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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV
TO TÜRKİYE AND LEBANON
WITH A PILGRIMAGE TO IZNIK (TÜRKİYE)
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 1700th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL
COUNCIL OF NICAIA
(27 November - 2 December 2025)

MEETING WITH HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I AND SIGNING OF THE JOINT DECLARATION

Patriarchal Palace (Istanbul)
Saturday, 29 November 2025
[**Multimedia**]

JOINT DECLARATION

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures for ever"

Psalm 106 (105): 1

On the eve of the feast of Saint Andrew the First-called Apostle, brother of the Apostle Peter and patron of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we, Pope Leo XIV and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, give heartfelt thanks to God, our merciful Father, for the gift of this fraternal meeting. Following the example of our venerable predecessors, and heeding the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, we continue to walk with firm determination on the path of dialogue, in love and truth (cf. *Eph* 4:15), towards the hoped-for restoration of full communion between our sister Churches. Aware that Christian unity is not merely the result of human efforts, but a gift that comes from on high, we invite all the members of our Churches – clergy, monastics, consecrated persons, and the lay faithful – earnestly to seek the fulfilment of the prayer that Jesus Christ addressed to the Father: “that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you... so that the world may believe” (*Jn* 17:21).

The commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, celebrated on the eve of our meeting, was an extraordinary moment of grace. The Council of Nicaea held in 325 AD was a providential event of unity. The purpose for commemorating this event, however, is not simply to call to mind the historical importance of the Council, but to spur us on to be continuously open to the same Holy Spirit who spoke through Nicaea, as we wrestle with the many challenges of our time. We are deeply grateful to all the leaders and delegates of other Churches and ecclesial communities who were willing to participate in this event. In addition to acknowledging the obstacles that prevent the restoration of full communion among all Christians – obstacles which we seek to address through the path of theological dialogue – we must also recognize that what binds us together is the faith expressed in the creed of Nicaea. This is the saving faith in the person of the Son of God, true God from true God, *homoousios* with the Father, who for us and our salvation was incarnate and dwelt among us, was crucified, died and was buried, arose on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come again to judge the living and the dead. Through the coming of the Son of God, we are initiated into the mystery of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and are invited to become, in and through the person of Christ, children of the Father and co-heirs with Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Endowed with this common confession, we can face our shared challenges in bearing witness to the faith expressed at Nicaea with mutual respect, and work together towards concrete solutions with genuine hope.

We are convinced that the commemoration of this significant anniversary can inspire new and courageous steps on the path towards unity. Among its decisions, the First Council of Nicaea also provided the criteria for determining the date of Easter, common for all Christians. We are grateful to divine providence that this year the whole Christian world celebrated Easter on the same day. It is our shared desire to continue the process of exploring a possible solution for celebrating together the Feast of Feasts every year. We hope and pray that all Christians will, "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9), commit themselves to the process of arriving at a common celebration of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This year we also commemorate the 60th anniversary of the historic Joint Declaration of our venerable predecessors, [Pope Paul VI](#) and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, which extinguished the exchange of excommunications of 1054. We give thanks to God that this prophetic gesture prompted our Churches to pursue "in a spirit of trust, esteem and mutual charity the dialogue which, with God's help, will lead to living together again, for the greater good of souls and the coming of the kingdom of God, in that full communion of faith, fraternal accord and sacramental life which existed among them during the first thousand years of the life of the Church" ([Joint Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras](#), 7 December 1965). At the same time, we exhort those who are still hesitant to any form of dialogue, to listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches (cf. Rev 2:29), who in the current circumstances of history urges us to present to the world a renewed witness of peace, reconciliation and unity.

Convinced of the importance of dialogue, we express our continued support for the work of the [Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church](#), which in its current phase is examining issues that have historically been considered divisive. Together with the irreplaceable role that theological dialogue plays in the process of rapprochement between our Churches, we also commend the other necessary elements of this process, including fraternal contacts, prayer, and joint work in all those areas where cooperation is already possible. We strongly urge all the faithful of our Churches, and especially the clergy and theologians, to embrace joyously the fruits that have been achieved thus far, and to labor for their continued increase.

The goal of Christian unity includes the objective of contributing in a fundamental and life-giving manner to peace among all peoples. Together we fervently raise our voices in invoking God's gift of peace upon our world. Tragically, in many regions of our world, conflict and violence continue to destroy the lives of so many. We appeal to those who have civil and political responsibilities to do everything possible to ensure that the tragedy of war ceases immediately, and we ask all people of good will to support our entreaty.

In particular, we reject any use of religion and the name of God to justify violence. We believe that authentic interreligious dialogue, far from being a cause of syncretism and confusion, is essential for the coexistence of peoples of different traditions and cultures. Mindful of the 60th anniversary of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, we exhort all men and women of good will to work together to build a more just and supportive world, and to care for creation, which is entrusted to us by God. Only in this way can the human family overcome indifference, desire for domination, greed for profit and xenophobia.

While we are deeply alarmed by the current international situation, we do not lose hope. God will not abandon humanity. The Father sent his Only-Begotten Son to save us, and the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, bestowed upon us the Holy Spirit, to make us sharers in his divine life, preserving and protecting the sacredness of the human person. By the Holy Spirit we know and experience that God is with us. For this reason, in our prayer we entrust to God every human being, especially those in need, those who experience hunger, loneliness or illness. We invoke upon each member of the human family every grace and blessing so that "their hearts may be encouraged, as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, who is our Lord Jesus Christ (Col 2:2).

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