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

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV

"Volkswagen Arena" (Istanbul)

Saturday, 29 November 2025

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters,

We celebrate this Mass on the eve of the day on which the Church commemorates Saint Andrew, Apostle and Patron of this land. At the same time, we begin Advent, the season for preparing ourselves to experience anew at Christmas the mystery of Jesus, the Son of God, "begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father" (*Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*), as solemnly declared 1700 years ago by the Fathers gathered at the Council of Nicaea.

In this context, the first reading (cf. *Is* 2:1-5) of today's Mass comes from one of the most beautiful passages in the book of the prophet Isaiah, where the invitation resounds, beckoning all peoples to ascend the mountain of the Lord (cf. v. 3), a place of light and peace. I would like, then, to meditate together on what it means to be part of the Church by reflecting on some of the images presented in this text.

The first image is that of the mountain “established as the highest of the mountain” (Is 2:2). It reminds us that the fruits of God’s action in our lives are a gift not only for us, but for everyone. Zion is a city set on the mountain and symbol of a community reborn in fidelity. Its beauty is a beacon of light for men and women from every place, and serves as a reminder that the joy of goodness is contagious. The lives of many saints confirm this. Saint Peter meets Jesus thanks to the enthusiasm of his brother Andrew (cf. Jn 1:40-42), who was led to the Lord, along with the Apostle John, by John the Baptist’s zeal. Saint Augustine, centuries later, comes to Christ thanks to the ardent preaching of Saint Ambrose and there are many similar examples.

We find here an invitation to renew the power of our own witness of faith. Saint John Chrysostom, a great shepherd of this Church, spoke of the allure of holiness as a sign more eloquent than many miracles. He said: “The miracle happens and passes, but the Christian life remains and continually edifies” (*Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, 43, 5). In conclusion, he exhorted: “Let us therefore watch over ourselves, so that we may also benefit others” (*ibid.*). Dear friends, if we truly want to help the people we meet, let us “keep watch” over ourselves, as the Gospel recommends (cf. Mt 24:42) by cultivating our faith with prayer with the sacraments, living it consistently in charity, and casting off — as Saint Paul tells us in the second reading — the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light (cf. Rom 13:12). The Lord, whom we await in glory at the end of time, comes every day to knock at our door. Let us be ready for him (cf. Mt 24:44), sincerely committed to living a life of goodness, after the example of the numerous holy men and women who have dwelt in this land throughout the ages.

The second image that comes to us from the prophet Isaiah is that of a world in which peace reigns. This is how he describes it: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is 2:4). How urgent this call is for us today! How great the need for peace, unity and reconciliation around us, within us and among us! What can our contribution be in response?

To better understand this, let us look at the logo of this journey, in which one of the images chosen is that of a bridge. It can also make us think to the famous large viaduct in this city which crosses the Bosphorus Strait and unites two continents: Asia and Europe. Over time, two other crossings have been added, so that there are now three points of connection between the two sides. These three great structures of communication, exchange and encounter are impressive to behold, yet so small and fragile in comparison to the immense territories they connect.

Their triple span across the Strait reminds us of the importance of our common efforts to build bridges of unity on three levels: within the community, in ecumenical relations with members of other Christian denominations, and in our encounters with brothers and sisters belonging to other religions. Taking care of these three bonds, strengthening and expanding them in every way possible, is part of our vocation to be a city set on a hill (cf. *Mt* 5:14-16).

The first bond of unity that I just mentioned is the one within this Church, which in this country consists of four different liturgical traditions — Latin, Armenian, Chaldean and Syriac. Each one contributes its own spiritual, historical and ecclesial richness. The sharing of these differences clearly demonstrate one of the most beautiful features of the face of the Bride of Christ: a catholicity that unites. The unity that binds us together around the altar is a gift from God. As such, it is strong and invincible, because it is the work of his grace. At the same time, however, realization of this unity in time is entrusted to us, to our efforts. For this reason, like the bridges over the Bosphorus, unity needs care, attention and “maintenance,” so that its foundations remain solid and are not weakened by time and vicissitudes. With our eyes turned to the promised mountain, an image of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is our destination and mother (cf. *Gal* 4:26), let us make every effort, then, to foster and strengthen the bonds that unite us, so that we may enrich one another and be a credible sign before the world of the Lord’s universal and infinite love.

The second bond of unity that this liturgy suggests is ecumenism. This is also attested to by the presence of Representatives of other Christian Confessions, whom I warmly greet. Indeed, the same faith in Jesus our Savior unites not only those of us within the Catholic Church, but all our brothers and sisters belonging to other Christian Churches. We experienced this yesterday in our prayer at İznik. This too is a path along which we have been walking together for some time. [Saint John XXIII](#), who was connected to this land by profound ties of mutual affection, was a great promoter of, and witness to, ecumenical communion. Therefore, while we ask in the words of Pope John that “the great mystery of that unity which Christ Jesus asked of the Heavenly Father with ardent prayers on the eve of his sacrifice may be accomplished” ([Opening Address of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council](#), October 11, 1962, 8.2), we renew today our “yes” to unity, “that they may all be one” (*Jn* 17:21), *ut unum sint*.

The third bond of unity, to which the word of God calls us, is that with members of non-Christian communities. We live in a world where religion is too often used to justify wars and atrocities. As the [Second Vatican Council](#) declared, however, "the attitude of human beings towards God the Father and that of a human being towards his fellow men and women are so closely connected that Scripture says: 'Whoever does not love does not know God' (1 Jn 4:8)" (Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#), 5). Therefore, we want to walk together by appreciating what unites us, breaking down the walls of prejudice and mistrust, promoting mutual knowledge and esteem in order to give to all a strong message of hope and an invitation to become "peacemakers" (Mt 5:9).

Dear friends, let us make these values our resolutions for the season of Advent and even more so for our personal and communal life. We journey as if on a bridge that connects earth to Heaven, a bridge that the Lord has built for us. Let us always keep our eyes fixed on both shores, so that we may love God and our brothers and sisters with all our hearts in order to journey together and find ourselves one day united in the house of the Father.

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The HOLY SEE

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