

21/07/2025

HIS ALL-HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW Remarks - Pilgrimage “From Rome to New Rome”



Your Eminence, Cardinal Joseph Tobin,

Your Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Pilgrims,

Beloved children in the Lord,

With heartfelt joy, we welcome you today to the sacred and historic city of Constantinople – New Rome – as you continue your blessed pilgrimage, “From Rome to New Rome.” Your journey, which leads from the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul in Rome to the seat of the Holy Apostle Andrew here in Constantinople, and soon to the ancient city of Nicaea, is a powerful and visible

testimony to the Spirit at work in our midst, guiding us along the path of reconciliation, understanding, and unity.

We are deeply moved by the message addressed to you by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, and we receive his words and fraternal greetings with gratitude and fraternal affection. We, too, share this sacred desire for unity – a unity not grounded in uniformity, but in the shared truth of the Gospel, in mutual love, and in our common baptism into the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This pilgrimage coincides with the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, a Council that proclaimed the divinity of Christ, established the Nicene Creed, and affirmed the unity of the Church around the confession of the true faith. It is most fitting that you will soon walk upon the same ground where the bishops of the early Church gathered to safeguard the mystery of Christ and to preserve communion among the Churches. Nicaea remains a symbol of conciliarity, of synodality, and of the apostolic unity we are called to recover today.

We rejoice especially in the common celebration of Pascha this year by East and West. This shared proclamation of the Resurrection allows us to bear witness with one voice to the redemptive hope that conquers sin, death, and division. It is a foretaste of what our full communion will mean not only for our Churches, but for the whole world thirsting for peace, justice, and spiritual renewal.

Beloved pilgrims, we greet you not only as guests but as fellow members of the household of God. As the Apostle Peter exhorts us: “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

Your presence here reminds us that the ecumenical journey is not only a theological endeavor, it is a spiritual calling. We must return to Jerusalem, the upper room where the Holy Spirit descended, and where fear was transformed into proclamation. In this pilgrimage of hope, may each of you be strengthened by the fire of Pentecost, bearing Christ to a world wounded by war, injustice, and despair.

The recent strike on the only Roman Catholic Church in Gaza reminded us of this tragic reality. We condemn this horrendous act against the Holy Family Church, which held a very special place in the heart of the late Pope Francis, who, even during the difficult period of his hospitalization, did not cease to call the priest of this community on a daily basis since the outburst of the war. This was an attack not only on a place of worship, but on a sanctuary where hundreds of people, irrespective of religion, found a home and a shelter during this period of trial and

tribulation.

We ask Your Eminence, Cardinal Tobin, to convey our most heartfelt condolences to our brother Pope Leo. Please assure His Holiness that we raise our voice with Him for an immediate ceasefire and termination of this war and together we pray to the Prince of Peace for the repose of the souls of the innocent victims, for the swift recovery of the injured and for the consolation of their families.

Esteemed guests,

We hope that your pilgrimage here in the Queen of Cities will deepen your faith, renew your hope, and stir your love for the Church and for one another. We assure you of our prayers, our blessings, and our abiding commitment to walk together, Orthodox and Catholic, as fellow disciples of the Risen Lord.

With this spirit, we look forward with anticipation to our meeting with Pope Leo during the feast day of Saint Andrew, the Patron Saint of the Church of Constantinople, as we continue to implore the Holy Spirit to guide us to the day when we shall once again gather around the same Holy Table, sharing in the one Body and one Cup of the Lord.

May the Lord bless your pilgrimage, now and always.

Welcome to the Phanar and to the Ecumenical Patriarchate!

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