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Proceeding “on the path of dialogue, in love and truth:” Ec. Patr. Bartholomew and Pope Leo XIV



November 30, 2025, the Feast of Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle, brother of the Apostle Peter and patron of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was crowned with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George at the Phanar, following yesterday’s Patriarchal Doxology of thanksgiving. In the fullness of the Church’s liturgical life, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew celebrated the Divine Liturgy, with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in attendance, as the Mother Church once more lifted up fervent supplication for the unity of all Christians and for the peace of the whole world.



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Huseyin Aldemir

His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America welcomed His Holiness at the entrance of the Patriarchal Church.



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Huseyin Aldemir

Archbishop Elpidophoros led a pilgrimage of more than one hundred faithful from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America who had traveled from the United States to witness this historic moment. The pilgrims participated in the Divine Liturgy and the midday ecumenical blessing, standing before the Ecumenical Throne on the feastday of its patron, Saint Andrew, and beholding a living icon of fraternal encounter between Constantinople and Rome, between the successors of the brother Apostles Andrew and Peter.



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Dimitrios Panagos

The celebrations were preceded, on Saturday, November 29, by a moving Doxology in the same Patriarchal Church of Saint George. Addressing His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the faithful, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV expressed his profound gratitude for the warm reception and underlined the continuity of brotherly ties with his predecessors. Upon entering the Patriarchal Church, he recalled the footsteps of Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, as well as the long friendship that has united the Ecumenical Patriarch with the Bishops of Rome in a shared concern for the Church and for the world. Central to this pilgrimage, as both His All-Holiness and His Holiness emphasized, was the historic commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, whose faith and vision continue to illuminate the common path of Christians today.

At the conclusion of their meeting on Saturday at the Phanar, His All-Holiness and His Holiness signed a Joint Declaration giving “heartfelt thanks to God, our merciful Father, for the gift of this fraternal meeting” and renewing their determination to proceed “on the path of dialogue, in love and truth” toward the hoped-for restoration of full communion between their two Sister Churches. Rooting this commitment in the commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, they recalled that the Creed of Nicaea remains a

shared confession—“the saving faith in the person of the Son of God, true God from true God”—and invited all the faithful to pray and labor for the fulfillment of the Lord’s own petition “that His disciples may all be one… so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Dimitrios Panagos

The Declaration looks ahead with hope to “new and courageous steps” on the road to unity, including continued work toward a common date for the celebration of Holy Pascha, while at the same time recalling the 60th anniversary of the historic act by Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras that lifted the anathemas of 1054. His All-Holiness and His Holiness reaffirmed their support for the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, firmly rejecting any misuse of religion to justify violence, while appealing to the leaders of nations to seek peace and justice for all. Acknowledging the gravity of the present moment, they closed with a word of confidence that God will not abandon humanity, entrusting every person—especially those who suffer hunger, loneliness, or war—to the mercy of the Triune God, “that their hearts may be encouraged, as they are knit together in love” (cf. Col 2:2).



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Dimitrios Panagos

This gathering marked the second official meeting between His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros and His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, following the Orthodox–Catholic pilgrimage “From Rome to New Rome” in July, 2025, which he jointly led with His Eminence Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark.



Photo: Orthodox Observer/Huseyin Aldemir

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