03/12/2025

The Chronicle of Pope Leo’s Official Visit to Nicaea and the Ecumenical Patriarchate



His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, responding to the invitation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, travelled on Friday, 28 November, to Nicaea in Bithynia, where the two Primates—together with His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria, representatives of other Churches, and ecclesiastical organisations, honoured the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, convened there in the year 325.

The ceremony took place on the shores of Lake of Nicaea, beside the ruins of the Basilica of Saint Neophytos, which were revealed after the waters receded, adjacent to the imperial palace where the Council originally assembled.

Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were present, as well as members of the Papal Delegation and representatives of Christian communities from Turkey and abroad.

A brief word of welcome was delivered by His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, followed by greetings from His Holiness the Pope of Rome.

After the ceremony, the two Primates were guided through the small museum constructed on the archaeological site of the basilica, where excavation finds are displayed. In a special hall, they received the attending hierarchs and clergy and presented them with commemorative medals and reproductions of the icon of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Pope’s entourage included Their Eminences Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Prime Minister of Vatican City State; Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Claudio Gugerotti, President of the Pontifical Council for the Eastern Churches; George Jacob Koovakad, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; and Their Excellencies Archbishops Edgar Peña Parra, Sostituto of the Secretariat of State; Paul R. Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States; Diego Ravelli, Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations; Solczyński, Apostolic Nuncio to Ankara; and Martin Kmetec, Archbishop of the Roman Catholics of

Smyrna and President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Turkey, along with other senior Vatican officials, clergy, and laypersons.

The Doxology at the Patriarchal Cathedral

On the following day, 29 November 2025, at 15:30, Pope Leo XIV arrived at the See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, at the Phanar, greeted by festal peals of the bells. Clergy of the Holy Archdiocese of Constantinople, under the leadership of Grand Protosyncellus Gregory, together with clergy of the neighbouring Metropolises of Chalcedon, Derkoi, and the Princes' Islands, were aligned along the Patriarchal courtyard.



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That same morning, the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch participated in an Ecumenical Gathering of Primates and representatives of Churches at the newly built Syriac Orthodox Church of Saint Ephraim in the suburb of St. Stephen.

The Thronal Feast of the Great Church of Christ, in the Presence of His Holiness the Pope

In a festive atmosphere, the Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrated the feast of its founder, Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle, marking its Thronal Feast in the presence of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

On Sunday, 30 November, a Patriarchal Concelebration took place, presided over by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, concelebrated by His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria, with the participation of Hierarchs: Basilios of Arcadia and Nektarios of Anthidon representing the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem respectively; Apostolos of Miletus; Athanasios of Kallonia; Andrew of Arkalochori, Kastelli, and Viannos; Nicodemus of Memphis from the Patriarchate of Alexandria; Sebastian of Atlanta; and Cleopas of Sweden and all Scandinavia.

Upon the Pope’s arrival at the entrance of the Patriarchate, he was greeted by Their Eminences Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, together with the Patriarchal Chancellor Bosporios, and was led onto the Solea of the Patriarchal Cathedral, from whose Antithronon he

followed the Divine Liturgy.

At the moment of “Let us love one another”, the Pope descended from the Antithronon and the Ecumenical Patriarch exited the Holy Altar; the two exchanged the kiss of peace, followed by Pope Theodoros of Alexandria.

The Pope recited the Lord’s Prayer in Latin.



A large number of Hierarchs of the Throne were in attendance, as well as members of the Papal Delegation, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Filuksinus Yusuf Çetin, clergy and monastics, Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece Ioannis-Michael Loverdos, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael J. Rigas, German Federal Commissioner for International Religious Freedom Thomas Rachel, the Greek Ambassadors to Ankara and Constantinople, Archons Theodoros Angelopoulos and Athanasios Martinos, Mr. Maximos Charakopoulos, and many other dignitaries and faithful from Istanbul and abroad.

At the close of the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness addressed the Pope with heartfelt words, and the Pope replied in the same fraternal spirit.

The Patriarchal choirs, under the direction of Archon Protopsaltis Panagiotis Neochoritis, chanted the Polychronia of both Primates, who again exchanged the kiss of peace and blessed the congregation.

Afterwards, the Pope and the Patriarch exited the Cathedral in procession and, ascending to the Patriarchal balcony, bestowed their blessing upon the faithful.

At midday, an official luncheon was offered at the Patriarchal refectory in honour of the Primate of the Church of Rome, attended by the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Cardinals and Archbishops accompanying the Pope, and Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne.

Finally, His All-Holiness escorted His Holiness the Pope to the outer gate of the Patriarchate, where he farewelled him with honour and fraternal warmth, together with members of the Patriarchal Court.

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou

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