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Apostolic Journey to Turkey and Lebanon

From 27 November to 2 December, Pope Leo XIV will make his first apostolic journey to Turkey and Lebanon. Among the main events, he will undertake a pilgrimage to İznik (Turkey) on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea.

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Pope Leo XIV's first apostolic journey will be to Turkey and Lebanon. From Thursday, 27 November to Sunday, 30

November, he will visit Turkey, and on Monday, 1 December and Tuesday, 2 December, he will be in Lebanon. The trip will include stops in Ankara, Istanbul, and İznik (ancient Nicaea) in Turkey, and Beirut, Annaya, Harissa, and Bkerké in Lebanon. The aim of the journey is to promote dialogue and unity among Christians, as well as interreligious dialogue in a region marked by both a rich history and ongoing tensions.

On Sunday, 23 November, the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Pope published the Apostolic Letter *In Unitate Fidei* in preparation for his trip. In the text, he calls for a renewed profession of faith centred on Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God and true God made man for our salvation. The letter recalls the Nicene definition (Christ is as “of the substance as the Father”) and highlights the ecumenical value of

the creed as a shared foundation on which to continue building Christian unity.

In Turkey, the Pope will meet with civil authorities and visit the Atatürk Mausoleum as well as the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. A major highlight will be the ecumenical celebration in İznik commemorating the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, during which he will sign a Joint Declaration with Patriarch Bartholomew I.

In Lebanon, the Pope will pray at the port of Beirut, still affected by the 2020 explosion; visit the tomb of Saint Charbel Makhlouf in Annaya; and meet with patients and staff at the psychiatric disabilities hospital in Jal el Dib. He will also hold meetings with civil authorities, clergy, and young people, and will preside over Mass on Beirut's waterfront.

The mottos for the trip are “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (in Turkey) and “Blessed are the peacemakers” (in Lebanon), and it is meant to bring a message of peace and dialogue to a region troubled by conflict.

In recent decades, Lebanon has received two papal visits: John Paul II in 1997 and Benedict XVI in 2012, both marked by strong appeals for peace and reconciliation. Although Pope Francis repeatedly expressed his desire to go, he was unable to do so. Turkey, for its part, received visits from Paul VI in 1967, John Paul II in 1979, Benedict XVI in 2006, and Francis in 2014. All of those journeys were centred on interreligious dialogue and coexistence.

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