

Dear brothers and sisters,

Immense gift of God's love is the Holy Eucharist. This great sacrament, instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper as a memorial of his Passover, is spiritual nourishment for the faithful, a sign of unity and a bond of charity, a promise of future glory. It shows the perpetual fulfillment of the promise of the Savior who said "I am with you all days till the end of the world." Truly we can say together with Pope St. John Paul II, "The Church lives by the Eucharist."

With joy and hope we take note that during the synodal journey we have experienced in recent years, united with the whole universal Church, it was pointed out that in the Christian communities living in Turkey, "The Holy Mass is still very important. The Word of God and participation in Sunday Mass remain a requirement of individuals." At the same time, the urgency of arresting the decline in the "spirit of unity" that occurs in many realities of our Church emerged.

As it had already been announced precisely on the occasion of the Synodal Conference that took place in Izmir in October last year, the bishops of our country approved the proposal to devote a special time so that in all our communities we may increasingly place the Eucharist at the center and, starting from it, build new bonds of communion and renew our Christian life and pastoral action. Hence forth intentionally to give concrete implementation to this decision, with this letter I convene the Eucharistic Year of the Catholic Church in Turkey. It will begin with the first Sunday of Advent, next December and will end on November 24, 2024, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe, the conclusion of the Christian year.

The choice to live this particular time of grace precisely in the year 2024 is related to a few reasons. First of all, it is intended to be deeply united with the celebration of the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress that will take place in Quito in September next year on the theme "Fraternity to heal the world. You are all brothers" (Mt.23:8). We intend in this way to participate, according to our concrete possibilities, in this significant moment in the life of the universal Church. Moreover, the year that is about to open will mark the conclusion of the synodal journey that has providentially begun long ago and will lead us to the opening of the Holy Year 2025, which, according to Pope Francis' intention, will have as its theme "Peregrinantes in Spe", pilgrims of hope. Focusing our attention on the Eucharist, which is sacrament of unity, bread of hope and prophecy of a new world, will help us to live fruitfully these very important moments.

The Church of Turkey wishes to know, love, serve and proclaim the Lord Jesus more and more and to recognize him present, like the disciples of Emmaus, in the act of breaking bread through the celebration of the Year of the Eucharist. We wish to deepen the faith of the church community on this Sacrament through catechesis and other means to participate more and more actively and consciously in liturgical celebrations, and to remember after eating the Bread of Heaven that we are called to share the earthly bread with all people in poverty and need. We also want to respond concretely to Pope Francis' repeated invitation to all Christians: to love God by "adoring him." In



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fact, "Adoration is the first response we can offer to the gratuitous love, the amazing love of God."  
"In fact to adore, means that to recognize faithfully that God alone is Lord and realize that our lives, the path of the Church, the fate of history depend on the tenderness of his love. He is the meaning of life."

In the coming months the initiatives will be proposed to live nationwide the Eucharistic Year of the Church of Turkey, will be announced. But it is important to emphasize that these larger events alone cannot be sufficient for this term of grace offered to us to bear abundant and lasting fruit. It is necessary to find out the best way to live the term of Year of the Eucharist in on their own specific possibilities and needs for each particular community, diocesan, parish, religious or other organizations, under the guidance of their pastors or superiors. At the same time, each individual faithful, bishop, presbyter, deacon, religious, consecrated person, lay person, is invited to ask himself, "How do I want to live in best manner this term?" "What concrete choices can and do I make so that the Year of the Eucharist that I am given as a gift of living, would leave a true sign of newness and joy on my life?"

Dear brothers and sisters, let us prepare to enter together with joy into the Year of the Eucharist of the Church of Turkey. And let us in prayer raise our arms and voices to the Lord making our own the words of Bishop Luigi Padovese: "Lord, help us to believe that your love for us has no limits. Make us understand that in the Eucharist you wanted to be with us always. Open our eyes for understanding that the meaning of our existence is realized in becoming also bread that gives life and sustains. Help us to become Eucharist that is Christians who give as much as they receive: love comfort and hope for our brothers and sisters. Amen."



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