

**To the Most Excellent Mons. Lorenzo Piretto**  
**Archbishop Emeritus of Smyrna**  
**Apostolic Administrator of Istanbul**  
**To the Rev. of Priests, men, and women religious,**  
**to pastoral workers and lay faithful of**  
**Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul**

Dearest Brothers and Sisters,

In obedience to the will of God, expressed by the Holy Father Pope Francis, I come to you in the name of Lord as your Bishop. I cannot hide my fears for acceptance of this obedience. With a weeping heart, I leave my beloved Church of Ariano - Irpino - Lacedonia that generated me the faith, and parish community of Trabzon in the Apostolic Vicariate of Vicar Apostolic of Anatolia, a community that I tried to serve in recent years with loving dedication. Furthermore, I feel crushed by the weight of an assignment that is far beyond my strength. Thus the mystery of the Lord's choices is renewed in my life: "God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are," (1Cor 1, 28).

I kindly ask you, please welcome me with kindness and from now on I ask you to help me get in tune with a very complex ecclesial and social reality that I believe I do not know adequately.

I understand well the special vocation of the Catholic Church in Istanbul: We called to be like a bridge between West and East, between Latin Church and Eastern Church, between Christianity and Islam. I would like to walk alongside you therefore, we are together committed to breaking down the walls of the enmities of centuries and remove of the mutual distrust and ancient prejudices. In harmony with the Universal Church, I am aware that only "a synodal Church" - in which we walk together - is a going out Church' a Church evangelizes 'with open doors'" (Documento Preparatorio della XVI Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi, n. 15).

With respect and humility, I enter a path already traced by my venerable predecessors. First, I bless the memory of H. E. Mons. Ruben Tierrablanca: His apostolic zeal and his initiative intelligence will be a starting point for resuming an ecclesial journey interrupted by his premature death him. I greet the Vicar Apostolic Emeritus H.E. Mons. Louis Pelatre with deep feelings of veneration for his long and generous episcopal service. I ask him from now on for his supporting prayers and advice. And I would like to offer my

gratitude to H. E. Mons. Lorenzo Piretto, Archbishop Emeritus of Smyrna, who in these difficult months guided the Vicariate with wisdom and meekness, and to the Most Reverend Fr. Pawel Szymala, Vicar Delegate for his diligent help.

Dear brothers and sisters, having the Gospel as the unique program, I come to you to help for proclaiming the joy of the Risen Lord and for giving testimony to the compassionate love of the Father to the poor and afflicted. We will continue courageously to be a martyr and diaspora Church that cares especially for the needy, suffering, and refugees. Being devoted to one another in brotherly love, and giving preference to one another in honor (cf Rm 12,10), we will try to give credible testimony to the Gospel. I am sure that walking together and appreciating the charisms of each of us, Our Vicar Apostolic will continue as a fruitful seed sown by the Divine Sower in the furrow of the beloved land of Turkey so that the Kingdom of God may sprout there. May the Lord be happy each of us, be pleased with our apostolic commitment and never having ashamed of his disciples.

May Our Lady of Ephesus accompany us with her maternal love on this pilgrimage of faith and may the intercession of our Patrons Saint Andrew the Apostle, Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint John XXIII support us.

Ariano Irpino, September 14, 2021

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Ariano Irpino, September 14, 2021

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