



Prot. №. 931/2023 EN

**Subject: Official response of the Bishops' Conference of Turkey
To Halil Konakçı, Imam of the Pendik Ulu Çınar Mosque**

Dear brothers and sisters:
Peace and all good to you!

The Church has always been concerned and has publicly expressed its dismay and deep concern at the distortion of people's religious beliefs, the desecration of the Scriptures and places of worship and the misrepresentation of the heritage of faith, whatever creed or religion here is belong. Every person has the right to believe in and practice faith traditions that he has inherited or that he considers fundamental to his life. These doctrines shape his moral choices and help him live a morally upright life; in this way they contribute positively to life and to the human development of society for the good of all men. Pope Francis has touched the hearts of millions of people of all religions and nations through his evangelical life, his keen interest in their lives, and his loving concern for their well-being and world peace. He has never failed to speak out in defense of the victims of religious discrimination, hatred, violence and provocations due to misinterpretation of people's religious beliefs.

With these convictions, we feel the need and duty to deplore the statement made by the Imam of Pendik Ulu Çınar Mosque on May 11, 2023 based solely on his personal views. His baseless words disturbed and hurt the feelings of all devotees of Mary, loved as a Mother by millions of people. She was blessed by God and chosen as full of grace among all human beings to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah and the Savior of the world, according to the Christian faith. Mary was a virgin and immaculate and this state of hers was blessed by God. Being free from every stain of sin, she fully participates in the glory of Jesus in heaven, where he himself said that believers are free from every human bond and therefore "in the resurrection men shall neither marry nor be given in marriage; they shall be like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). Similarly, Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, is the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran and an entire chapter is named after her (Surah 19). The Prophet Muhammad listed her as one of the four greatest women of all time who achieved perfection.

The inappropriate and unfounded statement of the Imam of the Pendik Ulu Çınar mosque is therefore an attempt to damage the cordial and harmonious relations between the believers of two major religions, founded on mutual respect and trust with the constant commitment to promote the realization of fraternity universal community.

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We just have to pray for people with this mentality, in our beloved country and in other parts of the world, that God will guide them and grant them peace of mind and heart to promote the peace and well-being of all believers in God.

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Date: August 2, 2023

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