


Pope Francis meeting with the Assumptionist bishop of Istanbul, Bishop Pelâtre
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Although Pope Francis addressed the delicate issue of Muslim-Christian relations during his recent visit to Turkey in an attempt to foster greater understanding and tolerance, the main purpose of the historic visit was to meet Patriarch Bartholomew I in Constantinople now called Istanbul. What is significant is that this visit occurred in advance of an historic pan-orthodox Council that will take place again in Istanbul in 2016.

Patriarch Bartholomew is the spiritual leader of the world's 250 million Orthodox Christians, whose Church broke with Rome in 1054 in a schism that divided the Christian world.

On the last day of his three-day visit to Turkey, after an Orthodox liturgy in Istanbul attended by Pope Francis for the feast of Saint Andrew, patron saint of the Church in Constantinople, Pope

Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew I signed a joint declaration expressing their desire to overcome the obstacles dividing their two Churches. Let's hope and pray that such initiatives lead one day to the fulfillment of Jesus's prayer. "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are" (John 17:11).

During his visit, the  Pope also met the small Catholic community in Istanbul and their bishop, Most Rev. Louis Pelâtre, an Assumptionist, In the photo Bishop Pelâtre is seen greeting Pope Francis in the garden of the Nuncio's residence where Pope stayed during his visit to Istanbul.

The Assumptionists maintain a community in Istanbul, situated in Chalcedon, site of one of the earliest ecumenical councils of the Church (today Chalcedon is known as Kadikoy) on the Asian side of the Bosphorus strait separating Asia from Europe.  Our Lady of Assumption church was built there in 1863 and since then the Assumptionist community has maintained its presence in this historic city.

By Bro. Jonathan Adams, A.A.
Photo: Nathalie RITZMANN