What Nicaea means to us today: Sharing reflections and proposals.
Meeting between Heads of Churches and Leaders of the World Christian Communities
29 November 2025, Istanbul.

Your All-Holiness, Holy Father, Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences, Your Graces,
beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the Union of Utrecht of Old-Catholic Churches and its president the Archbishop of Utrecht Bernd Wallet, I give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for this wonderful opportunity to share our thoughts and prayers on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

The significance of the Council of Nicaea for members of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht can be summarized in three points.

First of all, as a historical event, the Council was decisive in establishing Christian doctrine. With the creed the Council summarized the teachings of the Church Fathers and thereby defined and established the Holy Trinity as the foundation of the faith. The Council rejected teachings that were not in accordance with the creed, thereby also fulfilling a critical function. The Council has been authoritative for all generations of believers that followed. The common search for insight is part of the concilair tradition, in which orthodoxy is rediscovered time and again.

Secondly, throughout the history of the Latin Church of the West, the status of the Council of Nicaea has never been disputed. It was and still is regarded by Catholic churches as a model and example of a general council as the highest authoritative body where the church reaches decisions. For Old Catholics in particular, with their protest against excessive centralization of ecclesiastical authority that undermines the position of the local church with its bishop, presbytery, and faithful, the appeal to the old, undivided church is the ideal way to deal with conflicts and overcome division. In this sense, the Council of Nicaea is the highest means of achieving the goal of all ecumenical efforts of the Old Catholic Churches: agreement on all essential points of the Christian faith, finding ecclesial communion, and sharing in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.

Thirdly. With each celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sunday morning, Old Catholics celebrate their faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After the reading of Holy Scripture and before the gifts are prepared for the Lord's table, the congregation professes its faith by singing or reciting the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in its authentic version, that is: without the *filioque*. The ideal of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is realized in that celebrating congregation on the spot. Just as the congregation participates in the Body and Blood of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist and anticipates the completion of God's kingdom, so the singing of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is part of the local realization of this one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Even if not every ordinary churchgoer understands all the words of the creed in the finer points of the theological debates from which they originated, one still knows that this faith is greater than any human temporal reality, just as God is greater than our hearts.

For Old Catholics, the Council of Nicea is in its form of conciliarity and its content of the creed a benchmark and an ideal, a historical event with lasting significance for the present and a challenge for the future to discover and give shape to the unity to which the Church in all its diversity is called. To this end, may Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us.

Dirk Jan Schoon
bishop of Haarlem