

Christ at the Center:

Echoes from George Augustin to Pope Leo at Nicaea

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George Augustin's article, published in the volume "Gott in die Mitte" in mid-October 2025, appears several weeks before Pope Leo's apostolic journey to Turkey at the end of November 2025, where the Pope structures his message around Nicaea, the Creed, and the danger of a "new Arianism" that reduces Jesus to a mere exemplary human being. This temporal order and thematic convergence allow an article to argue plausibly that Augustin articulates, in a more academic and dogmatic form, what the Pope will soon proclaim on a global ecclesial stage.

Christ as the decisive center

In his contribution "Das Bekenntnis zur Gottheit Jesu Christi und seine bleibende Bedeutung," Augustin insists that Jesus Christ is "die alles bestimmende Mitte" of Christian faith because in him God's own reality is revealed and encountered personally. He frames Christian existence as beginning with a personal encounter with Christ and then poses the fundamental question of whether Jesus of Nazareth is, in reality, the Son of God, or only for Christians as a confessional construct within a pluralistic world of religions. By revisiting the biblical confession "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," Augustine shows that even practicing Christians often find this statement unclear or remote, and he calls for a renewed intellectual and spiritual struggle to understand who Jesus really is.

Pope Leo, in turn, takes up the same center: Christ as the key to the Creed and to Christian unity at Nicaea. In his address, he describes the Creed not as a cold formula but as a living "compass" that keeps the Church focused on the essential core of the faith: Jesus Christ, true God and true man, confessed

in continuity with the Church's Tradition. Like Augustin, he asks existential questions: "Who is Jesus for us? What does it essentially mean to be Christian?" and invites the faithful to allow this confession to shape not only doctrine but also life, decisions, and witness in today's world.

The new Arianism and spiritual amnesia

Augustin diagnoses what he calls a widespread loss of real knowledge of Christ, almost a "geistliches Alzheimer," echoing Pope Francis' earlier image of spiritual amnesia. He worries that even within the Church, Jesus is often treated only as a morally inspiring or God-oriented human being, a model or ethical exemplar, but not truly confessed and lived as the eternal Son of the Father. For him, this is not a marginal problem but a central doctrinal and pastoral crisis, because a merely human Christ could not truly redeem from sin and death, as the Fathers at Nicaea and later councils insisted. Hence his insistence that the ancient confession of Christ as "true God from true God, of one being with the Father" remains indispensable for real Christian life today.

Pope Leo names the same danger with the expressive phrase "new Arianism." He criticizes contemporary tendencies—even among believers—to admire Jesus as a prophet, teacher, or champion of justice while quietly denying or sidelining his full divinity and lordship over history. From the site of Nicaea itself, he appeals to Christians not to reduce Christ to the past but to recognize him as the living Son of God, present and active, guiding history towards the future promised by the Father. This pastoral warning mirrors Augustin's dogmatic concern: both see a subtle, culturally acceptable Christology spreading in which Jesus is honored yet no longer truly adored as Lord and God.

Nicaea, redemption, and lived faith

In Augustin's argument, the confession of Christ's divinity is not a speculative detail but the condition for salvation. He recalls how the Church Fathers defended Christ's true divinity against heresies with a very concrete logic: only God can grant a new beginning, forgive sins, and conquer death; if Christ were merely a just and God-oriented man, he could give only what is human, limited and provisional, and humanity would remain unredeemed in its deepest need. For this reason, the Nicene formula about Christ as "light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father" is, for Augustin, existentially decisive rather than abstract.

Pope Leo's reflections at Nicaea bring this same soteriological logic into a global, pastoral context. He presents the Creed as a shared criterion of discernment that orients both belief and action, insisting that confessing Jesus as Son of God goes hand in hand with concrete charity and solidarity, for example, in the Church's response to earthquake victims in Turkey. By linking Christological faith with works of mercy and with the call to Christian unity, he shows that Nicaea's confession remains the engine of Christian hope and mission, not a relic of the fourth century.

Augustin as a theological forerunner

From this perspective, chronologically, Augustin's volume appears in October 2025, whereas the Pope's journey and homilies at Nicaea take place at the end of November 2025, on the 1700th anniversary of the Council. Thematically, both focus on three tightly interconnected axes: Christ as the decisive center of faith, the enduring normativity of the Nicene confession of his divinity, and the urgent need to confront modern forms of Arian reductionism within a pluralistic and often post-Christian culture.