

Pope in Iraq. Card. Sako (Patriarch) to SIR: “The Pope’s tears touched the hearts of all Iraqi people. Now a ‘Magna Carta’ to rebuild the Iraq of civilizations”

"This morning I went to the apostolic nunciature to bid farewell to Pope Francis on his departure. Before leaving, I asked him: 'Are you happy?' He smiled, and extending his arms he replied: 'Yes, very!' I said to him: 'Your Holiness, you have made history in this country. After all that we went through, now is the time to change the culture and mentality of our country.'" The Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad, **Card. Louis Raphael Sako**, Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad, thus recounted his farewell to Pope Francis shortly before departure for Italy, at the end of a four-day visit to Iraq, the first by a pontiff to the land of Abraham.



[The Cardinal is still moved. Contacted by phone, he said it was “a visit enriched by his simplicity, his humbleness and his love, with a wealth of extremely meaningful messages.” He retraced the various legs of the journey, Baghdad, Najaf, Ur of the Chaldeans, Mosul, Qaraqosh and Erbil: "all of these were very touching events, with the world's attention fixed on Iraq.](#)

The Pope touched the hearts of all Iraqis.

[These are days that we shall never forget. The Pope's tears in Mosul, surrounded by the ruins of this city, symbol of Daesh brutality, touched the hearts of the whole country.” **The most beautiful gift.** "The very presence of the Pope among us was the most beautiful gift of the visit. It was an exceptional experience that everyone wished to enjoy", said Cardinal Mar Sako, who said that "more than 150 Muslims took part in the Holy Masses and everyone asked for a prayer book to follow the services, including those who remained outside. Many dignitaries, diplomats and ministers were present. It was a very emotional experience. At the conclusion of the visit, Mar Sako added, "*the Pope left us a compelling mandate: 'to be instruments of God's mercy and peace, patient and courageous artisans of a new social order'*, as he said to us yesterday at Mass in Erbil. The Pope's visit marked a historic moment for us and for the whole of Iraq."](#)



[: 'You are a part of us and we are a part of you'. We are brothers despite our differences, and that is why we are called upon to do away with the despicable mentality of betrayal and sectarianism and accept each other with love, whilst respecting the wealth of differences in faith, culture and ethnicity. As the Holy Father told us: we must shape a future based more on what unites us than on what](#)

divides us." This means to "welcome, understand, respect and forgive. We are being called to undertake a long journey for the good of Iraq, but also for the good of the whole region."



. "During the last few days, all Iraqis were united as one people by the Pope's presence. Even those who opposed the visit, those who were sceptical, ultimately had to change their minds. We were part of a team: the presidency, the government, the Shiite and Sunni authorities, the Church, the security services and the media", His Eminence said. "Speaking on television a few moments ago, Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi reaffirmed his commitment to prepare a document for the future of Iraq comparable to a 'Magna carta', stipulating the respect of rights and diversity, the guarantee of the country's sovereignty, and other aspects related to the rebirth, progress and prosperity of our country." "For my part", concluded the cardinal, "I suggested to President Barham Salih to promote a meeting on the aftermath of the visit, to discuss how to make it bear fruit. We must not give up now. We pray that

Iraq may return to being a country of civilisations, religions and diversity.

The first fruit. The first fruit of the papal visit is already blossoming: in a tweet, Prime Minister al Kadhimi declared March 6 the National Day of Tolerance and Coexistence. It is a way to "celebrate" and remember the historic meetings in Najaf between Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani and Pope Francis and in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of Abraham.

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