

Monday, June 28, 2021
Monday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Irenaeus, Bishop, Martyr

Abraham intercedes for the people of Sodom. He asks God, “Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?” Abraham courageously asks God, in his humble way (“though I am but dust and ashes!”), over and over to spare the destruction he said he would bring to all the people of Sodom. He hears God say, “For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it.” Intercessory prayer is powerful! Jesus calls us and we follow him. Even if we have good intentions to follow him, like the scribe, Jesus enlightens him to the fact that “the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.” Are we ready to follow Jesus without excuses? Irenaeus followed Jesus to the death in the year 202, clinging to the Savior amidst persecution in the city of Lyons, France. Saint Irenaeus, pray for us!

God Love You!

Fr. Jim Starasovich



Pope Francis' Solidarity with Beleaguered Christians in Iraq

Religious Freedom Week 2021: June 28

Pray for Christians in Iraq, and that people of all faiths in the land of Abraham may live in peace.

Reflect

Pope Francis' visit to Iraq March 5 – 8, 2021 represented a historic milestone for Christians and the Middle East. The Christian presence in Iraq has dwindled from an estimated high of 1.4 million to less than 300,000. The Holy Father's presence was a much-needed affirmation of his love for this beleaguered people and a call for interfaith harmony. Pope Francis met privately with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, leader of Iraq's Shiite Muslim population, to build bridges of fraternal dialogue and interreligious understanding. But most of this visit was to express solidarity with Christians. In Baghdad, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in the Syro-Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation, the site of a horrific attack by extremists in 2010 who killed two priests and took 150 of the faithful hostage, leaving dozens of worshippers and police dead and even more wounded and maimed. This attack was a harbinger for the brutality that swept through northern Iraq when ISIS took control in the 2014-2017 period. ISIS targeted religious minorities, attacking churches, kidnapping priests and bishops for ransom, seizing women and girls to forcibly convert them or sell them into slavery, and destroying property. Today, although ISIS was

defeated, the threat from extremists remains as Christians who return to Mosul and the Nineveh Plains are often still subject to harassment, intimidation, and extortion; the task of rebuilding is daunting. In December 2020 in discussing this historic journey to Iraq, Pope Francis said, “We must work to ensure that the Christian presence in these lands continue to be what it has always been: a sign of peace, process, development and reconciliation between peoples.”

Act

Various international Catholic agencies are providing humanitarian assistance to the millions who have been affected and displaced by these conflicts in Iraq. You can join these efforts by [donating to the Knights of Columbus Persecuted Christian fund](#). Support our brothers and sisters in the Middle East today!