

## **Card. Sako: Covid-19, Iraqi Christians and Muslims in prayer with the Pope and the imam**

The Chaldean Church adheres to May 14 initiative for the end of the pandemic. A common moment for everyone to "live in peace, security, stability and joy". The renewed hope for a trip by Francis to Iraq and the meeting with al-Sistani. Muslims are asked to join in prayer in the holy month of Ramadan.



**Baghdad (AsiaNews 12 May 2020)** - In this "difficult moment", humanity and "in particular Iraqis" marked by months of political crisis need "human solidarity and concentrated efforts" to "eliminate the common enemy, the coronavirus" and others "Complex problems," writes Chaldean patriarch card Louis Raphael Sako.

In the message shared with *AsiaNews*, he confirms the adherence of the Iraqi Church to the day of prayer called by the High Committee for Human Fraternity for the day after tomorrow, May 14. The cardinal invites Christians and Muslims to a common prayer, so that "everyone can live in peace, security, stability and joy".

In response to the call of Pope Francis and the imam of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Chaldean primate "urges believers of the Chaldean Church in Iraq and the world to participate in this day by fasting and praying". The cardinal turns "to all Iraqis, most of whom are Muslims" who are observing Ramadan, "to raise their prayers to God" to put an end to "this dangerous pandemic and save it" from the terrible "health consequences, economic, social and political".

In his message, the cardinal recalls the promise of a pontiff's trip to Iraq in 2020, announced last year and then suspended due to political and institutional turmoil and the emergency triggered by the new coronavirus.

"We had hoped - said Card Sako - that Pope Francis would visit Iraq and meet the Shiite supreme leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in Najaf". On this occasion, he continues, **the two religious leaders were to have "signed the document on human fraternity. We hope - says the cardinal - that this can be achieved in the near future "**.

In these weeks the Chaldean Church would have liked to organize an Islamic-Christian ecumenical prayer, also inviting members of other religions "but - underlines Card Sako - the coronavirus pandemic has prevented it".

In a context that remains an emergency, the priests of the capital have decided to donate their salary to the neediest and the patriarchate has allocated an additional sum of 90 thousand dollars.

To fully live the day of prayer, Iraqi Christians will observe fasting "according to our rituals" and, at half past six in the evening "we will recite the Rosary and then mass in the Patriarchate church. The celebration, concludes the Chaldean primate, will be able to assist all the faithful "through the live broadcast of Facebook".