



4th Sunday Advent – 22 December 2024

POPE FRANCIS ESCAPED SUICIDE BOMBING IN IRAQ IN 2021



Pope Francis has said he escaped a double suicide bombing during a visit to Iraq three years ago after the attempts on his life were foiled by British intelligence and Iraqi police. Francis made the revelation in his upcoming autobiography, *Spera (Hope)*, excerpts of which were shared with *Corriere della Sera* on Tuesday, the pontiff's 88th birthday. Francis said he had been strongly advised against making the trip to Iraq in March 2021, the first by a pope, because Covid was still raging and the security risks were high, especially in Mosul, the northern city devastated by Islamic State militants. The pope said he was determined to go ahead with the trip, however. In his recounting of events, British intelligence informed Iraqi police of the planned bombings as soon as Francis arrived in Baghdad. In turn, the Iraqi police informed the Vatican's security detail. The pontiff described how one of the suicide bombers was a woman who was heading towards Mosul during the papal visit. A truck was also "heading there fast with the same intention", he said. In the book, written with the Italian author Carlo Musso and due to be published in January, Francis said he later asked Vatican security what had become of the suicide bombers. "The commander replied laconically: 'They're no longer here,'" Francis wrote. "Iraqi police had intercepted them and made them explode. This struck me as well: Even this is the poisonous fruit of war." Francis persevered with the three-day trip to six Iraqi cities, saying at the time that he was travelling as "a pilgrim of peace". Thousands of Christians in the north of the country were killed under the rule of Islamic State between 2014-2017, and hundreds of thousands more fled their homes in the face of violence and persecution. Standing in the wreckage of a Mosul church, the pope urged the country's dwindling Christian community to forgive the injustices against them by the extremists and to rebuild. During the visit, about 10,000 Iraqi police were deployed to protect the pope and curfews were imposed to limit the spread of Covid-19. The book was originally planned to come out after Francis's death, but is instead being published to coincide with the beginning of the jubilee 2025, a year of celebrations for Catholics around the world to reconnect with their faith. The pope officially opens the event, which occurs every 25 years, on December 24th. The Italian publisher Mondadori said *Hope* was the first autobiography published by a pope, although Francis has published other memoir-style books.

Francis has embarked on more than 40 overseas trips since becoming pope in 2013, his longest and most arduous being a 12-day Asia-Pacific tour in September.

Courtesy Angela Giuffrida & The Irish Times

Remembered this Weekend

We remember all belong to us as well as those who have died through violence, hunger & war.



Reconciliation Services

James's Street this Sunday 22 December at 11am.

Meath Street Monday 23rd December at 7.30pm

Francis Street 23rd December at 3pm for those who do not wish to come out at night.

For all other Christmas Services see [here](#).



Crosscare Appeal

Crosscare, the social care agency of the Archdiocese, is once again asking for support for their Christmas Food Poverty Appeal. As families struggle to cope with the cost of Christmas, there will likely be a spike in the number of people seeking help in the weeks ahead. Anyone wishing to contribute can donate online at www.crosscare.ie call 01 8360011, or send a cheque or postal order to Crosscare Christmas Appeal, 2 Saint Mary's Place North, D07 Y768.



Jubilee of Youth Pilgrimage

We are delighted to announce our plans to have a group representing the Diocese at the Jubilee of Youth gathering in Rome during the summer. If you can't make it, there's also an option for a 'Rome @ Home'! Fill in your details to express interest in being part of the group or mark your option for 'Rome @ Home'. Email: natalie.doherty@dublindiocese.ie Register Interest: <https://forms.office.com/e/9fGvLqil7t>



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FOURTH SUNDAY ADVENT

Penitential Rite

As we begin our celebration, let us remember God's tenderness and compassion.

In your mercy you call us to belong to you.
Lord have mercy

From your goodness, we are made into one family.
Christ have mercy

By your love you defeat everything that would rob us of our dignity. Lord have mercy

May our great and gracious Lord, have mercy on us, forgive us our sin and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

Micah 5:1-4

The Lord says this: You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old. The Lord is therefore going to abandon them till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth. Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel. He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of his God. They will live secure, for from then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land. He himself will be peace.

Hebrews 10:5-10

This is what he said, on coming into the world: You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, 'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.' Notice that he says first: You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ.

Alleluia, Alleluia
'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' 'let what you have said be done to me.' Alleluia

Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the

mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.'

Prayer of the Faithful

God our Father and Mother, we are close to the celebration of the birth of your Son Jesus, your greatest gift to us. We praise and we thank you.
Lord hear us

Open our hearts Lord, to those whom society wishes to forget. As Mary responded to Elizabeth's need, so may we respond to the needs of those around us.
Lord hear us

We call to mind all those who have died, and all who mourn for them. May the pain of their loss make us careful to appreciate those with whom we share our lives. Lord hear us

We are mindful of those who may find themselves homeless as Christmas approaches. May our government provide the necessary supports for them and their families. Lord hear us

As we approach the celebration of Jesus birth, Lord, give us the courage and confidence that Joseph & Mary had in your love. Lord hear us

In silence we remember those who need our prayer and our support.....Lord hear us



Reflection

"The hunger to belong is at the heart of our nature. Cut off from others, we atrophy and turn in on ourselves. The sense of belonging is the natural balance of our lives. Mostly, we do not need to make an issue of belonging. When we belong, we take it for granted. There is some innocent childlike side to the human heart that is always deeply hurt when we are excluded. Belonging suggests warmth, understanding, and embrace. No one was created for isolation. When we become isolated, we are prone to being damaged; our minds lose their flexibility and natural kindness; we become vulnerable to fear and negativity. The sense of belonging keeps you in balance amidst the inner and outer immensities. The ancient and eternal values of human life—truth, unity, goodness, justice, beauty, and love are all statements of true belonging; they are also the secret intention and dream of human longing."

John O'Donohue