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## POPE'S SCHEDULE IN IRAQ REVEALS TWO MISSIONS

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Al Monitor (9 February 2021)

The Vatican released the itinerary of Pope Francis March visit to Iraq on Monday. The schedule, packed with events and meetings with religious and political figures across the country, reveals a trip with two missions: to highlight the plight of the countrys dwindling Christian population and to promote interfaith dialogue.

The March 5-8 trip will be Francis first foreign outing in 16 months due to the coronavirus pandemic. His touchdown at Baghdad International Airport comes amid an uptick of new coronavirus cases in the country, growing influence of armed groups and a pair of bombings in Baghdad claimed by the Islamic State. The Catholic leader says now is the time to extend a visit to some of the oldest Christian communities in the world.

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