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Cardinal Gugerotti to Visit Holy Land for Pope Leo XIV

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The expression of the Holy Father's closeness"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti will make a pastoral visit to Israel and Palestine from 16 to 21 November 2026 on behalf of Pope Leo XIV, to bring what the Vatican calls "the expression of the Holy Father's closeness" to Christians living through the ongoing war. The Dicastery for the Eastern Churches announced the trip on 11 November, and the visit will take the cardinal to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Galilee.

Gugerotti is the prefect of that dicastery, the Vatican office that looks after Eastern Catholic churches. He is not travelling as a tourist or a diplomat. He is travelling as the Pope's messenger, and the message is simple: Rome has not forgotten the Christians of the Holy Land.

For families who have watched neighbours leave and churches empty, a visit like this lands differently from a statement read out in St Peter's Square.

The trip will put him face to face with Catholics of six rites: Latin, Greek Melkite, Maronite, Armenian, Syriac and Chaldean. That list matters, because the Holy Land's Christians are not one community speaking with one voice. They are ancient churches with their own liturgies, their own bishops and their own wounds, and Gugerotti's schedule is built to meet them one by one rather than gather them into a single photo opportunity.

Gugerotti To Meet Six Rites In Jerusalem Bethlehem Galilee

In Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Galilee, the cardinal will meet clergy, religious communites and lay Christians, and visit Bethlehem University and Christian schools. Schools are a quiet part of this story. In towns where Christian families are shrinking in number, a Christian school is often the last place where a child grows up hearing the faith spoken every day, and keeping those schools open is part of keeping the community itself alive.

He will also meet Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III and Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manougian. Those meetings reach beyond Catholic walls. The Orthodox and Armenian churches are among the oldest Christian communities in Jerusalem, and a papal envoy sitting down with their patriarchs is a sign that this visit is about the whole Christian presence in the land, not only about Catholics.

The most striking part of the itinerary may be the conversation that will not happen in person at all. Gugerotti is set to speak remotely with the pastor of Holy Family parish in Gaza, where only about 500 Christians remain. Five hundred people.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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