Christian News | 15 November 2026 | English article

Iraq Opens First Coptic Cathedral in Baghdad and Urges Christians Abroad to Come Home

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

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Iraq has inaugurated the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, St"

(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

Iraq has inaugurated the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, St. Paul and St. Anthony in Baghdad, the first Coptic Orthodox cathedral ever built in the country. The cathedral opened on Thursday 12 November 2026 in the New Baghdad district of the Iraqi capital, with Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi attending the ceremony. Iraqi officials described the opening as a message to Christians who fled the country during decades of conflict: come home, because Iraq is safe and needs you.

Fourteen years passed between the laying of the foundation stone and this week. Construction began in 2012 and faced repeated delays, so the building stood as a promise long before it stood as a church. On Thursday, that promise finally opened its doors, and a bishop who had travelled from Jerusalem led the celebration.

First Coptic Cathedral In Iraq: What Opened In Baghdad

The new cathedral belongs to the Coptic Orthodox Church, the ancient church of Egypt, and officials called it the first of its kind in Iraq. It is expected to serve Egyptian Copts living in Iraq as well as other worshippers in the capital.

Karim Hammadi, head of the Iraqi Media Network, told the Iraqi News Agency at the opening that the cathedral carries great symbolic significance. He said it was a plain sign that Iraqis of different faiths live side by side and that the country has room for all of them.

The building sits in the New Baghdad district, a busy part of the capital far from the old churches of the city centre. Its opening puts a Coptic landmark on the map of Baghdad for the first time, in a country where the Christian presence has shrunk sharply over the past two decades.

Bishop Antonios Carries Pope Tawadros II Message To Baghdad

Bishop Antonios, Metropolitan of Jerusalem and the Near East, represented Coptic Pope Tawadros II at the ceremony. His presence gave the opening the weight of the whole Coptic Church, not just the small community in Baghdad.

Bishop Antonios was scheduled to preside over the first Divine Liturgy in the new cathedral on Friday 13 November 2026, the morning after the opening. For the Copts of Baghdad, that first liturgy mattered even more than the speeches, because a church is only truly a church when its people gather inside it to pray.

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?

READ THE FULL STORY

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