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A Warning to the West From a Catholic Bishop Who Had To Flee Iraq

The Chaldean Catholic Church, one of the approved rites of Catholicism, traces its roots back to Thomas the Apostle in the first century A.D. It grew dramatically throughout the Middle East between the 9th and 14th centuries. Until very recently, one of its main churches was St. Paul's Cathedral in the Iraq city of Mosul.

"Recently" is the key word in any current discussion of Mosul's Chaldean Catholics. When the city was overrun by the militants known as ISIS only weeks ago, Catholics became their main target. Many who would not convert to Islam have been killed; many more have left everything and fled. Mosul's Archbishop Amel Shimoun Nona took refuge with some of his flock in the Kurd-controlled city of Erbil in northeastern Iraq, an area not yet overrun by ISIS. From there, he sent a message to fellow Christians in Europe and the West pointing out that they should beware because all are targets of an "enemy you have welcomed into your home."



Archbishop Nona's stark warning stated, "I lost my diocese. The physical setting of my apostolate has been occupied by Islamic radicals who want us converted or dead. Please try to understand. Your liberal and democratic principles are worth nothing here. You think that all men are equal, but Islam does not say that all men are equal. Your values are not their values. If you do not understand this soon enough, you will become victims."

Christians in nearby Syria have already experienced this same type of attack. In Africa, the Islamist Boko Haram has kidnapped many hundreds of schoolgirls and killed hundreds more adults and children. Archbishop Nona hopes that no one would have to endure what he and his people have faced. Welcoming more Muslims, he contends, is suicidal. "Our sufferings today are the prelude of those you, European and Western Christians, will also suffer in the near future," he claims and adds, "You must take strong and courageous decisions."

What the Archbishop of Mosul has already experienced does not have to happen elsewhere. But, to avoid such a fate, realization of an actual threat that could be duplicated in other countries will have to take hold.

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