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Abu Dhabi, UAE | Thursday 7 February  
2019

# The Pope in the UAE



John Dennehy

Dec 12, 2018

December 12, 2018

## Pope Francis public mass to be held at Abu Dhabi's Zayed Sports City

The event is expected to draw 100,000 people



Pope Francis greets the faithful at the Vatican. EPA



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## THE POPE'S ITINERARY

Sunday, February 3, 2019 - Rome to Abu Dhabi

1pm: departure by plane from Rome / Fiumicino to Abu Dhabi

10pm: arrival at Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport

Monday, February 4

12pm: welcome ceremony at the main entrance of the Presidential Palace

12.20pm: visit Abu Dhabi Crown Prince at Presidential Palace

5pm: private meeting with Muslim Council of Elders at Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque

6.10pm: Inter-religious in the Founder's Memorial

Tuesday, February 5 - Abu Dhabi to Rome

9.15am: private visit to undisclosed cathedral

10.30am: public mass at Zayed Sports City – with a homily by Pope Francis

12.40pm: farewell at Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport

1pm: departure by plane to Rome

## 5pm: arrival at the Rome / Ciampino International Airport

A large public Mass that will mark Pope Francis's visit to Abu Dhabi in February is to be held at Zayed Sports City.

The Mass will start at 10.30am on February 5. Organisers are expecting more than 100,000 people to attend.

A full itinerary for the Pontiff's landmark visit to the UAE was revealed on Wednesday, and it is a packed schedule, including visits to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Founder's Memorial.

After arriving late in the evening from Rome on February 3, Pope Francis will be met at the Presidential Airport by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

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[Pope Francis to make landmark visit to UAE](#)

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The following day, Sheikh Mohamed will host a reception at the Presidential Palace, and this will be followed by a meeting with the Muslim Council of Elders at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and an inter-faith meeting at the Founder's Memorial.

Much of the visit will be private, but the public Mass will offer multinational Catholic congregations far from home a rare chance to see the leader of their church in person.

Details about tickets and entry are still being worked out by the Vatican and the UAE Government.

Pope Francis will fly back to Rome following the event at Zayed Sports City.

Paul Hinder, bishop of southern Arabia, said people of different religions need to be able to live side by side, something that Founding President Sheikh Zayed believed in.

"The late Sheikh Zayed is known to have instilled the virtue of human coexistence

in the people of the UAE," said Mr Hinder on Wednesday.



"The Pope is a realist and knows that in a world of migration, human beings have to learn to live together, whether Christians among Muslims or Muslims among Christians. And Muslims and Christians among non-believers and among those who follow other big religions – we have to learn to coexist," he said.

It is the first visit by a pontiff to the Arabian Gulf and it is expected to mark a new era in inter-faith relations between the UAE and the Vatican.

Catholics have enjoyed the freedom to worship here for decades. St Joseph's Catholic church opened on Abu Dhabi's Corniche in 1965, several years before the Emirates' union. The Ruler of Abu Dhabi at the time, Sheikh Shakhbut, attended the opening.



Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, met Pope Francis during a visit to the Vatican in 2016. Mohamed Al Hammadi / Crown Prince Court - Abu Dhabi

Today, there about a million Catholics in the UAE, and the February visit is the culmination of decades of work by priests, dedicated congregations and the leaders of the UAE who have inculcated a tolerant society.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed said the Pope is a symbol of peace and tolerance.

"We look forward to a historic visit, through which we will seek dialogue on the peaceful coexistence among peoples," he said.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, said the visit would help

build peace around the world.

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