

Here is the account which Fr. Olivier-Marie Rousseau, Provincial of the Paris Province, wrote about his stay at the Carmelite friars' convent in Baghdad from January 7 - 14, 2016:

For this my eleventh stay in Baghdad, I was accompanied by the President Provincial of the Secular Order, the Swiss person in charge of "Aid to the Church in Distress" for Christians living in Muslim countries, and by a parliamentary "attaché", who is a member of the association "Franco-Iraqi Solidarity".

During my trip, **15 people made their Definitive Promises in the Secular Order of Carmel (OCDS)**. The church was packed with more than 400 people. Bishop Jean Sleiman, OCD, Latin-rite Archbishop of Baghdad, presided at the celebration, in the presence of the Syrian-Catholic Bishop and several priests. It was an exceptional time of prayer, and everyone was touched because this event was so new. In the present context of the Church in Iraq, it was a singular grace for our Order.

We also had a meeting with the Ambassador of France, Marc Baret, and then with His Excellency Emmanuel Badarian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholics. He is a man with a look of fire, and he welcomes many Muslims who discover Christ. Then we went to a refugee camp for Christians from the Syrian village of Karakosh. We heard the testimony of two families, of whom one man was a prisoner of ISIS. When the Kurds left, he wanted to stay, but he made his family leave. He was a prisoner of ISIS for five weeks. He endured mistreatment and humiliations without end. Thanks to the persevering help of his bishop and a ransom that was paid, he could finally be freed with twelve other Christians.

Finally we went to visit the Syrian Bishop in the church of **Our Lady of Perpetual Help**, where the tragic massacre of November 1, 2010 took place. He told us what happened. The church has been completely rebuilt and is magnificent. There is a memorial next door with remembrances of the victims and of the massacre, as well as a crypt with their tombs.

The humanitarian work of the Consecrated Women of Carmel goes on in Dehock for the refugees, thanks to the donations I receive in France. Especially the Yezidis, whom no one else is caring for, express their great gratitude for the Christians in France who remember them.

At the end of my visit, I marvel at the meetings we had and also the vitality of faith of so many people. At the same time, no one sees the possibility of a future in Iraq, and **more or less everyone hopes to be able to leave Iraq**. It seems there is no other hope than to pray that the Lord will open roads there, where the spiral of violence and injustice continues to destroy these regions. We renewed our assurance of prayer by the Christians of France and especially the Order of Carmel.