

Controversy Erupts as Pope Francis Inaugurates Nativity with Baby Jesus on Palestinian Symbol

Once again, Pope Francis finds himself at the center of controversy, angering Israeli officials and Christians worldwide with a provocative act that many view as a dangerous distortion of biblical truth.

On Saturday, the Pope attended the inauguration of a nativity scene that depicts the baby Jesus lying on a keffiyeh—a traditional Palestinian scarf symbolizing national identity and commonly worn by Hamas terrorists. The scene was presented by Palestinian officials and designed by Palestinian artists Johny Andonia and Faten Nastas Mitwasi from Bethlehem.

A Political Statement Disguised as Art

The keffiyeh-draped nativity scene, titled “Nativity of Bethlehem 2024,” is displayed in the Vatican’s Paul VI Hall, separate from the traditional nativity in St. Peter’s Square. The event was attended by Palestinian dignitaries, including Ramzi Khouri of the PLO, who praised the Pope’s “unwavering support for the Palestinian cause.” Pope Francis, in his remarks, called for peace and decried war and violence but did so without directly addressing the context of ongoing conflicts involving Israel.

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This display is more than an artistic choice—it is a political statement suggesting a revisionist narrative that frames Jesus as a Palestinian. This trope, previously invoked by

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in 2013, is deeply troubling to those who hold to the Bible's clear teaching that Jesus was a Jew, born of the tribe of Judah.

Unbiblical and Dangerous

The depiction of Jesus in association with Palestinian symbolism directly contradicts Scripture. The Bible leaves no doubt about Jesus' Jewish identity. Matthew 1:1 opens the New Testament by affirming Jesus as "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." His lineage, culture and practices were unequivocally Jewish, as evidenced by His participation in Jewish feasts and His teaching in synagogues.

In John 4:22, Jesus himself declared, "Salvation is of the Jews." By linking Jesus to Palestinian identity through the keffiyeh, this nativity scene not only distorts historical and biblical truths but also fuels a narrative that undermines Israel's legitimacy and misrepresents the Christian faith's origins.

A Call for Discernment

This act by Pope Francis is not merely a cultural misstep—it is a dangerous theological error with significant implications. By allowing such a depiction, the Pope risks aligning the church with narratives that distort biblical truth to fit political agendas. This is not the first time the pontiff has stirred controversy, either. His reluctance to unequivocally condemn Hamas' atrocities and his statements on Israel's actions being potentially genocidal have already strained relations with the Jewish community.

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For Christians, this moment demands vigilance and discernment.

The apostle Paul warned in Galatians 1:8, “But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than the one we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” The Bible must remain the ultimate authority, and any attempt to reshape its narratives to align with worldly ideologies must be rejected.

A Call to Repentance

Pope Francis must recognize the harm caused by such actions and repent for allowing political influences to distort the church’s representation of Jesus Christ. This is a critical moment for the global Christian community to reaffirm its commitment to biblical truth and reject any attempt to reshape the Gospel message for political gain.

Christians worldwide need to pray for the Pope and all leaders in positions of influence, that they may seek wisdom from God and align their actions with Scripture. In an increasingly polarized world, we must hold fast to the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to discern truth from deception.

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