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***SPECIAL FIDES***

**YOUNG MISSIONARIES**

**WITNESSES OF CHRIST**

**GIVING THEIR LIVES**

**Young priests, nuns, seminarians, lay people**

**killed**

**from 2000 to 2017**

**- Some profiles**

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**- All missionaries killed from 2000 to 2017**

**YOUNG MISSIONARIES, WITNESSES OF CHRIST GIVING THEIR LIVES**

**The Vatican (Fides News Agency)** – At the end of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, which introduced the Church into the new millennium, Pope John Paul II strongly exhorted “The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint". At the beginning of this new century, our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world. *(Duc in altum, 58)*.

Ten years previously (1990), in the encyclical “Redemptoris Missio”, John Paul II clearly affirmed that “the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion” *(RM1)* and called all the baptized people to this task as “the universal Church, all the particular Churches, all the ecclesial institutions and associations and every Christian has the duty to commit themselves to spreading the message of the Lord to every corner of the Earth” *(RM77)*.

A call, an appeal that, even at the beginning of this millennium marked by worrying events in every continent, has not left indifferent the many baptized and the many young who have decided upon making their missionary vocation the roads of the world. Roads which, for some of them, have been violently interrupted. “Accepting the mission implies the willingness to risk one’s life and to travel the way of the cross, in the footsteps of Jesus, who firmly set out on his journey to Jerusalem to offer his life for humanity” emphasized the preparatory document to the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (no. 3), dedicated to “*Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*”.

With this in mind, at the beginning of the month of October, traditionally dedicated to missions, and in the year the Synod of Bishops is dedicated to the vocational discernment of the young, Fides News Agency presents the profiles of some young people who, in this millennium which has just begun, have not hesitated to “go forth” and put their lives in the hands of God to proclaim his Gospel and witness him, even by their very presence in particularly difficult situations: in hospital wards, with abandoned children, reaching a small, remote Catholic community, youth workers in an oratory in the middle of a war …

The youth of our times, similar to many of their contemporaries, certainly not naïve or unprepared, with high-school diplomas, lovers of music or dance, social media users, that have prepared themselves spiritually and culturally to face realities different to their own, evaluating objectively the risks in places where some thought of spending a period of time, others an entire lifetime.

In an interview given to Fides News Agency on the occasion of the annual “Day of prayer and fasting in memory of missionary martyrs” on 24th March, Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and President of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) observed: “In the ancient Church there were many young martyrs. Thinking of them, we can say that the testimony of faith, even of blood, knows no limits: the call to the gift of life touches every baptized person, and young people can give a precious example. When you are younger you have a strong enthusiasm and willingness to give your life. There is so much generosity in the hearts of young people". "I do not believe that today's young people - continues the President of the PMS - are less generous than past generations. Youth, like other ages of life, has endemic weaknesses, but even the millennials, the young people of today, show generosity: just think of the experiences of young people and volunteers who go to mission countries"(Fides 23/03/2018).

In the short profiles we have presented, we have tried to include the diversity of the states of life (priests, religious, seminarians, lay people), the circumstances and geographical locations where they were killed and the activities through which they were witnessing the Gospel. They are grouped together in age (under 40 years old when they were killed), dying within a time span from 2000 to 2017, (the beginning of the millennium) and by the deep missionary commitment that motivated them. We have identified 12, like the Apostles, about whom we have been able to find information and eye-witness accounts which have allowed us to build up a basic identikit. There then follows a series of short notes about another 90 missionaries killed in the same period and, we have been able to ascertain, are within the same age group. These lists cannot, however, be considered complete. The term ‘martyr’ is not used in any case, only in its etymological meaning of ‘witness’, so as not to affect the judgment that the Church might give on some of them, something that has happened recently with the beatification and canonization of some young missionary martyrs.

 “Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus” Pope Francis repeats continually. “If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life” (*Evangelii Gaudium 49).*

This being “rightly disturbed” has certainly been felt by the many young people who have “gone forth” to help others, above all, the most despised, the abandoned and the forgotten, heedless of sacrificing a comfortable and, in some cases, affluent lifestyle, happy to give their life “to offer everyone the life of Jesus”. They have not let that “missionary enthusiasm” be taken, that which pushed them to go forth in the name of God and that which the young of today are called upon to embrace as a precious inheritance from their contemporaries’ bloodshed, and who continue to give life to the Church of Christ in the third millennium.

(SL) (Fides News Agency 1/10/2018)

**PROFILES**

Grace Akullo, nurse, 27, died in Uganda on 17th November, 2000.

Sister Lita Castillo, 22, Dominican sisters of the Annunciation, died in Chile on 29th October, 2001.

Alberto Neri Fernandez, 39, Focolare Movement layman, killed in Brazil on 19th October, 2002.

Brother Fransiskus Madhu, 30, Verbite, killed on 1st April, 2007 in the Philippines.

Sister Anne Thole, 35, Nardini Sister, died in South Africa on 1st April, 2007.

Brother Thomas Pandippallyil, 38, Carmelite, killed in India between 16th and 17th August, 2008.

Father Rubens Almeida Goncalves, 34, murdered in Campo Belos on 20th May, 2010.

Father Marek Rybinski, 33, Salesian, killed in Tunisia on 18th February, 2011.

Samuel Gustavo Gómez, 21, seminarian, killed in Mexico on 14th April, 2014.

Anwar Samaan, 21 and Misho Samaan, 17, Salesian Animators, died in Syria on 11th April 2015.

Sister M. Reginette, 32, Missionary of Charity, murdered in Yemen on 4th March, 2016.

Helena A. Kmiec, 26, Salvator Missionary Volunteers, killed in Bolivia on 24th March, 2016.

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**Grace Akullo, nurse, 27, died in Uganda on 17th November, 2000.**

Grace Akullo was born in 1973 into a deeply Christian family and qualified as a nurse in October, 1999. She worked in St Mary’s hospital in Lachor, in the Gulu district (Northern Uganda). She lived her faith with enthusiasm and enlivened the liturgy, above all, with her singing. She was married and had 2 twins, and at the end of 2000, after a spiritual retreat, announced that she had discovered her vocation: being an evangelizer in the world of suffering, to show the ill the love and compassion of the Lord. The end of September of the same year marked the beginning of the Ebola epidemic, and Grace, with other nurses (male and female), immediately volunteered to work in the infectious diseases ward. All were aware that they were endangering their lives. Unfortunately this is what happened. Grace died on 17th November, 2000, singing hymns of praise and abandon to the will of God.

 “I met Grace when she was a student at secondary school, in a school very near our community” said Sister Dorina Tadiello, Combonian Missionary, to the Fides News Agency. “In her free time she loved coming to our community in a rural hospital. She was lively but shy at the same time. When we met, when our respective commitments made it possible, she loved telling me of her life, her dreams as an adolescent, and her hopes for the future. Then I left the community but we met again in the Lachor hospital where she had already finished nursing school and was working. She was by then an adult with two twins who were her pride and joy.”

“I remember the meetings held with all the personnel on the relationships with patients in order to humanize the hospital environment, her participation was always very interesting” continues Sister Dorina. “She would happily stay and share to improve the quality of a service that she lived as a mission. Being beside the patients, listening with empathy, sharing with others was part of her life, and she did it with a joyful and generous touch. She had a very strong spiritual dimension of life, nurtured by her very Christian family and then developed in the prayer groups that she belonged to in the hospital. Therefore, for her the spiritual dimension of the patients was an important aspect of the treatment. Having to work hard did not allow much time to dedicate to the patients, but her smile, attention, willingness and love were important aspects of the treatment and spoke of God”.

**Sister Lita Castillo, 22, Dominican sisters of the Annunciation, died in Chile on 29th October, 2001**

Sister Lita Castillo Chumacero was born on 1st April, 1979 in Chirinos, department of Cajamarca (Peru) and was the first of six children. She received her initial Christian and human education within her family. Being the oldest daughter, she took care of her brothers while her parents were at work. Within the parish she was part of a Franciscan nuns’ missionary and vocational group, here she discovered her religious vocation. In this phase of discernment, she met the Dominican sisters of the Annunciation and in 1997 she entered as a novice in their community in Vitarte, in the province of Lima. She followed the passages with commitment and, attracted by the ideal of the religious apostolic life according to Saint Dominico, at the festival of the Immaculate Conception in 2000, she took the vows of the religious profession.

In January 2001 she was sent together with other Religious to the community of La Serena, in Chile, to continue her theological formation and prepare to teach in the college ‘Oscar Aldunate’, which hosted around 600 students in an area of conflict and was very difficult from a social point of view. According to the accounts of her fellow sisters, she “participated in community life with the joy, enthusiasm, optimism, courage and simplicity of a sister. She committed herself responsibly to the apostolic assignments the Community gave her. She paid a lot of attention, dedication and creativity in sustaining and strengthening the life of the Annunciation movement”.

During the night of 17th October, 2001, two individualsirrupted inthe dormitory of the nuns which was in a wing of the college. TheReligious were attacked with a knife while they were asleep, Sister Lita was wounded to her shoulder then they tipped inflammable liquid over her and set fire to it. Another 19 Religious were wounded and beaten, some had to face a long period in hospital to recover, and others had permanent disabilities or psychological problems. As a final act, the criminals set fire to the college. Sister Lita had burns in over 70% of her body. She was taken by the fire brigade to La Serena Hospital and then transferred to Santiago. Despite the treatment and efforts of the doctors, her body did not withstand the damage caused by the terrible injuries and she died on 29th October 2001.

**Alberto Neri Fernandez, 39, Focolare Movement layman, killed in Brazil on 19th October, 2002.**

Alberto Neri Fernandez, a young Uruguayan doctor who belonged to the Focolare Movement had participated in a study seminar on Ethics at the University of the Sacred Heart of Bauru in the state of San Pablo, Brazil on 19th October, 2002. At 4pm he was driving towards Votuporanga, 200 km away, where he was supposed to meet a group of children who were experiencing the evangelical ideal of unity belonging to the Focolare Movement, but he never arrived. The police started the investigations, three days later his car was found and on 2nd November two young soldiers were arrested and confessed to the murder of Alberto and another doctor who had been murdered while being robbed. However, Alberto only had the equivalent of €10 with him. His body was found in a sugar beet plantation where it had been abandoned for 15 days. In communicating the news, Chiara Lubich wrote “He is our first Focolare martyr, killed while on a mission of love”. In fact, he had a particular predilection for the emarginated, for the last and for those who found themselves in situations of necessity.

Alberto was born in Uruguay, into a poor family on 18th March, 1963. At the age of 10 his father died tragically. Aged 15 a meeting with the young of the Focolare movement marked a change in his life: he discovered the love of God. With great sacrifice, working and studying, he finished his medical studies and joined the Focolare Movement. In 1996 he travelled to the city of Fontem, in the heart of the jungle in Western Cameroon, here he worked as a doctor in the hospital built by the Movement to treat the high infant mortality rate. He later moved to Brazil to study for a Master’s in Tropical Medicine and to carry out important research on AIDS. He was almost ready to return to Cameroon when he was killed by the two soldiers who he had offered a lift to as he used to do for anyone that asked.

On the back seat of the car the enormous die that he used in his meetings with children, sculpted on the 6 faces with the six key words of love: “love everyone, be the first to love, love each other, love your neighbors, love Jesus in everyone, love steadily”. It was Alberto’s style of life transformed into a game for the little ones.

**Fr. Fransiskus Madhu, 30, Verbite, killed on 1st April, 2007 in the Philippines**

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Father Fransiskus Madhu, 30, a Divine Word Missionary (SVD) (Verbite) born in Flores (Indonesia) was killed on Sunday 1st April 2007, Palm Sunday, in the junior school in the of Mabugot, where he carried out his pastoral activity near the city of Lubuagan, in the northern Philippine province of Kalinga (Island of Luzon). He was already wearing his vestments to celebrate Evening Mass when he was approached by 4 men; one had a rifle and shot him. Five bullets hit his vital organs and the priest arrived dead at the hospital where he had been taken immediately after the aggression.

The police identified his assassin, Nestor Wailan, a farmer from Lubuagan who had personal problems, and his accomplices. According to the Police, the assassin was wanted for other crimes and had threatened the missionary a few hours before the ambush. It would seem that the group was under the effects of alcohol and drugs. Wailan later died in a gunfight with the Police.

Fr. Franciskus was born in 1976. He had taken his vows in the Divine Word Society in 2003 and was ordained a priest in 2004. He had been in the missionary service in Lubuagan in the mountain province of Kalinga, on the Philippine island of Luzon since 2005. The locals remember him as being kind and thoughtful, sociable, active and having a sincere personality. He was very pleased to be there to proclaim the Gospel, to put himself at the service of the community and to bring peace. According to the testimonies of those who knew him, he was aware of the risks of missionary work. However, his desire was to give his life for the Gospel.

**Sister Anne Thole, 35, a Nardini Sister, died in South Africa on 1st April, 2007**

Sister Anne Thole lost her life attempting to save patients from a fire in the ‘Duduza Hospice’, an AIDS centre of the ‘Maria Ratschitz’ Mission, a rural area near Wasbank in the north of South Africa. The Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Family, also known as the Nardini Sisters (name taken from the name of their founder), looked after terminal AIDS patients who, in this very poor area, endure the ostracism of the community. Sister Anne, who had had the job of teaching the novices for two years, knew her patients well because every Sunday and whenever she could; she went to the Center with the novices to play the guitar and sing, to ease their suffering with moments of joy and distraction.

The fire started in the afternoon of 31st March, 2007, the day before Palm Sunday, most probably because one of the cigarettes that a patient was smoking set fire to the straw roof. The Sisters noticed immediately, managing to take 5 patients outside together with the medical staff. Sister Anne knew that there were people upstairs who could not get out of bed so she did not hesitate and went back into the flames to save them. As soon as she had gone inside the building, the ceiling collapsed, crushing her and three patients.

Sister Isentraud Reuscher, at that time Superior regional of the Nardini Sisters, had known Sister Anne from when she was a student and described her as “warm and friendly, always smiling and affectionate towards people. A splendid teacher and an ideal guide, she showed it in this wonderful example of generosity. For us, Sister Anne’s message was that of the grain of wheat that fell on the ground, dead, but gave new life”. Many lay and religious people went to give their condolences to the Maria Ratschitz mission, built over a century ago by German Trappist monks at the base of the Hlatikhulu Mountains as did messages coming from America, Europe, Africa and India to demonstrate sympathy and admiration for Sister Anne.

Sister Anne was born in Manzini in Swaziland and went to school at the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena. In 1994 she joined the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Family and took the vows of the perpetual profession on 21st July, 2001. From 1996 to 2004 she dedicated herself to teaching and in January 2005 she was elected teacher to the novices.

**Fr. Thomas Pandippallyil, 38, Carmelite, killed in India between 16th and 17th August, 2008**

During the night of 16th/17th August, 2008, the body of an Indian Carmelite priest, Thomas Pandippallyil (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate), aged 38, was found in Moslikunta, on the road that links Lingampet to Yellareddy in the Indian state of Andra Pradesh. He had been murdered while he returned from a village where he had celebrated the Sunday Holy Mass. The body, left on the roadside, had many facial injuries and other signs of brutality and of a fight, and also the hands and legs had been broken.

The moped he used to get about was found about a kilometer from the body. Father Thomas, a zealous priest, used to go to celebrate Mass in different missionary stations as well as carrying out his duties of parish priest and deputy head of a secondary school in Yellareddy. He was a generous priest, always helpful to the people who told him of their problems and worries, and was considered one of the best educators in the Hyderabad archdiocese.

 “Father Thomas is a martyr” said Mgr. MarampudiJoji, Archbishop of Hyderabad. ”He sacrificed his life for the poor and the emarginated. But he did not die in vain, his body and his blood will enrich the Indian Church, in particular the one in Andra Pradesh”. The Archbishop strongly denied ‘proselytism and enforced conversion’ which were supposedly the reasons for the murder. In his opinion, the Catholic Church is blameworthy only of working for the development of the poorer and abandoned areas of the country, committed to sustaining and helping those who are victims of violence and oppression.

Born in 1971 in Kottayam, diocese of Palai, in the state of Kerala, Father Pandippallyil joined the mission of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate in Chanda on 24th June, 1987. He was ordained a priest in 2002. He was director of the CMI missionary province of Chanda for some time, he worked as the hospital administrator, and he was in charge of the school and director of the missionary center.

**Don Rubens Almeida Gonçalves, 34, murdered in Campo Belos on 20th May, 2010**

 “Father Rubens died while practicing his priestly ministry which has always been marked by missionary zeal and faith in Risen Christ. All the communities for which he worked have testified the enthusiastic commitment with which he practiced his mission of evangelization” maintained the note of Fr. Paulo Sérgio Maya Barbosa, Chancellor of the diocesan Curate of Porto Nacional, in announcing the tragic death of the parish priest of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

Father Rubens was murdered while he was in his parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, in the city of Campo Belos (GO), Brazilian diocese of Porto Nacional. He was shot in the head with a gun on 20th May, 2010 and died the day after in the Brasilia Hospital where he had been taken. The reason for the crime was an argument with a young man who had asked to rent a parochial room to do a sport which he was responsible for. The priest refused as he was not interested in the proposal, the man then shot and killed him and ran away. The Police later captured him saving him from being lynched by the crowd.

Renowned for his work with the poor and emarginated, Father Rubens was born in Gioiania. He studied at Dianópolis and joined the seminary of Port Nacional, then going to Mariana, where he studied theology. During his diaconate, he carried out his pastoral ministry in Gurupi, in the Parish of Sant’Antonio, which held a special memory for him. On the 3rd July 2004 he was ordained priest. His first parish was São Francisco de Assi in Alvorada. In January 2010 he was transferred to Campo Belos and was the parish priest of the Parish of Nossa Senhora da Conceição.

His companions from the seminary remember that “wherever he went, he was remembered as a happy, sincere, pious and simple person”. He was brought up in a strongly religious family, his adopted mother was “an example of a religious woman, a faithful disciple of the Lord, busy in the ecclesial community “and who had not hidden her dream of her son becoming a priest.

**Don Marek Rybinski, Salesian, 33, killed in Tunisia on 18th February, 2011**

Father Marek Rybinski was 33 years old, came from the Salesian province of Warsaw (Poland) and was ordained a priest in May 2005. Having worked in the Polish Missions Office in September 2007 he arrived as a missionary in Manouba where he was the treasurer of the community. The Archbishop of Tunis appointed him chaplain of the Polish community. He dedicated a lot of time to this and in particular preparing the boys to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

This is the reconstruction of the crime according to Mgr. Maroun Elias Nimeh Lahham, Archbishop of Tunis, as told to the Fides News Agency: “Don Rybinski left the Missionary house around midday of Thursday, 17th February, leaving his car in the mission. The day after, Friday 18th, we found his computer on in his room. We think that someone called him with an excuse to make him go out. This person must have kidnapped don Rybinski on 17th February to then kill him the following day. His body was found in a school warehouse. The murderer or murderers are people that know the building well, because the warehouse is hidden behind the school. They also knew that don Rybinski had the keys to the building. I saw the body at around 1 pm, the blood had not clotted, and this was then confirmed by the coroner. So the murder had taken place some hours before”.

Don Rybinski had his throat cut for money. The murderer, who has been caught and convicted, had asked for a loan to buy material for a carpentry job that he had been asked to do. He had then spent the money for something else and the Salesian priest had asked to have the school’s money back. At this point the carpenter had attacked him, killing him.

**Samuel** **Gustavo Gómez Veleta, seminarian, 21, killed on 14th April, 2014 in Mexico**

The Mexican seminarian Samuel Gustavo Gómez Veleta, 21, student at the Archbishop of Chihuahua’s Seminary was in the city of Aldama, in the community of San Ignacio, practicing his missionary service as do all the seminarians during Holy Week, helping the priests in the demanding celebrations of those days. Many of them stay and sleep in the communities which are the furthest away. On the Sunday morning, Palm Sunday, Samuel did not have breakfast with the family he had had an appointment with. The parish priest therefore denounced the disappearance and the search started the same day. On the Monday morning, the Police found his body. The reason for the murder was to steal his car which was later found by the Police, they also arrested the three men who committed the crime.

“Samy had a strong character but in his heart he was extremely generous, there was nothing he wasn’t ready to do, always looking for someone to help, to fight for what he believed to be right” wrote a companion of the seminary, Fernando Portillo, on the anniversary of his death. “His love for the family was always exemplary. In our hearts there is still a big empty space that no one will ever be able to fill, today I can say that Samuel hasn’t left us completely, he is still with us every time we remember the time spent together; when we remember what he liked and what he didn’t like, when we see his photograph in the rooms of the third group of philosophy, community to which he belonged: in some videos posted on YouTube and above all in his devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary. We miss him and his passing away still hurts us, but we are sure we will meet him, we know he is already enjoying the heavenly glory promised by our Lord”.

**Anwar Samaan, 21 and Misho Samaan, 17, Salesian Animators, died in Syria on 11th April, 2015**

The ferocious war that has been causing bloodshed in Syria for years has provoked indescribable suffering and numerous victims also amidst civilians. Amongst them two young brothers, who died together with their mother when a missile fell on their house in Aleppo. Both had spent their youth in the house of Don Bosco, and “as animators they left signs of joy and love for life in the souls of many”.

Father Pier Jabloyan, Salesians of Don Bosco, Director of the Salesian community of Aleppo, speaking to the Fides News Agency, remembers them like this:”Misho Samaan was born on 7th September 1998. In the third year of elementary school he started attending the Salesian Oratory in Aleppo ‘Georges and Maltilde Salem’. He was a calm, friendly boy, fond of dancing, and for this reason he participated willingly when there were celebrations, especially when it had to do with Don Bosco. When he became an animator, he started to share this gift with children younger than him, teaching them to dance. Misho grew up in the oratory and took part in sporting events, especially basketball, being tall helped him. For this, his presence in the oratory team was always effective.”

He was a young Christian who like many young people search for the Lord in daily happenings, with many questions that need answers, he participated in the catechism and the associations of the Salesian Youth Movement in the oratory

Together with Misha was his older brother, Anwar Samaan, born on 29th July, 1993. He was also a son of the Salesian Oratory in Aleppo. Every Friday he participated in the catechism of the oratory and was a member of the Domenico Savio Movement. He became an animator amongst the children and his simplicity and openness won over many friends and young people. As a Salesian animator, Anwar was friendly, simple and spontaneous and for this the children were fond of him. Every Sunday he and his brother attended the Holy Mass in the Oratory. He willingly put into practice the advice of Don Bosco about approaching the Sacrament of the Confession, an aspect that was evident when the penitential celebrations were organized in preparation for Christmas and Easter celebrations.

These two brothers were not able to fulfill their many dreams which they were making because of the war in Syria. Missiles hit and destroyed their house, causing their death and that of their mother, Minerva, on 11th April, 2015 during the Octave of Easter. In this way they participated in the cross of the Lord, his Resurrection and his glory.

These two brothers loved Don Bosco and the Salesians and this was obvious also from the pictures of Don Bosco that they kept in their wallets and the pictures of him in their house. We are sure that now they are enjoying his company and those of all the Saints in the presence of the Lord”.

**Sister M. Reginette, 32, Rwandan, Missionary of Charity, murdered on 4th March, 2016 in Yemen.**

Sister M. Reginette was the youngest of 4 Missionaries of Charity murdered and disfigured on March 4th 2016 by a commando of armed men who attacked the building where they helped the elderly and disabled in the city of Aden in Yemen. During the terrorist attack, 12 other people were killed, including a driver, two Community helpers and elderly and disabled patients, while the Superior of the convent escaped death. An Indian Salesian priest, Father Tom Uzhunnalil, who lived in the Convent after the church where he lived had been looted and set fire to by unidentified armed men, was kidnapped and subsequently released in September of the following year. Pope Francis defined the massacre in Aden as an “act of senseless and diabolical violence” and in a message given by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Pontiff prayed that the sacrifice of the nuns their friends and helpers would “awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart, and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue”.

**Helena Agnieska Kmiec, 26, Salvator Missionary Volunteer killed on 24th January, 2017 in Bolivia.**

 “Even if it’s unbelievable, this mission is possible!” wrote Helena Kmieć on Facebook just before leaving for Bolivia and then on 9th January she added “Greetings from Cochabamba which will be our house for the next six months” this was the day Anita Szuwald arrived, another volunteer from the Salvator Missionary Volunteers.

In fact, they should have stayed for six months to work in the reception center for children at the school ‘Edmundo Bojanowski’ of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God run by the religious association “Lucyna Teresa Jdolowska”. Only a few days later, on 24th January, 2017, Helena was stabbed to death by two criminals (subsequently arrested) during an attempted robbery in the building where she was staying.

According to the testimonies of those who knew her, Helena loved God, people and life; it was natural for her to help all those that needed it. She had joined the Salvator Missionary Volunteers in 2012. As she had a particular musical talent, she immediately got involved in a musical group that organized concerts praising the Lord, Community worship, pilgrimages …. She was a member of the Academic Chaplaincy University Choir in Gliwice.

In the summer of 2016, she was a volunteer for the World Youth Day. She was very religious and sociable towards others. She prayed following the Liturgy of the Hours, she read the Sacred Bible and often lead common prayers and worship. “She let herself be guided by God” said one of her friends, “She was involved in missionary work because serving God was her whole life”. She was also very sensitive towards defending the life of unborn children.

She was always ready to take responsibility for National and International missionary initiatives. She had served in Romania, Hungary and Zambia. Before leaving for Bolivia, taking six months off work without pay, along with the other Polish missionaries she had had to learn Spanish and about the habits and way of life of the local population, the geography, history, traditions and local culture. Helena’s extensive preparation both in spiritual and practical terms has been recognized by all her friends. She loved cuddling children and they clung to her. She had a missionary gift and a particular call for serving the little ones; she wanted to give love to those children who had never had any, as one of the priests who knew her well declared.

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**BRIEF NOTES ON OTHER YOUNG MISSIONARIES KILLED from 2000 to 2017**

**Brief notes on other young missionaries who were killed in the period of time from 2000 to 2017 and who are under the age of 40 (taken from the archives of the Fides News Agency).**

**2017**

**Franciscan Religious, Diego Bedoya, 35,** from the **‘White Cross Franciscan Brothers’**, who run Casa Hogar in the town of La Victoria, in the Aragua state of Venezuela, was found dead at daybreak yesterday, Monday 10th April, in his office. He was reportedly murdered during a burglary and had a knife wound to his neck.His body showed signs of a fight. Diego, Colombian, had been in Venezuela for more than 15 years and carried out his pastoral ministry at Casa Hogar which cares for elderly people and disabled children. The thieves escaped with some pc, objects of value and all the Home’s food stores. (Fides 11/04/2017)

**A priest,** **Diomer Eliver Chavarría Pérez,** was killed on the day of his **31st birthday**, on the evening of July 27th, 2017, in the parish of Raudal, in the village of Puerto Valdivia, in the department of Antioquia (Columbia). Mgr. Jorge Alberto Ossa Soto, Bishop of the diocese of Santa Rosa de Osos in which Father Chavarría Pérez was incardinated, issued a statement invoking the conversion of the murderers and reaffirmed the rejection of all forms of violence against the lives and dignity of people. The Bishop thanked the Lord for the gift of the priestly life "of this son and brother to the service of evangelization …. sacrificed in practicing his mission".

 (Fides 29/07/2017)

**Joseph Naga, 56, John Manye, 38, catechists, and a trainee catechist, Patrick, 27** were amongst the people killed in an explosion on 11th December 2017 in the Minawao Camp, Pulka, in the North East of Nigeria, in the dioceses of Maiduguri. This camp welcomes Nigerian refugees sent back from Cameroon. Some members of Boko Haram managed to enter the camp and exploded their suicide belts, killing around 10 people including the catechists of the community.

(Fides 13/12/2017)

**Ricardo Luna, layman, 29,** guardian of the Virgen Imaculada parish, of the college and of the annexed center, in the Villa Soldati area of Buenos Aires (Argentina), was killed on 23rd August shot with a gunshot to the head. Most likely the perpetrators of the crime were a gang of teenagers, who had threatened him with death in the days before as he had repeatedly prevented them from stealing. They killed him without stealing anything. Ricardo, who had been doing this job for four years, was loved and respected. He was married and had three children.

(Fides 28/12/2017)

**2016**

**Elias Abiad, 22, a young volunteer** of Caritas Syria, was killed in Aleppo by mortar shells on 13th February, 2016 in the Sulaymaniyah district. The Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis, Michael Roy, in a message of condolence to Elias’ family underlined that the sacrifice of the young volunteer “reminds us of the continuing daily tragedy in Syria and the urgent need for a cease fire and peace”. Elias was engaged in the projects of assistance realized by Caritas Syria in the area of Aleppo from September, 2014.

(Fides 16/2/2016).

**Esra Patatang, 27, catechist e Catholic teacher,** was killed on 12th September, 2016 with a bullet to his head in the district of Puncak Jaya in the diocese of Timika in the southern area of Indonesian Papua. Esra had been teaching at the junior school for two years. In addition he also drove a motorcycle taxi to earn a bit more money. He was also the Catholic Youth leader of Illaga parish, in Mulia. In the afternoon of 12th September he was taking a passenger from Kota Baru in Kota Lama, where his home is also located, when he was killed. "It is unclear what or who is behind the execution. Esra is the victim of those who use violence to achieve their ends. Esra remains an example for young Indonesians, for his dedication to serve others with joy in a tense and difficult social situation like that in Papua", said Fr. Antonius Haryanto, Executive Secretary of the Youth Commission of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference.

(Fides 14/9/2016)

**Don Francisco Carlos Barbosa Tenorio, 37**, was found dead on the morning of Sunday, October 9th, 2016 along the RJ-081 road, in Nova Iguaçu, in the Baixada Fluminense region, Rio de Janeiro state. According to the testimonies of friends who identified the body at the institute of Forensic Medicine, the priest had edged weapon injuries and had been hit round the head by a rifle stock. The car the priest was driving was not found. Don Francisco was pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes parish in the district of São Benedito in Nova Iguacu, where he was loved by the faithful and had no enemies. Everything leads to a robbery which ended in murder. "Don Francisco had gone to visit a family in the neighborhood, near the parish of São Simão, but it seems he never returned home. Father Francisco was born in Pernambuco, but lived for about ten years in Rio de Janeiro. He started working in the diocese of Nova Iguacu in 2008 and was ordained a priest in 2011.

(Fides 11/10/2016)

**Don João Paulo Nolli,** **35**, of the diocese of Rondonópolis-Guiratinga (Mato Grosso, Brazil), disappeared on October 8th and was found dead on October 11th, his body showing clear signs of violence.

Police arrested three young people while they were trying to sell some objects belonging to the priest, and they confessed the theft which had ended in murder. Don João Paulo Nolli had agreed to give the three young drug addicts aged 17, a lift along a suburban street. They stole his wallet, car and mobile phone. Don João Paulo was well known: more than 5000 people gathered when he celebrated Mass, he also led a radio and television program entitled "God takes care of me" (Deus cuida de mim).

(Fides 13/10/2016)

A Congolese Religious of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King School, **Sister Clara Agano Kahambu**, **40**, was killed in the early afternoon of 29th November, at the Mater Dei parish in Bukavu, capital of South Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sister Clara was in her office with a student, when a man went up to the guardian saying he had to enroll his daughter. Once the man entered he threw himself against the nun stabbing her with a knife in the neck. The man was captured but the Religious died before reaching hospital. Sister Clara Agano was born on 3rd July 3, 1976 in Luofu parish, Diocese of Butembo-Beni. On 16th November, 2000 in Bukavu she became part of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King School; she professed her perpetual vows on 2nd August 2, 2010. She taught psychology, pedagogy and catechesis. She was Headmaster of "Marie Madeleine" School in Bukavu and of the "Mater Dei" pastoral center where she taught poor girls to read and write.

 (Fides 2/12/2016)

**Lazarus Nwafor, seminarian, 26**, from the Imo state (Nigeria) was killed on 25th August, 2016 during an attack by a group belonging to Fulani nomads in the community of Ndiagu Attakwu, in Nkanu in the Nigerian state of Enugu. During the attack other people were either killed or injured.

(Fides 30/12/2016)

**2015**

The treasurer of the parish of Mweso (in North Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo), **don Jean-Paul Kakule Kyalembera**, **33**, was killed on the evening of 25th February. "It appears to be an act of banditry" said His Exc. Mgr. Théophile Kaboy Ruboneka, Bishop of Goma, diocese to which Mweso belongs. "The priest was closing the doors of the church when he discovered one or more bandits who were hiding. The criminals fired without hesitation, hitting him in the abdomen and head. Fr. Kakule died instantly". The Bishop of Goma stressed that "in our diocese there are many gangs that terrorize the population and there are too many weapons in circulation. There are also Religious among the victims of violence and extortion". A few months before, the pastor of the same church in which Fr. Kakule was murdered had escaped a murder attempt.

(Fides 27/02/2015)

**2014**

**Father Gilbert Dasna, 32**, of the **Congregation of the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy** (SMMM), Assistant Pastor of the St Paul's Parish Cathedral in Alberta (Canada), was killed on the evening of May 9th, 2014 by a criminal. He is remembered as a kind and generous priest, who radiated joy and peace. He was born in Cameroon in 1982, ordained a priest on 11th July, 2009 and had been Assistant Pastor of St. Paul's Cathedral from 19th May, 2011 until his death. He had been in Canada for three years.

(Fides 12/05/2014)

**Father Kenneth Walker**, **29**, of the **Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter** (FSSP), was shot and killed at the Mother of Mercy Mission, Phoenix, Arizona (USA) at around 9 pm on 11th June, 2014, most probably during a suspected burglary. A second priest was severely injured. Probably the two priests who were in the mission building reacted to and were attacked by the criminals. Father Walker was born in 1985 in Ploughkeepsie, in the State of New York and was ordained a priest in 2012.

(Fides 13/06/2014)

**Father Gregorio Lopez Gorostieta, 39**, disappeared on the evening of 21st December, his body was found on Christmas Day in the city of Colonia Juárez, in the district of Tlapehuala, region of Tierra Caliente, in the Diocese of Ciudad Altamirano (Mexico) to which he belonged. The priest who was a teacher at “La Anunciacion” seminary in his diocese was strangled a few hours after being kidnapped. According to eye-witnesses, he was taken away from the Seminary by criminals who forced him into a vehicle.

(Fides 30/12/2014)

**2013**

**The lay Catholic Dexter Condez, 26**, belonged to the religious Family of the Society of St. Vincent de' Paul (Religious Vincentian Family), was killed by eight shots on the island of Boracaya (Philippines) on February 22nd, 2013. Condez defended the rights and prerogatives of the indigenous group Ati, who are opposed to the exploitation of the land by construction companies. The young man worked closely with the local Church in the Diocese of Kalibo.

(Fides 4/3/2013)

The lifeless body of **don Néstor Darío Buendía Martínez, 35**, who had been missing for a few days, was found in an isolated area of the town of Los Cordobas, about 500 miles north of Bogota (Colombia), on 26th June, 2013. The priest had left Cerete, where he was assistant pastor, and was heading towards Monteria where his family lives, but never reached his intended destination. Although the priest had never reported receiving threats, according to local information he had publicly condemned the criminal gangs in the area of Cerete. Father Néstor Darío Buendía Martínez was born in Canalete (Cordoba), and was assistant pastor in San Antonio de Padua parish in Cerete after having been pastor in the church of Santo Domingo Vidal in Chima.

(Fides 25/06/2013; 26/06/2013)

**Don Luis Bernardo Echeverri, 69** and **don Héctor Fabio Cabrera, 27,** respectively parish priest and curate of the parish of San Sebastián in the district of Roldanillo, in the department of the Valle del Cauca, archdiocese of Cali (Colombia), were killed in their home during the night between 27th and 28th September 2013. According to local sources, around midnight some local residents saw two men leave the parish and drive away on a motorbike. Given the late hour, their suspicions were aroused and they called the police, who found the bodies of the two priests, knifed, in their respective rooms. The two priests belonged to the Diocese of Cartago.

(Fides 28/09/2013)

**Don Hipólito Villalobos Lima, 45, and don Nicolás De la Cruz Martínez, 31,** were found murdered on 29th November, 2013, in the parish home in San Cristobal, in the district of Ixhuatlán de Madero, in the state of Veracruz (Mexico), Diocese of Tuxpan, most likely due to an attempted robbery. (Fides 30/11/2013)

**2012**

**Sister** **Liliane Mapalayi, 32**, of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, was stabbed to death by an individual on 2nd February, 2012 in Kananga, in western Kasai (D. R. Congo). The religious sister worked in a high school run by her Congregation, dealing with the monies. She was attacked around 1 p.m. while she was in her office at school. Upon hearing the screams, the Director of the school and a nun rushed into Sister Liliane’s office, she passed away in their arms, with a kitchen knife in her chest.

(Fides 20/02/2012)

**Don Eduardo Teixeira,** aBrazilian priest, **35**, was murdered on the evening of Sunday, 16th December, 2012 in the village Novo Hamburgo (state of Rio Grande do Sul), Brazil, during a robbery. Don Teixeira and another priest had stopped at traffic lights when two bandits approached them. The two priests were forced to follow the bandits to a park and after handing over their wallets, Fr Eduardo was shot at least twice while attempting to return to his car. Don Teixeira, had been a priest for three years and was the pastor of Santa Terezinha de Campo Bom, and had recently been appointed parish priest of the Parish of São Jorge, in the Campina area.

(Fides 19/12/2012)

**2011**

**Don Rafael Reátiga Rojas, 35,** priest at the “Jesucristo Nuestra Paz” Cathedral, in the diocese of Soacha, (suffragan to Bogotà, Colombia) and **don Richard Armando Piffano Laguado, 37,** parish priest of the “San Juan de La Cruz” church in Ciudad Kennedy were killed in Bogotá on the evening of Wednesday 26th January, 2011 on the outskirts of the capital of Colombia. The murderer was travelling in the same car as the priests: after having shot one in the head and the other in the chest, causing instant death, he got out of the car and ran away. According to eye-witnesses, someone was waiting for him and helped him escape.

(Fides 28/01/2011)

**Don Luis Carlos Orozco Cardona, 28**, was fatally wounded in Rionegro (Antioquia), Colombia on the evening of 12th February, 2011. A young armed man opened fire upon the crowd, aiming at the priest who was the vicar at the Cathedral in the diocese of Sonson-Rionegro. Don Orozco, seriously injured, was taken to hospital where he died during an operation at dawn on 13th February. After the murder, a minor who was responsible for the crime was arrested. The reasons for said crime, however, have remained unknown. Don Orozco Cardona had been ordained a priest less than a year before, on 26th February, 2010.

(Fides 16/02/2011)

On 17th January, 2011 in South Sudan, **Sister Angelina, 37, of Sant’Agostino Institute,** in the diocese of Tombura-Yambio (South Sudan)was murdered. The Religious was killed by militants of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) while she was taking medical aid to the refugees in South Sudan. The crime is one on the long list of episodes of violence and conflict that have been committed in different states by the South Sudan army and rebel factions.

(Fides 8/4/2011)

# An Eudist priest, father Gustavo Garcia, 34, was murdered in Bogotá, Colombia by an individual who attacked him wanting to steal his mobile phone. The Congregation of Jesus and Maria, the Eudists, to which he belonged, reported that father Gustavo García Bohórquez died on Thursday 12th May, 2011. He was waiting for a bus to go and help a sick person, while he was speaking on his mobile phone a criminal stabbed and seriously injured him in order to steal the phone. The situation was serious when he was taken to hospital and he died shortly afterwards. He was involved the “el Minuto de Dios” association: he practiced his ministry of preaching with groups from the same association, in the parish communities and through the mass media. He was the Chaplain of the Minuto de Dios University in Bogotá and assistant of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal youth Community.

(Fides 15/05/2011)

On 23rd August, 2011, the body of **don Marlon Ernesto Pupiro García, 40,** was found. Parish priest of the Immaculate Conception Church in the area of La Concepción, in Masaya (Nicaragua), he had disappeared on 20th August. Every morning Father Marlon arrived in time to open up the church. On the morning of 20th August, not seeing him arrive, the sacristan walked along the road but did not find him. Three days later, his body was found at kilometer 16 of the Old State Road in the direction of Leon.

(Fides 24/08/2011; 29/08/ 2011)

**Don José Reinel Restrepo Idárraga,** **36,** was killed on 1st September, 2011 on a road from Mistrato in Bethlehem of Umbria, in the neighboring department of Risaralda (west of Colombia, about 200km from Bogotá). The priest, pastor in Marmato, was riding a motorcycle when strangers stopped him and then shot him, wounding him fatally. The assailants escaped taking the motorcycle (which later was found by the police) and other objects belonging to the priest.

(Fides 3/09/2011)

**Don Gualberto Oviedo Arrieta, 34**, priest of Our Lady of Carmen in Capurganá, in the diocese of Apartadó (Colombia), was found covered in injuries and stab wounds at dawn on 12th September, 2011 in the rectory of the parish. No acts of violence within the house were evident and nothing had been stolen. The murder took place just hours after the conclusion of the "Week of Peace" which from 5th - 11th September saw Colombian schools, universities and institutions involved in such an important issue in the national context.

(Fides 13/09/2011).

**María Elizabeth Macías Castro, 39**, known as Marisol, of the **Lay Scalabrinian Movement** in Nuevo Laredo (Mexico) worked for a newspaper in Tamaulipas (Mexico). She was kidnapped on 22nd September, 2011 by a group of drug dealers of the border region. After two days of research and dramatic silence, her lifeless body, horrendously mutilated, was found in a street in the city of Nuevo Laredo. Marisol was a member of the Central Committee of the Lay Scalabrinian Movement and worked at the Casa del Migrante in Nuevo Laredo. According to those who knew her, she was "a woman of great faith and commitment to justice".

(Fides 26/09/2011)

**Luis Eduardo Garcia, lay man, 38**, member of the Social Pastoral, leader of the Popayan group (Colombia) was murdered on the evening of 16th October, 2011, while he was going from Popayan to El Tambo (Cauca): he was intercepted by a group of guerrillas, abducted and then killed. He was working on the project of Social and Cultural Reactivation, promoted by the National Secretary of the Social Pastoral, which helped people hit by the cold weather that had swept through the country. He was also employed by the town council of his birthplace, El Tambo, for this project. He was known for his dedication and commitment towards farmers, his community and the victims of this catastrophe.

(Fides 19/10/2011)

**2010**

**Don Dejair Gonçalves de Almeida,  32**, died from head injuries on Tuesday, 16th March, 2010 at 7 a.m. at St John the Baptist Hospital in Volta Redonda, about 80 km from Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) as the consequence of an aggression. On Sunday 14th March Fr Dejair was attacked while returning to the Church Community in Volta Redonda “Signor Buon Gesù”, in the district of Agua Limpa. With him was a former seminarian, **Epaminondas Marques da Silva, 26**, who died from a blow to the head.  According to information sent to Fides News Agency by the Diocese of Barra do Pirai in Volta Redonda, Father Dejair and Epaminondas were kidnapped and taken to the rectory in the early hours of Sunday.
The kidnappers wanted money and as they found nothing, they struck both on the head. The former seminarian died instantly and the priest underwent surgery, but did not survive.
The former seminarian was the coordinator of the ecclesial community of Santa Cruz.
Father Dejair Gonçalves de Almeida was born in Arantina (MG) and was Chancellor of the Diocese and Director of the Diocesan Apostleship of Prayer. He worked as a priest in the Our Lady of Grace area, where he served eight Ecclesial Communities.

(Fides 17/03/2010)

The **seminarian Mario Dayvit Pinheiro Reis**, **31**, of the Archdiocese of Sao Luis (Brazil), was killed in the capital on the evening of 4th July, 2010, hit by a bullet in his abdomen. At around 8.30 pm he was in front of the of his family’s house, in the car with his grandmother, when he was approached by two robbers who forced them to get out of the car. After handing over the keys, he was suddenly hit by a shot fired by one of the criminals that severed his aorta and reached a lung. Taken to hospital, he died at around 9.30 pm. A fourth year student of theology, he was to be ordained deacon the following year and would have travelled to France for Bible studies.

(Fides 30/12/2010)

**Father Herminio Calero Alumia**, **36**, a native of Buenaventura, parish priest of the church of Santiago de la Atalaya, in the town of Bosa (Colombia) died in a situation which remains unclear. The incident occurred around 3.00 am, Friday, 20th August, 2010, on the road between Bogotá and Soacha, in an area called Quintanares. There are different versions of the incident. According to some sources, the priest was travelling in a taxi with other people, when the vehicle was stopped at a police roadblock and a dispute began between one of them and a police officer. The policeman pulled out his gun and an accidental shot went off that killed the priest instantly. In other versions, the men who were travelling with the priest were drunk, and in the scuffle that followed at the police block, they tried to attack the policeman and steal his gun when the tragic event occurred. Father Reynaldo Vargas, Chancellor of the Diocese of Soacha, referred to Father Calero as “a very peaceful man.”

(Fides 30/12/2010)

**Julien Kénord, 27,** **Swiss Caritas operator** was murdered in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti on 8th October, 2010, following an attempted robbery. He had just cashed a cheque for $2,000 in a local bank when he was attacked and shot more than once while in his car. He was taken to hospital and died soon afterwards from his injuries. The General Secretary of Caritas Internationalis, Lesley-Anne Knight, confirmed that he was “a loyal collaborator dedicated to his work. He had helped the victims of the earthquake reconstruct their life”.

(Fides 30/12/2010)

**Father Wasim Sabieh** and **Father Thaier Saad Abdul** were **not even 30 years old** when they were killed on the evening of 31st October, 2010, during the terrible attack carried out in the Syriac-Catholic Cathedral in Bagdad which caused many deaths and injuries amongst the faithful who were gathered for the Sunday Holy Mass. A third priest was severely wounded. According to eye-witness accounts, Father Thaier told the terrorists who irrupted into the church: “Kill me, not this family with children” while shielding them with his body. The two priests were not even 30 years old and were very active in biblical apostolate, interreligious dialogue and charity. Father Thaier was responsible for a Center of Islamic studies while Father Wasim was involved in helping poor families.

(Fides 3/11/2010; 8/11/2010)

**Don Bernardo Muniz Rabelo Amaral, 28**, Assistant Pastor in the city of Humberto de Campos (Brazil) died around 9 pm on Saturday, 20th November, 2010 in the hospital of the city where he had been taken following an attack by a man who had asked him for a ride in his car. The priest had been shot in the neck and the chest by the criminal who then took the car, along with over 400 Brazilian dollars and the priest's mobile phone. When people arrived to help, the priest was still conscious. He was taken to hospital in Humberto de Campos but he did not survive the severe wounds he had suffered. He had been ordained priest on 5th September of the same year, 2010.

(Fides 23/11/2010)

A **Jesuit seminarian** **of Togolese nationality, Nicolas Eklou Komla, 25**, was killed on Sunday, 5th December on Belair Street, Mont Ngafula, on the outskirts of Kinshasa, capital of Democratic Republic of Congo. During the night between 4th and 5th December, the seminarian was returning on foot with some colleagues from the Jesuit school, “St Pierre Canisius” in Kimwenza, when a masked gunman blocked their path, presumably to rob them. A quarrel began which soon degenerated: the bandit fired a few shots which hit the seminarian, he died several hours later. Nicolas Eklou Komla was born on 4th June, 1985 in Togo, and entered the Order of the Society of Jesus on 7th October, 2008. He made his first vows on 2nd October, 2010. Nicolas Eklou Komla had arrived in the DRC two months previous to the attack to study philosophy.

(Fides 09/12/2010)

**2009**

**Don Daniel Matsela Mahula, 34**, from Klerksdorp Diocese (South Africa), was killed by four armed men while driving his car near Bloemhof on 27th February, 2009. Father Matsela was born on the 6th June, 1975 and ordained to Priesthood on 22nd December, 2002. He ministered at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Jouberton.

(Fides 10/3/2009)

**Don Révocat Gahimbare, 39**, priest of the Karuzi parish in Burundi was killed on Sunday 8th March, 2009. The priest was killed by 4 bandits dressed as policemen who had robbed the cloister of the Sisters “Bene Maria”. Upon learning of the attack, don Gahimbare rushed to help the Religious but the bandits ambushed him along the road. The priest was hit by a bullet which killed him.

(Fides 10/03/2009)

**Two Redemptorist priests, Father Gabriel Fernando Montoya Tamayo, 40, and Father Jesús Ariel Jiménez, 45,** were killed on the night of March 16, 2009 in the municipality of La Primavera (Vichada), Colombia. The tragic events took place in the Easter sector, jurisdiction of the La Primavera municipality, in the area of Vichada, more than 500 kilometers from Bogota on the border with Venezuela. The double homicide was committed by a man who, on the evening of March 16, broke into the home of the priests in Easter College, most likely looking for money, killing them both with a firearm. Gabriel Gabriel Montoya was the director of the College for seven years and was about to pass his position to Fr. Jesús Ariel Jiménez, who had recently arrived as the manager.

(Fides 18/3/2009; 20/3/2009)

**Jorge Humberto Echeverri Garro, 40, professor and pastoral worke**r, on June 11, 2009 was in Colonos, Panama of Arauca, Colombia to attend a Pastoral Social meeting focused on Church projects in the area to invigorate the community, according to the arrangement with Caritas of Germany. During the meeting, a group of guerrillas invaded the city center and headed directly to the meeting where, without any explanation, bludgeoned the him to death. According to the statement released by Mons. Héctor Fabio Henao Gaviria, Director of the National Secretariat for Social Pastoral Care, "Jorge Humberto, in addition to being recognized for his leadership, was also a catechist and a member of the network of teachers for the Social Pastoral with the Educational Centers of Peace and Community, which is active in same area in agreement with the UNHCR ".

(Fides 15/6/2009)

**Mexican priest Habacuc Hernández Benítez, 39, and the young seminarians Eduardo Oregón Benítez, 19, and Silvestre González Cambrón, 21**, both from Ajuchitlán (Guerrero), were assassinated while they were on their way to a vocational pastoral meeting, Saturday evening on June 13, 2009, in the municipality of Arcelia, in Tierra Caliente (Guerrero). The priest was the coordinator of the pastoral vocations in the diocese of Ciudad Altamirano, Mexico. According to the police reconstruction of the crime scene, the priest and the seminarians were shot by multiple individuals on June 13th around 7PM. Traveling in a pickup truck, they were driving along one of the central streets of Arcelia, when suddenly another vehicle forced them to stop the vehicle, get out of the truck and were shot.

(Fides 16/6/2009)

On June 15, 2009, **Father Gisley Azevedo Gomes, CSS, 31, National Councilor of the Youth Section of the Brazilian Episcopal Conference (CNBB)** was killed. The body of the priest was found on June 16, in the vicinity of Brazlândia, a suburb of Brasilia (DF), inside his car with a blow to the face and two to the head. The police arrested a few juveniles who committed the crime. They first entered his car, robbed him and then killed him. Originally from Morrinhos, Father Gisley entered the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ and was ordained a priest in May 2005. He was a National Councilor for the youth section of the CNBB for two years. Always engaging with young people, he organized with the Youth Ministry of Brazil the National Campaign themed "Youth marching against violence". "In a deplorable way - the Bishops said - he was a victim of the violence he was fighting".

(Fides 17/6/2009)

**Ricky Agusa Sukaka, 27, a young Congolese man working as a Caritas operator**, was killed on the afternoon of July 15, 2009 in Musezero, in the north of Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the reconstruction of the homicide, the young man, who had worked for the past year as an agricultural engineer on the project of Secours Catholique-Caritas France, was approached by two men wearing army uniforms as he returned home. Later his body was found without his Secours Catholique shirt that he was last seen wearing and also his wallet was missing. Caritas Internationalis condemned "the brutal murder of a young man who courageously worked in a war zone to help others rebuild their lives".

(Fides 12/30/2009)

**Don James Mukalel, 39**, was found dead near Mangalore, Karnataka state, in southern India. His body was found in the countryside by parishioners on July 30, 2009, after the young priest had not returned to his parish in the Syro-Malabar diocese of Belthangady. On July 29th, in the hours immediately before his death, the priest had visited various families, had lunch in a convent and celebrated a funeral as per his usual pastoral duties. The young priest was well liked by everyone, he was always smiling and passionate in his work. Among the many hypotheses, his murder could have been a case of anti-Christian violence, given that in the area there had been cases of fundamentalist attacks on Christians.

(Fides 31/7/2009)

**Don Evaldo Martiol, 33**, from the diocese of Cacador (Brazil), was murdered in Santa Caterina on the evening of September 26, 2009 by two young men, aged 21 and 15, respectively, uncle and nephew. The priest was the victim of a theft that ended in murder. In fact, after leaving a chapel and passing by the home of another priest, Don Evaldo gave a ride in his car to the two young men who killed him. The following day the police identified the criminals, who still had the car, cell phone and documents of the priest on them. The two confessed and indicated where to find the body of the priest which was 5 kilometers outside the urban area of ​​Cacador, killed by four bullet wounds. Don Evaldo, originally from Timbo Grande, was ordained a priest on April 26, 2003. "His method of evangelizing was friendship", recalled the tearful diocesan Bishop, Monsignor Luiz Carlos Eccell during the funeral which was celebrated in the Cathedral where the priest worked. It was filled with the faithful who were grief stricken and shattered because "Father Evaldo was a beloved son who made friends with everyone".

(Fides 29/9/2009)

**Young William Quijano, 21, from the community of Sant'Egidio** in El Salvador, was shot dead while returning home on the evening of September 28, 2009. His murderers were part of one of the many violent gangs organized to hire poor young people in the suburbs of Central America. For five years, William worked in the School of Peace for poor children in the neighborhood of Apopa, in the suburbs of the capital, San Salvador. His peaceful and good life, at the service of the young and the needy, was known and represented an alternative to violent gangs.

(Fides 1/10/2009)

**2008**

**Don Julio Cesar Mendoza Acuma, a 33-year-old Mexican**, died on May 2, 2008 in a hospital in Mexico City, following an attack suffered in his parish the night before. He was the parish priest of the church of Our Lady of the Rosary, in a neighborhood in the southern part of the Mexican capital He was found in the bathroom of his house, still alive, face down, with his hands tied, his head and face bloodied. He was transported to the hospital where he subsequently died from his injuries.

(see Fides 30/12/2008)

The lifeless bodies of 60-year-old Catholic priest, **Fr. Samuel Francis**, and **a volunteer, Mercy Bahadur, 32,** were found on September 22, 2008 in the village of Chota Rampur, near Dehradun, in the diocese of Meerut, in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand. Fr Samuel Francis was also known as "Swami Astheya", since he had chosen a hermitical life in an "ashram", a typical Hindu monastery, adapted to Christian traditions. The volunteer collaborated for over a year with the priest to welcome those who went to the ashram. According to the investigation, the double murders date back two days prior. The Episcopal Conference of India stated the murder appears to be the result of an attempted robbery in the priest’s home, which was in fact looted.

(Fides 23/9/2008)

**2007**

**Fr. Fransiskus Madhu, 30, verbite missionary (SVD)** and native of Flores, Indonesia, was killed on Palm Sunday, April 1, 2007 in the village of Mabungtot, diocese of Tabuk, in the north Philippines of Luzon Island, while heading to the chapel where he was parish priest. He was to celebrate the evening Mass. A group of men approached him and opened fire with semi-automatic weapons. He was struck by 5 bullets which hit vital organs and he was pronounced dead on arrival to the hospital. Father Madhu had been a missionary in that parish since 2005 where the locals described him as "kind and caring, active and honest".

(Fides 3/4/2007)

On a Sunday afternoon June 3, 2007, **Father Raghiid Ganni, 35, and three deacons** were killed: **Basman Yousef Daoud, Ghasan Bidawid and Wahid Hanna** in front of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Mosul, Iraq. After Mass, they were about to get into their car when a gunman approached and shot and killed them. Father Ganni was the first Catholic priest killed in Iraq. The Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans Mar Emmanuel III Delly and the Bishops of the Patriarchal Synod, in their widespread note after the tragic event, said: "This is a shameful crime, which any conscientious person should refuse to accept. Those who have committed this crime have done a horrible act against God and also against humanity, against their brothers who were faithful and peaceful citizens and men of religion who always offered their prayers and their appeals to God Almighty to bring peace, security and stability to all of Iraq ".

(Fides 4/6/2007)

**Justin Daniel Bataclan, 20, seminarian** of the San Paolo Society of the Philippines, was killed on the evening of June 7, 2007 by a thief who entered his family's home, where he was staying for the holidays, in Cubao, Quezon City (Metro Manila). After hearing noises, Justin went to the kitchen where he was attacked by the thief and subsequently died as a result his injuries. The following day, at the end of the summer holidays, he would have to return to the Pauline parish of Silang, where he would have begun his fifth year of formation. Justin demonstrated a calm personality, diligent, reliable and applied himself in his studies. He was also the head of the vocational IT department given his exceptional computer skills.

(Fides 12/29/2007)

**Brother Enrique Alberto Olano Merino, originally from San Salvador, 29**, Congregation of Marist Brothers of Schools (Little Brothers of Mary), was killed on the night between June 9th and 10th, 2007 in Guatemala City, most likely by common criminals. While returning to his residence with his follow brothers, Brother Enrique was attacked and robbed by two armed men. Meanwhile, two other men, aboard a car, approached the group and opened fire, killing Brother Enrique. For the previous 7 years while in Guatemala, Brother Enrique was a high school professor and actively engaged in youth ministry.

(Fides 12/29/2007)

**D. Nicholaspillai Packiyaranjith, 40,** diocesan priest and coordinator of the "Jesuit Refugee Service" in the Mannar district in Sri Lanka, was killed by a road side bomb placed on the road where the priest traveled frequently to bring assistance to the refugee camp and at the orphanage of Vidathalvu. The explosion occurred on Poonery Road, in Kalvi'laan, on the evening of Thursday, September 26, 2007, and left the entire local Catholic community shocked, which greatly appreciated the tireless work of Fr. Nicholas.

(Fides 27/9/2007)

**2006**

**Sister Maria Yermine Yamlean, 33,** of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (FDNSC), native of Arui Das-Ambon, Indonesia and resident in the convent of Jalan Pattimura, Ambon city, capital of the Moluccan islands, was killed the morning of March 10, 2006. The nun had surprised an intruder in the convent, perhaps a thief, who then attacked her with a knife. When the sisters found her, she was in a serious condition. She died shortly after being taken to the hospital. Sister Maria was very active in the pastoral and in the Charismatic Movement where she was a member of the Provincial Council of her Congregation, Vice-Superior of the Community of Ambon and guided the formation of the postulants.

(Fides 14/3/2006)

**Don John Mutiso Kivaya, 35,** a Kenyan assistant priest in the parish of Masinga in Kenya, was killed in Tala, Machakos diocese, on the night of July 31, 2006 by criminals who broke into the restaurant where he was having dinner with two other priests. Don John was in his hometown to visit his family. The criminals robbed the priests of their money and mobile phones and subsequently killing two others besides the priest and injuring others.

(Fides 12/30/2006)

**Don Chidi Okorie, 31,** a Nigerian, was killed in Afikpo, state of Ebonyi, Nigeria, on the night of August 4, 2006. He was attacked and stabbed in his home in St. Mary's Catholic Church. He was immediately transported to the hospital where he died shortly thereafter. Most likely he was the victim of thieves who had entered the house looking for items of value. The young priest had been ordained just two years earlier in June 2004.

(Fides 12/30/2006)

**Brother Augustine Taiwa, 40**, of the Order of the Hospital of St Johns (Fatebenefratelli), a native of Eastern New Britain, was killed on Monday evening, August 28, 2006, near the capital of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby. The cleric was hit with a steel spear while he was driving a van, at low speed with the window down to talk to the street market vendors. Three young men who had been drinking were throwing stones and other objects at passing cars. One of them threw a spear at the brother’s car, which hit him in the head killing him instantly. The police intervened promptly and took him to Port Moresby General Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

(Fides 2/9/2006; 5/9/2006)

**Father Waldyr dos Santos, Brazilian Jesuit, 69, and the Portuguese volunteer Idalina Neto Gomes, 30,** were killed in the early hours of November 6, 2006 by a group of armed men who assaulted them in their residence in Angonia, province of Tete, Mozambique. Two others were also injured during the attack. The assailants, after stealing money and other items, escaped by stealing a vehicle. Idalina Neto Gomes, a lawyer, was a member of the Portuguese Association "Lay people for Development" and was in the Jesuit community with other members of the Association. In this border area between Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, violence has repeatedly hit Catholic missions and the religious communities.

(Fides 7/11/2006; 10/11/2006; 20/11/2006; 7/12/2006)

**Johnny Morales, 34, a Salesian Cooperator** in Guatemala, was killed on December 8, 2006 following an ambush as he left work. The vehicle he was in was riddled with bullets fired from various points causing his immediate death. Johnny Morales collaborated with the "Salesian Center Father Sergio Checchi" together with his wife, also a Salesian Cooperator in the same center. They had married just one year prior to his death. Johnny worked in the Tax Administration Secretariat (SAT) and only two days earlier had been sent to the frontier of Tecún Umám, Mexico, where there is a high level of drug trafficking and smuggling. The cause of the crime seems to have been retribution as he refused to collaborate and commit crimes on their behalf.

(Fides 12/30/2006)

**2005**

**Fr. Paulo Henrique Machado, 36,** Brazilian, Vice-coordinator of the pastoral care of Nova Iguacu, was killed on July 25, 2005 by an armed commando. His body was found in his car under a bridge on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, having been robbed of his watch, cellphone and wallet. The motive for the crime appears to be revenge for the priest’s activities in the field of human rights and against local criminal gangs. He was a young priest, cheerful, active, committed to bringing peace and serenity to the neighborhoods where he worked. In particular, he started a support group for the families of the victims of the massacre in the Nova Iguacu district, one of the most violent in the suburbs, and had repeatedly denounced the abuses of drug traffickers.

(Fides 12/30/2005)

**Don Jesus Adrian Sanchez, 32,** a Colombian priest of the diocese of Espinal (Tolima), Parish priest of El Limon, was killed on August 18, 2005 while he was teaching a religious class at the Camacho Angarita Institute, in the rural area of ​​Chaparral (Tolima). Around 10 am, an armed man broke into the hall and forced the priest out, shooting and killing him. The priest was actively engaged in the community but above all in the pastoral care of young people, who he tried in every way to persuade them not to leave school to join the ranks of guerrillas and violent gangs.

(Fides 12/30/2005)

**Father Angelo Redaelli, 40,** from the Province of the Friars Minor of Lombardia, was killed by a crowd on September 12, 2005, after accidently running over a little girl in a village about thirty kilometers from Owando in central-northern Congo of Brazzaville. Angelo had been on a mission in Congo for two years and was immediately well integrated into the local community. In his final months, he worked mainly in the parish of Mekua which is north of Owando and not far from the area where the tragic events took place. His principle work was dedicated to health care and catechism for homeless children. He was killed on his way to teach his catechism class.

(Fides 13/9/2005)

**Suresh Barwa, 31, and Marco Candelario Lasbuna, 22**, members of the diocesan religious congregation Missionaries of the Poor (MOP), dedicated to helping the poor and marginalized in Jamaica, India, Uganda and the Philippines, were killed in Kingston, Jamaica on the evening of October 27, 2005. They were together with a small group of people in the kitchen of the Corpus Christi Missionary, located in the heart of Kingston, Jamaica. Both were killed by the same bullet to the head, while washing dishes after a party at the home of another priest. Marco, originally from the Philippines, was in Kingston for 5 months and Suresh, from India, for 2 years.

(Fides 12/30/2005)

**2004**

**Javed Anjum, a 19-year-old student** from Quetta (Pakistan), died on May 2, 2004 at Faisalabad Hospital in Pakistan, from 26 wounds, inflicted by a teacher and his students of an Islamic school who wanted to convert him to Islam. On April 17, Javed was captured by a teacher and some students of Jamia Hassan bin Almurtaza, an Islamic religious school near Islamabad. For five days Javed was tortured until his condition became so severe that his own torturers took him to a police station, claiming that Javed had tried to steal from. The police took him to the hospital, where the young man died of his serious injuries.

(Fides 12/5/2004)

**Nasir Masih, a 26-year-old Pakistani Catholic**, was kidnapped on August 16, 2004 while in his home in the Baldia Siekhupoura district, 45 km from Lahore, and forcibly dragged away by a group of Muslims who accused him of theft. A few hours later the police informed the family that Nasir had been arrested. Three days later his death was announced: numerous wounds and bruises were found on his body.

(Fides 8/9/2004)

**2003**

**Don Martin Macharia Njoroge, a Kenyan, 34**, died on April 11, 2003 in a hospital in Nairobi, Kenya following an attack suffered a few days prior by a group of bandits on the outskirts of the city. The criminals had forced him from his car, shot him and stole the car, abandoning it not far from the crime scene. Ordained a priest 4 years prior, he was in charge of the parish "San Francesco Saverio" in Parklands. Don Martin’s brother, also a priest, was killed in 2000.

(Fides 14/4/2003)

On the evening of May 10th to 11th, 2003, LRA rebels kidnapped 41 children and there is evidence that **three young seminarians** were also killed in the attack on Lachor, Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda. It was around midnight when the rebels attacked the seminar. Government forces resisted and a shoot-out lasted for two hours. During the battle a local boy was killed, who slept in the seminary to seek shelter from the rebels. Most of the boys, estimated at one hundred, managed to escape, while forty-one of them were captured. These were first and second year high school students.

(Fides 12/5/2003)

**Don Jairo Garavito, Colombian, 36,** was killed on May 15, 2003 by criminals who broke into the parish home of Yerbabuena di Chia (Cundinamarca region, Colombia) to rob him. The priest died of asphyxiation, as the criminals who attacked him, bound and gagged him.

(Fides 12/30/2003)

**Ana Isabel Sánchez Torralba, 22, from the Spanish Missionary Volunteer Calasanziano**, on her first mission abroad, was killed in Equatorial Guinea (locality of Mongomo) on July 1, 2003, during a routine police check. She had left Madrid on June 29th and was heading for Akonibe, where for a month, together with another volunteer, would be involved in the literacy program for girls and women for the Sister of Scolopie Mission. The two girls were on a bus to reach their destination, but at a checkpoint near the town of Mongomo a discussion arose between the bus driver and the police. One of the policemen opened fire on the bus, injuring passengers, including Ana, who died after surgery. Ana had been involved for years in the fight against poverty and social inequalities. She had worked in several Spanish social centers, among drug addicts, the poor and the mentally handicapped. One of his wishes was to strengthen the Church's presence in mission countries.

(Fides 04/07/2003)

**Don George Ibrahim, from Pakistan, 38,** was shot dead on July 5, 2003 in his parish of "Our Lady of Fatima", in the Renala Khurd district of Okara, Pakistan by six armed men who entered the parish complex during that evening. Fr Peter Semson, vice-president of Father George, recalled that "Father Ibraim was a gentle person. In the past, he had received threats from some fundamentalists, especially after the school annexed to the parish, run by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary, nationalized in 1973, had been returned to the Church in July 2002 ". Father George was ordained a priest on September 3, 1993. Coming from a deeply Catholic family, he was the son of a Ibrahim catechist who for many years had served in the diocese of Faisalabad. Goerge's sister, Angelina, is a Dominican nun and dean of the School of the Sacred Heart in Faisalabad.

(Fides 7/7/2003)

Father Mario Mantovani, from the Combonian Missionary, 84 years old, was an Italian living in Uganda for 45 years where he assisted those suffering from lyprocy. He was killed along with **Brother Godfrey Kiryowa, Ugandan, 29**, also Combonian, while on the road between Capeto and Kotido in Uganda on August 14, 2003. Br. Godfrey and Fr. Mario were driving through the area of ​​Kopoth. During the night there had been a raid between the Dodoth of the North and the Jie of the South of the Kotido district. It seems that some Dodoth, feeling humiliated by the loss of their livestock, wanted to vent their rage on the first car that had the misfortune to pass that way. Br. Godfrey was hit first and died instantly. Shortly thereafter, Father Mario was shot repeatedly about 300 meters from the car. The lifeless body of Br. Godfrey was found on Assumption day, in the early morning, that of Fr. Mantovani was found later, around two o'clock on the same day. There are several versions of this dramatic incident. Some say that there was no relationship between the raid and the ambush. A man was arrested because he had the shoes of Fr. Mario was also killed in mysterious circumstances, most likely to prevent him from revealing the names of his accomplices.

(Fides 12/30/2003)

**Fr William De Jesus Ortez, 32**, born in Jucuapa, El Salvador, pastor of the Cathedral of Santiago in the diocese of Santiago de Maria in El Salvador, was shot dead inside the church on the evening of October 5, 2003. **Jaime Noel Quintanilla, 23**, sacristan of the temple, was also killed along with the priest. Don William died when he arrived at the hospital, while Jaime died instantly. Don William was greatly cherished in his diocese by the faithful, but most of all for his sensitivity towards the poor and the homeless. After the earthquake, he helped hundreds of families to rebuild their homes.

(Fides 12/30/2003)

**Don Saulo Carreño, 38,** from Guacamayas (Boyacá), parish priest of Saravena in Arauca, Colombia was shot dead on November 3, 2003. An employee from the local hospital who was in the car with him, Maritza Linares, was also killed. The assassin was operating with a local criminal group for the control of this oil zone. It took place near the Sarare hospital, along the road that leads from Saravena to Fortul. According to the local police, the priest had not received any death threats, so the assassination is attributed to a dispute between the guerrilla groups who control this oil region.

(Fides 7/11/2003)

**2002**

**Father Declan O'Toole, 31**, an Irish priest of the Mill Hill Missionaries, was traveling by car in the Kotido region in Uganda on March 21, 2002. With him were two members of the parish council and they were returning from a meeting regarding peace in which they had both participated. Their car was stopped by a man wearing a military uniform who opened fire on them, killing all three.

(Fides 15/2/2003)

**Fr. Arley Arias Garcia, 30**, Colombian, pastor of the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption of Florentia, municipality of Samaná (Caldas), was killed on May 18, 2002 in an ambush along the road from Florencia to Samanà in Colombia. Two other people who were with him, associate **Carlos Pérez, 21**, and his cousin **Fernando Perez, 16**, were killed. The priest was president of the city's peace council, and had been busy trying to start negotiations between the paramilitaries and guerrillas. He had worked for the release of several hostages and on numerous occasions had eliminated civilian causalities during the clashes between the two groups. In 1999, his church was destroyed by the guerrillas and he rebuilt it. The year prior, one of his brothers was murdered.

(Fides 15/2/2003)

**Leonardo Muakalia Livongue, 22**, an Angolan seminarian, a native of Huambo, was killed during a robbery on September 8, 2002 in Malanje, Angola. He was returning to the seminary of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, where he was entering his third year, after a holiday period. He was in a shared taxi when a group of criminals fired at the car, most likely for a robbery, hitting a woman and the seminarian, who died shortly after being hospitalized due to the severity of his injuries.

(Fides 15/2/2003)

**Fr. José Luis Cardenas, 31**, was murdered in Chalan, Sucre department in Colombia on October 17, 2002, shortly after celebrating Mass. He was a parish priest in the municipality of Chalan for seven months. After mass, he was exiting the rectory, as usual, to take a walk around town. Three men were waiting for him outside his house, the priest greeted them and shortly thereafter gunshots were heard. He was killed by five gunshot wounds.

(Fides 15/2/2003)

**Don Jean Claude Kilamong, 40**, of the Central African Republic, was held by insurgents who control the city of Bossangoa on December 8, 2002. His lifeless body was found the next day. The city was now half-deserted, as the population had moved away to escape the violence and looting of the rebels, who did not spare priests, the religious, churches and religious institutions, including the archdiocese.

(Fides 15/2/2003)

**2001**

**Don Raphael Paliakara, 43, Don Andreas Kindo, 32, and Joseph Shinu, a 25-year-old seminarian,** all Salesians of Don Bosco, were killed on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, in Imphal, Manipur State, in Northeast India. At about 8 p.m. a group of armed men entered the district of the Salesian Novitiate of Imphal and asked Don Paliakara, head of the house and head of the students, to give them all the students belonging to the Naga tribe. At his firm refusal, they shot him in cold blood. Upon hearing the shots, Don Andreas Kindo and Joseph Shinu rushed out of the house and approached the priest's body, but were immediately hit by a flurry of bullets that also killed them. Then the killers fled. The Salesian Provincial Fr Thomas Mulayinkal defined the death of his brothers "an act of heroic sacrifice" "Committed to the formation of young Salesians, they died in defense of their students and for this they are martyrs".

(Fides 25/5/2001)

**Father John Baptist Crasta, 37,** was murdered on September 6, 2001 in the Indian state of Jharkhand, together with the driver of the ambulance they were traveling in. A nun and a layman who were in the same car were injured and left for dead, they managed to escape when the bandits left. The attack was carried out by a group of rebels from the Maoist Communist Center (MCC) who killed the priest and the driver as they had violated their rule that prohibited the circulation of all vehicles for 72 hours. The Maoists blocked the vehicle by firing at the tires, then approached and fired at the occupants and escaped.

(Fides 14/9/2001)

**Father Gopal, a 35-year-old Indian priest**, was killed in Puthkel, in the state of Chattisgarh, India, on October 12, 2001 by guerrillas who considered him guilty of speaking against them. The priest participated actively in the government program to raise awareness against violence.

(Fides 4/1/2002)

**Father Siméon Coly, 40,** from the diocese of Ziguinchor in Senegal, was killed on November 7, 2001 during an attack on the Transgambian road, which leads from the south to the north of Senegal, via the Gambia. Father Coly was going to Dakar aboard a shared taxi when armed men told the driver to stop. He did not obey and the assailants fired on the vehicle. They wounded 3 and killed 2, including Fr. Coly, who was killed by a bullet to the chest. Father Coly was a pastor of the parish of Niaguis, about 20 km from Ziguinchor. He was a diocesan responsible for the coordination of choirs and also a member of the diocesan commission for the liturgy. The bishop had also instructed him to lead the diocesan commission to improve relations between Christians and Muslims.

(Fides 11/16/2001)

The lifeless body of **Sarita Toppo, an Indian consecrated lay woman, 29,** was found in the forest of Chalgali, state of Madhya Pradesh, diocese of Ambikapur, where she had gone to collect firewood on November 27, 2001. The young woman was sexual assaulted before being murdered. She was a member of the Secular Institute of the Disciples, founded in the 1960s by the Salesian Fr. Joseph De Souza. He was also of Indian nationality, a tribe of the Oraon ethnic group. He worked in social welfare and was mainly involved in health services for the female population.

(Fides 12/14/2001)

**2000**

**The seminarian Frater Yosef Jami**, of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), **29,** was walking along the beach in Ende, Indonesia on the afternoon of January 1, 2000 when he was attacked and shot dead by a group of people. His body was found the morning of January 2nd. He was born on January 11, 1972 in Ladok, Ruteng (Flores). After his primary studies at Watu Weri, he entered the minor seminary of Kisol. Later he was admitted to the Verbites and attended the novitiate in Kuwu, Ruteng. He had made his first vows on August 2, 1995, then moved to Ledalero's major seminary for his studies in philosophy and theology. In June 1999, he began his year of insertion in pastoral care, working at the "Saint Paul" Biblical Center in Ende.

(Fides 14/1/2000)

**Don Remis Pepe, 30,** was killed on February 15, 2000 in Kiliba, east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, halfway between Uvira and Bukavu, along with two lay people. A group of armed men broke into the parish to loot it and killed the priest and the two lay people in the process. After the attack on the parish, the gunman then set it on fire. This violence was attributed to a group of banyamulenge rebels. Two other priests were saved during this attack in the same parish. Another page in the book of violence against ecclesiastical personnel written by the Rwando-Ugandan occupation troops and by the rebels who support them. Don Remis had been ordained a priest for just six months.

(Fides 25/2/2000)

**Seminarian Claude Gustave Amzati**, **27**, was killed on the night between May 30 and 31, 2000 in the Major Seminary of Murhesa which is about 25 km north of Bukavu. A guardian of the Seminary was also killed with him, while another guard was injured. The seminarian came from the Diocese of Kindu and studied theology. The Major Seminary of Murhesa was completely looted, the same fate was suffered by a nearby village and health clinic. Aggression and looting were the work of one of the armed militias in the east of the R.D. of the Congo.

(Fides 9/6/2000)

**Father Victor Crasta, 40,** of the Congregation of the Holy Cross (CSC), originally from Kerala, was killed while two other priests were wounded on July 25, 2000, in Balukcherra, in the state of Tripura, India. According to a reconstruction by the police, men in uniform, most likely members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), wanted to kidnap two people aboard a car when the vehicle with the priests came upon the scene by way of Panisagar directed to Kanhmun, where Fr. Victor had recently been in charge of leading the parish. The driver, seeing the criminals, accelerated in an attempt to escape them, but they opened fire killing p. Victor and wounding the other two priests and the driver.

(Fides 12/31/2000)

**Father Jude Marie Ogbu, 40**, a barefoot Carmelite from Akpugo, in the Nigerian state of Enugu, was killed in mid-September 2000 along the road connecting Lagos to Ekpoma. He was part of this lost community, of which he was first councilor. From the reconstruction of the general curia, it appears that during the trip he was assaulted and robbed and he subsequently died because of a lack of medical assistance as a consequence of the injuries he received.

(Fides 12/31/2000)

**Father Arnoldo Gomez Ramirez, 35,** of the Saverian Missionaries of Yarumal, who was the pastor of the parish of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" in Buenaventura, Colombia, for just over a year, was murdered in his home on October 17, 2000. He was most likely murdered by common criminals. Gomez had launched an intense campaign against a gang of criminals who attacked the faithful as they climbed a staircase to reach the church.

(Fides 12/31/2000)

The lifeless body of **Fr. Howard Rochester, 40,** was found along the roadside, about fifty miles from the Jamaican capitol of Hartland on October 28, 2000. He presented mortal wounds to his head and ribcage, leading the police to believe he was killed to steal his vehicle. Howard was very much loved in his parish of St. Joseph, in Spanish Town, where he had recently been transferred, not far from the place where his body was found.

(Fides 12/31/2000)

**Father Shajan Jacob Chittinapilly, 30**, from the Diocese of Imphal, India, was killed in Manipur on the night of December 2, 2000. The priest was deputy pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Sugnu, Chandel district in Manipur, diocese of Imphal. He was kidnapped in the afternoon, together with his driver, by two armed criminals who took them away in the parish jeep saying that their leader wanted to meet them in the Sugnu district. Instead they headed for Imphal. After about 7 kilometers they instructed the driver to turn onto a secondary road. They asked the priest and the driver to turn around and shot Fr. Chittinapilly in the head. Upon hearing the shot, the driver fainted. After over half an hour he regained consciousness and was forced to return home on foot, arriving at 11 pm, only then informed the police.

(Fides 8/12/2000)

**MISSIONARIES KILLED FROM 2000 TO 2017**

**Vatican City (Agenzia Fides)** - According to Fides news, in the period between 2000 and 2017, **447 missionaries** died violently: **5 bishops, 313 priests, 3 deacons, 61 religious men and women, 16 seminarians, 3 members of institutes of consecrated life, 42 lay people and 4 volunteers.**

This figure is undoubtedly low since it refers only to the cases of which we have received confirmation.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **YEAR** | **TOT** | **BISH** | **PRIE** | **DEA** | **BRO** | **REL** | **SEM** | **ICL** | **CAT** | **LAI** | **VOL** |
| **2000** | **31** |  | 19 |  |  | 7 | 3 | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| **2001** | **33** |  | 25 |  |  | 5 | 1 | 1 |  | 1 |  |
| **2002** | **25** | 1 | 18 |  | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |  |  |  |
| **2003** | **29** | 1 | 20 |  | 1 |  | 3 |  |  | 2 | 2 |
| **2004** | **16** |  | 12 |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | 3 |  |
| **2005** | **25** | 1 | 18 |  | 2 | 3 |  |  |  | 1 |  |
| **2006** | **24** |  | 17 |  | 1 | 3 |  |  |  | 2 | 1 |
| **2007** | **21** |  | 15 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| **2008** | **20** | 1 | 16 |  | 1 |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |
| **2009** | **37** |  | 30 |  |  | 2 | 2 |  |  | 3 |  |
| **2010** | **25** | 1 | 17 |  | 1 | 1 | 2 |  |  | 3 |  |
| **2011** | **26** |  | 18 |  |  | 4 |  |  |  | 4 |  |
| **2012** | **13** |  | 11 |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | 1 |  |
| **2013** | **23** |  | 20 |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | 2 |  |
| **2014** | **26** |  | 17 |  | 1 | 6 | 1 |  |  | 1 |  |
| **2015** | **22** |  | 13 |  |  | 4 |  |  |  | 5 |  |
| **2016** | **28** |  | 14 |  |  | 9 | 1 |  |  | 4 |  |
| **2017** | **23** |  | 13 |  | 1 | 1 |  |  |  | 8 |  |

BISH: bishops; CARDINALS: cardinals; PRIE: diocesan and religious priests; DEAC: deacons; BRO: religious not priests; REL: religious sisters; SEM: seminarians; ICL: members of institutes of consecrated life; CAT: catechists; LAI: lay people; VOL: volunteers; ct: catechumen.

(Agenzia Fides 1/10/2018)