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ASIA/INDIA - Priest killed in India; Archbishop comments on a life offered to God and neighbor

Vasai (Agenzia Fides) - "We priests have already offered our lives on our ordination day. Our life is not ours; it is God's. Father Peter was welcomed today by the Lord and Our Lady of the Forsaken, to whom he was so devoted." This is what Fides learned in an interview with Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai (near Mumbai), who told of an event that has shaken the entire community in the area, both Catholics and non alike: the killing of Fr. Peter Bombaci, a 74-year-old priest murdered by unknown persons last night at his home, a short distance from the Archbishop's Residence.

"I found the body of Fr. Peter laying in a pool of blood this morning," Archbishop Machado told Fides, explaining how he had been alerted by some lay people who worked with the priest. "He had a rope around his neck and scissors stuck in his throat. It was a gruesome scene. The police appeared immediately on the scene and took the body for postmortem investigations. They are investigating the matter."

The Archbishop continued: "The community is in shock. Fr. Peter had created and operated, with the help of some lay people, a recovery home for alcoholics. He was from Vasai and came from a fishing community. That's why his name was 'Peter.' He was well liked and respected by everyone."

"We have no idea of the reasons for the assassination, perhaps a theft or maybe someone was angry with him," says the Archbishop, excluding violence by Hindu fundamentalists. "We do not believe it to be the work of Hindu extremist groups. First of all, because in this area there are none. Indeed, relations with the Hindu community in the territory are excellent. Many Hindu faithful have come today to express dismay and solidarity. Many [of them] will attend the funeral, which I will celebrate in the evening today, April 29. We expect about 10,000 people."

The funeral Mass "will be a moment of prayer in which the mourning community will come together in tears, but also in hope. I will recall, as we are living this Year for Priests, that we priests have already offered our lives, which belong to God and that are spent in service to others. I will also try to give a message of encouragement to the people, who are really shocked and saddened. We offer our suffering, entrusting ourselves to Our Lady of the Forsaken, to whom Fr. Peter turned in prayer with great faith and devotion." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 29/04/2010)

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