



## Special Issue - VATICAN - PASTORAL CARE WORKERS KILLED IN 2013

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - According to information in our possession, during 2013, 22 pastoral care workers were killed worldwide (mostly priests), almost double compared to 13 who were killed in 2012. On the night of December 31, 2013 and January 1, 2014, Fr. Eric Freed, a priest in Eureka, California was killed: The police are investigating to determine the reasons of such murder.

For the fifth consecutive year, the place most affected, with an extremely elevated number of pastoral care workers killed is LATIN AMERICA, especially in Colombia.

The pastoral care workers who died violently in 2013 are: 19 priests, 1 religious sister, 2 lay persons. In America: 15 priests (7 in Colombia, 4 in Mexico, 1 in Brazil, 1 in Venezuela, 1 in Panama, 1 in Haiti) were killed; in Africa: 1 priest was killed in Tanzania, 1 religious sister in Madagascar, 1 lay person in Nigeria were killed; in Asia 1 priest in India and 1 in Syria were killed; in the Philippines 1 lay person was killed; in Europe a priest was killed in Italy.

As it has been for some time, Fides' list does not only include missionaries ad gentes in the strict sense, but all pastoral care workers who died violent deaths. We do not propose to use the term "martyrs", if not in its etymological meaning of "witnesses" since it is up to the Church to judge their possible merits and also because of the scarcity of available information in most cases, with regard to their life and even the circumstances of their death.

In 2013 the beatification process of the six Italian missionary Sisters of the Poor of Bergamo was opened, who died in Congo in 1995 after having contracted the Ebola virus in order not to leave the population without health care, defined as "martyrs of love". Instead the diocesan phase of the beatification process of Luisa Mistralli Guidotti, a member of the Women's Medical Missionary Association was completed, who was killed in 1979 in the then Rhodesia, while accompanying a pregnant woman at risk in labor to the hospital. The cause of beatification of Father Mario Vergara, a missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), and the lay catechist Isidore Ngei Ko Lat, killed in hatred of faith in Myanmar in 1950 was opened. On April 25 the beatification of Father Pino Puglisi was celebrated: "his gentleness and his unceasing missionary work, collided with a logic of life opposed to faith, that of the mafia, that hindered his pastoral action with intimidation, threats and beatings, to the point of killing him, in hatred of faith" wrote the Bishops of Sicily.

There is still much concern regarding the fate of many other pastoral care workers who have been kidnapped or disappeared, of whom there has been no news, such as the three Congolese Augustinian priests of the Assumption, kidnapped in North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo in October 2012, and a Colombian priest who has disappeared for months. While the terrible conflict that has plunged Syria in blood for three years does not spare the Christians: we have not had any news of the Italian Jesuit Fr. Paul Dall'Oglio for a long time, of the two metropolitan Bishops of Aleppo - the Greek Orthodox Boulos al-Yazigi and the Syrian Orthodox Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, of the Orthodox nuns of the monastery of Santa Tecla. Fr. Georges Vandenberg, the French "Fidei Donum" priest has just been released, who had been kidnapped on November 13 in his parish home in Nguetchewe, Cameroon.

The majority of the pastoral care workers in 2013 were killed in attempted robbery, and in some cases violently attacked, a sign of the climate of moral decline, economic and cultural poverty, which generates violence and disregard for human life. They all lived in these human and social contexts, carrying out the mission of proclaiming the Gospel message without making sensational acts, but by witnessing their faith in the humility of daily life.

As pointed out by the Holy Father, "in 2,000 years, a vast host of men and women have sacrificed their lives to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and his Gospel" (Angelus, 23 June 2013).

The provisional list compiled annually by Fides, must therefore be added to the long list of many of whom there

may never be news, who in every corner of the world suffer and even pay with their lives for their faith in Christ: "let us think about our many Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution for their faith. There are so many. Perhaps more now than in past centuries. Jesus is with them. We too are united to them with our prayers and our love; we admire their courage and their witness. They are our brothers and sisters who, in many parts of the world, are suffering for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ" (Pope Francis, Angelus, 17 November 2013).

> *LINKS*

*PASTORAL CARE WORKERS KILLED IN 2013:*

<http://www.fides.org/eng/attachments/view/file/PastoralCareWorkerskilledin2013.doc>: