

## The Agency FIDES publishes list of Church people killed in 2011



Vatican, January 03, 2012: Releases names of murdered missionaries for 2011. Vatican news sources released the names of Catholic bishops, priests, religious and laity who were killed in 2011 for their faith. The FIDES news service noted the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who said on December 26 of that year, “As in ancient times, today the sincere adherence to the Gospel may require the sacrifice of life, and many Christians in various parts of the world are sometimes exposed to persecution and martyrdom”.

According to FIDES, in its annual documentation of the deaths of pastoral workers and others, 26 pastoral care workers were killed in 2011: one more than the previous year: 18 priests, 4 religious sisters, 4 lay people.

For the third consecutive year, the place most affected, with an extremely elevated number of pastoral workers killed is the Americas, bathed with the blood of 13 priests and 2 lay persons. Following is Africa, where 6 pastoral workers were killed: 2 priests, 3 religious sisters, 1 lay person. Asia, where 2 priests, 1 religious sister, 1 lay person were killed. The least affected was Europe, where one priest was killed.

Some were victims of that violence, fighting it or being willing to help others with the small everyday problems, giving their own safety last priority. This year too, many were killed in attempted robbery or kidnapping which ended badly, caught in their homes by bandits in search of imaginary riches. Others were killed in the name of Christ by those opposing love with hatred, hope with despair, dialogue with violent opposition, the right to perpetrate abuse.

On the day of the liturgical feast of Proto-Martyr Stephen, December 26, Pope Benedict XVI recalled during the Angelus: “As in ancient times, today the sincere adherence to the Gospel may require the sacrifice of life and many Christians in various parts of the world are occasionally exposed to persecution and martyrdom. But, the Lord reminds us, “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Mt 10:22)”.

Although the biographical notes of these brothers and sisters killed are scant, they professed “a sincere

adherence to the Gospel” not only in words, but with the testimony of their lives, in situations of suffering, poverty, tension, degradation, violence ... without discrimination of race, caste, religion, with the sole aim of ensuring the Father’s love and promoting the human person, every man.

“The true imitation of Christ is love”, said Pope Benedict on December 26. And this was certainly the rule of life for Sister Angelina, who was killed in South Sudan by militants of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) while she was bringing medical aid to refugees; and also for Maria Elizabeth Macías Castro, of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement of Nuevo Laredo (Mexico) , who worked for a newspaper and was committed to assisting migrants, she was kidnapped and murdered by drug dealers; even for Father Fausto Tentorio, Italian missionary of PIME, priest in Mindanao (Southern Philippines), who devoted his life to the service of literacy and development of indigenous people; or even for the layman Rabindra Parichha, killed in Orissa in eastern India: former itinerant catechist was very involved in the legal field and a promoter of human rights.

Fides’ list includes not only missionaries ad gentes in the strict sense, but all pastoral care workers who died violent deaths. The term “martyrs” is not used, since it is up to the Church to judge their possible merits and also because of the scarcity of available information in most of cases, with regard to their life and even the circumstances of their death. However, the beatification process has begun for 15 martyrs, including missionaries and lay catechists, killed in Laos, “in hatred of the Christian faith” between 1954 and 1970 : 5 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), 5 members of the Society for Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP) and 5 lay Laotian catechists.

The provisional list compiled annually by Fides, which 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.” They are the “cloud of unknown soldiers for the great cause of God” – according to the words of Pope John Paul II – ranging from the Pakistan Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti, the first Catholic to hold this office, committed to peaceful coexistence between the religious communities in his country, killed on March 3, to the young Nigerian who in Abuja, at the church of Saint Theresa, was working for the security service to protect worshippers on Christmas Day, killed by an attack by the Boko Haram Muslim religious sect along with other 35 people.

## **Overview of Continents**

### ***Americas***

In North and South America 15 pastoral care workers were killed (13 priests and 2 lay people). They were killed in Colombia (7), Mexico (5), Brazil (1), Paraguay (1) and Nicaragua (1).

In Colombia 6 priests and 1 lay person were killed: Fr. Rafael Reátiga Rojas and Fr. Richard Armando Piffano Laguado killed by gunshot by a murderer who was traveling with the two priests; Fr. Luis Carlos Orozco Cardona, killed by a young man who shot him among the crowd; Fr. Gustavo Garcia, Eudista, murdered in the street by a man who wanted to steal his mobile phone; Fr. Jose Reinel Restrepo Idárraga, killed by unknown persons while he was riding his motorcycle which was then stolen along with other objects belonging to the priest; Fr. Gualberto Oviedo Arrieta, found covered with wounds and knifed to death, in the rectory of his parish. To the list of priests we also add a lay

man Luis Eduardo Garcia, a member of the Social Pastoral, attacked by a group of guerrillas, kidnapped and then killed.

In Mexico, 4 priests died and 1 lay woman: Fr. Santos Sánchez Hernández, attacked by an intruder who entered his house, most likely to steal; Fr. Francisco Sanchez Duran, found in the church with wounds to the neck, perhaps in an attempt to stop a robbery in church; Fr. Salvador Ruiz Enciso, who was kidnapped and killed; Fr. Marco Antonio Duran Romero, killed in a gunfight between soldiers and an armed group. To the list we add Mary Elizabeth Macías Castro, of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement, who worked at a newspaper and in contact with migrants, kidnapped by a group of drug dealers and brutally killed.

In Brazil, Fr. Romeu Drago was killed in his home. His body was then brought to about 25 km from his home, where he was burned.

In Paraguay, Mgr. Julio Cesar Alvarez was killed. His body was found in his room, hand and foot bound, with injuries and scratches and strangled.

In Nicaragua, Fr. Marlon Ernesto Pupiro García was kidnapped and killed.

### *Africa*

In Africa, 6 pastoral care workers were killed: 2 priests, 3 women religious, 1 lay person. The killings took place in Burundi (2) and DR Congo, Southern Sudan, Tunisia, Kenya.

In Tunisia Fr. Marek Rybinsk was killed, a Salesian missionary, whose body was found dead in a local Salesian school of Manouba. The Polish missionary had received death threats from Muslim extremists before his murder.

In Kenya Fr. Awuor Kiser was attacked in a suburb of the Kenyan capital. Shot in the chest with an edged weapon and died because of the serious the wounds.

In R.D. Congo Sister Jeanne Yegmane was killed in an ambush .

In South Sudan Sister Angelina died, while bringing medical aid to refugees.

In Burundi, during a robbery attempt Sister Lukrecija Mamica, of the “Sisters of Charity”, and Francesco Bazzani, a volunteer were killed.

### *Asia*

In 2011 in Asia the deaths of 4 pastoral care workers were recorded: 2 priests, 3 religious sisters, 1 lay person. They died in: India (3) and the Philippines (1).

In India, the priest Fr. G. Amalan was killed in his room by a young man who escaped with a few rupees found in the home; the religious Sister Valsha John, working among the poor, the marginalized and tribal people, killed in her home, a catechist and lay activist RabindraParichha, kidnapped and

killed.

In the Philippines, Fr. Fausto Tentorio, PIME missionary was killed, who had dedicated his life to the service of literacy and development of the indigenous known as lumads. He was killed while on his way to a priests' meeting, two gunmen shot him in the head and back.

### *Europe*

In Spain, Fr. Ricardo Munoz Juarez was killed by thieves who broke into his home.

### **Biographical Notes and Circumstances of Death**

*Sister Jeanne Yegmane*, Congolese, of the congregation of "Augustine" (Order of Saint Augustine) of Dangu (DR Congo), was killed in a street ambush on January 15, 2011. The assailants emerged unannounced from the forest and suddenly fired shots at passenger vehicles, killing Sister Yegmane. After having stopped the cars, the bandits kidnapped the passengers and before escaping, they set fire to the vehicles. After the end of her mandate as Superior, Sister Yegmane had specialized in ophthalmology in Kinshasa. She was very committed to healing the sick and for months had been working hard to bring about the Ophtalmologique Siloe Centre in Isiro, intended to cover a catchment area of about 2 million people in the High Luel District.

On 17 January 2011 *Sister Angelina* was killed in South Sudan, a religious of the local institute of St. Augustine, age 37, of the diocese of Tombura-Yambio (South Sudan). The nun was killed by militants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) while she was bringing medical aid to refugees in South Sudan. The crime is part of the long list of episodes of violence and clashes in different states between the army of Southern Sudan and rebel factions.

*Fr. Rafael Reátiga Rojas*, 35, pastor of the "Jesucristo Nuestra Paz" Cathedral, in the Diocese of Soacha (suffragan of Bogotá, Colombia), and Fr. Richard Armando Piffano Laguado, 37, pastor of the church of "San Juan de la Cruz" Kennedy City, who were killed in Bogotá on Wednesday evening, January 26, 2011, on the southern outskirts of the great capital of Colombia. The assassin was traveling in the same car as the two priests: after he shot one in the head and the other in the chest, bringing on their instantaneous deaths, he alighted from the car and escaped. According to testimonies someone was waiting for him and helped him to escape.

**Fr. Luis Carlos Orozco Cardona**, 26, was seriously wounded in Rionegro (Antioquia), Colombia, on Saturday evening, on February 12, 2011. Among the crowd, an armed young man shot the priest, who was the vicar of the Cathedral in the Diocese of Sonson-Rionegro. Fr. Orozco, seriously wounded, was taken to hospital but despite doctors' efforts he died in the early morning on February 13, 2011, while undergoing surgery. The capture of a minor was reported, perpetrator of the priest's murder, and whose motives remain unknown. Fr. Orozco Cardona was ordained a priest the year before, February 26, 2010.

*Fr. G. Amalan*, 54, Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for the Family, in the Diocese of Palayamkottai, in Tamil Nadu (southern India), was found dead in his room by the Vicar General of the diocese and the police on February 16, 2011. His body was naked, hands and feet bound, his neck

had been broken. The killer is a young 24 year old man, who confessed and was arrested: having killed the priest, walked away with the few rupees that Fr. Amalan had on him.

*Fr. Marek Rybinski*, Salesian missionary (SDB) Polish, 33, was found dead on the morning of February 18, 2011 in a local Salesian school in Manouba (Tunis). Bishop Maroun Elias NimehLahham, Bishop of Tunis, describes the circumstances of Fr. Rybinsk's death: Fr. Rybinsk had left the house around noon on February 17, leaving his car at the mission. The next day, February 18, his computer was found in his room turned on. Therefore it is believed that someone called him with an excuse to get him to leave the house, that person kidnapped and then killed him the next day.

*Fr. Romeu Drago* was killed in his home in the city of Montes Claros (MG), Brazil, on February 19, 2011. His body was then brought to the area of Janaúba along the highway, about 25 km from his home, where he was burned. Several items from his home were stolen and even his car, the safe was found open. The priest, 56, was the head of the community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in the Archdiocese of Montes Claros.

*Fr. Santos Sánchez Hernández*, parish priest of San Jose in Mecapalapa, Puebla (Mexico), was found dead in the rectory, murdered on the night between 21 and 22 February 2011. According to the written by the Bishop of Tuxpan, Bishop Juan Navarro Castellanos, someone entered the priest's quarters, probably to steal, and once he was discovered, he attacked the priest with a machete, gravely injuring him and then finally killing him. Father Santos, 43, a native of the community of Pastoria in the town of Chicontepec, in Veracruz, he had arrived in this parish on 24 June 2010.

*Bishop Julio Cesar Alvarez*, 47, had been pastor of the Parish "Sagrado Corazón de Jesús" in Villarrica, 150 km from Asunción (Paraguay) for two years, was killed in his home in the early hours on April 14, 2011. In his room, where in the morning the lifeless body of the priest was found, he had been strangled, there were evident traces of a struggle. His hands and feet were bound, and there were several shots to the head, injuries and scratches. It is possible that the priest was the victim of a series of thefts that had occurred in the parishes of Villarrica in recent months. The previous day he had withdrawn a sum of money to buy a new car.

*Fr. Francisco Sanchez Duran*, 60, was killed at dawn on April 26, 2011, in the church ElPatrocinio in San José, in the area Educacion, in Coyoacán (south of Mexico City). His body was found around 9.30 am with wounds to the neck. The murder may have been the tragic conclusion of an attempted robbery in the church, as a result of the opposition of the priest to the thieves.

The Eudista priest *Father Gustavo Garcia*, 34, was assassinated in Bogota (Colombia) by an individual who attacked him to steal his mobile phone. The Congregation of Jesus and Mary -Eudisti, informed that Father Gustavo Garcia Bohórquez died on Thursday, May 12, 2011. He was waiting for the bus to go and look after a sick person and, while he was talking on the phone, a criminal who wanted to rob him seriously injured him with a knife. He was immediately taken to hospital, he was very serious and he died shortly after. He was involved with the Association "El Minuto de Dios": he exercised his

ministry of preaching with the groups of the same association, in parish communities and through mass media. He was chaplain of the University *Minuto de Dios*, in Bogota, and assistant to the youth communities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

*Fr. Salvador Ruiz Enciso*, a Mexican, had disappeared from the parish where he was pastor, dedicated to the “*Divino Rostro de Jesus*” in the city of Tijuana, in the north of Mexico, near the border with the United States. On Monday, May 23, 2011, the police found, in a neighborhood near Tijuana, a body with hands and feet tied, unrecognizable, which was submitted to the DNA. Later the Archbishop Romo Muñoz confirmed that it was the priest who had disappeared. Father Chavita, as he affectionately was called, was known to be a simple person and dedicated to his ministry. He became popular for having promoted the “*Mass of the family*”, during which he used some puppets, which he handled with dexterity, to explain the Gospel in an understandable way to children.

*Fr. Ricardo Munoz Juarez*, a retired military chaplain, who carried out his pastoral ministry at the *Iglesia de la Caridad* in Cartagena (Spain), was killed on June 3, 2011 by a blow to the head inflicted with a blunt object. The priest’s body was found in his home. The hypothesis is that some thieves entered the victim’s home, where the priest’s elderly and disabled sister also lived, and once they realized they had been discovered hit and killed Fr. Ricardo.

*Fr. Marco Antonio Duran Romero*, Mexican diocesan priest, 48, was killed in a gunfight between soldiers and an armed group in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, on the border with the United States. In the early afternoon of Friday, July 2, 2011, Father Marco Antonio was in his car, near the parish where he was the pastor, when he found himself in the middle of a gunfight. He was hit by a bullet, was taken to hospital, where, however, died shortly after.

On August 23, the lifeless body of *Fr. Marlon Ernesto Pupiro Garcia*, 40, was found. He was the pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church in the town of La Concepcion, in Masaya (Nicaragua), he was missing since August 20. Every morning Fr. Marlon arrived in time to open the church. On the morning of August 20 not seeing him arrive, the sexton walked along the road but did not find it. Three days later his body was found at km 16 of the Old State Road in the direction of Leon.

*Fr. Jose Reinel Restrepo Idárraga*, 36, was killed on 1 September 2011 on a road from Misra in Bethlehem of Umbria, in the neighboring department of Risaralda (west of Colombia approximately 200 kilometers from Bogota). The priest, pastor in Marmata, was riding a motorcycle when some strangers stopped him and shot him to death. The assailants escaped with the motorcycle (which later was found) and other objects belonging to the priest.

*Fr. Gualberto Oviedo Arrieta*, 34, pastor of Our Lady of Carmen in Capurganá in the Diocese of Apartadó (Colombia), in the early morning of September 12, 2011 was found covered with wounds and stabs, in the parish rectory. There were no acts of violence within the home and nothing was stolen. The murder took place just hours after the conclusion of the “*Week of Peace*”, which had mobilized schools, universities and Colombian institutions on this issue which is so important in the national context.

*Maria Elizabeth Macías Castro*, 39, known as Marisol, of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement (MLS) in Nuevo Laredo (Mexico), worked at a newspaper in Tamaulipas (Mexico). She was kidnapped on Sept. 22, 2011 by a group of drug dealers in this border region. After two days of searching and dramatic silence, her lifeless body was found in a street of the city of Nuevo Laredo, terribly mutilated. Marisol was a member of the Central Committee of the Scalabrinian Lay 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.”

*Fr. Awuor Kiseru*, was attacked by four criminals on the evening of October 3, 2011, while he was in the district of Dandora, on the outskirts of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Fr. James was shot in the chest with a weapon. He was immediately taken to Kayole clinic, on the advice of the doctors he was then transferred to Kenyatta National Hospital, but during transport to the hospital he died.

*Luis Eduardo Garcia*, lay member of the Social Pastoral, group leader of Popayan (Colombia), was murdered on the evening of Sunday, October 16, 2011, while he was going from Popayan to El Tambo (Cauca): he was intercepted by a group of guerrillas, was kidnapped and later killed. He worked in the project for “Social and cultural reactivation”, sponsored by the National Secretariat of Social Pastoral, which assists people affected by the wave of cold weather which hit the country. He was also employed in the municipality of his hometown, El Tambo, for this project, where he was known for his dedication and commitment to the farmers, to his community and to the victims of this natural disaster.

*Father Fausto Tentorio*, Italian missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), pastor of Arakan Valley, on the big island of Mindanao (southern Philippines), he was killed on the morning of October 17, 2011, between 8.30 and 9, in front of his parish. The missionary was on his way to a meeting with priests of the Diocese of Kidapawan, when he was attacked by two armed men who shot him cold-bloodedly to the head and back. He was taken to hospital, doctors only confirmed his death. Fr. Tentorio was working in the apostolate among the tribal people. He dedicated his life to the service of literacy and development of these indigenous known as lumads, especially the tribes of manobo. He created educational programs, helped to build water systems to provide drinking water to villages and fields, he launched training courses. Father Tentorio, had been living in the Philippines since 1978, worked in the Diocese of Kidapawan since 1980.

*Sister Valsha John*, 53, Indian, of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, was killed on the night of November 15, 2011 in her home in the village of Pachwara, Pakur district in the state of Jharkhand (northern India). The nun had been carrying out her pastoral work for 20 years, especially among the poor, the marginalized, the tribal people in the district of Pakur, in the diocese of Dumka. Fr. Nirmal Raj SJ, Provincial of the Jesuits in Dumka said: “Sister Valshalived with the poor, gave her Christian testimony, and preached the gospel, sharing their hardships and difficulties. She was next to the most marginalized tribal communities. She was mainly committed to defending indigenous people from the alienation of their land, carried out by the mining companies to extract coal. She paid this effort with her life”. The sister had been repeatedly threatened by criminals who had warned her not to oppose the work of some companies, but state authorities ignored her requests for help and they left her without protection.

*Sister Lukrecija Mamica*, Croatian, and Francesco Bazzani, Italian volunteer, were killed during an attempted robbery which occurred on the evening of November 27, 2011, when some criminals entered

the house of the Sisters' " Sisters of Charity " in Kiremba in north western Burundi, near the hospital where the great religious nun worked. Lukrecija Sister Lukrecija was killed cold bloodedly, while the volunteer and another nun, Sister Carla, were kidnapped by bandits who, soon after, fearing a confrontation with police, made them get out of the car and cold-bloodedly killed Francesco Bazzani. Sister Carla instead had the strength to react and, although wounded, she saved her life.

The catechist and Catholic activist *Rabindra Parichha*, 47, was killed in Orissa, state in east India. Parichha worked in Kandhamal district, the scene of the 2008 anti-Christian massacres and part of the diocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, but was killed while he was in Bhanjanagar, in the neighboring Diocese of Berhampur, always in Orissa. The murder took place between the evening of December 15, 2011 and the early morning hours of the 16th . The activist had been called by a neighbor on the phone and never returned home. His wife and children looked for him and called the police, who on the morning of December 16 found the body. Parichha had his throat cut and stab wounds to the hands and stomach. Parichha, a former itinerant catechist in the parish of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Mondasoro (Kandhamal district), worked in Orissa Legal Aid Centre for three years, supported by Christian churches in Kandhamal, busy as a lawyer and human rights activist.

- fides

Fides Agency