



(ZENIT, Vatican City, September 14, 2016).- “To kill in the name of God is satanic.”

Pope Francis made this strong statement as he celebrated his morning Mass today in memory of Father Jacques Hamel, before his General Audience in St. Peter’s Square. The Eucharistic celebration was filmed and broadcast live by the Vatican Television Center.

Yesterday, the director of the Holy See Press Office, Greg Burke, announced this Mass for the martyred 86-year-old priest, killed by an Islamic terrorist, noting it would be a “gesture as a sign of closeness to Father Jacques Hamel and his family and the whole community of Rouen.”

Eighty pilgrims of the French diocese, together with Bishop Monsignor Dominique Lebrun of Rouen attended today’s Mass for Fr. Hamel who suffered a martyr’s death on July 26, in the church of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, where he was pastor. There, two men armed with knives entered and took him, two nuns, and two faithful hostage. They subsequently killed Fr. Hamel, by cutting his throat, and seriously wounded another.

During this morning’s homily, Francis recalled that today marks the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Speaking on this mystery, the Pontiff reflected how Fr. Hamel, like Christ, was obedient unto death.

The Holy Father reminded those present how Jesus was the first martyr, and ever since, the Church has had many martyrs, but today more than ever.

“Today, there are Christians martyred, tortured, slaughtered, because they do not deny Jesus Christ,” he said.

In this history of martyrdom, he noted, we arrive at that of Father Jacques, who is part of this chain of martyrs.

“This cruelty that asks for apostasy is – let’s say the word – satanic,” he said, noting, “How much I would like that all the confessions would say: to kill in the name of God is satanic.”

Father Jacques Hamel was slaughtered, just as he was celebrating the Sacrifice of Christ. “A good, meek man, who always was trying to make peace, was assassinated, as if he were a criminal.”

“This is the thread of satanic persecution,” Francis said, observing, “In the midst of the difficult time that he lived in the midst of this tragedy he saw coming, he did not lose the clarity of accusing and say the name of the assassination: ‘Go away, Satan!’”

At the funeral Mass for Father Hamel, the archbishop of Rouen recalled that Father Hamel tried to push away his attacker, saying twice, “Go away, Satan.”

“May this example of courage, along with the martyrdom of his life, to empty himself to help others,” Pope Francis prayed, “help us to move forward without fear. We must pray, eh! He is a martyr, the martyrs are blessed ... We must pray he gives us brotherhood, meekness, peace.”

Moreover, the Pope prayed that Father Hamel intercedes that the faithful might have “the courage to tell the truth: that to kill in the name of God is satanic.”