



An Italian Catholic priest, who is a member of the Neocatechumenal Way, was kidnapped on Thursday by armed men in Benin City, Nigeria, according to media reports.

Fr. Maurizio Pallu had been a missionary in Nigeria for three years.

According to the Italian bishops' publication, *Avvenire*, the kidnapers may be local criminals whose aim would be to obtain a ransom in exchange for the priest.

While the Islamist terror group Boko Haram is active in Nigeria's northern region, the priest was kidnapped from the south.

Authorities are investigating the incident.

Greg Burke, director of the Holy See Press Office, posted on Twitter that "Pope Francis has been informed about the Italian priest kidnapped in Nigeria, Fr. Maurizio Pallu, and is praying for him."

Fr. Pallu is 63 and a native of Florence. As a member of the Neocatechumenal Way, he was a lay missionary for 11 years in various countries. In 1998, he entered the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Rome.