

Vatican finds 1,600+ Christians killed for their faith since millennium.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/53232>

Xavier Burgos. Sep 11th, 2025

Source: Aid to the Church in Need

A Vatican commission comprising historians, theologians and other experts has documented the stories of more than 1,600 men and women killed over the past 25 years for being Christian. The work was supported by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

Pope Leo XIV has invited representatives from all Christian denominations to take part in a celebration in the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Wall this Sunday (14 September), to pay tribute to these "witnesses of the Faith".

The head of the commission, Archbishop Fabio Fabene, said: "Martyrdom has existed in every age of the Church, but perhaps now more than in the past, many surrender their lives in order not to betray the message of Christ."

Working with bishops' conferences, religious institutes and other Church entities - as well as drawing on verified media accounts - the commission confirmed 1,624 cases of Christians murdered because of their faith between the years 2000 and 2025.

Of these, 643 were killed in Sub-Saharan Africa, 357 in Asia and Oceania, 304 in the Americas, 277 in the Middle East and the Maghreb, and 43 in Europe.

The commission's Deputy, Sant'Egidio Community founder Andrea Riccardi, said Christians were killed for different reasons throughout the world.

The 357 killed in Asia and Oceania includes the 200 who died on Easter Sunday 2019 in the bombing attacks against Catholic and Protestant churches in Sri Lanka, while the martyrs in Africa "were mostly killed by jihadists or for the role they played in ethnic-political conflicts". Dr Riccardi added the number of those killed could be much higher "as martyrdom cannot be fully counted, especially in remote areas".

Commission members have been working since July 2023, when Pope Francis asked them to "gather the testimonies of life, up to the shedding of blood, of these sisters and brothers of ours, so that their memory can stand as a treasure cherished by the Christian community".

The Pope stressed that this research should not be limited to the Catholic Church, but "extend to all Christian denominations", adding "to all of them we owe a great debt, and we cannot forget them".

The commission has opted not to publish a full list of names "until it is prudent to do so", although some are mentioned, including seven Anglican religious from the Melanesian Brotherhood, who were tortured and killed by the head of a militia group while they were trying to mediate a local conflict in the Solomon Islands in 2003.

Dr Riccardi said: "The work of this commission and the ecumenical ceremony on Sunday 14th September show that our Church is still a Church of martyrs and that they have much to teach us. "We are contemporaries of these people whom we could have met and known personally in our lifetime." Stressing the context of the Jubilee of Hope, he added that they were "men and women who believed in a God who was faithful to them even in adverse circumstances. The Church regards the memory of the martyrs not as a moment of sorrow but as hope for the future."

ACN's international executive president Regina Lynch said the findings "reflect the experience of our work on the ground, helping communities that face constant existential threats.

"ACN is very proud to stand with and support these Christians, but above all we are grateful to learn from their testimony, which strengthens our faith, and that of our benefactors every day."