



The Holy See

ENCOUNTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS WITH SURVIVORS AND RELATIVES OF THE VICTIMS OF THE ATTACK IN NICE

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 24 September 2016*

[Multimedia]

Mes chers frères et soeurs, je m'excuse de parler italien, mais mon français n'est pas bon. [My dear brothers and sisters, pardon me if I speak in Italian, but my French is not good.]

With deep emotion I meet you, who are in anguish body and mind because, one festive evening, violence blindly struck you or one of your loved ones, regardless of origin or religion. I would like to share in your pain, a pain that is even more acute when I think of the children, even entire families, whose lives were suddenly and dramatically torn apart. To each of you I assure my compassion, my closeness and my prayers.

Dear families, I invoke our heavenly Father, Father of all, that He welcome your dear departed, so that they may soon find rest and the joy of eternal life. For us Christians, the foundation of hope is Jesus Christ who died and is risen. The Apostle Paul assures us: "if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom 6:8-9). May the certainty of everlasting life, which also pertains to believers of other religions, be a comfort to you throughout your life, and constitute a strong reason for perseverance in order to courageously continue your journey here on earth.

I also pray to the God of Mercy for all the people who were injured, in certain cases atrociously maimed, in flesh or in spirit, and I do not forget those who for this reason were not able to come or who are still in hospital. The Church is close to you and accompanies you with immense compassion. With her presence, beside you in these moments so hard to face, she asks the Lord to come to help you and to place in your hearts feelings of peace and brotherhood.

The tragedy that happened in the city of Nice met has brought about significant gestures of

solidarity and sympathy everywhere. I thank all of the people who, immediately, gave assistance to the victims, or who until today, and certainly for a long time to come, devote themselves to supporting and assisting the families. I naturally think of the Catholic community and of its Bishop, Msgr André Marceau, as also of the services and of the world of associations. In particular I think of the *Alpes-Maritimes Fraternité* association, present here, which is made up of representatives of all the religious confessions, and this is a very beautiful sign of hope. I am delighted to see that among you interreligious relationships are very active, and this cannot but contribute to alleviate the wounds of these tragic events.

Indeed, establishing a sincere dialogue and a fraternal relationship among all, in particular among those who confess the one and merciful God, is an urgent priority which leaders, both political and religious, must seek to foster and which each one is called to implement around him- or herself. When the temptation to withdraw back into oneself, or to respond to hatred with hatred and to violence with violence, an authentic conversion of heart is necessary. This is the message that the Gospel of Jesus addresses to all of us. One can respond to the demon's assaults only with the works of God which are forgiveness, love and respect for neighbour, even if he or she is different.

Dear brothers and sisters, once more I assure you of my prayers and of all the tenderness of the Successor of Peter. I also pray for your dear country and for its leaders, so that they may tirelessly build a just, peaceful and fraternal society. As a sign of my closeness, I invoke upon each of you the help of the Virgin Mary and an abundance of heavenly blessings.

Le Seigneur bénisse vous tous. [May the Lord bless you all.]