News



Pope Francis is pictured after delivering his Easter message and blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 21, 2019. That day he prayed for Burkina Faso, and on May 13 he expressed his closeness to and prayers for the victims of a May 12 shooting at a Catholic Church there. (CNS/Paul Haring)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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Pope Francis expressed his closeness to and prayers for the victims of a shooting at a Catholic Church in Burkina Faso, which claimed the lives of six people.

"The Holy Father has learned with sorrow about the news of the attack on the church in Dablo, Burkina Faso. He prays for the victims, for their families and for the entire Christian community in the country," Alessandro Gisotti, interim director of the Vatican press office, tweeted May 13.

According to the Agence France-Presse, armed persons entered the church May 12 on motorcycles and shot at churchgoers attempting to escape. Father Simeon Yampa, who was celebrating Sunday Mass, was among those killed in the attack. The gunmen then set fire to the church and several other buildings nearby before raiding a local health center.

Government officials blamed the attack on Muslim extremist groups, saying that after failing "to pit communities against each other with targeted killings of traditional chiefs and community leaders, terrorist groups are now attacking religion in an evil plot to divide us," AFP reported.

Burkina Faso has seen a rise in attacks against Christians in the country in recent months.

Before giving his Easter blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) April 21, Francis prayed for peace in several countries in the African continent, including Burkina Faso, which he said are "still rife with social tensions, conflicts and at times violent forms of extremism that leave in their wake insecurity, destruction and death."

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