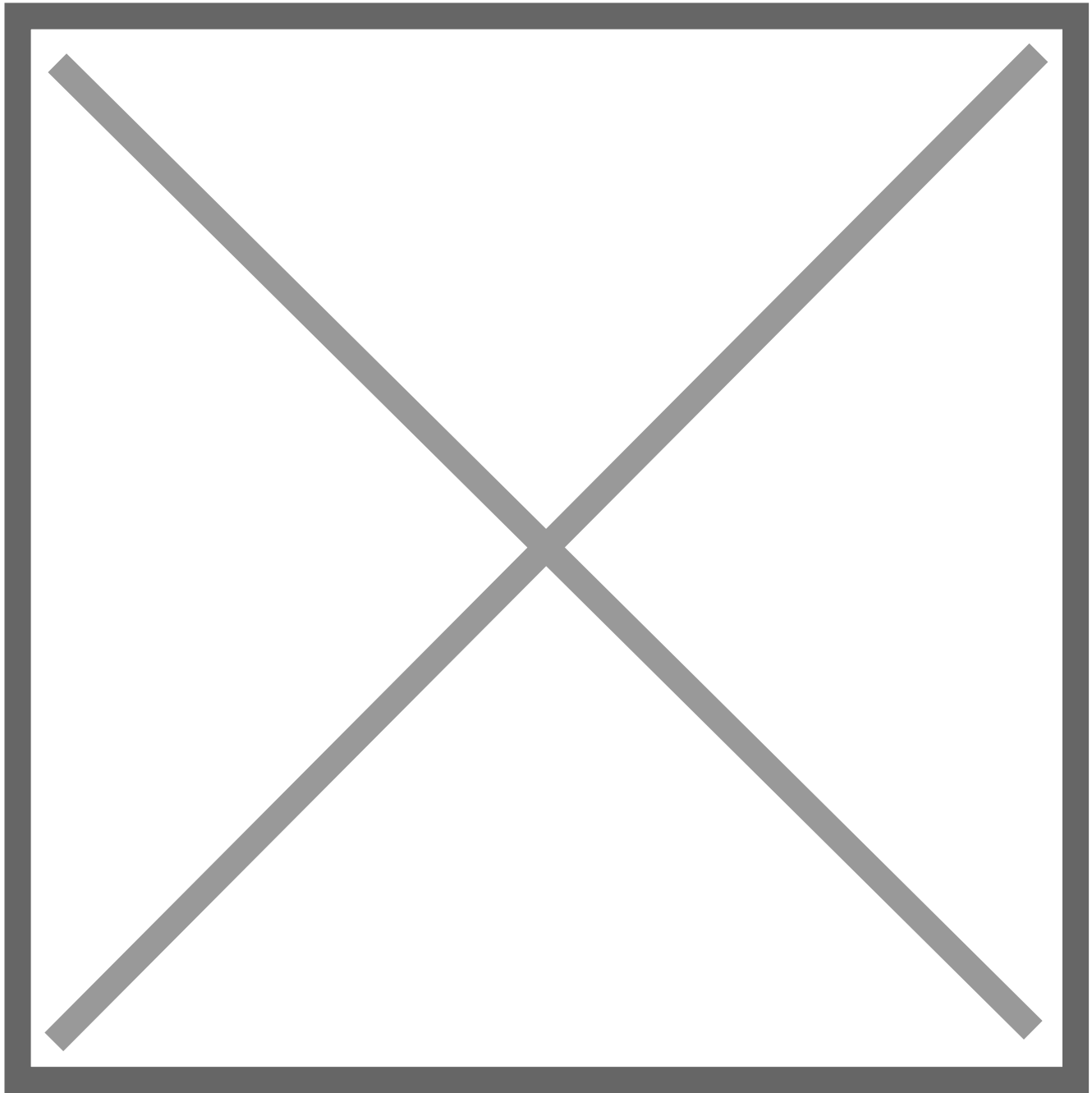


[News](#)



Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline of Marseille, president of the French bishops' conference, center, joins politicians, bishops and family in a silent march to the Church of Saint-Étienne July 26, 2026, to mark the 10th anniversary Mass of Father Jacques Hamel in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, France. The 85-year-old priest was murdered there by two Islamic terrorists as he was celebrating Mass July 26, 2016. (OSV News/Antoine-Marie IZOARD/Catholic Press)

Paulina Guzik

[View Author Profile](#)



OSV News

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

SAINT-ETIENNE-DU-ROUVRAY, France — July 27, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

French top politicians, bishops and family remembered the 85-year-old Fr. Jacques Hamel 10 years after the priest was murdered by two Islamic terrorists as he was celebrating Mass July 26, 2016, in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, France.

Hamel's stole was placed on a cross in the center of the church. "You would have preferred that it is not here," Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen told the faithful gathered during Mass, according to *Le Monde*, the daily French newspaper, which reported that the prelate was visibly moved by the action. "But we needed to see (the stole) on the cross ... where, in Jesus, the worst violence and victorious love for all are united."

Attending Mass were Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu and former President Francois Holland, who held office at the time of the tragedy.

Roseline Hamel, Hamel's 86-year-old sister, also attended the Mass, along with Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline of Marseille, president of the French bishops' conference.

Before Mass, they led a crowd that walked the route Hamel took from his rectory to what would be his final Mass.

President Emmanuel Macron commemorated Hamel in an X post July 26, saying, "We will not forget Fr. Jacques Hamel."

"Ten years ago today, he was cowardly murdered by two Islamist terrorists, targeted because he embodied the rejection of hatred, fraternity, and hope," the president wrote.

"To his family, his parishioners and all the residents of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, to the Catholics of France, I extend the fraternal and faithful greetings of the Nation," President Macron added.

"His memory compels us," he continued. "It compels us to relentlessly defend the freedom of conscience that the Republic guarantees and protects. Faced with Islamist terrorism, France remains united. Faithful to its founding principles. Resolved to yield nothing to those who seek to divide us."

Advertisement

After slitting Hamel's throat, the attackers, Adel Kermiche and Abdel-Malik Petitjean, also seriously injured Guy Coponet, one of the worshippers they took hostage. They were shot dead by police as they tried to leave the church.

Coponet remembered the horrific event in a video produced by the French National Police, thanking the officers involved in his rescue.

"Everyone involved went beyond what was expected of them ... if I'm here with you today, it's thanks to you," Coponet said.

Hollande, France's president from 2012 to 2017, said in a video recorded for the anniversary that "the risk when such a tragedy occurs in a church is that — and this was indeed the intention of the Islamist terrorists who were sent there — it could lead to division, confrontation and revenge."

"So it was absolutely essential to show that we stood together, that we were united, beyond religions, beyond sensitivities, to stand together and face this together," he continued.

Roseline Hamel became an embodiment of the spirit of reconciliation after the tragedy. She not only forgave the attackers, but also befriended Kermiche's mother, Nassera, with whom she wrote a 2025 book, "Sisters in Sorrow."

"For many, such a friendship was incomprehensible and even met with rejection," Hamel told OSV News.

"But what led me to seek out Nassera was my desire to meet someone with whom I could share my suffering, which seemed insurmountable to me," she said. "I thought of the murderer's mother, and I put myself in her shoes. I could imagine that she was suffering even more than I was. No doubt she could understand my pain."

As they spent time together, the two women learned to confide in one another. Hamel went to pay her respects at the grave of Kermiche's son, Adel.

"I wanted to convey a message of forgiveness from my brother," she said. "After that, little by little, year after year, we tried together to forge a path of resilience and to begin to heal the still-fragile wound left by that tragic day."

For Hamel, this friendship has been "a sign of hope and a true source of comfort."

In his interview for the anniversary, Hollande said: "The fact remains that we held firm, that the population did not succumb to a spirit of division, separation and confrontation."

Today, he said, "we must maintain the same attitude. There are forces that want to move towards division. We want to move towards unity. And that is the meaning of this commemoration, to remember."