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Argentine priest kidnapped during 'dirty war' reconciled with Pope Francis

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NCR Today

Pope Francis

An Argentine priest kidnapped and tortured during the South American country's 'dirty war' said Friday that he has since reconciled with Pope Francis.

Jesuit Fr. Francisco Jalics was kidnapped in 1976 along with a fellow priest by the military junta who ran the government as a dictatorship from 1976-1983, Argentina's 'dirty war.' The Associated Press reported Friday that the priest, through a statement on the German Jesuits' website, said he and Francis met 'years later,' believed to be in 2000, to discuss the events.

'Following that, we celebrated Mass publicly together and hugged solemnly. I am reconciled to the events and consider the matter to be closed,' he said in the statement.

Jalics' kidnapping came while Francis (then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio) served at the Jesuit provincial in the country (1973-1979).

Since his ascendance to the papacy, some have renewed criticism of his decision to mandate that Jesuits remain in their roles and at their parishes, instead of entering into political activism and 'base communities.'

The AP report also stated that Bergoglio withdrew support for Jalics and Fr. Orlando Yorio, after both refused his order to abandon their work in the slums for their own safety. Both men survived the prison where they were tortured, partly due to Bergoglio's behind-the-scenes intervention with dictator Jorge Videla, according to a separate AP report.

Yorio passed away of natural causes in 2000, but had previously argued Bergoglio's action basically handed the two over to the death squads. Jalics now lives in southern Germany.

[**Editor's note:** An earlier version incorrectly stated kidnappers had killed Yorio. This post has also been updated with additional information about the two priests' release.]

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