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The Pope receives the relatives of the 14 July attack in Nice

This morning in the Paul VI Hall the Holy Father received the relatives of the victims of the 14 July attack in Nice, France, in which 87 people were killed and more than three hundred injured, some gravely. He expressed his profound emotion in meeting those who had suffered in body and heart during a night of celebration when they and their loved ones were struck by blind violence that paid no heed to their origin or religion. "I wish to share in your pain, a pain that is even greater when I think of the children, or indeed entire families, whose life was taken from them suddenly and so dramatically. I assure each one of you of my compassion, my closeness and my prayer".

"Dear families, I invoke our heavenly Father, Father of all, so that He welcome your departed loved ones, so that they soon find the repose and joy of eternal life. For us, Christians, the foundation of hope is Jesus Christ, Who died and rose again. The apostle Paul assures us, 'if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him'. ... May the certainty of eternal life, that belongs also to believers of other religions, be of consolation to you throughout life, and constitute a strong reason for perseverance, to continue with courage on your earthly journey".

The Pope also implored of God mercy for all those who were injured, and in some cases appallingly maimed, in flesh and in spirit, and recalled also those who were unable to be present in the Paul VI Hall, or were indeed still in hospital. "The Church remains close to you and accompanies you with immense compassion. With her presence next to you in these moments, so difficult to face, she asks the Lord to come to your aid and to infuse your hearts with sentiments of peace and fraternity".

The Nice tragedy inspired meaningful gestures of solidarity and closeness throughout the world, noted the Holy Father, and he thanked all those who gave immediate aid to the victims or who have and continue to devote themselves to the support and accompaniment of families. He gave special thanks to the Catholic community and to Bishop André Marceau, to the aid services, and to the world of associations, in particular the Alpes-Maritimes Fraternité, present in the Paul VI Hall, whose members include people of all religious confessions. "This is a very beautiful sign of hope. I rejoice to see that interreligious relations flourish among you, and this cannot but contribute to alleviating the wounds of this dramatic event"

"Indeed, establishing a sincere dialogue and fraternal relations among all, in particular among those who confess

a sole and merciful God, is an urgent priority that leaders, both political and religious, must seek to favour and that every person is called to put into practice in his or her environment. When there is the temptation to be wrapped up in oneself, or to respond with hatred with hatred, and violence with violence, then an authentic conversion of the heart is needed. This is the message that Jesus' Gospel addresses to all of us. It is possible to respond to assaults by the devil only with the works of God, which are forgiveness, love and respect for our neighbour, even if he or she is different".

Finally, the Pope again assured all those present of his prayers, and "all the tenderness of Peter's Successor. I also pray for your dear country and for all leaders, so that a just, peaceful and fraternal society may be built. As a sign of my closeness, I invoke upon each one of you the help of the Virgin Mary and the abundance of heavenly blessings".
