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Prayer of the Holy Father at the Mausoleum of the Ardeatine Caves

At the end of the celebration the Pope transferred to the Mausoleum of the Fosse Ardeatine, where he was welcomed by the Commissioner of the “Onorcaduti”, the Fallen, Alessandro Velti; by the director of the Mausoleum, Francesco Sardone; by the president of the Jewish Community of Rome, Ruth Dureghello; and by the Chief Rabbi, Riccardo Di Segni, who entered with him in the Mausoleum. Members of the national Association for Italian Families of Martyrs fallen for the Freedom of the Homeland (ANFIM) were also present.

Before the prayer in the Mausoleum, the Holy Father greeted the relatives of the victims of the massacre of 24 March 1944, who awaited him outside. He then spent a moment with the leaders of the Italian Armed Forces, who have custodianship of the Mausoleum, and paused in silent prayer before the bronze railings that enclose the location of the massacre. Subsequently, following a brief visit to the Fosse Ardeatine, Pope Francis again prayed, placing a white rose on ten of the 335 tombs. Immediately afterwards he read out a prayer, alongside Rabbi Di Segni, who had previously recited a prayer in Hebrew.

Finally, the Pope signed the Book of Honour, with the following words: “These are the fruits of war: hatred, death, vengeance... Forgive us, Lord”. At around 18.00 he returned to the Vatican.

The following is the Holy Father’s prayer at the Mausoleum of the Ardeatine Caves:

Prayer of the Holy Father

“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob” (cf. *Ex* 3. 6).

With this name you introduced yourself to Moses,

when you revealed to him the will to free your people from the slavery of Egypt.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob:

God Who secures a covenant with man;

God Who binds Himself with a pact of faithful love forever.

Merciful and compassionate

with every man and every people who suffers oppression.

"I have ... seen the affliction of my people ... I have heard their cry ... I know their sufferings" (*Ex 3: 7*).

God of faces and names.

God of each one of the three hundred and thirty-five men slaughtered here on 24 March 1944,

whose remains repose in these tombs.

You know their faces and their names.

All of them, even the twelve who remain unknown to us; for you, no-one is unknown.

God of Jesus, Our Father Who is in Heaven.

Thanks to Him, crucified and risen,

we know that Your name

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob"

means that you are not the God of the dead, but of the living (cf. *Mt 22: 32*),

that your covenant of faithful love is stronger than death

and is an assurance of resurrection.

O Lord, in this place

consecrated to the memory of the fallen for freedom and justice,

Make us remove the sandals of selfishness and indifference

and cross the burning bush of this Mausoleum,

let us listen in silence to Your name:

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob"

God of Jesus,

God of the living.

Amen.
