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Video Message of the Holy Father Francis in memory of the Coptic martyrs killed in Libya

An online meeting is being held today in commemoration of the 21 Coptic martyrs killed on 15 February 2015 on the beach in Sirte, Libya. Taking part in the event are His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Copts and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, and His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, among others.

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis for the occasion:

Video Message of the Holy Father

Today is the day I have in my heart, that February of 2015. I hold in my heart that baptism of blood, those twenty-one men baptised as Christians with water and the Spirit, and that day also baptised with blood. They are our Saints, Saints of all Christians, Saints of all Christian denominations and traditions. They are those who have blanchèd their lives in the blood of the Lamb, they are those... of the people of God, the faithful people of God.

They had gone to work abroad to support their families: ordinary men, fathers of families, men with the illusion [desire] to have children; men with the dignity of workers, who not only seek to bring home bread, but to bring it home with the dignity of work. And these men bore witness to Jesus Christ. Their throats slit by the brutality of Isis, they died saying: "Lord Jesus!", confessing the name of Jesus.

It is true that this was a tragedy, that these people lost their lives on that beach; but it is also true that the beach was blessed by their blood. And it is even more true that from their simplicity, from their simple but consistent faith, they received the greatest gift a Christian can receive: bearing witness to Jesus Christ to the point of giving their life.

I thank God our Father because He gave us these courageous brothers. I thank the Holy Spirit because He gave them the strength and consistency to confess Jesus Christ to the point of shedding blood. I thank the bishops, the priests of the Coptic sister church which raised them and taught them to grow in the faith. And I thank the mothers of these people, of these twenty-one men, who "nursed" them in the faith: they are the mothers of God's holy people who transmit the faith "in dialect", a dialect that goes beyond languages, the dialect of belonging.

I join all of you, brother bishops, in this commemoration. To you, great, beloved Tawadros, brother bishop and friend. To you, Justin Welby, who also wanted to come to this meeting. And to all the other bishops and priests, but above all I join the holy faithful people of God who in their simplicity, with their consistency and inconsistencies, with their graces and sins, carry forth the confession of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is Lord.

I thank you, twenty-one saints, Christian saints of all confessions, for your witness. And I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for being so close to your people, for not forgetting them.

Let us pray together today in memory of these twenty-one Coptic Martyrs: may they intercede for us all before the Father. Amen.
