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Pope Francis appalled by the taking of hostages and murder of a priest in a church near Rouen

The Holy Father, through Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, has sent a message of condolences to Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen, France, following the dramatic events this morning in the church of nearby Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, where two men armed with knives entered and took hostage the priest, two nuns and two faithful. They subsequently killed the priest, Fr. Jacques Hamel, aged 86, by cutting his throat, and seriously wounded another hostage.

“Informed of the hostage-taking in the church of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, which has caused the death of a priest and in which one of the hostages has been gravely injured, His Holiness Pope Francis assures you of his spiritual closeness and joins in prayer with the suffering of the families and with the pain of the parish and the diocese of Rouen. He implores God, Father of mercy, to welcome Fr. Jacques Hamel in the peace of His light, and comfort the injured person. The Holy Father is particularly troubled to learn that this act of violence took place in a church, during Mass, a liturgical act that implores of God His peace on earth. He asks the Lord to inspire in all thoughts of reconciliation and fraternity in this new trial, and to extend to everyone the abundance of His blessings”.