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Francis calls anti-Christian violence 'ecumenism of blood'

John L. Allen Jr. | Dec. 15, 2013 NCR Today

In a Dec. 14 interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, Pope Francis suggested that the common experience of anti-Christian persecution around the world could become the basis for efforts at Christian unity, calling it the "ecumenism of blood."

Here is the text of what Pope Francis said, in reply to a question from Italian writer Andrea Tornielli as to whether ecumenism is a priority for the pope, in NCR translation from the Italian.

"For me, ecumenism is a priority. Today, there's the ecumenism of blood. In some countries they kill Christians because they wear a cross or have a Bible, and before killing them they don't ask if they're Anglicans, Lutherans, Catholic or Orthodox. The blood is mixed. For those who kill, we're Christians. We're united in blood, even if among ourselves we still haven't succeeded in taking the necessary steps towards unity and perhaps the moment hasn't arrived. Unity is a grace that we have to ask for."

"In Hamburg [Germany], I knew a pastor who was working on the beatification cause of a Catholic priest sent to the guillotine by the Nazis because he was teaching catechism to children. After him in the line-up of the condemned was a Lutheran pastor killed for the same reason. Their blood was mixed. The pastor told me he'd gone to his bishop and said to him: 'I'll continue to pursue the cause, but both of them together, not just the Catholic.' That's the ecumenism of blood. It exists today too, all you have to do is read the papers."

"Those who kill Christians don't ask for our ID cards to know which church you were baptized in. We have to take this reality into consideration."

(*Follow John Allen on Twitter: @**JohnLAllenJr**)*

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