

Avvenire – August 12, 2014

The urgent need to show our closeness to the persecuted Christians

Our faith re-awakened by their testimony

by Julián Carrón*

Dear Editor,

“If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it.” (I Cor 12:26). How can we not feel all the lacerating pain of our persecuted Christian brethren? The outcry is growing ever stronger at the appalling injustices suffered by Christians in many parts of the world, forced to leave everything and flee their homeland for one reason: the fact of being Christian. It seems incredible that in the 21st century something of the kind can still happen.

“There are more martyrs today than there were in the early centuries of the Church. More martyrs! Our own brothers and sisters. They are suffering! They carry their faith even to martyrdom.” (May 18, 2013). How can we remain indifferent to these words of Pope Francis? Evidently we are before a new challenge, as he reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “On occasion these [challenges] may take the form of veritable attacks on religious freedom or new persecutions directed against Christians; in some countries these have reached alarming levels of hatred and violence.” (61).

But even in the midst of these sufferings, we receive the testimony of their faith, as the Archbishop of Mosul said in a recent interview: “They were the ones to tell me that they needed to be more attached to our faith. It was they who told me that they began to live again amidst the many difficulties. They told me in words and I, from their eyes, could see that it was true. I could tell by the way they said it,” because “When I arrived, it was totally different. After six months, a year, the change in them was palpable.” (*Traces*, July/August 2014). I hope we will treasure and learn from their testimony, so they may re-awaken our faith and we may live it and testify to it as they do in the circumstances in which each of us is called to live it.

“If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. [...] Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.” (I Cor 12:26-27). Precisely because of this common membership in the ecclesiastical body we would like to bear some of the weight of intolerance, misunderstanding and violence that the world that rejects Christ heaps on the backs of our brethren.

How can we not feel the urgency of showing all our closeness to the persecuted Christians? We do so not only by uniting with the outcry of all those who sense this wound as if inflicted on themselves, so that these facts do not pass in silence, but above all by participating with all our communities of Communion and Liberation throughout Italy in the day of prayer that the Italian Bishop's Conference has called for them on August 15th, united with all the Church in Italy. Thank you for your hospitality.

**President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*