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Trial for the murder of Father Olivier Maire SMM

LA ROCHE-SUR-YON, France - The trial for the murder of Father Olivier MAIRE, SMM, which occurred on the night of August 8-9, 2021 in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, recently concluded on January 22, 2026, before the Assize Court of La Roche-sur-Yon, in Vendée.

The court sentenced Emmanuel Abayisenga, 45, a Rwandan national, to 30 years in prison and, upon completion of his sentence, to deportation from France. The verdict was influenced by the judges' finding of premeditation.

Present at the hearing were Father Olivier's elderly parents, his two twin brothers, the provincial of France, Father Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE, SMM and Brother Daniel BUSNEL, SMM.

"We miss him terribly! We would like to understand why. Olivier was non-violent and gentle," one of his brothers emphasizes. The other remembers his smiles and his kindness. And they acknowledge having learned a great deal about their brother after his death: his erudition, his concern for others.

The trial was marked by the absolute silence of the accused. A silence that weighed heavily on Father Olivier's family. *"On the one hand, I was angry, very angry," confided Father Paulin. "We wanted to hear him! For four days, we waited for his voice, a confession, a plea for forgiveness. Nothing! But this waiting was met with profound compassion. When we looked at him, he lowered his head. He didn't dare look at us. Compassion arose from this sight."*

The mother's words, as reported by his brother, were also moving: at that moment, she was also thinking of the suffering of another mother, the mother of the accused.

The diocese of Luçon experienced this moment by preparing for and accompanying the trial with prayer.

Prayer before the start of the trial

Lord God, Father of mercy and truth, We turn to you as the trial of Father Olivier Maire begins.

We entrust to you his person, his life, his religious family and all those who still bear the wound of his death.

Grant to each one – judges, lawyers, plaintiffs and defendants – a sincere and clear-sighted heart, respectful of human dignity.

May the search for truth never be separated from justice, and may justice always be illuminated by mercy.

We ask you for peace for troubled hearts, courage for those who will bear witness, and wisdom for those who will have to decide.

Welcome into your light Father Olivier, faithful servant of the Gospel and witness of charity. May his example continue to bear fruits of reconciliation, forgiveness, and fraternity. Holy Spirit, breathe upon this trial so that it may open a path of truth, healing, and hope. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

P. Efreem ASSOLARI, SMM