



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

ACN news 14.03.2025 / Pakistan

by Maria Lozano, with permission to reproduce.

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Young Pakistani Akash Bashir remains an inspiration to many, ten years after his death

March 15 will mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Akash Bashir, a 20-year-old Catholic who sacrificed his life to save hundreds of people when he intercepted a suicide bomber trying to access the church of Saint John, in Youhanabad, in the Diocese of Lahore, Pakistan.

That act led to his being raised to the status of Servant of God – the first in the history of Pakistan – a first step on the path to beatification, generating much hope among the Christian community in Pakistan and around the world.

Akash Bashir was born on 22 June 1994 to a Catholic family in Risalpur, Pakistan. From an early age he showed a commitment to his community. On 15 March 2015, the fourth Sunday of Lent, he was on duty as a volunteer guard outside the church when a suspicious man tried to enter the building where hundreds of people and families were gathered for Mass.

Akash realised that the man was wearing explosives and stopped him. His last words were: “I will die before letting you enter”, as he wrapped his arms around the terrorist to prevent him from committing a massacre. Unable to complete his mission, the terrorist detonated his explosives, killing himself and Akash.

Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, general postulator for the Causes of the Saints of the Salesian Family, spoke to Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) in Rome, highlighting the importance of Akash’s witness: “I think that this is a special cause, because he was a young boy, because he will be the first Pakistani saint, and because it has an ecumenical dimension to it.”

According to the postulator, who has been charged with this cause because Akash attended a Salesian school, the death of Akash highlights the ecumenism of blood which Pope Francis has spoken of so often. “Shortly before the attack on the Catholic Church of Saint John, an Anglican church had also been attacked, which united the local Anglican and Catholic communities in their pain. Besides that, Akash’s grave was built out of marble donated by a Muslim, which shows that his sacrifice was recognised beyond religious boundaries.”

The power of his witness





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Since the beginning of his beatification cause, 32 witnesses have been heard, including friends, family, religious, and priests, as well as some Muslims. The diocesan phase of the process was concluded on 24 October 2024, and it is now in the hands of Rome.

The life and sacrifice of Akash have inspired many young people in Pakistan and all over the world. In the words of Fr Cameroni: “The Christians have been strengthened, other young people have taken over, and there have been many baptisms. He has been a source of peace and hope, because his example gives one a glimpse of Christ’s victory. Easter is about death and resurrection, and therefore, hope. It is also a call to reconciliation.”

Akash is also an example for young people because he was a humble person. “He was a very simple boy, but he was always full of love and service for the poor, and moved by an ideal of defending justice,” recalls Fr Cameroni, who wrote a short book about the young Pakistani.

During his conversation with ACN, the general postulator highlighted Akash’s openness to serving others. “In fact, there is an impressive episode about a dream that Akash had and which he confided to a friend, who after the murder told it to Akash’s father. He said he had dreamed that he would die serving, doing good.”

Ten years after the fact, Akash Bashir’s story continues to be a powerful reminder of the strength of faith and courage, including among young people, in times of persecution.

According to Fr Cameroni, his last words: “I will die before letting you enter” are a sign of the courage with which he stood up to evil, protecting the faithful at the cost of his own life. The general postulator says that this is also a sentence that can help the young people of today. “Akash did not let evil in. He preferred to die. We must do the same, struggling to avoid letting evil into our lives. In that sentence I see reflections of Don Bosco’s message, I believe that this is a source of great Christian hope. The power of Christ can defeat any evil. Evil does not have the last word.”

Aid to the Church in Need’s Lent Appeal focuses on *Witnesses of Hope: Persecuted, suffering & oppressed Christians of our times*. You can support Christians facing persecution at www.aidtochurch.org/hope