

Indonesian Catholic Priest Forgives Suspect Attacking Him



The email of the retired Bishop of Purwokerto, Central Java, Mgr. Sunarko SJ, has been published in *Serayu.net*. It talks about the incidence where Karl Edmud Prier SJ, a German Indonesian Catholic priest, has become one of the victims of the brutal actions conducted by Sulyono, the suspect in an attack at St. Lidwina Catholic Church in Bedog, Yogyakarta on Sunday (11 February).

Having left the hospital for almost two weeks, the priest shared his reflection and the chronological order of the attack.

According to him, when he was leading a Mass ceremony, Sulyono suddenly came inside the church with his long sword, attacking anyone standing in his way. Trying to be a good shepherd, he remained standing in front of the altar in the hope that Sulyono would go towards him and stop attacking the congregation attending the Mass.

“Raising high up his sword, he shouted ‘Allahu akbar’ [‘Allah is Great’] and moved toward the altar. He stopped in front of the altar, watching me. He seemed to think how to scare me. I was not frightened, standing still behind the altar,” said the priest, adding that the suspect, then, moved behind him, striking him with his sword twice on his back and once on his head. Almost tumbling down I tried to stand still.

Mentioning that the blood was all over his body, the priest moved slowly without the suspect following him. The chairman of the local congregation came, asking him to go to the hospital right away. After that, not only did the militant suspect destroy the altar, damaging everything around it, but he also cut the head of Mother Mary statue and that of the Holy Heart Jesus statue.

While the churchgoers were trying to stop the suspect’s violent actions, the police came. As Sulyono, the suspect, also wildly attacked the police, injuring some of them with his sword, he was then shot at his leg. Tumbling down on the floor, the police quickly arrested him.

Together with the other three churchgoers who were seriously injured, the Frankfurt-born Prier who has been serving Catholics in Yogyakarta since the 1960s, had to undertake surgery on his head at Panti Rapih Hospital Yogyakarta.

After that, the Catholic priest said he had witnessed three important things. First, the governor and King of Yogyakarta, Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, visited him at the hospital on the same day (on 11 February), saying “Saya minta maaf pada Romo” [“I apologize to you, Father.”].

The priest was told that it was for the very first time for anyone in Yogyakarta ever heard such words expressed by the Sultan.

Then, it was Monday (on 12 February) when the Catholic congregation in Bedog started to clean up and repair the violent damages inside and outside the church, groups of Muslims came to help showing their solidarity. Not only did they together put new coat of paint on the church building, but one of the Muslims donated new statues of Mother Mary and Jesus, respectively. Another Muslim also donated and put CCTV and alarm devices on the church. All of these were spontaneously done. Yogyakarta communities seemed to try hard repairing the image of peaceful Yogyakarta which was recently made blurred by some irresponsible persons.

Next, the Archbishop of Semarang Mgr. Robertus Rubiyatmoko celebrated a Grateful Mass ceremony on Monday (19 February). Not only was it attended by all the victims of the attack and the local congregation in Bedog, but it was also attended by more than 1,400 Yogyakartaans.

During the sermon, priest Prier was invited to share his reflection. He said two things, namely, not to be afraid and that he had forgiven Suliyono, the suspect. He also mentioned about Jesus' words on forgiving.

Source: MgrS/Serayu.net, mirifica/2018/02/24/sharing-dari-rm-edmund-prier-sj/, "Sharing dari Romo Edmund Prier, Sj (Priest Edmund Prier forgives suspect attacking him)", in Indonesian, 24 Feb18.

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