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Nigeria Catholic School Abduction Today: 315 Students and Teachers Taken From St Mary's in Niger State

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Keep quiet or we shoot"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Gunmen abducted 315 students and teachers from St Mary's Catholic Primary and Secondary School in Papiri, Niger State, in the early hours of Friday 20 November 2026 - the largest school abduction in Nigeria since Chibok in 2014. The Catholic Diocese of Kontagora confirmed the raid, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Niger State put the confirmed toll at 215 pupils and 12 teachers after a headcount, before a later church census raised it to 303 students and 12 teachers. Fifty students have since escaped, leaving 253 students and 12 staff still in captivity.

A gun in a little girl's mouth - "keep quiet or we shoot" - that was one of the first sounds of the night at St Mary's, before the children vanished into the bush. Teacher Martha Mathias watched gunmen tie her husband up on the ground. When her youngest daughter cried at the sight of him, a gunman pressed a gun into the little girl's mouth and threatened to shoot her if she did not stop crying.

The gunmen came between 1:00 and 3:00 a.M., When the dormitories were full and the compound was dark. A school security guard tried to stand in their way and was shot, badly wounded, during the raid. By the time the shooting stopped, whole dormitories were empty.

St Mary's serves children aged 12 to 17, and its campus holds more than 50 classroom and dormitory buildings near the Yelwa-Mokwa road in Agwara Local Government Area. It is a big school in a quiet place, the kind of place parents send their children because it feels safe. That feeling is gone now, and the gates have not opened since.

The numbers took days to settle, and they matter enough to state plainly. Early reports said around 100 children had been taken. CAN's headcount then confirmed 215 pupils and 12 teachers.

A later church census counted 303 students and 12 teachers - 315 people in total, more than the 276 girls taken at Chibok in 2014. Fifty students escaped from their captors on the way. That is why 253 students and 12 staff remain held, according to CAN, as reported on Sunday 22 November.

Nigeria Catholic School Abduction: How The Raid On St Mary's Unfolded

Nobody at St Mary's has said yet exactly how the gunmen moved through the compound, or how long they stayed. What is known is that they came in force, in the middle of the night, and left with hundreds of children. The guard who was shot is the only person known to have resisted them, and he was left badly wounded for his trouble.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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