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A priest who served a number of parishes in Brooklyn and moved back to Colombia four years ago to retire was brutally murdered there March 10.

Father Dagoberto Noguera, 68, was killed in his residence in Mamatoco, Colombia. He was doing social work in the nearby capital of Magdalena.

The priest was reportedly tied and beaten and initial reports said his throat had been slit by a group of strangers who came to the priest's home to rob him. Later the cause of death was changed to strangulation.

A memorial Mass will be celebrated for the priest at St. Anthony of Padua-St. Alphonsus Church in Brooklyn March 23. The funeral Mass was March 12 at St. Jerome's Church in Mamatoco.

According to members of the local community, a domestic employee who worked for Noguera started screaming from the patio, saying people were inside the building. When neighbors came to help, they only found the priest's dead body.

Rumors spread in Mamatoco that Venezuelan immigrants whom the priest had given food were responsible for the homicide.

Police investigators said that after allegedly committing the crime, two Venezuelans went to a clothing store located in the Historic Center of Santa Marta, where they made a large purchase of clothing, apparently with a credit card owned by the priest, and then fled to an unknown destination.

They were recorded by security cameras in the downtown area as well as when they left the priest's residence.

Donaldo Duica, who was close to the priest, told a digital news site in Colombia that the priest was a member of a very well-regarded family of Mamatoco. "By killing him, they have broken the heart of Mamatoco," he said.

He said Noguera , who was enjoying retirement and had mobility problems that forced him to use a wheelchair, "was a very dear person. This has been very painful."

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Noguera was born in Ecuador and educated in Colombia where he was ordained in 1985. He came to the Brooklyn Diocese in 1990 and was incardinated as a priest of the diocese in 2002. He served at several Brooklyn parishes before retiring for medical reasons in 2014 and returning to Colombia.

Bishop Luis Adriano Piedrahita Sandoval of Santa Marta expressed "deep sorrow" upon learning of the death of Noguera , saying that in retirement that "he dedicated himself to charity work with people in need."

The priest remained close to the people of St. Anthony of Padua-St. Alphonsus Parish; he had planned to visit in April.

"Every year, he used to come and visit with us for about a month,"Father Kavungal Davy, a Carmelite of Mary Immaculate, told The Tablet, Brooklyn's diocesan newspaper.

"The people here are very upset," he said, noting that when parishioners sang special songs for Noguera , people were crying in the pews.

"He really animated the Spanish community in this parish. He tried to bring them all together. We have people from 11 different countries here, but he taught them to pray together without national differences. People would hug him. They really loved him," he said.

Parishioner Fernando Calderon, who had known Noguera for years, called him kind and humble and said his murder was "very painful."

"All the time he wasn't thinking about himself; he was always thinking about how he could help the other person."