News



David Agren

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Mexico City — June 20, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A priest in Mexico City has been arrested for murder barely a week after he celebrated a funeral Mass for the victim.

Fr. Francisco Javier Bautista was arrested June 19 by Mexico City judicial officials. He was charged with the murder of Hugo Leonardo Avendano Chavez, 29, who had recently graduated with a master's degree from a Catholic university, worked with Bautista at Christ the Savior Parish and had aspirations of entering the priesthood.

The priest, who also served as an exorcist, was ordered held pending trial.

Motives for the slaying were not revealed by Mexico City investigators, though local prosecutor Ernestina Godoy told reporters the case was not a kidnapping, as originally reported.

Avendano was found murdered June 13 in southern Mexico City. Family say he had gone to the Christ the Savior Parish, where he worked, late June 11 and saw Bautista.

The two men were spotted together outside the parish, according to footage from surveillance cameras.

The Archdiocese of Mexico City issued a statement June 19, saying it was watching events closely – without naming the priest – and adding it was cooperating with investigators.

"The same as the rest of society, the Catholic Church of Mexico City hopes and trusts that the work of the authorities in charge of the investigation and the prosecution is efficient, rigorous, conforms to the law and is respectful of the human rights of the victims, their family members and those eventually accused," the statement said.

Mexico City media reported Bautista had celebrated Avendano's funeral Mass. Television outlets showed Bautista telling reporters, "On behalf of priests of the church, forgiveness is granted" for the crime.

Avendano's murder provoked an uproar in Mexico City, where perceptions of crime have increased and critics of the current government – which took office six months ago – have highlighted recent high-profile atrocities as supposed evidence of ineptness. Avendano's family also alleged receiving abusive treatment when reporting the case to the authorities.

Students from Mexico City university posted a video after the death of Avendano and another student kidnapped and killed in June, demanding justice, but also saying, "We want to go to work, to study, to have fun and have the security that we're going to return."

Advertisement