News



People attend a candlelight vigil outside Gilroy City Hall in California July 29, 2019, honoring those that died and were injured during a mass shooting at the Gilroy Garlic Festival a day earlier. The Diocese of San Jose held a bilingual prayer vigil July 29 for victims, survivors and first responders at St. Mary Church in Gilroy in response to the the shooting that claimed three lives and injured 12 others. (CNS photo/Kate Munsch, Reuters)

by Catholic News Service

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GILROY, Calif. — July 30, 2019

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Hundreds gathered late July 29 at St. Mary's Church for a bilingual prayer service, invited by Gilroy's Catholic community "to come together and pray for all those affected by the senseless tragedy."

A day earlier, a gunman, later identified as 19-year-old Santino William Legan, fired on the crowd attending the final day of the Gilroy Garlic Festival. Three were killed — a 6-year-old boy, a 13-year-old girl and a man in his 20s — and 12 others were injured. Police quickly shot and killed the gunman.

As community members entered the Catholic church, the Los Angeles Times reported, Fr. Michael Hendrickson, the pastor, stood outside to greet them. The evening was about prayer, he told the daily newspaper: "A prayer for the living and a prayer for the dead."

Hundreds more gathered outside Gilroy's City Hall the same evening for the same reason, to remember the shooting victims — those who died, those who were injured by survived and their families — and also to express gratitude to the first responders.

"Our hearts are heavy with sadness in the wake of the horrific shooting that claimed the lives of at least three innocent victims and injured several others at the Gilroy Garlic Festival," San Jose Bishop Oscar Cantu said in a statement July 29. "I am grateful for the first responders and individual citizens whose quick thinking and professional actions saved countless lives."

"My thoughts and prayers are with the victims, survivors and their families in this time of sorrow," Cantu said. "May God, the source of our faith and strength, grant comfort and hope to all those affected by acts of violence.

"May grief give way to healing and grace, as we work together to protect the innocent and prevent future massacres, so that peace may prevail in our hearts and communities," he added.

The three who were killed were identified as Stephen Romero, 6; Keyla Salazar, 13, and Trevor Irby, who the police said was in his 20s.

"Any time a life is lost, it's a tragedy," said Gilroy Police Chief Scot Smithee at a morning news conference July 29. "But when it's young people, it's even worse. It's very difficult."

The police chief said investigators had not found motive yet for the shooting.

Gilroy is about 80 miles southeast of San Francisco. It is considered the "garlic capital of the world." The festival goes over three days, features food, cooking competitions and music, and draws more than 100,000 people.

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