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Pope Francis, dressed in red and gold and without a zucchetto, bends his head in prayer

Pope Francis prays during a memorial Mass for cardinals and bishops who have died over the past year, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 2, 2022, All Souls' Day. In a special condolence message made public March 1, 2022, the pope sent a telegram expressing his sadness over the Feb. 18 shooting death of Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell of Los Angeles. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis praised the late Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell of Los Angeles for his "profound concern for the poor, immigrants and those in need" in a telegram following his murder.

In the undated telegram sent to Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, the pope said he was "deeply saddened" by the "untimely and tragic death" of O'Connell, who was found shot dead at his home Feb. 18. Authorities have charged Carlos Medina, the husband of O'Connell's housekeeper, with his murder.

Francis expressed his spiritual closeness to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and recalled the bishop's "efforts to uphold the sanctity and dignity of God's gift of life and his zeal for fostering solidarity, cooperation and peace within the local community."

The pope prayed that "all who honor his memory will be confirmed in the resolve to reject the ways of violence and overcome evil with good."

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The message was read aloud by Gomez at a memorial Mass for O'Connell March 1.

O'Connell was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1953 and was ordained a priest of the archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1979, where he worked in schools, gang intervention programs and immigration issues.

In the 1990s, then-Fr. O'Connell worked to reconcile riot-torn communities with law enforcement after the police beating of Rodney King, and in the early 2010s he founded the SoCal Immigration Task Force to help unaccompanied minors entering the United States. Francis appointed him auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles in 2015.

O'Connell's funeral Mass was scheduled to be celebrated March 3 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in Los Angeles.