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A drone view shows people working at the site of a plane crash in Vinhedo, Sao Paulo, Brazil, August 10, 2024. The Aug. 9 crash killed all 62 passengers on board, greatly touching different Catholic communities in the country. (OSV News/Carla Carniel, Reuters)



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SAO PAULO, Brazil — August 12, 2024
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The Aug. 9 passenger plane crash in the city of Vinhedo, Brazil killed all 62 on board, greatly touching different Catholic communities in the country.

Pope Francis prayed for the victims of the crash during his Aug. 11 Angelus prayer in the Vatican: "Let us … pray for the victims of the tragic air crash in Brazil," he said.

A twin-engine turboprop plane, traveling from Cascavel, in Paraná state, to Guarulhos airport, in the São Paulo metropolitan area, crashed close to residential buildings, dropping 17,000 feet in just one minute, only 45 miles away from its destination. Some analysts suggested the possibility of bad weather conditions as a cause for the crash — meanwhile, authorities are still investigating what could have happened. This was reported to be the deadliest airline crash since January 2023, when 72 people died on a Yeti Airlines plane in Nepal.

Many of Voepass Brazilian airline passengers lived in the region of the Archdiocese of Cascavel, which released a letter of condolences a few hours after the incident and informed that all Masses celebrated over the following three days would be dedicated to the victims.

"Our Archbishop, José Mário Scalon Angonese, expresses his deepest solidarity to the families affected by this tragedy. He joins the community in prayer and offers his spiritual support, wishing that divine comfort can alleviate the sorrow and pain of everyone who is suffering," the note, posted on the archdiocese's Facebook page, read.

According to the Cathedral of Cascavel, at least two churchgoers were killed in the crash. They were Adriana Santos, who was the sister of the parish council's coordinator, and José Leonel Ferreira, a physician whose wife, Maria Fernanda, is a

member of the liturgical music ministry.

The Archdiocese of Campinas, which encompasses the Catholic church in Vinhedo, also expressed condolences and solidarity to the impacted families in a note released on Aug. 9.

The archdiocese released a letter in which it invited Catholics to pray for the victims, so "they can be welcomed in the Lord's immeasurable mercy."

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The parish church of St. Peter the Apostle in Guaratinguetá, in São Paulo state, was also affected by the tragedy. Local churchgoers Maria Auxiliadora Vaz de Arruda and her husband José Cloves Arruda were among the victims. Father Aloísio dos Santos Mota released a statement Aug. 9. expressing sorrow for the loss of the couple. The wife, called Dona Dôra in her church community, was well known to the faithful across the region.

"I've been her parish priest for five years, since I arrived in Guaratinguetá. She had an iconic presence in our church, a protagonism that everybody could notice," Mota told OSV News.

A 74-year-old retired physical education teacher, Dona Dôra coordinated the parish's team of eucharistic ministers with "indescribable zeal," according to Mota. She was a tireless organizer, always promoting eucharistic adoration, rosary prayers, and patron saint festivities, the parish priest said.

"She and her husband traveled to Paraná in order to visit their only daughter, who lives and works there," the priest said, adding that Dona Dôra called him often "about an upcoming festivity in honor of St. Dulce of the Poor," Mota said.

Dona Dôra worked for decades in Guaratinguetá's school system and also in an association that offers assistance for children with special needs. She touched hundreds of people with her work, the parish priest described.

"Some time ago, we were about to give the first Communion to a group of children (with) autism. … Due to their condition, we were facing problems giving them the

bread and the wine," recalled Mota. He knew that only Dona Dôra could handle that matter and called her.

"She quickly talked to them and led them through that challenge. They received Communion shortly later with no problem," he said.

The news of her death struck the Guaratinguetá parish with great pain, the priest said, and a vigil was organized in the victims' parish on Aug. 9.

"Our church exists because of women like her, with humble and simple lives and a great testimony. That tragedy took from us the best we had," Mota concluded.