News



Notre Dame fans attended a Mass Jan. 1, 2025, at St. Louis Cathedral following a truck assault in the French Quarter that killed 15 people and injured three dozen others. Archbishop Gregory Aymond and 600 worshipers struggled to make sense of the death and carnage perpetrated by a man who drove a pickup truck into a dense crowd of early-morning New Year's revelers just five blocks away on Bourbon Street. (OSV News/Clarion Herald/Peter Finney Jr.)



Peter Finney Jr.

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New Orleans — January 2, 2025

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Inside St. Louis Cathedral for the 11 a.m. Mass on New Year's Day, Archbishop Gregory Aymond and 600 worshipers struggled to make sense of the death and carnage perpetrated by a man who drove a pickup truck into a dense crowd of early-morning New Year's revelers barely eight hours earlier and just five blocks away on Bourbon Street.

Fifteen people died and more than three dozen others were injured, many seriously, when a white Ford F-150 Lightning electric truck, rented by Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, of Texas, plowed into the crowd walking along the French Quarter's most famous partying street at 3:15 a.m. on Jan. 1. The FBI said it is investigating the crime as a terror attack. Jabbar had an ISIS flag in his truck.

In a telegram sent to Aymond, the Archbishop of New Orleans, Pope Francis spoke of his "spiritual closeness" to those affected by the attack. The message — signed by Holy See Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin — said the pope is praying for those affected, and that, "as a pledge of peace and strength in the Lord, the Holy Father sends his blessing."

Speaking during Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God from inside the history cathedral, Aymond said the dawn of a new year always brings with it uncertainty because no one has been able "to create a future 'app' to tell us exactly what will happen from day to day in our lives."

"I don't know who would have ever thought that we would be gathering here this morning with what has happened during the night," Aymond said. "What will happen

during this year is the question that all of us … will ask. What will happen? The easy answer is, we don't know."

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The archbishop addressed those present — many who were football fans planning to attend the Sugar Bowl's College Football Playoff quarterfinal between University of Notre Dame and University of Georgia — to turn to the Blessed Mother as a model for hope when unforeseen challenges and tragedies occur. In the wake of the attack, the Sugar Bowl to be played in the 70,000-seat Superdome was postponed until today, Jan. 2.

"Let us not forget those who feel hopeless — some of those families who have lost loved ones this morning in the terrorist attack," Aymond said. "Let us not forget those in the hospital struggling for life. Let us not forget their families and friends because they need hope in a very particular way at this time.

"God gives us hope. Mary strengthens that hope in our lives. We need to be aware that it is Mary's hand that reaches out to touch us today and to give us the hope that no one else can give."

Fr. Pat Williams, rector of St. Louis Cathedral, said about 300 people attended the 9 a.m. Mass on Jan. 1, most of them Notre Dame fans. Williams said his New Year's homily is ordinarily about hope.

"This year [in the church] is the Jubilee of Hope," Williams said. "Hope is not where everything turns out fine, as we found out this morning. There are tragedies. Hope is that the child born at Christmas is with us all the time. God walks with us. I don't know why he doesn't stop it, but he's with us."

After Mass, Aymond said while the violence makes it difficult to "think about hope" in the midst of "the sins of those who have taken the lives of others," God remains faithful.

"God always gives us hope, even in the midst of tragic situations," Aymond said. "He calls us to experience his comfort, his peace, and he certainly listens to our prayers as we pray for those who have died and those who are sick or injured. There still is hope that this world can become one of peace. But, on days like today, that's very

difficult to see.

"We have to pray for the perpetrators as well that they will come to know the mercy of God and come to correct their ways. As difficult as it is, we need to pray for our enemies and for those who bring great tragedy to our lives. The hope is today that violence, murder and racism will become tempered in our lives and certainly in our own city."



People pray inside St. Louis Cathedral Jan. 1, 2025, where during Mass Archbishop Gregory Aymond and 600 worshipers struggled to make sense of the death and carnage perpetrated by a man who drove a pickup truck into a dense crowd of early-morning New Year's revelers just five blocks away on Bourbon Street. (OSV News/Clarion Herald/Peter Finney Jr.)

Gayle Benson, owner of the New Orleans Saints and New Orleans Pelicans, was the lector at the 11 a.m. Mass. She called the attack "horrific."

"I cannot believe that this has happened in our city," Benson said after the Mass. "We have so many things and so many people who are protecting us. Our police department is working so hard to keep us safe. For this to happen is just unbelievable. God has a plan for us, and I don't understand it. I'm sure many people don't. But all we can do is pray for everybody."

Wearing a green No. 3 Joe Montana jersey, Notre Dame fan John Blanchard of Foley, Alabama, sat in the first pew for the Mass and said the archbishop's message about hope resonated with him.

"God gave people free will, and I don't know what that person was thinking," Blanchard said. "That was an awful situation. We'll see what plays out. We pray for the families."

Jonah Walls of Houston, also a Notre Dame fan, said he arrived in New Orleans around the time of the attack but did not hear about it until later.

"It's awful, and bringing in the new year is just absolutely awful," Walls said. "I pray for those people. Everybody should pray for the victims, no matter what denomination they are."

Aymond, a New Orleans native, also released a statement after the attack. "This violent act is a sign of utter disrespect for human life," the archbishop said. "I give thanks for the heroic duty of hundreds of law enforcement and medical personnel in the face of such evil."

NCR Vatican correspondent Christopher White contributed to this report.