News




Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, alongside Mayor Jacob Frey, right, addresses the media outside Annunciation Catholic School following a shooting Aug. 27, 2025. A shooter opened fire with a rifle through the windows of the school church and struck children celebrating Mass during the first week of school, killing two and injuring 18 people in an act of violence the police chief called “absolutely incomprehensible.” (OSV News/The Catholic Spirit/Dave Hrbacek)



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Law enforcement officials identified the assailant in Wednesday's mass shooting at a Minneapolis Catholic church as Robin Westman, a 23-year-old Minneapolis resident who left behind a racist and antisemitic manifesto on social media.

Westman died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after opening fire at Annunciation Church, where teachers and students from the parish school had gathered for a Mass to celebrate the beginning of the academic year. Two children were slain and 18 others were injured.

Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said investigators were not sure of a motive, though he noted that law enforcement officials had found what appeared to be a manifesto that Westman appeared to record on YouTube. He said the video had

since been removed at the request of law enforcement officials.

A murky image of Westman was beginning to emerge in the hours following the shooting.

Shortly after news broke of the shooting, social media was inundated with clips and screenshots of the alleged killer's video manifesto. The video, nearly 11 minutes long, was posted on a YouTube channel named "Robin W." Several social media users were able to download and repost it before the video was removed from YouTube.

Viewed more than 4 million times, the video starts with some indecipherable mumbling, then transitions to what appears to be a final letter to friends and family. The letter is chillingly lucid given what follows in the remainder of the video.

"I know this is wrong but can't seem to stop myself," Westman writes in the letter. "I am severely depressed and have been suicidal for years."

O'Hara said investigators believe that Westman posted the videos. Westman had no criminal record, officials added.

O'Hara was asked about reports that Westman had attended Annunciation and that Westman's mother had a connection to the school. O'Hara said the investigation was continuing and four search warrants had been served, one at the church and three at residences in the community.

FBI Director Kash Patel identified the suspect as a man, while court documents related to a name-change request in 2019 stated that Westman identified as a woman. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey cautioned against scapegoating in the wake of the attack.

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Records obtained by the National Catholic Reporter from the Dakota County, Minnesota, District Court show that Westman got a name change in 2020 at age 17, from Robert Paul Westman to Robin M. Westman.

Because Westman was a minor, the change required the consent of Westman's mother, Mary Grace Westman, who filled out the part of the form stating the reason

that the change was in the best interest of the child was because "minor child identifies as a female and wants her name to reflect that identification."

At an afternoon news conference, Frey made a reference to the name change.

"I have heard about a whole lot of hate that's being directed at our trans community," the mayor said. Frey cautioned that anyone "using this as an opportunity to villainize our trans community, or any other community out there, has lost their sense of common humanity. We should not be operating out of a place of hate for anyone. We should be operating from a place of love for our kids."

NCR reviewed the video and could hear Westman muttering incoherent obscenities, rummaging through bullets, and showing off fully loaded magazines and high-velocity weapons with anti-LGBTQ, anti-Latino, antisemitic language written on them.

Later in the video, Westman shows what appears to be a rifle with the words "6 million wasn't enough," an apparent reference to those killed in the Holocaust, and "Kill Donald Trump," written on various portions of the weapon.

The words "Waco" and "McVeigh" both appeared on various pieces of equipment, in apparent references to the 1993 siege/massacre in Waco, Texas, and to Timothy McVeigh, the mastermind of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Russian words appear on some magazines as well, along with English phrases like "suck on this!" and "where is your God?"

Various racial and anti-LGBTQ slurs appear on paraphernalia throughout the video.

The video conveys a particular animosity toward Christians. An image of a bloodied Christ is seen on the head of what appears to be an item used for target practice, while the person recording the video laughs.

After 11 minutes, the video cuts out to an animated word art image that says "thanks for watching."

**Related:** Minneapolis shooter, firing through Catholic church windows, kills 2 children

This story appears in the **Minneapolis church shooting** feature series. View the full series.