News



Families and loved ones reunite following a shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis Aug. 27, 2025. A shooter opened fire with a rifle through the windows of the school's 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/Reuters/Ben Brewer)



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When Mike Roaldi received text messages about a shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis on Wednesday (Aug. 27), the father of three jumped in his car and headed to the century-old Catholic parish that is at the center of his family's life.

"I drove down there as fast as I could," Roaldi told the National Catholic Reporter, his voice unsteady, sobbing. "There were police and first responders on the scene, and they were wonderful. I could see that a lot of the kids were going back towards the school from the church and then there were some kids who were injured on the sidewalk getting treatment. And I tried to find mine."

Roaldi said he located one child quickly amid the chaos and police tape, then searched frantically for the other two.

"They're safe. They're upset, but they're safe," Roaldi said. He declined to give their ages.

As students gathered in the pews to celebrate the first week of school, two children, ages 8 and 10, were killed by a gun-wielding assailant who fired a barrage of shots through stained-glass windows of the church.

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"We lost two angels today," Annunciation Catholic School Principal Matthew DeBoer said at a news conference as he fought back emotion.

"We are navigating an impossible situation together at this time," wrote DeBoer and the parish pastor, Fr. Dennis Zehren, in a joint letter to parents and parishioners. "No words can capture what we have gone through, what we are going through, and what we will go through in the coming days and weeks. But we will navigate this – together."



Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis, pictured in a 2019 file photo (OSV News/Bob Roller)

Archbishop Bernard Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis, who oversees 89 Catholic schools serving more than 30,000 students, decried an attack carried out inside a place that should have been a refuge.

"My heart is broken as I think about students, teachers, clergy and parishioners and the horror they witnessed in a Church, a place where we should feel safe," Hebda said in a statement about the shooting.

DeBoer and Zehren praised the swift response of staff and law enforcement in their joint letter. "Within seconds, our heroic staff moved students under the pews. Law enforcement responded quickly and evacuated all of our children and staff to safety in a matter of minutes when it was safe to do so," they wrote.

"Tragically, we lost two of our beloved students before the scene was secured. A number of other children and parishioners were wounded, and they are being treated at area hospitals. Some have been treated and released. All staff are physically safe and accounted for."

The letter asked families and parishioners to hold one another close.

"In this time of darkness, let us commit to being the Light to our children, each other and our community," they wrote. "We will rebuild our future filled with hope – together."

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Hebda said in his statement that he had been deeply moved by the response. "I am so grateful for the many promises of prayers that have been coming in from the Holy Father, Pope Leo, and from so many from all around the globe, all praying for the families of Annunciation Parish and School and for all who were impacted by this morning's senseless violence," the archbishop said.

Hebda appealed to Catholics across the archdiocese and beyond.

"I beg for the continued prayers of all of the priests and faithful of this Archdiocese, as well for the prayers of all men and women of good will, that the healing that only God can bring will be poured out," he said. "We lift up the souls of those who lost their lives to our loving God through the intercession of Our Lady, Queen of Peace."

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Hebda placed the tragedy in the wider context of violence in the city, noting that it followed another deadly shooting near Cristo Rey High School just one day earlier. "That today's tragedy occurred only a day after the tragic shooting near Cristo Rey High School increases the sadness about the pain and anger that is present in our

communities," he said.

"We need an end to gun violence," he said. "Our community is rightfully outraged at such horrific acts of violence perpetrated against the vulnerable and innocent. They are far too commonplace."

Hebda added that archdiocesan staff are working directly with parish and school leaders to ensure support services.



From left, Clarissa and Suzanne Garcia reunited after shooting at Annunciation in Minneapolis Aug. 27, 2025 (Courtesy of The Catholic Spirit)

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said that Sen. Amy Klobuchar had spoken to President Donald Trump and his leadership team earlier that day. Trump and his team had expressed their deep condolences and offered to provide support.

At an afternoon press conference, the governor said: "There shouldn't be words for these types of incidents because they should not happen."

Earlier, outside the school parents held their children tightly after being reunited among the chaos.

When Suzanne Garcia arrived at the school, her car was stopped by police cars and yellow tape. She got out of the car and started running and screaming, "Clarissa! Where are you?"

She found her daughter, Clarissa, a fifth grader in a crowd of evacuated students.

"There's nothing like putting my arms around her," Garcia said. "It’s something you see in the news. It’s not something that you live."

Roaldi, when asked what Annunciation parish means to his family, broke down in emotion.

"It's a great place, so very special to us because we moved from out of town," he said through tears. "People were very welcoming and it's a place where everyone's welcome and supports each other and we have very close friends. Everybody lives in the neighborhood and looks out for each other, and staff is wonderful and caring, thoughtful."

He praised the staff, later cited as heroes by the archbishop, mayor and police chief.

"They've been there for a long time. The priest and deacon are very great, great leaders, and it's just a community parish where people love each other and look out for each other, and we were very lucky to become a part of it."

Roaldi said the rest of his week would be spent close to home. "Just first, be with my family, and then next, be with our community and do whatever we can to support them," he said.

At the afternoon news conference, DeBoer noted that the theme for the school year was taken from the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 29: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you — oracle of the Lord — plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope."

Josh McGovern of The Catholic Spirit and news researcher Alice Crites contributed to this report.

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