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Crowd of mourners at Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis

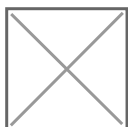
Mourners attend an Interfaith Prayer Service for the Annunciation Catholic Community, following the Aug. 27 shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Aug. 28. (OSV News/Reuters/Tim Evans)

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A police car was parked outside the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul, Minnesota, at noon Aug. 28, as people walked through the open doors to participate in an ecumenical prayer service mourning the victims of the Aug. 27 church shooting at Annunciation in Minneapolis.

Police were present inside the cathedral, as well, while Bishop Kevin Kenney spoke to the congregation about the impact of the shooting that killed two children while

injuring 15 other children and three adults. The suspected shooter died at the scene of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said.

"These children, adults and staff, had entered into the sanctuary where the love of Jesus Christ was present to them. The evil outside tried to get them," Kenney said.

He began to cry as he said, "But the heroic stories we will hear in the days ahead, of how the older children tried to protect the younger children. They put their lives on the line to help the little ones. The community that was there put aside differences and helped one another. And what a lesson that is for us, today, to wake up and see how do we help within the community? How do we reach out? Are we willing? What God has hidden from the wise and the learned he shares with the childlike."

Bishop Michael Izen also spoke, urging the congregation to run to Jesus during these difficult times. He referred to the Gospel passage from John, in which Martha runs to Jesus and says to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21).

"That's a question I've heard in the past 24 hours: Where was Jesus yesterday?" Izen said. "Where was Jesus at 8:30 in the morning at Annunciation? There is no shortage of questions. ... No shortage of questions, but only one answer: Jesus Christ. We're invited to go to him. We don't have to have all the answers. Just being present to those who are suffering is plenty. And the question, where was Jesus during that time, during that shooting? I think he was right there on the cross, suffering with them."

Archbishop Bernard Hebda speaks during an interfaith prayer service.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda speaks during an interfaith prayer service for the Annunciation Catholic community, following the Aug. 27 shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, Aug. 28. (OSV News/Reuters/Tim Evans)

Archbishop Bernard Hebda said the attack at Annunciation hits home in a particular way. It is "appropriately painful" to hear about loss of life in Ukraine and Gaza, and just as horrible "to think about the trauma that's experienced by children and families in those places and in any place of violence."

"But it hits home in a particular way when the tragedy is in our own community," the archbishop said.

Hebda also spoke at an interfaith prayer service Aug. 28 at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis.

"We can't even imagine the horror experienced by those in Annunciation Church yesterday morning," he said there. "I see a good number of people from Annunciation today, some of whom were present for that Mass yesterday. I can't even imagine what that was like."

Expressing gratitude for the presence of law enforcement and first responders in the Basilica, the archbishop said the community's prayers were with them as well, "and we struggle to support you with our words."

Noting one of the readings for the evening came from the Book of Revelation as it speaks of a new heaven and a new Earth, the archbishop said it was a reading that looks forward, not backward.

"While in spite of our prayers, we can't turn back the hands of time to reverse what happened yesterday, we can rest assured, brothers and sisters, that we have a God who, in spite of how it might seem, has a plan, and that plan involves a new heaven and a new Earth," Hebda said.

Faith leaders who spoke — with expansive time for meditation and music between comments — included Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman of Temple Israel in Minneapolis. Jewish tradition, she said, tells us we are all responsible for one another. It calls us to care deeply for the safety, dignity and humanity of every child, teacher, religious leader, every member of our community. An assault on one community is an assault on every community."

She described the fatal shooting as shared pain and a shared call to action. "When one light is extinguished by hatred and violence, the world grows darker," she said.

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Imam Matthew Ramadan of Masjid An-Nur Mosque in Minneapolis made a similar point,

"God reminds us in the Quran, "Whoever kills a soul, unless for justice or for corruption in the land, it is as if they had killed all of humanity," he said. "And whoever saves one, it is as if they had saved all of humanity. The sanctity of life is among the greatest trusts given to us by our Creator."

Metropolitan Nathanael, who presides over the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, which has parishes and monastic communities in Minnesota and five other states, said Jesus entered suffering, "bearing the pain of the cross, so that all creation might share in the joy of your rising."

"In this hour of grief and loss, we confess that our lives, our sorrows, and our tears are not our own," he said. "They belong to you, oh Lord, who have made us one body in your love. Remember, oh God, the lives cut short by violence in our city. Comfort the families who mourn and grant peace to our community. Help us who now share in this suffering to also share in the unshakeable hope of your resurrection."

This story appears in the **Minneapolis church shooting** feature series. [View the full series.](#)