



St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard Hebda blesses two trees and a plaque outside the Archdiocesan Catholic Center in St. Paul Aug. 27, 2026, in memory of Harper Moyski and Fletcher Merkel, who died during a shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis Aug. 27, 2025. (OSV News/Catholic Spirit/Dave Hrbacek)

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Archbishop Bernard Hebda is encouraging the faithful of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and all community members to be "beacons of light" as the one-year mark of a fatal [shooting during an all-school Mass](#) at Annunciation School and Church in Minneapolis approaches.

In a newsletter released Aug. 24, the archbishop wrote that Aug. 27, 2025, "continues to have an impact on so many others connected with the parish, its school, and its families."

In reflecting on the loss of 10-year-old Harper Moyski and 8-year-old Fletcher Merkel that day, the archbishop wrote that "I have no doubt that their absence will be forever felt. My heart continues to go out to all who feel their loss."

The archbishop also wrote, "I give thanks to God for the many ways in which he continues to bring healing into the lives of the others who were directly impacted by last year's shooting. How blessed we are to have such excellent first responders and medical care here in our corner of Minnesota! I know that the Lord was compassionately working through them and through the perseverance and courage demonstrated by each of those who were injured."

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The archbishop also acknowledged an Aug. 19 gathering of parishioners and visitors in Edina, a Minneapolis suburb.

"The four speakers who shared their experiences from last Aug. 27 (an Annunciation teacher, two parents, and a student wise beyond her years) each provided proof that even in the midst of such tragedy, there can be an outpouring of compassion, a meeting of hearts, a deepening sense of solidarity, and a turning to the Lord," the archbishop wrote.

The archbishop continued: "I am grateful that the over 300 attendees who were privileged to hear their stories, to pray with them, and to break bread with them could walk away that evening with assurances that faith had been shaken, but not destroyed. While many hearts are understandably still hurting, we can also see how they have been fortified by the love, prayers and support that have been poured out in response to this tragedy. I sure hope that the Annunciation Light Alliance, the sponsor of the event, will be welcomed into other parishes and schools for similar evenings."

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Hebda wrote that as Annunciation's theme for the 2026-27 school year — "Guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79) — was announced, the school's Principal Matt DeBoer "explained that 'peace is not passive — we must work towards it.' "

"That certainly resonates in my heart, and I hope that it will touch the hearts of the Annunciation community and your hearts as well," the archbishop wrote. "We are blessed that the families of Annunciation continue to choose 'to be beacons of light and to pursue peace.' What a necessary and powerful reminder for our world."

As Annunciation leaders encouraged acts of service and prayer on Aug. 27, the city of Minneapolis held a community remembrance event at Pearl Park.

"The City and our partners invite community members to join us to plant flowers and trees, assemble care kits for youth and collect school supplies," officials wrote on the city's website, which includes details about Annunciation Remembrance Day.

"As we approach Aug. 27, I invite you to find a way to be a beacon of light within your own community, no matter your state in life," Hebda wrote in his reflection.

"Our sisters and brothers at Annunciation will be spending the day engaged in acts of service, and they have invited us — in our own communities and homes — to do the same. Please join me in praying for Annunciation and for all those in need of healing as we are guided to walk together in the way of peace."

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