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Boston cardinal says all feel 'deep sorrow' for victims of explosions

by Christopher S. Pineo by Catholic News Service

Boston — Within hours of two explosions taking place Monday near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, Cardinal Sean O'Malley sent a message of prayer and support for those injured, their loved ones and those who experienced the trauma of the tragedy.

"The Archdiocese of Boston joins all people of good will in expressing deep sorrow following the senseless acts of violence perpetrated at the Boston Marathon today," he said.

Close to 3 p.m., the Boston Police Department reported that officers had responded to two large explosions along the Boston Marathon route that left three people dead, including an 8-year-old boy, and more than 140 wounded.

"The citizens of the city of Boston and the commonwealth of Massachusetts are blessed by the bravery and heroism of many, particularly the men and women of the police and fire departments and emergency services who responded within moments of these tragic events," the cardinal said.

Many expressed fear the explosions, which were seconds apart, were carried out by terrorists, and The Associated Press reported that federal officials were treating the bombings as an act of terrorism.

As of early Tuesday, no one had yet stepped forward to claim responsibility for the act, which took place on Patriot's Day, a civic holiday in Massachusetts that commemorates the first battles of the American Revolution.

O'Malley commended the leadership efforts of Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and the city's police commissioner, Ed Davis.

"(They) are providing the leadership that will see us through this most difficult time and ensure that proper procedures are followed to protect the public safety," O'Malley said.

The cardinal also commended those who rushed to help at the scene of the tragedy.

"In the midst of the darkness of this tragedy we turn to the light of Jesus Christ, the light that was evident in the lives of people who immediately turned to help those in need today," he said.

O'Malley promised the Catholic church's support for other faith communities, promoting a message of hope in response to the tragedy.

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"We stand in solidarity with our ecumenical and interfaith colleagues in the commitment to witness the greater power of good in our society and to work together for healing," the cardinal said.

New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, as president of the U.S. bishops' conference, urged all "to pray for the souls of those killed, the healing of those injured and the restoration of peace for all of us unsettled by the bombings at a world renowned sporting event."

"Our special prayers are with the Archdiocese of Boston and the people there who are working in the aftermath of this crisis to address those wounded in so many ways by these events," he added in a statement issued a few hours after the explosions.

The "tragic end" to the marathon "reminds us all that evil exists and that life is fragile," Dolan said.

"The growing culture of violence in our world and even in our country calls for both wise security measures by government officials and an examination by all of us to see what we can personally do to enhance peace and respect for one another in our world," he said.

In a press briefing, President Barack Obama offered the nation's condolences to the victims and their families, saying he was confident residents of the "resilient town" that Boston is would pull together to take care of one another.

"And as they do, the American people will be with them every single step of the way," he said.

Obama urged people not to "jump to conclusions" as to the reason for the bombings and said a full investigation was well under way. "We will get to the bottom of this. ... Any responsible individuals, any responsible groups will feel the full weight of justice," the president said.

In Boston, archdiocesan spokesman Terrence Donilon said the pastor at Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted Parish, Fr. James DiPerri, was to offer a special eucharistic Holy Hour with the rosary for the Boston bombing victims at Our Lady's Parish in Waltham.

Massachusetts' governor also called for prayer in a statement issued after the explosions.

"This is a horrific day in Boston. My thoughts and prayers are with those who have been injured," Patrick said.

[Christopher S. Pineo is a reporter at *The Pilot*, newspaper of the Boston archdiocese.]

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