

Police evacuate Notre Dame Cathedral after reported suicide

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Paris

Visitors were evacuated from Notre Dame Cathedral after a man committed suicide in the 850-year-old church, police said.

News agencies reported that the man in his 70s walked up to the main altar and shot himself the afternoon of May 21 as tourists and worshippers were in the church.

France's BFMTV reported the man was writer and essayist Dominique Venner, who was identified as a conservative who was a staunch opponent of same-sex marriage. The news outlet said a suicide note was found next to his body.

The reports were not clear whether the cathedral was closed. Church officials said only that it had been evacuated.

It was not immediately clear how many people were inside the building at the time of the incident. Some 13 million people visit the cathedral annually.

The cathedral is in the middle of yearlong celebration commemorating its 850th anniversary.

French Catholic leaders have been outspoken as they led opposition to the country's same-sex marriage law, signed by President Francois Hollande May 18.

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