



Rosa Maria Perez, with her granddaughter Abigail Gil, pay their respects to Bishop David O'Connell at the corner of his home in Hacienda Heights, California, Feb. 19. According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, detectives are investigating the death of O'Connell, who was shot and killed Saturday just blocks from a church, as a homicide. (AP/Damian Dovarganes)

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Los Angeles — February 20, 2023

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A suspect has been arrested in the killing of a Catholic bishop who was fatally shot over the weekend in Southern California in a crime that shocked the Los Angeles religious and immigrant communities, authorities said Monday.

The person was arrested in the killing of Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell, who was found in his home with a gunshot wound and declared dead at the scene, Los Angeles Sheriff's Deputy Lizette Falcon said.

Sheriff Robert Luna was expected to provide details at a news conference at 3 p.m. Pacific time.

O'Connell, 69, [was killed just blocks from the St. John Vianney Catholic Church](#), part of his archdiocese, in Hacienda Heights, an unincorporated community about 20 miles (30 kilometers) east of downtown Los Angeles.

O'Connell was found around 1 p.m. Saturday with a gunshot wound. Sheriff's deputies were called to the area for a report of a medical emergency. Authorities have not said whether the bishop was targeted or if his religion might have been a factor.



Candles and messages are left near Bishop David O'Connell's residence in Hacienda Heights, California, Feb. 19. O'Connell was shot and killed Saturday just blocks from a church, a slaying of a longtime priest hailed as a "peacemaker" that's stunned the Los Angeles religious community, authorities said. (AP/Damian Dovarganes)

O'Connell had been a priest for 45 years and was a native of Ireland, according to Angelus News, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the nation's largest. In 2015, Pope Francis named him one of several auxiliary bishops of the archdiocese.

O'Connell worked in South Los Angeles for years and focused on gang intervention, Angelus News reported. He later sought to broker peace between residents and law enforcement following the violent 1992 uprising after a jury acquitted four white LA police officers in the beating of Rodney King, a Black man.

Nearly two decades later, O'Connell brought the San Gabriel Valley community together to rebuild a mission there destroyed an arson attack. In recent years he also spearheaded Catholic efforts in the region to work with immigrant children and

families from Central America.

Luna called O'Connell a peacemaker and offered the agency's condolences.

"He was a peacemaker and had a passion serving those in need while improving our community," Luna said on Twitter.

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Neighbors and parishioners left flowers and candles and prayed the rosary next to police tape in Hacienda Heights on Sunday.

Gabriela Gil, who first met O'Connell when she was pregnant with her youngest child, was among those who prayed outside O'Connell's home.

"I've never ever felt more understood by anyone in this world," she said.

The Diocese of Cork and Ross in Ireland, where O'Connell was born, was shocked by the priest's death. Bishop Fintan Gavin said in a statement that O'Connell "has always maintained his connection with family and friends in Cork" through frequent visits back to Ireland.

The violence was the latest to rock religious leaders in Los Angeles. Two Jewish men were shot and wounded last week by a gunman who authorities said had targeted them for their faith. Suspect Jaime Tran has been charged with federal hate crimes.