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Democratic State Rep. Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, who were shot dead in their home June 14, were remembered at their funeral Mass June 28 for living their lives "with purpose and meaning."

"They lived lives in service of others, in community with those they loved, their family and their friends," Fr. Daniel Griffith said in his homily during the Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, where he is pastor and rector.

"We honor the memory of Melissa and Mark Hortman, we honor the God who created them, redeemed them and gifted them," said the priest, who also was the main celebrant of the liturgy.

To the couple's grown son and daughter, Colin and Sophie, and other family members, he said, "Our hearts go out to you today and we will continue to be praying for you and with you and accompanying you in your grief."

Over 1,000 people filled the basilica for the funeral — some media estimates put the attendance at 1,500. Former President Joe Biden and former Vice President Kamala Harris sat in a front pew. Other Massgoers included Melissa Hortman's fellow state lawmakers, as well as Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan and former Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton.

Gov. Tim Walz, who attended with his wife, Gwen, was a pallbearer and delivered a eulogy after the Mass.

The Hortmans were killed in their home in the western Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Park. Before they were fatally shot, state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, were each shot multiple times in nearby Champlin. They underwent surgery, and John Hoffman is still recovering in the hospital. Yvette was released June 20.

After a nearly two-day manhunt that authorities described as the largest in state history, on June 15 police arrested a suspect in the shooting, Vance Boelter, 57. He was apprehended in a field near his home in Green Isle, Minnesota, officials said. State officials, including Walz, have said they believe Boelter's actions were politically motivated.

Boelter has been charged by the Hennepin County Attorney's Office with two counts of second-degree murder and two counts of attempted second-degree murder.

Melissa Hortman, 55, was killed amid her 11th term in the Minnesota House of Representatives, where she served as the House Democrats' leader from 2017-2019 and as speaker of the House from 2019-2025.

On June 27, she became the first woman to lie in state at the Minnesota Capitol rotunda. Alongside her were husband Mark and the couple's beloved golden retriever, Gilbert, who was wounded in the attack before being euthanized, according to NBC News. Thousands paid their respects at the Capitol rotunda.

"Friends, God is present here in this basilica," Griffith said in his homily.

"The Catholic Mass is imbued with the love of God, who accompanies us at all times including in our grief and in our hope for new life. God is present here. God loves each of us, every one of us here, with a deep and abiding love, a transformative love. We need to hear this more often. It's true."

Griffith praised the Hortman's children for their "grace and courage in the wake of the tragic death of your parents," calling it extraordinary.

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"Thank you both for your courage and for being a source of light and hope in the darkness," he said.

Griffith said that in meeting with the late couple's family and in exchanges with friends and colleagues, "two things stood out powerfully" about them. "There were two lights that guided them — service and community," Griffith said. "Service and community are antidotes to our present afflictions as a state and as a nation."

He said Sophie and Colin rightly "communicated that this funeral Mass should be a celebration" of their parents' lives, but they also allowed him to comment on the state of the nation in light of what many have described as a politically motivated shooting that took their lives.

Sadly, the priest said, Minnesota has "been the ground zero place" for racial injustice, with the 2020 killing of George Floyd "just miles from our church ... and now we are the ground zero place for political violence and extremism. Both of these must be decried in the strongest possible terms, as they are, respectively, a threat to human dignity and indeed our democracy."

Racial disparities, some of the most acute in the country, persist here in Minnesota," Griffith noted. "But friends, Minnesotans, this can be a ground zero place for restoration and justice and healing, but we must work together, and there is much

more work to be done. Your presence here is a sign that we can do that work."

The Hortmans are an example of how a commitment to service and community can bring about the common good, promoting "personal and collective flourishing, with always care for those on the margins."

Melissa and Mark shared "similar values and interests, a rich humanity," Griffith said. "Both manifested a dynamic pairing of head and heart — that is a powerful combination."

"The family told me that their neighborhood was and is an extraordinary place of community, and Mark and Melissa were the first to really foster that community," he added, with the couple regularly hosting friends on the deck at their home for happy hours, card games or monthly gourmet dinners.

"The Hortman home and their commitment to intentional communities is a contrast to the idol of autonomy at all costs in our American culture, individualism and loneliness that many suffer from," he said.

Griffith also spoke of Gilbert, the couple's dog. The Hortmans had worked with a local nonprofit, Helping Paws, to help train service dogs for veterans.

"They trained one successfully to go on to be a service dog," he said. "The other, Gilbert, had quite an attachment to Melissa. ... When Gilbert had to go into service, Melissa was wrecked and emotional, and the family wonders if Gilbert maybe failed that assignment on purpose so he could head back to the Hortman house."

At the end of the Mass, Colin Hortman offered a prayer with his fiancée standing next to him. He recited the Prayer of St. Francis, which begins: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love." His mother kept a worn copy of the prayer in her purse.