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Reactions to Orlando Mass Shooting

Catholic Leaders

Bishop John G. Noonan of Orlando, Florida, urged people of faith “to turn their hearts and souls” to God and pray for the victims, the families and first responders following the worst mass shooting in U.S. history June 12. “A sword has pierced the heart of our city,” he said in a statement. The shooting rampage at a gay nightclub in Orlando left 50 people dead, including the gunman, and 53 wounded. Police said a lone gunman identified as 29-year-old Omar Mateen opened fire inside the Pulse club in Orlando in the early morning hours; he died in a gun battle with SWAT team members. Across the nation, reaction from church and com-

“As we pray for those who died in Orlando, let us pray that we might have the courage to fight against all bigotry and prejudice wherever we may experience it.”

munity leaders was swift, and in cities large and small, people organized candlelit vigils for the victims and their families the night of the shooting. Pope Francis offered prayers for the families of the victims of the mass shooting in Orlando, and the Vatican press office expressed hope that people would find ways to identify and uproot “the causes of such terrible and absurd violence.” Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said, “Waking up to the unspeakable violence in Orlando reminds us of how precious human life is.” The Obama administration called the shooting an act of terror; but the motive behind the shooting remained unclear. Statements from various Catholic leaders about the tragedy follow.

Vatican Press Office

the terrible massacre that has taken place in Orlando, with its dreadfully high number of innocent victims, has caused in Pope Francis and in all of us the deepest feelings of horror and condemnation, of pain and turmoil before this new manifestation of homicidal folly and senseless hatred. Pope Francis joins the families of the victims and all of the injured in prayer and in compassion. Sharing in their indescribable suffering he entrusts them to the Lord so they may find comfort.

We all hope that ways may be found as soon as possible to effectively identify and contrast the causes of such terrible and absurd violence that so deeply upsets the

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