

After cathedral blast, Philippine bishop urges Catholics not to fear

MANILA, Philippines - Catholics must continue living their faith without fear, the bishop of Jolo said after a grenade blast outside his cathedral.

“Whether in your office, in the marketplace, inside the city hall, wherever you are, you must live your Christian faith, as we cannot act as if we are afraid,” Bishop Angelito Lampon said in a Jan. 11 interview over church radio. His remarks were reported by the Asian church news agency UCA News.

A grenade exploded outside Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo about 20 minutes before the first Mass Jan. 10, the bishop said.

Police reported no casualties. It was the first day of the gun ban being implemented nationwide before the May 10 general elections.

Bishop Lampon said he believes the church was the target.

“How can it be random if it was thrown inside the church compound near pastoral offices?” the bishop asked. However, he said he had no idea who was behind the attack and why it happened. Police have not identified any suspects.

Jolo is the capital of predominantly Muslim Sulu province. The city is among 10 “election hotspots” listed by the Philippine National Police because of its proliferation of guns and private armies.

The recent incident was the fourth explosion in Jolo in less than a year.