

# Baltimore's religious and civic leaders mourn 11 slain in Pittsburgh

On All Souls Day, a day when Catholics and those of other Christian denominations pray for the dead, religious and civic leaders from around Baltimore gathered at the Weinberg Park Heights Jewish Community Center in Baltimore Nov. 2 to remember the 11 people slain at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh nearly one week earlier.

"How fitting that we stand on this day in solidarity with our Jewish elder brothers and sisters to mourn the loss of Jews who were honoring God on the Sabbath," said Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Mark E. Brennan, representing Archbishop William E. Lori. "We condemn unequivocally this and all other forms of antisemitism and we call Catholics and all others to a renewed respect for the right of all people to worship in peace and safety."

Bishop Brennan observed that the nation is now witnessing a decline in religious practice and an upsurge in hate and violence directed against specific groups. He wondered whether the two trends may be connected.

"It should trouble government leaders that the religious foundations of public morality are eroding," he said. "It should motivate religious leaders to reach out to the unaffiliated and the disaffected, not only for the good of those persons and of the religious congregations but for the good of us all."

Gov. Lawrence Hogan Jr. emphasized that the right of all to worship and practice their faith freely is a "founding pillar" of American democracy.

"Our synagogues and other places of worship must never become places of fear," he said. "An attack like this cuts at the very heart of our values as Americans and as human beings. It was an attack not just on one peaceful synagogue, but an attack on the Jewish people and an attack on all of us."

The governor said the best way to change hearts is to show love.

“Sadly, we have seen far too many brutal acts of antisemitism, bigotry and hatred in our nation,” he said. “I believe that the goodness in us will always triumph over evil.”

For some of the speakers, the attack was very personal. Marc B. Terrill, president of The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, said two of his wife’s cousins, David and Cecil Rosenthal, were among those killed in the shooting.

“Our society has become frighteningly lazy,” he said, “and the default is, unfortunately, hatred of all things different.”

Terrill said he prayed that “we resolve to listen, to learn, to appreciate and celebrate our neighbor.”

The interfaith gathering was the “kickoff” to Baltimore’s Solidarity Shabat that continues through Nov. 3.

“Thousands of people will file into synagogues in unison, in unity, in blessing for peace and solidarity,” Terrill said.

Sen. Ben Cardin, a member of the Jewish community, said the attack on Pittsburgh was “an attack on all of us.” He warned against growing hate and intolerance in the United States.

“This attack underscores that words have consequences,” he said. “Public discourse that wrongly stokes fear is not policy debate. It is hate-mongering, pure and simple. It must be condemned by our leaders.”

Rabbi Moshe Hauer of Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion in Baltimore said the Jewish community deeply appreciates the show of support it has received in the wake of the shooting. He said he particularly appreciated the presence of civic leaders at the interfaith gathering.

“Your presence here today is not just another function,” he said. “It means the world to us.”

Several hundred people attended the Nov. 2 gathering. Among the other dignities were leaders of Protestant denominations, Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh, Sen. Chris Van Hollen and others.

*Listen to Gov. Hogan and Bishop Brennan's full comments below:*

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