

Catholics in western India baffled by priest's murder

NEW DELHI - Catholics in a western Indian diocese say they are baffled by the murder of a 74-year-old priest.

Some associates of Father Peter Bombaci found his body in a pool of blood April 29 at his residence, near Vasai diocesan headquarters.

Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai, who visited the scene, told the Vatican's missionary news service, Fides, that the body had a rope around his neck and a pair of scissors stuck in his throat.

"It was a gruesome scene," he said.

Father Bombaci was operating a detox center for alcoholics. He came from the local community and "was well liked and respected by everyone," the archbishop said.

Diocesan officials such as Father John Furgose said they have "absolutely no idea" as to why the priest was murdered.

"We do not suspect anyone; we do not know who did it," he told the Asian church news agency UCA News April 30.

Father Furgose, the archbishop's secretary, said about 4,000 people, including "people from other religions" attended the priest's funeral late April 29.

The police have begun investigation, "but they have not told us about any leads," the priest said.

The police conducted an autopsy, but the report was not given to the diocese, Father Furgose said.