

Official calls for prayer after Utah shooting spree

SALT LAKE CITY - Monsignor J. Terrence Fitzgerald, administrator of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, called on Catholics Feb. 13 to unite in prayer for victims of a shooting spree at a shopping mall and their families and for the gunman and his family.

Five people were killed and at least four more were wounded in a shooting spree at Trolley Square in Salt Lake City Feb. 12. The gunman was fatally shot by police. Authorities were trying to figure out what sparked the rampage.

"We pray for everyone who has been traumatized by this violent event, including the police officers involved, the rescue workers, Trolley Square employees, and all of the people who were in the mall at the time of the shootings," said Monsignor Fitzgerald.

"We do not know yet the identity of any of the victims or of the person who perpetrated this violence upon our city. I pray that we will draw strength from our faith and the faith of those around us as we reach out as a community of compassion and caring," said the priest, whose statement was issued before police released the identities of the victims or the gunman.

"We pray that the victims may receive the fullness of eternal life, that their families and friends receive comfort, and that our entire community may work together to achieve the healing that is so badly needed at this time," Monsignor Fitzgerald said.

Terrified shoppers and diners at downtown Salt Lake City's Trolley Square shopping mall were running for their lives and hiding under restaurant tables and in any nook, cranny or closet they could find after an 18-year-old man went on a deadly shooting spree shortly after 6:40 p.m. Feb. 12.

Trolley Square, a quaint, 239,000-square-foot shopping center built around the city's old trolley barns, erupted with the sounds of gunfire, screaming and people running for cover when the shooting began at a site outside the mall.

By the time the shooting stopped, six people including the gunman lay dead, and at

least four people were seriously injured. An unknown number of shoppers, diners and mall employees were being treated for minor injuries and shock on the scene while the more seriously injured were transported to the University of Utah Medical Center, LDS Hospital and Salt Lake Regional Medical Center.

Shortly after the shootings began, the mall was surrounded by lines of police cars and emergency vehicles.

A triage area for the immediate treatment of victims was quickly set up in a corner of the mall parking lot. Law enforcement officers searched every corner of the sprawling mall and were assisted by helicopters in searching the mall's roof.

Shortly after 10 p.m., Robin Snyder, Salt Lake City Police Department spokeswoman, announced that the police had located one gunman "and he is dead."

Mary Mayo and her daughter, JoAnne, were just leaving the Spaghetti Factory, a restaurant on the upper level of Trolley Square, when they heard shots and saw the shooter.

Mayo is the wife of Deacon Silvio Mayo, diocesan chancellor; JoAnne Mayo is the twin sister of Father Joseph M. Mayo, rector of the Cathedral of the Madeleine.

The two women had just left the restaurant and sat down to look at a brochure "when we heard the sound of breaking glass," JoAnne Mayo told the Intermountain Catholic, Salt Lake City's diocesan newspaper.

They looked over a railing and there at the bottom of the stairs they nearly walked down was the gunman. The Mayos returned to the restaurant to take cover.

"The staff of the Spaghetti Factory really should be commended," said Mary Mayo. "They moved everyone upstairs to a safer place, and they locked the front gate to the restaurant. Some people were crying, and we were all scared, but they turned out the lights and did everything they could to keep us calm."

The restaurant patrons and staff stood together in the dark for about 15 minutes before they heard someone tell them to leave the restaurant with their hands above their heads. It was the police, who made a safe path for everyone down the stairs and out of the mall.

Because they had seen the gunman, the Mayos were asked to stay at the scene to give their statements.

“We told them what we saw and what we heard,” Mary Mayo said.

“We saw the man with the gun, but we didn’t see him shoot anyone, thank God,” JoAnne Mayo said. “We were blessed that we didn’t see any bodies or anyone who had been hurt.”