

Ohio bishop calls for prayer after teacher stabbed

PORTSMOUTH, Ohio - Columbus Bishop Frederick F. Campbell asked for prayers Feb. 7 following the stabbing of a teacher at Notre Dame Elementary School in Portsmouth.

Police said William Michael Layne, 46, of Portsmouth, stabbed his estranged wife, Christi Layne, 53, inside her fifth-grade classroom at about 9 a.m. She was listed in critical but stable condition at Cabell-Huntington Hospital in Huntington, W.Va. None of the 17 students in the classroom were reported injured.

Police said a gunshot was reported in the building and a gun was recovered from the scene, but they were unsure whether the teacher was shot.

Following the stabbing, police said Layne barricaded himself inside a house. Officers entered the building at about 1:30 p.m. and found him dead. He apparently shot himself.

"I was deeply distressed to learn of these events in Portsmouth, Ohio, and I ask that all people join with me in prayer for the students, staff and families of Notre Dame Elementary School," Bishop Campbell said in a statement.

"I have a particular concern for our children at Notre Dame Elementary School. We pray especially for all the victims of today's violence so that God's loving embrace and healing will sustain and comfort them," he continued.

"I also want to thank the many people who have stepped forward to help with this situation by providing the expertise to help the students, staff and their families," the bishop said. "Their dedication and devotion will be an invaluable help, not just today but in the difficult days that lay ahead."

Police said that just before he came to the school Layne stabbed Stephanie Loop, 22, of Portsmouth at a residence. She was listed in critical condition at Grant Medical Center in Columbus. Police were not sure of the relationship between Loop and the

Laynes.

After the attack at the school, Notre Dame and another Catholic school nearby were locked down. Counselors were made available to students after the incident and throughout the rest of the day at a community center next to the school. The school was closed Feb. 8.

Counselors were to be made available to students again Feb. 11.

The Associated Press reported that a prayer service at St. Mary Catholic Church in Portsmouth the evening of the stabbing drew an overflow crowd of more than 500 people who came to pray for the victims as well as the students and their families.