

# **One Benedictine nun killed, two seriously injured in Virginia accident**

ARLINGTON, Va. - Two members of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia remained in critical condition Aug. 4 following an accident that killed another member of their religious community.

A head-on collision Aug. 1 with a vehicle allegedly driven by a drunk driver left Sister Denise Mosier, 66, dead and Sisters Charlotte Lange, 75, and Connie Ruth Lupton, 70, seriously injured.

"None of us can do anything but pray right now," said Susan Walker, president of St. Gertrude High School in Richmond, where the Bristow-based nuns had a presence.

The three women had been en route to the Benedictine monastery in Bristow for the community's annual retreat at the time of the accident.

The Benedictines were continuing their retreat with some minor alterations, said Sister Glenna Smith, spokeswoman for the community. A funeral Mass for Sister Denise was to take place Aug. 6 at the Bristow monastery.

A message on the community's website at [www.osbva.org](http://www.osbva.org) asked for prayers for the injured women and for the driver of the other vehicle, Carlos Martinelly-Montano, and his family. It also expressed dismay that "this tragedy has been politicized and become an apparent forum for the illegal immigration agenda."

The Bolivian-born Martinelly-Montano, 23, reportedly entered the United States illegally in 1996; deportation proceedings were started against him by the Department of Homeland Security in 2008 after a previous arrest for drunk driving, The Washington Post reported.

"While grieving and dealing with the death and severe injuries of our sisters, we would like to refocus attention on the consequences of drinking and driving, and on

Christ's command to forgive," the community's Aug. 3 message said.

"The young driver of the other car will experience the consequences of his decisions through our justice system," it added. "We sincerely hope this heartbreak will help him evaluate his decisions and give him motivation to make life-changing choices."

After the accident, Sister Denise, who had been asleep in the back seat, was pronounced dead at the scene. Sisters Charlotte and Connie were airlifted to Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, where they remained in critical condition Aug. 4.

The injuries to Sisters Charlotte and Connie were severe, according to school officials. Sister Charlotte lost some of her intestine and has internal bleeding.

Sister Connie, who was driving the car, has a fractured leg, ankle and wrist. Part of her thumb was amputated, and she suffered organ injuries and internal bleeding.

Father Charles W. Merkle III, Catholic chaplain for Inova Fairfax Hospital, was paged at the hospital when the sisters arrived. He alerted Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde, who said he went to be with the nuns immediately after the accident.

"Our faith gives us the knowledge that the Lord is with us in all things, even in this profound sorrow," Bishop Loverde said in a statement Aug. 2. "This devastating event is a reminder that we are pilgrims on this earthly journey. In remembering the many ways they have supported the faithful of the Diocese of Arlington, I pledge to the sisters that our entire diocesan family is likewise lifting them to the Lord in prayerful support."