

Student recalled for her faith, a spirit that could ‘light up a room’

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. – A Seton Hall University honors student who was fatally shot at an off-campus party was remembered at an Oct. 6 prayer service as a young woman who had a deep spirituality and a personality that could “light up a room.”

Hundreds of students, faculty and other members of the university community gathered on campus with the family of Jessica A. Moore, 19, who was shot and killed at a Sept. 25 house party in nearby East Orange.

Prayers also were offered for students Nakeisha Vanterpool and Nicosia Henry, who were injured in the shooting and have since returned to campus.

A slideshow ran during the service, projecting candid photographs of Moore, a sophomore from Disputanta, Va., and condolences from her friends and family.

Gabriel Esteban, interim president of the Catholic school, assured the audience that Moore’s presence was with them at the service. Coming together as a community, Esteban stressed, was the best way to face such tragedy.

Professor Melinda Papaccio, Moore’s former English instructor, remembered the student as a “lovely, intelligent, talented” young woman who could “light up the room with her warm, vibrant spirit.” The professor commended Moore’s parents for instilling her with positive values and a deep sense of spirituality. “Your Jessica was the embodiment of love and compassion. She was a beautiful spirit of life and love.”

Monsignor C. Anthony Ziccardi, vice president of mission and ministry at Seton Hall, encouraged the community to not lose faith, even after the senseless act of violence.

“Let us not be pessimistic about human nature; God made it,” Ziccardi explained. “Our loss is great and our hurt is deep, but we are going to get through it. (Jessica’s) life is no less complete for being brief. ... It is fulfilled.”

Olanda Tolliver, Jessica’s stepfather, thanked the Seton Hall community for their outpouring of love and support. He believed his daughter touched the lives of all she came in contact with and lauded her sense of spirituality.

“These tears I shed today are not tears of sadness,” he remarked, “but tears of joy that if I live the way my daughter did, I will one day see her again.”

Her mother, Phyllis Moore-Tolliver, also offered her gratitude and encouraged everyone to strive for peace in the community.

“Don’t let Jessica’s blood be spilled in vain. We must commit (ourselves) to end this violence,” she said.

The two men arrested in connection with the shooting, Nicholas Welch, 25, and Marcus Bascus, 19, face murder, conspiracy, attempted murder and weapons charges.