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Salvadoran priest assassinated during Holy Week

Rhina Guidos Mar 30, 2018
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE



Women take part in the Palm Sunday procession March 25 in El Salvador. (Credit: Jose Cabezas/Reuters via CNS.)

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priest during Holy Week, in what some suspect may be a gang killing.

Authorities said Father Walter Vasquez Jimenez was traveling with parishioners March 29 to officiate a Holy Thursday Mass in San Miguel when their car was stopped by an armed group wearing masks. The other passengers were set free after their belongings were taken, but Vasquez was abducted, shot and left to die.

Vasquez worked for the Diocese of Santiago de Maria in the eastern part of El Salvador.

“We’re shocked and very worried about what’s taken place,” said San Salvador Archbishop Jose Luis Escobar Alas, clearly shaken by the news as he spoke in a local television interview just minutes after wrapping up a Holy Thursday Mass. He urged an investigation of the killing.

Although authorities were not giving many details, local newspapers said the priest had been threatened by gangs and that he changed his telephone number after the threats. Many suspect he was the latest victim of rampant violence, and perhaps the first priest killed by gangs that have ravaged the Central American nation which is considered one of the most dangerous countries not at war.

Escobar said he wanted “justice,” but the church has been given few details by authorities, other than the news of the priest’s death.

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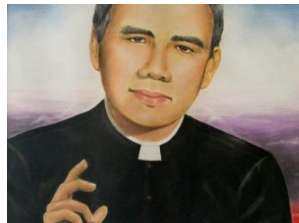
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