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Dorchester neighbors of Richard family watch prayer service

By Matt Rocheleau | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT APRIL 18, 2013

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About a half mile from the home of the 8-year-old boy who died in Monday's bombings, Mary O'Brien watched Thursday's televised interfaith service from her home.

The tears that have come so often over the past few days came again as she listened to speeches, including by the mayor and President.

"I don't understand how people can get up in that kind of a situation and give speeches like that without breaking down," said O'Brien, 53, while on a mid-afternoon walk around the Dorchester neighborhood she's lived in her whole life.

Standing on Carruth Street about a block from the Richard family's home, O'Brien said she does not know the family. But, she belongs to the same church that the family goes to, St. Ann Parish.

"It's just a community that pulls together," she said. "That's who we are."

O'Brien said Thursday's service and Obama's visit to Boston have been helpful in the healing process as have other shows of support, like the community vigil she went to Tuesday night for the Richard family.

She said it was touching "to see that many people come out," to pray and think of the family.

She said Monday's attacks are yet another painful reminder of how "you're never really safe anywhere anymore. You just never know."

"It's not just a Boston thing. It's not just a national thing," she added. "This affects the whole world."

Many neighbors declined to speak to Thursday. Some asked that reporters leave their neighborhood. In a statement issued earlier this week, the family asked for privacy.

On Thursday, Boston police officers continued to guard an area in front of the family's home to keep media and others away.

A memorial for Martin Richard, 8, was set up at the Peabody Square intersection a few blocks from his family's home.

There were balloons, stuffed animals, flowers, candles photos and newspapers placed there.

Parked several feet from the memorial, a man sat in a car listening to Thursday's interfaith service on the radio.

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