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## Prayer at Cathedral Church of St. Paul: 'Let happy times return to our city'

Posted by Roy Greene April 16, 2013 04:32 PM

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**By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent**

Nearly 100 people gathered for a special service at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on Tremont Street just after noon today. The Episcopal church arranged the service to pray in the wake of Monday's bombings.

"I want to say on a day like today, just three things," the Reverend Cristina Rathbone said during a brief sermon. "The first is that the hatred and the blood and the death and the pain are real. They are real. They are real and present with us today."

But, she said in making her second point: "They are not the only reality." There is also the reality of: "the hope and the reaching out and the coming together as we are doing here today."

Lastly, Rathbone said: "We must struggle to say Father, forgive them. Forgive us. For they know not what they do. For we know not what we do."

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Churchgoers, several of whom wore blue and yellow Boston Marathon jackets, then sat in silence and quiet reflection for several moments.

Many bowed their heads. Several used their hands or tissues to wipe away tears.

One woman sitting by herself in the middle of the church began to shake, sobbing silently. After several seconds, another woman in a pew behind her leaned over and wrapped her arms around the crying woman, holding her for about half a minute.

The Rev. Steven Bonsey offered prayers for those who died, including 8-year-old Martin Richard, those who were hurt, and anyone else whose lives were affected by the tragedy. Bonsey thanked God for and prayed for law enforcement, National Guardsmen, race volunteers, medical personnel, religious leaders and others who have tended to victims.

He also prayed for "all who feel compelled to turn to violence."

Bonsey asked God: "Let happy times soon return to our city."

Cash and checks were accepted at an offering that church leaders said will go to Children's Hospital, which has treated numerous young victims.

Angela Hamilton, 53, of North Carolina, planned to run what would have been her third Boston Marathon, but on Monday morning she said she was too sick to run. Instead, she went to Copley Square to watch the elite runners finish before heading back to her hotel.

About 45 minutes later, she watched the tragedy unfold on the television in her hotel room.

Outside of the church after the service, she said she came because she needed to pray.

"It was a little peace and comfort at a time when you can't explain all of your emotions," said Hamilton, her voice still hoarse from her recent illness.

"I just feel for -- it's too much to process," she added.

East Boston resident Jonathan Ralton, 33, wore his yellow Boston Marathon

jacket to the service. Monday was the fifth time he has volunteered at the race.

The church he belongs to, Trinity Church in Copley Square, is closed because it is within the area police have kept blocked off as a crime scene.

Ralton worked from home Tuesday and saw on Facebook that the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, another church in the diocese, was holding a special service.

"I really didn't feel that I could go into work, but I wanted to be able to pray and I'm glad that the diocese opened up the cathedral for us," he said. "I just wanted to have a place to reflect and to try and go about my day."

When asked if the service helped him, Ralton said: "It's a beginning. It's a start. It's a place to center myself and reflect."

"I'm pretty much still in shock. It was very traumatic where I was," he added.

When the bombs went off on Monday, Ralton said he was handing out food about a block and a half away. He tried to run toward the scene, but was nearly trampled by people heading away from the explosions. He stayed in the area and tried to help out for as long as he could.

Standing beside him, Rev. Rathbone said some people stricken with grief have turned to the church's clergy for help and guidance, including a runner and a volunteer that she said she spoke with Tuesday.

"The runner didn't have any words, just tears," she said. "The volunteer didn't yet have tears, but I told him they were coming."

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