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"Squirrel Hill will never be the same again"

Grandvue Center, a women's center of Opus Dei in Pittsburgh, is across the street from the synagogue where the recent mass shooting took place. Here are some stories from that deeply moving day.

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October 27 started as a normal Saturday morning. Grandvue—a women's center of Opus Dei in the

Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh—was brimming with activity. A few high schoolers were attending an overnight workshop to discuss how to discover new horizons as a young person in the Church—a response to Pope Francis’ call for conversations on the mission of youth in the Church in light of the recent Synod of Bishops in Rome on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.

Another group of high schoolers, part of LeadersNow International, arrived at 9 am for their monthly meeting at the center. A few of the girls’ mothers socialized in the dining room as part of the professional mothers’ exchange that happens monthly. Kathy, on the staff at Grandevue, was pleased to see new mothers attending the program.

They had breakfast, and the overnights were about to get

started on a service project making cards for expectant mothers at a crisis pregnancy center. The mothers sat down in the front living room for a talk on “Love for your spouse: Actions speak louder than words,” given by Laura, a guest speaker.

Suddenly, through the window, they noticed police cars gathering on the street. Kathy told the ladies to head toward the back of the house and away from the window, while she answered the door. But before she made it, she heard many gun shots —“a harrowing noise that until you’ve heard it in person, it’s hard to imagine,” she said. She started praying to St. Josemaria, asking for his protection and help.

She also thought of another family who was about to arrive, bringing girls for a morning of recollection about to take place. Getting them on the phone, she quickly learned that

they were in their car, on the street, surrounded by police, and were told to leave the area where the gunshots were being fired. (You can read their whole story [here](#)). Between tears, they asked for prayers and were praying.

Meanwhile, the moms began praying the rosary for the protection of all involved in the situation. Kathy locked the doors, set all of the house alarms, and closed the blinds.

Alexandra came upstairs to be with the high school girls and called their parents to let them know they were safe. Before telling the LeadersNow girls what was happening, the mothers called each of their parents to let them know that they were doing whatever necessary to keep the girls safe, and to please pray.

“When we heard more gunshots, we decided to all get to the lowest level of the house and do the thing that

would protect us most: pray,” Kathy said. “After praying for everyone’s safety, we got word that the shooter was surrendering, and the police were taking him into custody.”

As it was by now lunch time, Kathy and the mothers pulled together meals for all twenty-five people in the center. Kathy recounts: “A little after 2:30 pm, we saw our neighbors outside, and so we stepped out. The coast was clear. Our next-door neighbors came running over to make sure we were alright. They were also shaken up, but it was moving to see the concern everyone had for each other. Our neighborhood is a tight-knit community, yet after this we felt even more united. An attack on people so close to us moved us even more to love them and pray for them.”

"We received calls from New York, letting us know that the Prelate of Opus Dei and others in Rome had been praying for us and all those affected," says Kathy.

In the following days, though the streets were closed, many people brought flowers, creating a memorial for the victims at the synagogue. Anyone who comes is obviously praying; no one is talking, and it is quite solemn. People stop by 24/7 bringing flowers.

Clergy from different religious affiliations stop and pray at each Star of David with each victim's name (see photo above).

A Muslim leader here in Pittsburgh collected money and offered help to families of the victims. All the parishes prayed for each of the victims by name on All Souls Day. There was a special collection for

them at the following weekend collections at Mass.

The Saturday after the shooting, in one of the nearby synagogues, the head rabbi invited everyone who could come (including Christians and non-Christians) to pray together, and acknowledged their presence.

“I think Squirrel Hill will never be the same again,” Kathy said.

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