

## Bishop: Shootings hit close to home

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y. (CNS) — The shooting rampage Dec. 7 on a Long Island commuter train that left six people dead and 18 injured has "brought home the frightening reality of violence in our society," said Bishop John R. McGann of Rockville Centre.

"Of the many incidents of violence in our nation and world, none has touched as raw a nerve ending," he said in a statement, calling it a "terrible tragedy."

Colin Ferguson, a 35-year-old Jamaica native, was being held without bail and was charged with the murders as well as four counts of "depraved indifference to human life" for his rampage that took place for three minutes on the Long Island Rail Road train.

"Our hearts reach out to the victims and their families all of whom are in our thoughts and prayers," said Bishop McGann.

Without warning, Ferguson opened fire on the passengers in the third car. Four died instantly; a fifth died the following day; and a sixth died Sunday. Eighteen were wounded. Ferguson eventually was wrestled to the floor by three passengers as the rush-hour train pulled into a Long Island station 20 miles east of New York City.

Ferguson said nothing during the three-minute attack, in which he reloaded his powerful 9 mm automatic pistol at least once, witnesses and officials said.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Donald Kane said at a news conference that the gunman's hatred was revealed in rambling notes in which he vented his rage about Asians, whites and those he called "Uncle Tom Negroes."

"He has hostilities against a major portion of the population and a variety of institutions," Kane said, adding that the papers showed "a strong hostility being harbored by him in terms of racism."

# Kevorkian wins a partial victory

## Michigan judge rules in his favor

DETROIT (CNS) — Controversial suicide doctor Jack Kevorkian won a key legal victory Dec. 13 when a judge ruled that part of Michigan's law against assisted suicide was unconstitutional.

Kevorkian's lawyer, Geoffrey Fieger, said he would use the ruling to try to get all of the pending charges against Kevorkian dropped.

But he said the 65-year-old retired pathologist would not end a 14-day-old hunger strike that may have led to his being sent to the hospital Dec. 12 with chest pains.

Prosecutors said they would appeal the ruling from Wayne County Circuit Judge Richard Kaufman, who said a section of the law — passed specifically to halt Kevorkian's suicide assistance campaign — was too broad.

He said there is a "constitutionally protected right to commit suicide" when quality of life is impaired by a medical condition and the decision to end one's life is made freely.

Part of the law, Kaufman added, is unconstitutional because it is "overbroad with respect to a person's liberty interest in committing rational suicide."

Kaufman's ruling addressed only one of four deaths that have led to state charges against the 65-year-old retired pathologist.

The judge did not specifically strike down the law in his ruling, but that question may be addressed at a later hearing to determine if the death involved fell within the constitutionally protected area laid out in his ruling.

Kevorkian, who has been present at 20 suicides since 1990, was reported in stable condition Dec. 13 at North Oakland Medical Center in nearby Pontiac.

A spokeswoman said his heartbeat had returned to normal but he would not be discharged and returned to his jail cell until nightfall, meaning that he would not be present at an afternoon hearing in a



AP/Wide World Photos  
Dr. Jack Kevorkian, seated in a wheelchair, appears in Oakland County District Court in Royal Oak, Mich., Dec. 10. Kevorkian was in court for his preliminary hearing on charges he violated Michigan's ban on assisted suicide in the Oct. 22, 1993, suicide death of Merian Frederick, of Ann Arbor, Mich.

second suicide case.

That hearing was to determine if he should stand trial for assisting the suicide of Merian Frederick, 72, on Oct. 22.

Fieger said he would use Kaufman's ruling to get all of the charges dropped against Kevorkian. He also said he would ask Kaufman for a hearing date in that case earlier than Jan. 6, because of the "emergency nature" of Kevorkian's hunger strike.

"He will not be stopping the hunger

strike. He should not have to buy his freedom," Fieger said.

Kevorkian has taken no solid food — accepting only juice, water and vitamins — since he surrendered to police Nov. 29 and Fieger said he may be dead by Christmas if not released.

Another attorney for Kevorkian, Michael Schwartz, said his client does not have a death wish. "He's not interested in dying," Schwartz said. "I can tell you that. He wants to live."

## Priest says Polly Klaas leaves 'mighty legacy' for others

PETALUMA, Calif. (CNS) — The murdered Polly Klaas left a "mighty legacy for a 12-year-old" by bringing the Petaluma community together in the search for her, a priest said at her memorial service Dec. 9.

Father George Ridsen, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Petaluma, gave an opening welcome and prayer at the service, which drew hundreds of people to the church and was seen by thousands more at several other locations where the service was beamed by satellite.

Although Polly was not Catholic, her Jewish mother and Episcopalian father asked that the service be held at St. Vincent's, the largest church in Petaluma, rather than at a civic center or other secular site, Father Ridsen told Catholic News Service.

Joan Baez and Linda Ronstadt sang, President Clinton sent a message of condolence and California Gov. Pete Wilson called for tougher penalties for violent criminals as the famous joined family, friends and well-wishers in mourning the murder.

Eight hundred mourners packed St. Vincent's for what was a moving service for Polly, found dead two months after being abducted at knife-point from her home in Petaluma, 50 miles north of San Francisco. Hundreds more were turned away from the church.

In his prayer, Father Ridsen thanked

God for having "given us Polly" during her short life and said she now "stands with all the angels and saints." He prayed that "she may know God's love and ours."

The priest said Polly's death had helped the Petaluma community achieve "new heights of caring and love" as residents united in the search for her. "That's a mighty legacy for a 12-year-old," he added.

In a message read by Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Calif., Clinton called Polly's death "a terrible tragedy, unbelievably difficult to accept." He said the best way to honor her memory was "by dedicating ourselves to preventing such senseless deaths in the future."

The nation was shocked by the death of Polly, kidnapped from her bedroom Oct. 1 during a slumber party with friends while her mother slept nearby. Petaluma residents united in a campaign to find her.

Richard Davis, a 39-year-old man with a long criminal record, has been charged with murder and kidnapping.

The service began with Ms. Baez singing "Amazing Grace" and ended with Ms. Ronstadt's rendition of "Somewhere Out There," one of Polly's favorite songs.

Members of the congregation held red roses or lighted candles. Some wiped away tears while Polly's father, Marc, sat with head bowed.

Wilson said what happened to Polly "is

every parent's darkest fear."

"We must ... do everything we can as a society to see this does not happen to another child, that it does not happen to another family," he said.

"We must fight to put laws on the books to ensure that career criminals become career inmates ... We must change the law to ensure that the first offense of rapists and child molesters is the last," he said.

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said that for most 12-year-olds, the wonderful kaleidoscope of discovery had just begun and life was at its most promising. "But not for Polly Klaas. The job of her growing up has ended," she said.

Michael Groves, a family friend who

had known Polly all her life, said she was an adoring and an adored child who was intelligent, witty and talented at music and acting.

Polly's grief-stricken parents did not speak, but in a message read at the service they expressed profound gratitude to police, friends and the hundreds of volunteers who helped search for their daughter.

Family friend Barry Blansett said the family wanted the momentum created by the campaign to find Polly used to bring about changes to the judicial system.

"We as a community can and must prevent these tragedies, these attacks on our children and our communities, from ever occurring again," he said.

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