

# WORLD & NATION

## Attack on priest follows murders of missionaries

SOUTH AFRICA (CNS)—A 70-year-old priest returning from the funeral of a murdered nun was shot at by a man who stole his car.

The attack follows the recent murders of the nun and four other Catholic missionaries in three separate incidents.

Benedictine Father Albert Herold, parish priest at Mtunzini in Eshowe Diocese, South Africa, had stopped at a roadside market to buy fruit when he was robbed of his car Aug. 1. He was on his way home from the town of Eshowe after the funeral of Franciscan Sister Theodelind Schreck, who was shot to death July 26.

When he got into his car after buying fruit, he saw a man in the back seat.

"I thought he must want a lift — I didn't think for a minute that it was a hijacking. I asked him in Zulu what he wanted, but he was silent," Father Herold said in an Aug. 3 telephone interview from Mtunzini, a village about 10 miles from Eshowe.

"An old lady who I had been talking to must have sensed the danger, and she shouted to me to get out the car, which I did," said German-born Father Herold, who has worked in Eshowe Diocese for the past 45 years.

The man in the car demanded the keys, then pointed a gun at the priest and shot.

"The bullet went over my head. Then he either took my keys from me or I dropped them, I don't remember," the priest said.

The man appeared to be between 18 and 20 years old, the priest said. He was joined by a youth "of about 16," and they drove off in Father Herold's car.

The woman who had warned Father Herold flagged down a passing car, and the

driver drove the priest to the nearest police station.

At the time, Father Herold was not wearing his black Benedictine habit, but had a silver crucifix on the lapel of his black jacket.

Father Herold was returning from the funeral of Sister Schreck, a member of the Servant of the Holy Child Jesus congregation of the Franciscan order, who was found shot to death in a wooded area about 25 miles from Eshowe July 26.

Sister Schreck, 57, was principal of the Holy Childhood convent school in the Eshowe Diocese. Students' parents, parishioners and nearby farmers joined police and army staff in the search after the nun failed to return home July 22 from a mission more than 30 miles away.

Her car, with traces of blood in it, was discovered abandoned near Durban, South Africa, the day after she disappeared. The radio and a wheel had been stolen and the battery and two tires had been changed.

Police arrested two male suspects, age 17 and 23, July 28. After Sister Schreck was found dead, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement condemning "the scourge of murder and death" in South Africa.

Sister Schreck was one of five Catholic missionaries slain in a week's span.

At 2 a.m. July 28, Jesuit Father Michel Halbecq was surprised by a man with a gun outside his bedroom window at his residence in the capital of Congo, Brazzaville.

Father Jose Maria de Vera, spokesman for the Rome-based order, said the priest had just returned from a vacation in his native France, had taken a taxi from the airport and was changing his clothing when



Reuters/CNS

## Victims remembered

Ethnic Chinese and Muslim worshipers stand side-by-side in an interreligious prayer service in Jakarta Aug. 1. The worshipers reflected on the nearly 1,200 people who died in the riots that shook Indonesia in May.

the attack occurred.

The intruder apparently fired through the window, striking Father Halbecq in the head. Police believe the gunman fled without taking anything.

No motive for the shooting was known, but authorities were investigating a possible link with the recent theft of a car from the Jesuit community in Brazzaville.

The car was found in the possession of "a military man" who was "forced to return it," Father de Vera said.

"We do not know anything more about the theft other than that this military man had the stolen car and had to give it back," the priest added. "If there was a connection between that crime and this killing, it may

have been revenge."

The 65-year-old Father Halbecq was engaged principally in pastoral ministry in Congo, including the administration of a Jesuit retreat house in Brazzaville.

Meanwhile, three Missionaries of Charity died July 27 when a lone man with an automatic rifle shot the nuns outside their residence in Hodeida, Yemen:

Abdullah al-Nashri was arrested and confessed. Authorities described al-Nashri as unstable and said he had been treated at the center for the disabled where the nuns worked.

The victims were two Indians, Sister Tilia and Sister Anetta, and Sister Michael, who was from the Philippines.



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