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## The murder of Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell in Los Angeles: a peacemaker devoted to serving the needy

Homicide. As of Sunday, the death of Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell is being investigated as a homicide, the L.A. County Sheriff's Department said in a statement without adding any further details. Bishop O'Connell, born in Ireland 69 years ago, was found with a gunshot wound to the upper torso in his Hacienda Heights home, just a few blocks from St. John Vianney Church. His death came as a shock to the Catholic community of Los Angeles, as the auxiliary bishop, appointed by Pope Francis in 2015, was regarded by all as a dedicated "peacemaker." Bishop O'Connell, was born in Ireland 69 years ago. He was ordained a priest 45 years ago and spent many years helping those affected by gang violence in the southern suburbs of Los Angeles. The diocesan newspaper 'Angelo News' remembers one of the many bridges of peace forged by the bishop who negotiated peace between residents and law enforcement following the violent 1992 riots, when a jury acquitted four white Los Angeles police officers for the beating of African-American Rodney King.

His presence had been instrumental for restoring good relations between citizens and authorities, while his peaceful attitude had persuaded even the shop looters to return the stolen goods.

Two decades after that tragic event, Bishop O'Connell talked the community of Saint Gabriel Valley into rebuilding a mission after a local arson attack. "He was a peacemaker and had a passion for serving those in need while improving our community," Sheriff Robert Luna wrote on Twitter, assuring that his department "is committed to arresting those responsible for this horrible crime." Authorities did not say whether the bishop was a target in the shooting or whether his religious beliefs played a role in the murder, yet his commitment in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods struggling with daily subsistence issues in the Los Angeles metropolitan area is widely acknowledged. All residents remember his efforts to improve traffic safety, to protect pedestrians or to create safe playgrounds and get politicians to support the people. These same people held impromptu candlelight vigils with candles and prayers, right behind the police tape blocking the area of the shooting. "A good friend", said the Archbishop of Los Angeles, José H. Gomez in a statement, released as soon as he learned of the tragic news. "It is a shock and I have no words to express my sadness," said Gomez, who went on to ask for prayers for the bishop and his family at Sunday Mass in the Cathedral, as well as for law enforcement officials "as they continue their investigation into this terrible crime". The archbishop of Los Angeles recalled the Holy Mass for the sick he co-celebrated with Bishop O'Connell on February 11. During the Mass, Archbishop Gomez mentioned a detail from O'Connell's homily: "He had a wonderful sense of humour and a beautiful devotion to Our Lady. We all miss him dearly." Linda Dakin-Grimm, an immigration lawyer in California, tweeted a photo of O'Connell with one of her clients with the caption: "he was there for every child and family I have represented. Always." Sister Norma Pimentel, director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, renowned for her outreach work with migrants at the Texas-Mexico border zone, shared a photo of O'Connell on Twitter, referring to him as "a true man of God." In a Facebook statement posted on Sunday, the Sheriff's Department, addressing the South Los Angeles community, wrote: "We can only imagine how the community is suffering because of this senseless murder. Bishop O'Connell was a guiding light for so many, and his legacy will continue to live on through the community that he helped build. Please know that you are not alone in your grief."

Maddalena Maltese, from New York