



Crosses bearing the names of the victims who died in the El Paso, Texas, Walmart shooting are displayed Tuesday in front of the St. Rosa of Lima Church in Meriden.

Aaron Flaum, Record-Journal

## St. Rose honors El Paso shooting victims

By Mary Ellen Godin  
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MERIDEN — Twenty-three crosses dot the front lawn of St. Rose of Lima Church to honor the victims of the Walmart shooting in El Paso, Texas.

The crosses, made by St. Rose parishioners, display the victims' names and ages. There is an extra cross to remind believers to pray for those who have no one to pray for them.

"St. Rose is very diverse and El Paso is not that far away," said St. Rose pastor the Rev. James Manship. "It's for us to remember what happened in our community."

The Aug. 3 shooting took the

lives of 22 Walmart shoppers from both sides of the Mexican border. Authorities said the gunman left his home in suburban Dallas to drive about 10 hours with the intent to kill Hispanics.

The suspect, who is white, wrote his manifesto with anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric, saying he advocated a plan to divide the nation into territories by race, authorities told media sources.

Those killed ranged in age from 90 years old to a 15-year-old high school student. One mother died shielding her infant from gunfire. Her husband also died.

St. Rose congregation members came up with the idea to honor the victims soon after the

tragedy. The crosses are also a symbol that words have consequences.

"Saying hateful things about groups of people provokes things that happen like in El Paso," Manship said. "You can't be talking about invasions and classifying whole groups of people who are fleeing dire circumstances as rabble. They are human beings."

Although, there isn't a familial connection to the victims, church members have a spiritual and communal bond to Latinos, and to the other houses of worship that have also been targeted.

"It's not direct family," Manship said. "It's the ties to the Latino

community. They feel it and it gave them an opportunity to express that connection to them."

Manship said church leaders have yet to discuss when the crucifixes will be taken down.

Fred Rose tends to the gardens and buildings at St. Rose. He said people stop and visit the crosses, pray and reflect. He laments the frequency of shootings based on hatred and bigotry.

"It's too bad things like this are happening and we have to display things like this," Rose said. "People notice for sure. They stop, look and say a prayer."

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