

Sri Lanka Catholics celebrate Mass via TV amid new warnings

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A general view of St. Anthony's Shrine, where an explosion took place during mass on Easter Sunday, is seen in Colombo, Sri Lanka May 5, 2019. (REUTERS)

Colombo: Sri Lankan Catholics celebrated Sunday Mass in their homes for a second week as churches remain closed after reports of possible fresh attacks by Islamic extremists.

Cardinal Malcom Ranjith, the archbishop of Colombo, offered a televised Mass from his residence that was attended mostly by priests and nuns.

A letter from Pope Francis addressed to him was read out at the end of the service in which the pontiff said he prayed that "hearts hardened by hatred may yield to His will for peace and reconciliation among all his children."

At St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, one of the sites targeted by Easter suicide bombings that killed 257 people, a Mass was celebrated for a small group of children and youth as a means for inner healing. Almost all churches remained closed with armed soldiers and police guarding them.

Authorities cancelled Sunday services after reports emerged that a Catholic church and lay institution could be targeted this weekend. Catholic schools have also been closed until further notice.

However, all government schools are to reopen Monday for grade 6 and up. Police have announced they will search the premises of all schools Sunday.

- AP