

ORANGE COUNTY

Memorial Mass Is Held for Man Who Died in Custody

By DAVID REYES, *Times Staff Writer*

About 65 friends and relatives of Ezequiel Flores Larios gathered at El Salvador Park on Saturday for a Mass said by Catholic Archbishop Tomas Clavel in memory of the 25-year-old Santa Ana man who died after a controversial arrest.

Larios died July 10, four days after he was arrested following a struggle with two Santa Ana police officers who subdued him with nightsticks.

Autopsy Report Awaited

Larios' family is still waiting to learn the results of the autopsy, said Barbara McDonald, the family's attorney, who attended the service. McDonald said that unless authorities decide to release the autopsy findings, she plans to file suit Monday seeking a court order to force disclosure of the report or whatever portion has been completed.

At the time of Larios' death, authorities said it would take three weeks to finish an investigation and release a report. McDonald said the autopsy is one week overdue.

The Mass, said in Spanish and English, drew many Orange County community and Latino leaders who stood silently with family members, including the dead man's parents, in a tree-shaded area of the Santa Ana park.

'Many Difficult Problems'

Representatives from the Santa Ana League of United Latin American Citizens, the American GI Forum, Los Amigos of Anaheim and the Orange County Human Relations Commission attended.

"This has caused many difficult problems for us in the community and for the Police Department," said Clara Nava, president of the league, who attended the service.

Nava, who spoke before the





DON TORMEY / Los Angeles Times

Friends and neighbors gather in El Salvador Park to hear memorial mass for Ezequiel Flores Larios.

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service, also sought the "continued support" of those in attendance "through the duration of the investigations."

The FBI, as part of a U.S. Justice Department inquiry, is conducting an investigation to determine whether Larios' civil rights were violated. In addition, independent investigations by the Orange County district attorney's office, Sheriff's Department and the Santa Ana Police Department are under way.

Archbishop Clavel's attendance was seen as a symbolic gesture by many of those who attended the service. Clavel, who heads the Orange County Hispanic Ministry, and Msgr. John Sammon of Orange, who assisted Clavel, received a round of applause after the Mass.

Officer Escorted Archbishop

Organizers of Saturday's service said they had difficulty getting a Spanish-speaking priest from nearby churches to officiate.

Clavel was escorted to the service by Jose Vargas, a Santa Ana police officer assigned to the Latino community. Vargas offered his condolences and shook hands with Ezequiel and Yolanda Larios, the dead man's parents.

McDonald said she was denied in her attempt Friday to get a judge to

sign an order to release the coroner's autopsy report. She made the attempt, she said, because the family has been given "rather vague" times for the release of the documents.

The family and investigating agencies are trying to determine the cause of the fatal hairline fracture Larios suffered between the time he allegedly resisted arrest by two uniformed officers and the time he was discovered in a "disoriented" state after he was booked into Orange County Jail.