

CHURCH VANDALS HIT FIVE STATES

In February, Tucson metropolitan area was home to three separate incidents of church vandalism targeted at the same site. The acts occurred in a mortuary chapel next to the world-renowned Mission San Xavier del Bac near Tucson, Arizona.

The first act, which happened on February 13, included the desecration of 35 of the 50 statues located in the chapel; extensive spray painting was also apparent. On the morning of February 18, three more statues were broken. Later that evening, a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe was found covered in motor oil and smoldering.

Vandals at St. James Church destroyed a century-old statue of Madonna on February 15 in McMinnville, Oregon. Labeling it sacrilegious, Father Tom Farley said the congregation “felt personally violated.”

Notre Dame Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was the scene of vandalism on February 18. Derogatory notes about Catholicism were left, a picture of Christ was burned and pieces of Communion wafers were tossed around the church. The teenagers responsible for this incident also trashed a Jewish cemetery. Most of the alleged offenders were arrested and charged with a hate crime.

On March 10, Catholics in Topeka, Kansas, learned that vandals had broken a life-sized marble statue of Jesus that was located in Topeka’s Mount Calvary Cemetery. The damage occurred either the night before or early that day.

Police descended upon Saint Edward’s Catholic Church in Pembroke Pines, Florida, looking for the arsonists that tried to torch the church on March 12. The vandals broke into the

church and did approximately \$10,000 worth of damage before setting off the fire alarm.

These senseless acts of violence demonstrate the rage that some young people have towards Catholicism. They also show that no region of the country is immune from such vicious acts.