

VANDALS STRIKE CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Here is a list of some acts of vandalism at Catholic churches that have come to our attention in the past month. We usually see vandals attack crèches this time of the year; the fact that churches are being targeted is even more disturbing.

Cranston, RI: St. Paul Catholic Church was vandalized twice in just over a week. In both incidents, on Wednesday night, Nov. 20 and again on Friday night, Nov. 29, rocks were thrown through the church's stained glass windows, smashing them.

Wauseon, OH: Three statues were vandalized at an outdoor shrine at St. Caspar Catholic Church on Monday, Nov. 18. According to parish secretary Kasey Sekula, "One of the statue's head was completely cut off. The other ones, the face was just pretty much destroyed."

El Paso, TX: A Friday, Dec. 6 incident at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in east El Paso was the latest, and most egregious, of a series of acts of vandalism against Catholic churches in El Paso since last May. In this attack, vandals broke into the church around 2 a.m., after using large, heavy stones from the church landscaping to smash windows at the entrance to the gathering area, the parish main office and the bookkeeping office—which was ransacked. A bible was set on fire, and a second fire, started on a table, was apparently set intentionally to burn a large framed image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The image was badly damaged by the fire, as was the wall on which it hung. Two crosses were turned upside down on the walls and satanic symbols were left in multiple locations.

Wichita, KS: A statue of the Virgin Mary in front of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church was vandalized, with black markings, apparently from spray paint, covering her hands and face. The

incident happened over the weekend of Dec. 7-8.

Miami, FL: "A trail of destruction left" Corpus Christi Catholic Church "with thousands of dollars in damages as teenagers wreaked havoc across rooms during an early morning break-in" on Monday, Dec. 9, a local TV station reported. The teens started in a dining room, where they overturned tables, burned a package of disposable Styrofoam containers, and scrawled profanities and vulgar images onto windows and a refrigerator. Then they entered a kitchen, where they redrew the same vulgarities in white residue along a table, and discharged a fire extinguisher to blanket the table and floor in white flame retardant powder. Total damage was estimated at \$3,000.

Tacoma, WA: A tabernacle and a cross were stolen from the chapel at Holy Rosary Catholic Church on Tuesday night, Dec. 10. According to the principal of Holy Rosary Bilingual Academy, the thief knew exactly what he or she was looking for. The principal said it could cost thousands of dollars to replace what was stolen.

Franklin Lakes, NJ: A 26-year-old man has been charged with aggravated arson and burglary after setting fire to The Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church early in the morning of Wednesday, Dec. 11. The man used gasoline and a cigarette lighter to set the blaze, which completely destroyed the church.

Crowley, LA: Seven times in the past five months, Christian churches including St. Theresa Catholic Church have had glass shattered by thrown objects. The latest incident occurred at a Christian church on Sunday, Dec. 8.

Mt. Lebanon, PA: A 21-year-old man was charged with smashing doors and windows at three churches, including St. Bernard Catholic Church, on Wednesday, Dec. 4.