

# VANDALS STRIKE ON BOTH COASTS

Vandalism against Catholic icons marked the Easter season in New England, while in California the severed head of a statue of St. Junípero Serra that had been missing since October was found.

Just days after Easter, Father Frank Silva of St. Margaret's Church in Burlington, Vermont found a statue of the Blessed Mother on church grounds that had been desecrated. "I immediately noticed the head had been chopped off and as I got closer the hands had been broken off" as well, he said. And that was not the end of the destruction: further up the hill, two other statues were also found to have been vandalized.

Also just days after Easter, a statue of the Virgin Mary was found decapitated at St. Mary's Church in Billerica, Massachusetts. This statue too had its hands cut off in what Billerica police chief Daniel Rosa termed a "disturbing crime." It was the third such act of vandalism at Catholic churches in the area, following a similar incident in Norwood, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, in northern California, police announced in early April that the head of a statue of St. Junípero was found by a girl walking in shallow water. The statue at the lower Presidio of Monterey was one of several that had been targeted by vandals in the Monterey Peninsula last fall, after Pope Francis canonized the 18th century missionary who brought the Catholic faith to California. A statue in the city of Carmel and one at the Carmel mission had also been desecrated.