

Holy Cross picks up the pieces after widespread vandalism

Churches - 2000
 Baptismal font
 from late 1700s,
 bell tower damaged

By CATHY KELLY

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✓ SANTA CRUZ — A vandal or vandals caused widespread damage at Holy Cross Church early Sunday in what police are investigating as a possible hate crime.

The damaged items included a baptismal font brought to Mission Santa Cruz by Junipero Serra in the late 1700s, a church spokesman said.

A custodian discovered the destruction to the main church and other areas on the property about 6:50 a.m., police spokesman Zach Friend said. Police believe the damage was done about 4 a.m.

It included windows shattered by rocks and paint sprayed and poured on doors, walls, statues, a fountain area and sidewalks, Friend said. Some anti-church slogans and symbols were painted, he said.

Targets included the main church, the museum, the adjacent Siena House (a home serving pregnant women), and a garden area beside the historic chapel, said Warren Hoy, spokesman for the Diocese of Monterey.

The vandal or vandals went so far as to climb on the roof so they could spray paint on the church's bell tower, Hoy said.

Paint was poured on statues of Junipero Serra and the Virgin Mary, he said.

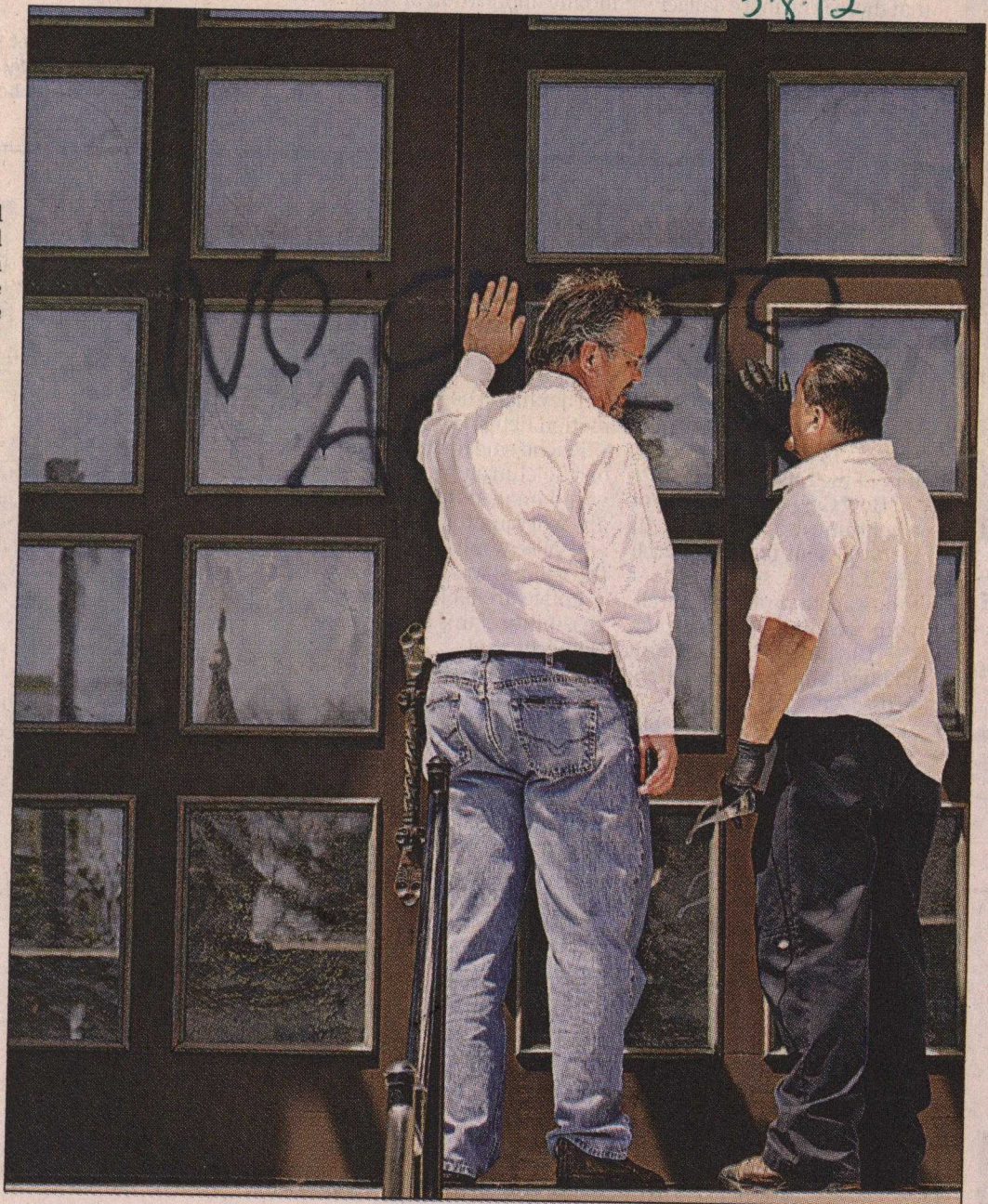
Those statues and the original baptismal font were in a garden area adjacent to the chapel and Mission Galeria gift shop, he said.

"They got a little bit of everything," Hoy said. "They were so thorough, that is why I keep saying 'they.' They took some time to do all this."

Stained-glass windows ringing the main church building, which was rebuilt after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, were largely spared, Hoy said. But some of the Plexiglas on the outside of those windows was damaged.

It's unclear what the repair will cost, or whether the historic font could be repaired, he said.

"The sad thing is a lot of stuff they damaged were cultural artifacts, so they were not just



Holy Cross Catholic Church officials talk about how to remove the 'No Cristo Aqui' graffiti sprayed across the front doors of the church.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL PHOTOS



ABOVE: Holy Cross workers will have to add another coat of paint to cover this graffiti left on a wall behind the Santa Cruz Mission chapel, which reads 'this was made by slaves.'



RIGHT: A Holy Cross Catholic Church worker removes paint splashed on a statue of Junipero Serra in a courtyard behind Holy Cross Mission on Monday.

VANDALISM

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attacking the church," Hoy said. "It's the history of it."

Holy Cross has suffered vandalism before, some of it specifically aimed at the history of the Mission era.

"Holy Cross is something of a lightning rod," Hoy said. "It is the obvious famous church in Santa Cruz, so if you want to do something to the Church, with a capital C, you attack the Catholic Church, and when you do, you attack Holy Cross."

"And it's readily accessible. It's a church. It's not walled off."

Hoy added that while church staff are working with the police to find who damaged the property, they are praying for the vandals, too.

"They are obviously in a lot

of pain and with any luck they will repent and turn themselves in," he said.

The church has an alarm system, but the vandalism outside did not prompt an alarm, Hoy said.

They might need to consider motion lights, he said.

Friend said a video camera on the church property also was damaged. Investigators are working to determine if any video was captured before the damage was done.

Police are looking into the possibility of this being a hate crime, he said.

Police ask anyone with information to call the anonymous tip line at 420-5995 or leave a tip at www.santacruzpolice.com or on its cell-phone application at <http://m.santacruzpolice.com>.

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A baptismal font dating from the late 1700s was pushed over and tagged with graffiti in a courtyard behind the Santa Cruz Mission chapel.

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