

Statue of Christ vandalized at Calgary church

The Calgary Police Service has launched an investigation into the vandalizing of a bronze Jesus statue by the front doors of a city parish.

A surveillance camera captured “two young people” committing the act at Sacred Heart Catholic Church “using spray paint and possibly a marker or chalk” at 1:29 a.m. July 14, according to a statement released by the Diocese of Calgary on July 16.

A picture provided to *The Catholic Register* shows the spray paint covering the eyes and parts of the face and hair. Letters were written upon the front garments using the presumed marker or chalk.

“We want to underscore that graffiti is a criminal offence and mischief against a religious property that is motivated by hate or violence is an additional offence,” said Corwin Odland, a communications strategist for the Calgary Police Service.

Odland told *The Register* that the original incident report did not mention the surveillance footage, but investigators will analyze the video.

The Diocese of Calgary has declined to comment on the incident.

It’s part of a wave of incidents across Canada that have seen the defacing of statues of historical and religious figures.

In May, eight Stations of the Cross statues at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Sudbury, Ont. were beheaded, while the site of a statue of explorer Samuel de Champlain was covered in red paint in Orillia, Ont. The statue had been removed from the site in 2017 for restoration and repairs. The original included a Jesuit priest and an Indigenous person at Champlain’s feet.

In Toronto on July 18, statues of Egerton Ryerson and John A. Macdonald were doused in paint during a Black Lives Matter protest.

Similar protests have taken place across the United States, with statues of St. Junipero Serra recently torn down in communities across California. Statues commemorating historical Confederate figures have also been torn down in protest of their ties to slavery in the United States.

All incidents seem to be linked by calls to wipe out any ties to colonial or racist pasts these figures or the Catholic Church are said to have.

Police in Calgary are asking anyone with information to call the Calgary Police

Service's non-emergency line at (403) 266-1234. In Sudbury, the investigation has stalled as there is no surveillance video, suspects or witnesses.