

Eucharist attacked at Emmitsburg parish

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The Eucharist was desecrated at St. Anthony Shrine in Emmitsburg after a frustrated thief or thieves apparently exacted revenge for failing to open a safe and poor box, according to Sister Marietta Culhane, O.S.F., temporary pastoral life director of St. Anthony and Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Thurmont.

A cleaning lady discovered the open tabernacle and consecrated hosts strewn on the church floor Feb. 2. Police and archdiocesan officials were immediately notified.

“We took it as a willful attack against the Blessed Sacrament,” said Sister Marietta. “I think they were so angry about not getting any money, they wanted to offend Catholics. They wanted to let us know they were angry.”

After failing to break open a back church door, the perpetrator(s) entered a side sacristy by forcing open a window, Sister Marietta said. A drill was used in a failed attempt to open a safe. The intruder(s) also tried to pry open an antique poor box.

Before a key was discovered and used to unlock the tabernacle, the thief or thieves tried to open the tabernacle with a tool, causing a small chip in the marble altar, Sister Marietta said.

The offenders also attempted to open two side altar tabernacles that did not contain the Eucharist.

There was no money in the safe or poor box, according to Sister Marietta. Only \$5 was stolen from a votive candle stand.

“There was no way they were going to get anything,” she said.

After contacting archdiocesan officials, church leaders followed official church protocols and buried the desecrated hosts at the National Grotto of Lourdes in

Emmitsburg. St. Anthony church was re-consecrated, Sister Marietta said.

Frederick County police are investigating the incident and have taken fingerprints at the crime scene.

The temporary pastoral life director said the parish will install an alarm system on the windows and improve outdoor lighting. The poor box has been repaired, and a new safe will be purchased. Total monetary damages amount to about \$1,200, Sister Marietta said.

“You just have to say, ‘Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they do,’” she said.