

Church Thefts on Increase

London — (NC) — The increasing looting of antiques from churches of all denominations is causing serious concern in Britain. The churches are worried not only at the loss of such religious treasures themselves but also because the insurance companies are accordingly raising their rates.

Almost every day now — as antiques of all kinds become scarcer and consequently more valuable — a church is plundered somewhere in Britain. The raids seek anything from silver communion vessels to candlesticks.

The Church of England, which

owns practically all of the oldest and best-endowed churches, is being particularly hit. Even suits of armor from medieval tombs in the churches are disappearing.

The Ecclesiastical Insurance Office, which insures the contents of some 20,000 Anglican cathedrals and churches said: "The situation is very serious. Never a day passes without our getting a report of one church being robbed or desecrated."

The less valuable stolen pieces such as candlesticks and vases are easily sold on the antique market because dealers cannot

possibly check the origin of everything they buy. And the problem is made more difficult by the fact that some church furnishings — though this hardly applies to Catholic churches — are periodically sold off legitimately, as, for instance, when a church is demolished.

Before World War II, he said, perhaps 20 or 30 churches were robbed annually. "Today it is hundreds," he added. He said that such thefts will probably go on increasing unless far greater security is observed by individual churches.

One Anglican bishop has appealed for vigilantes to guard churches in his diocese from thefts and acts of sacrilege.

Insurance men blame the clergy themselves to some extent. They say they should have all valuables photographed in detail to help police and antique dealers in checking stolen property. Few churches have introduced alarm systems covering their safes and sacristies. Some leave their churches open all night.

No figures for robberies at Catholic churches is available, but it is known that, although they usually have less to attract antique looters, they are also being robbed. Catholic churches more than those of other denominations are usually left open throughout the day and well into the evening.

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'Persecuted' Mass Banned In Madrid

Madrid — (RNS) — Archbishop Casimiro Morcillo Gonzalez has withdrawn his permission for a special Mass which Catholic sources said was intended to spark a political demonstration.

The Mass, sponsored by a group of young, "progressive" priests, was to have been offered for the "persecuted Church," a phrase usually associated with the Church in Iron Curtain countries.

According to well-informed sources, the ceremony was to be directed instead at the "persecution" of Catholics in Spain by the Franco government, probably focusing on priests who are awaiting trial for participating in recent workers' demonstrations.

At least ten priests are known to have been arrested during demonstrations in late October and at least three are awaiting trial in Barcelona.



Rest For The Weary

Con Thien — (RNS) — A bone-tired GI naps where he can. This Marine in Con Thien, South Vietnam, is almost lost amid sandbags, war material and rubble atop a bunker just south of the Demilitarized Zone.

Cites Rome's Pledge

Rejects Single Rite Plan

Trivandrum, India — (NC) — A leading priest-official of the Trivandrum archdiocese has strongly opposed a move to replace Kerala state's present three rites with a single rite reflecting "Indian cultural traditions."

Msgr. Philippe Remban, vicar-general of the See, said in an article that the proposed common rite will be against commitments made by the Holy See in 1930 while setting up the Syro-Malankara rite for Orthodox Christians reuniting with the Catholic Church.

The priest recalled that before joining the Catholic Church the original group of Malankara Catholics, who included the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios of Trivandrum, wrote to Rome to ask whether their rite would be changed after union.

Msgr. Remban said that Pope Pius XI had said in reply that the rite would be preserved intact and that bishops of the Malankara church would be

chosen exclusively from the reuniting community.

The article, published here in the official organ of the reunion movement, was in reply to a press conference in which Father Varghese Chathaparambil had claimed that more than 90 per cent of Kerala's clergy favor a single rite for the state's 2.6 million Catholics.

Father Chathaparambil is president of a committee of priests seeking support for "one rite for Kerala."

Msgr. Remban said that the state's two rites, Latin and Syro-Malabar, do not have "separated brethren" as the Malankara rite has. He pointed out that if the Malankara rite is displaced, "it will be impossible for us to fulfill our task of bringing separated brethren closer to the Catholic Church."

Msgr. Remban added that a single rite would be out of tune with Indian culture which was a mixture of the cultures of different communities.

A Mistake In Procedure

Toronto — (NC) — The woman moved casually through the department store, carefully selecting articles of clothing, folding them neatly and placing them in a shopping bag.

When the first bag was full, she filled another. "She had almost \$200 worth of merchandise in the bags," said the store detective who brought her before Municipal Court Judge Pascal Lachapelle on a shoplifting charge.

Lachapelle dismissed the charge.

The "shoplifter" turned out to be a 32-year-old teacher in a Catholic school, and the charge against her arose from the fact that she had just left a cloistered convent after 15 years.

"I just wasn't familiar with the procedure," she said. The woman told Lachapelle that her only other clothes-shopping trip had been to a store with a central check-out counter. "I thought it was the same here."

1-A In Draft

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made any decision on the next step.

Previous to turning in his draft card, Father Connor had expressed his anti-war views by signing several petitions and newspaper advertisements opposing U.S. involvement in the Vietnam struggle. "But," he added, "I felt I had to do more than that."

"I deeply regret the pain this may cause my family and friends," he noted. "I only hope that they will believe this step was taken after long thought and prayer. Once the decision was made, however, I had to follow my conscience in the matter."

A native of Caledonia, Father Connor had completed one year as an undergraduate engineering student at Cornell before entering St. Bernard's Seminary, from which he was ordained in 1964.

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Church Art Treasures Filched in Mexico

Mexico City — (NC) — Religious art treasures from Spanish colonial times have been disappearing from Mexican churches in a series of robberies dating back several decades, according to a prominent historian.

Dr. Arturo Arnaiz y Freg of the National Academy of History said that a thief arrested at the cathedral here revealed that he had been stealing art treasures since 1938.

The man, arrested Nov. 7, had taken a wooden sculpture representing the souls in Purgatory and eight small golden figures.

In an interview for the daily custodians of the church with Excelsior, Dr. Arnaiz charged negligence. He also said that repeated warnings on worn-out electrical wiring went unheeded before a fire early this year destroyed several art treasures including the Altar of Pardon and the canons' chair loft.

"How many pieces of sculpture, and paintings, have been stolen from churches in the

last 40 years? What happened at the cathedral is only one sign of a greater problem," the historian said.

"Everyone knows how antique dealers in Mexico can openly sell paintings, sculptures, ivory pieces, 'polychromes' and liturgical objects that obviously come from our churches."

He pointed out that these treasures are an irreplaceable part of the national heritage and that the state, sole owner of such treasures under confiscation laws, should tighten its control and vigilance.

Church properties were placed under government control by the constitution of 1857. In recent years, however, custody and maintenance of specific churches, as in the case of the cathedral, have been entrusted to citizens' committees including prominent Catholics.

Historian Arnaiz says now that these committees seldom appreciate colonial art, flounder in their restoration works, and lack police facilities to guard art treasures.

Churchmen Hold Dialog With Media Experts

Harrison Hot Springs, B.C. — (NC) — Representatives of the United Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches met here with a group of radio and television broadcasters to discuss "Christian Broadcasting" and the relationship of the churches to communications media.

The meeting was hailed as a step forward in cooperation among local churches, and the beginning of a new stage in the relationship of the churches to the community around them.

"I do not know of any other place in the world where such a meeting as this is being held," said Bishop Rem De Roo of Victoria, a member of the Canadian Bishops' National Commission on Communications Media.

The conference was arranged by the Rev. Art Ilves and the Rev. Rod Booth, broadcasting representatives in British Columbia of the Anglican and United Churches. It was a forerunner of a national conference to be held in Toronto next year.

Auxiliary Bishop James Carney of Vancouver said clergy men must ask themselves what it is they wish to communicate through the media. "I think we, the clergy of the Church, have to sit down and discover what is the Christian message," he said. "I think there is a great danger of dishonesty, in labeling ideas 'Christian' because they are attractive and acceptable to the viewing audience, without really facing up to the possible unpopularity or rejection of the Christian message."

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