

# Churches raided as troops continue fight with rebels

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (CNS) — Catholic and other Christian churches were ransacked and church workers detained by Salvadoran soldiers and bands of unidentified vandals during the battle for San Salvador that began Nov. 11, church authorities said.

The incidents occurred in the northern neighborhoods of the city where fighting was heaviest.

One report cited Col. Rene Emilio Ponce, of the military chief of staff office, as saying that the searches were conducted in order to find caches of arms and explosives used by the guerrillas in their offensive.

On Nov. 14, Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador had written to Ponce, advising him of the church's plan to shelter people displaced by the fighting. In the letter, the archbishop provided Ponce with a list of several churches and church-run schools in the most affected areas which were to serve as shelters, including the parishes of San Roque and Jesus the Worker, which were subsequently raided.

Salvadoran National Guard troops raided the Episcopal church in San Salvador Nov.

20 and detained six foreigners, including three Spaniards, one U.S. citizen, one Canadian and one Colombian.

An unidentified National Guard spokesman told journalists that the foreign church workers had been taken to Treasury Police headquarters and could soon be expelled from the country.

Meanwhile, soldiers from the elite Atlacatl Battalion searched the Catholic Church of St. Francis of Assisi in the poor neighborhood of Mejicanos, site of some of the heaviest fighting between guerrillas and government troops. One of the priests at the church, who asked not to be identified, told journalists that the soldiers detained and took away five young Salvadoran men who were helping to provide aid to the people sheltered in the church.

"They accused us of running a clinic for the guerrillas," the priest said. During the fighting, he said, the church gave shelter and medical aid to anyone who arrived seeking help, "and we never asked if they were from one group or the other."

"Our work is humanitarian, it is Christian," he told reporters. "But I can assure you that we never attended to any armed



Members of an emergency rescue unit in San Salvador, El Salvador, hit the ground during heavy combat guerrillas launched in the capital Nov. 11.

men that were wounded."

Franciscan nuns who operate a school in the parish of Jesus the Worker said that when they returned to the school Nov. 21, after the fighting, the doors had been battered down and the premises ransacked by a group of unidentified men.

Maryknoll officials said one of their priests, Father Ron Hennessey, reported soldiers on Nov. 17 had vandalized Christ

the Savior Church in a Zacamil district neighborhood which rebel guerrillas had occupied. Soldiers reportedly entered the church around 1:30 p.m. and stripped it of sacred objects, including the tabernacle. They left a sign at the front of the church reading "This church is mined."

The social secretariat office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador said that on Nov. 20 government troops also searched the shelter and the Church of San Roque in the neighborhood of San Jacinto, to the south of the city. According to a spokesman from the office, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal, some 50 people being sheltered in the parish were forcibly turned out of the shelter by army troops.

In the poor community of La Chacara, on the east side of San Salvador, troops also raided the Church of Mary of the Poor on Nov. 19 and again Nov. 20, according to the archdiocesan spokesman. On Nov. 14 treasury police reportedly raided a day care center at the same church.

In addition, the archdiocesan spokesman said, a shelter for displaced people, which was functioning at Holy Family Secondary School in the north of the capital, was also searched by soldiers.

"In all these places, the army troops were looking for wounded and bandages stained with blood, but they found nothing

Continued on page 14



## You'd be amazed with what just \$5 can buy.

Is there anything more joyful than the sparkle in a child's eyes on Christmas morning?

Greater Rochester Cablevision invites you to share the holiday spirit by participating in its annual holiday fund drive.

A donation of a toy, canned goods or a cash gift of \$5 will help provide a happier holiday for the needy in our community.

In return for your gift, you'll receive a free connection to cable television from GRC.

Let's work together to make this holiday season happier for all Rochester families.

If you would like to help . . .

Call 987-6300

### GRC

We put the vision back in television.

Your donations will be distributed through the Salvation Army and Clown Service Fund, Inc. Some restrictions may apply.

**HELP BROTHER TIMOTHY**  
to help the fatherless, unwanted, handicapped, homeless children, and the poor. Send Redemption Stamps; Green, Gold Bond and Plaid, Treasure chest coupons and donations, as well as tapes from Bells, Tops, and Super Duper Markets to:  
**Brother Timothy, OFM**  
St. Patrick's Friary  
102 Seymour St.  
Buffalo, NY 14210

**DONATE TO YOUR PARISH!**  
Your Car or Truck... Boat... Motorcycle... Recreational Vehicle

Charity Fundings has been established to assist non-profit organizations in disposing of cars, trucks, boats, motorcycles and R.V.'s. All donors will receive an IRS-Tax form for a tax deduction. Donations will be sold at auction and the net proceeds will be returned to your parish or favorite charity.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:**  
**CHARITY FUNDINGS**  
"Helping to Fund Public Charities"  
(716) 426-1030  
522 Trolley Blvd., Rochester, NY 14606