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## Senior Lifestyles

# Fire guts historic church in New York

By Tracy Early  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — St. Agnes Church, known beyond its parish bounds for ministries to New York commuters and for association with the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, was badly damaged in a fire Dec. 10.

A number of people were in the church when the fire began, but all got out safely.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor, who went to the scene, commented, "I'd rather lose a church than one life."

Mayor David N. Dinkins also went to the burning church, where a massive turnout of the city's firefighting personnel were engaged.

The church, a Gothic building of red brick with white stone trim, is near Grand Central Station.

It offers a number of Masses and provides other ministries, and draws many commuters who work nearby — especially on holy days.

The fire, which burned through the church roof, caused no serious damage to the adjacent rectory, nor to a former school behind the church that is now used as a shelter and soup kitchen.

The rectory was not used the night after the fire because of lack of heat and other temporary problems, but it came back on, and the priests expected to continue living there. The shelter and soup kitchen had to suspend services the first night, but they were resumed the next morning.

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for the New York archdiocese, said Monsignor Eugene Clark, pastor of St. Agnes, hoped to resume Masses in the lower

church soon, but that damage assessment had not yet been completed.

No cause of the fire had been determined yet, Zwilling said. It appeared to start in the choir loft at the back, and some speculated there was a short circuit in the organ.

A popular tradition at St. Agnes Church before Archbishop Sheen's death was his preaching of Good Friday devotions there.

At times the street was blocked off to accommodate the crowds, who listened to loudspeakers placed outside after the church filled up. A nearby corner now has a street sign designating it as Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Place.

## Newark knitter warms hearts, hands of others

Continued from page 13  
tine. "I knit whenever I feel like it," she laughed.

Because of her failing eyesight in recent years, VandeMortel has had to knit with brighter, more colorful yarn. She acknowledged that it is getting harder to see even the bright yarn, prompting her to predict that this will be her last year.

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