

WORLD & NATION

April attacks force Irish from church, homes

By Cian Molloy
Catholic News Service

DUBLIN, Ireland — An early morning blaze damaged a Catholic Church at An-naclone in County Down, Northern Ireland —the fifth such attack on a Catholic Church since the beginning of April.

Police said a deliberately-lit fire damaged vestments and the church interior.

The April 16 fire followed overnight skirmishes between Catholics and Protestants in County Armagh, in which gasoline bombs were tossed on a road that separates rival neighborhoods.

Just days earlier, Bishop Patrick Walsh of Down and Connor, Northern Ireland, had condemned an overnight fire at a Catholic church in County Antrim as "yet another deliberate, malicious attack" and asked people to pray for those responsible for the damage.

The Church of St. Peter the Rock in Stoneyford, near Lisburn, was completely gutted after a fire using gasoline was started in the sanctuary area the night of April 14. The altar was severely damaged.

Stoneyford is a rural area where the population is a mix of Catholics and Protestants. Father John McManus, spokesman for the diocese, told Catholic News Service that parishioners considered the church fire "a personal attack."

Bishop Walsh said in a statement, "My heart goes out to the parishioners for whom the church was a second home, where the family of the parish gathered to worship God and to share with one another the joyful and sorrowful occasions in life.

"The Church of St. Peter the Rock is in an isolated situation, but today the parishioners will not feel isolated, for they have the sympathy and the prayers of very many people ... who will be aghast at this further affront to Almighty God—for that is what an attack on a church is," the bishop said. "We must all pray for a change of heart in those who carry out and those who inspire such despicable acts," he added.

Eight Catholic families were forced to flee from their homes in Belfast when sectarian rioting broke out the night of April 12.

Parents and children hurriedly gathered what few belongings they could carry and fled from their homes on Limestone Road in the north of the city as Loyalists threw bricks and bottles through windows, smashed doors with iron bars and shouted sectarian abuse.

Loyalists, who are mainly Protestant, want Northern Ireland to remain a province of Great Britain. Nationalists, who are mainly Catholic, want Northern Ireland united with the Republic of Ireland.

The attacks on the Catholic residents

followed running battles earlier in the day between Catholic and Protestant youths. At one stage during the rioting, a brick was thrown into the bedroom window of a Protestant household and narrowly missed a sleeping 10-month-old baby.

The attacks on the Catholic homes is thought to be partly in response to that incident, but it also involves Protestants reasserting their territory. Limestone Road borders Tiger Bay, a Loyalist, working-class stronghold blighted by high unemployment which has caused the Protestant population to decrease.

Catholics started moving into new homes on the Limestone Road three years ago during the Irish Republican Army cease-fire, but the road is now 100 percent Protestant again.

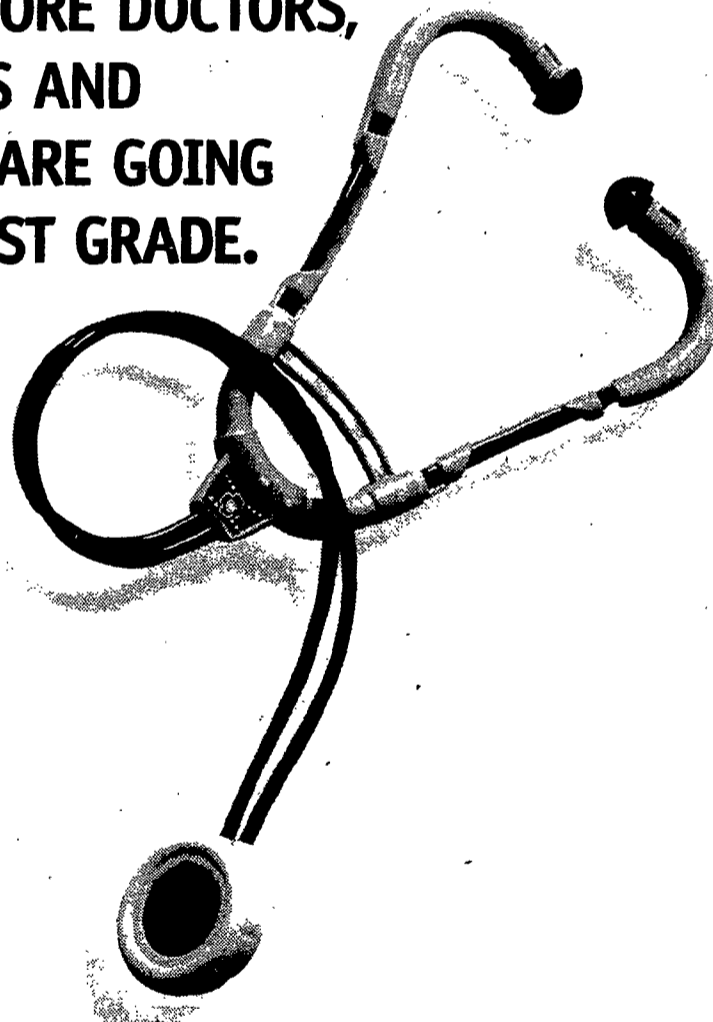
In 1969, when the Northern Ireland "troubles" first broke out, hundreds of Catholic families were forced to flee mixed areas in North Belfast after they were burnt out of their homes by Protestant mobs.

Protestant locals see the arrival of Catholic residents as a threat to their territory. Last July, 11 Catholic families were forced by Loyalist-mobs to leave the Torrens area of North Belfast.



Father Frank Kearney inspects the damage to the sacristy of St. Coleman Church in Bainbridge, Northern Ireland, April 16. CNS photo

**THANKS TO YOU, MORE DOCTORS,
ENGINEERS AND
LAWYERS ARE GOING
ON TO FIRST GRADE.**



Over the past four years, the number of children repeating kindergarten has dropped 50%. That's because accredited pre-school programs—many of them supported by United Way—are giving kids the confidence and love of learning that will take them through high school, college and who knows how far. It's so easy to help so many. Please give generously through payroll deduction.



A United Way Investment Priority

MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

www.uwayroch.org



PAGTIME

**DELUXE TORONTO WEEKEND
LAST CALL for May 3/4 - \$225 pp**

Personally escorted by owners Norrine & Ed Waller
Intimate group limited to 30 - Deluxe Coach
Continental Breakfast en route
Center Front Orchestra VIP seats
King Edward Hotel - Deluxe Accommodations
\$25 toward Food/Beverage - All Taxes & Gratuity

716-624-3110

**Kids' Answers
from page 16**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Acts, Romans, Corinthians (1&2)
Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians