Paint is seen across the front of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Stockton, Calif., Nov. 5, 2023, in an attack of vandalism that police were investigating as a hate crime. (OSV News photo/courtesy Diocese of Stockton)

by OSV News

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The Stockton Police Department was investigating whether a hate crime was behind an act of vandalism that left white paint streaked across the front doors of the 81-year-old Cathedral of the Annunciation in Stockton.

Local news reports said that besides the front door area, white paint also was seen on a walkway, a landscaping area and a flatbed trailer parked near the church. Police believe the paint was left there around 5:45 a.m. Nov. 5.

A post on the cathedral parish's Facebook page said, "Thanks to [pastor] Father John Foster's quick action before the 7 am Mass, the police department came out to record the incident."

"Our Cathedral of the Annunciation is alive with the Holy Spirit!!" said the post, adding, "Thanks to our amazing parishioners [who] volunteered their pressure washing equipment and talent, and our maintenance person who will finish off the details on the doors. Thank you to the community for your prayers. God is good!"

In a statement the Stockton Diocese provided to OSV News Nov. 6, Bishop Myron J. Cotta said, "I am deeply saddened by the early morning vandalism at our beloved Cathedral. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated parish staff and parishioners for their swift assistance in managing the situation. A special thanks goes to the Stockton Police Department for their prompt response and support."

Across the country about two weeks earlier, a vandal damaged the 150-year-old crucifix outside the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, according to The Pilot, the archdiocesan news outlet.

"Cellphone video posted online shows a man identified by police as 37-year-old Michael Patzelt of Attleboro swinging from the feet of Christ, apparently attempting to remove him from the cross" the night of Oct. 24, The Pilot reported. "Christ's arms, torn from the torso, hang from the cross as onlookers react in horror. The

vandal caused an estimated $20,000 in damage."

Boston Police arrested Patzelt at the scene. He was charged with assault and malicious destruction of property in the incident and was to be arraigned in Boston Municipal Court.

The cathedral's rector, Msgr. Kevin O'Leary, told The Pilot that he forgave the perpetrator, describing him as "a suffering man" who was vandalizing an image of "the suffering Jesus."