

Vandals ransack churches in Tramore and Faithlegg



Faithlegg Church, Co. Waterford.

Two churches in Waterford were vandalised at the weekend, with windows broken, flooring ripped up, skirting removed from walls and chalices thrown about.

The communities of both the Church of Ireland Christ Church in Tramore and the Roman Catholic St Nicholas Church in Faithlegg rowed in to assist with the clean-up operations at their respective places of worship, after both churches were targeted by vandals last Saturday.

It's unclear what time on Saturday that vandals gained entry to Christ Church on Tramore's Church Road, by breaking into the adjacent community hall and then accessing the church via the roof.

Dean of Waterford, the Very Revd Maria Jansson, said the vandals had risked their lives "over nothing" as there was no money kept in Christ Church. The emotional cost to parishioners, however, was significant.

"It appears that the culprits broke into the hall beside the church and, from there, entered the church itself," she said.

"They were clearly looking for money and kept digging in the hope that they would find some. Which they didn't, because money is never kept in churches these days.

"In the process, the chancel and vestry were ransacked, everything in there was upended. Both carpet and then flooring in the pulpit was torn up, skirting boards were removed and chalices were thrown about. What they ultimately got was €8 in cash, three bottles of port and two small silver boxes, which were donated to the church and used for the offertory procession.

"Structurally there was not a significant amount of damage done but it was very distressing to those parishioners who saw the damage, particularly the man who opened up the church and first discovered the damage. This particular man has worked very hard in renovating and upkeeping the church and it was so upsetting for him.

"For a group of peace-loving people, it was such a horrible thing to see. It is an older congregation and such a sight would be foreign to them. They were shocked. But people had come to pray so we called the Gardaí and whilst they did what they had to do we went outside and we prayed for those who had caused this damage.

"Then a few good souls rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in to cleaning up the mess. The church will be open for worship at 11.30am next Sunday and we're also continuing our plans for our Harvest celebrations on September 21st."

Dean Jansson acknowledged the widespread support offered in recent days. "I must acknowledge the support of Fr Twomey, the curate in Tramore, for the support he offered. It was deeply appreciated. Indeed the broader community in Tramore have been fantastic."

Meanwhile windows were broken and doors damaged, some time on Saturday night, as vandals attempted to gain entry to St Nicholas Church in Faithlegg.

Fr Bryan Power, PP, said the vandals eventually gained access to the sacristy. Though there was nothing stolen, Fr Power said the church was left in a complete mess. The damage was discovered by a sacristan.

"These vandals risked their lives over nothing."