

Two priests nab thief with crucifix

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Two priests said they spotted a man dragging a large wooden carving of the crucifixion of Christ away from their church and confronted the man, who then dropped to his knees, crying.

"I put my hand on his shoulder," the Rev. Dennis Puhl said. "Both of us kept very calm. We never raised our voices. That may have helped."

"He said something like, 'What have I done?' and went to his knees. He was crying ... When police came he put out his hands to be handcuffed and stood up," Puhl said.

He said the Rev. Ronald O. Crewe heard a scraping noise on the sidewalk about 2 a.m. Saturday, and, when the two looked outside, they saw someone dragging the carving, the 12th of 14 stations of the cross, away from St. Hedwig Catholic Church.

"My heart sank and I was breathless when I first looked out the window," Puhl said. "I thought if that's the 12th, they might have gotten 11 of them already."

The piece, which Puhl said was valued at about \$5,000, was damaged, but broken pieces were recovered. It depicts Christ on the cross and three other figures and stands about 4½ feet high.

A work representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was discovered hidden in bushes. Puhl said its value was about \$1,200.

Police said the 20-year-old man taken into custody was scheduled to appear in the district attorney's office on a burglary charge.



Crucifix recovered

Father Dennis Puhl examines the wooden crucifix that a burglar tried to steal from Milwaukee's St. Hedwig Catholic Church Saturday morning. Puhl and another priest caught a 20-year-old man as he was dragging the carving away from the church and held him for police.

—AP Laserphoto