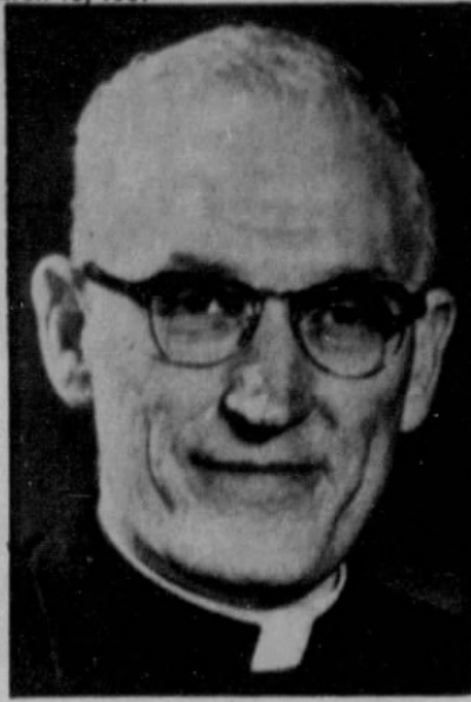




Associated Press

The Rev. Joseph Bissonette, left, and Monsignor David Herlihy were tied, beaten and stabbed to death in their Buffalo churches.

Two teens face charges in Buffalo priest killings

BUFFALO, N.Y. (UPI) — Two teenagers, described as "cold-blooded killers" by police, Monday were charged with robbing and fatally stabbing two Roman Catholic priests.

Police Commissioner Ralph Degenhart said Milton Jones, 17, and Theodore Simmons, 18, were charged with second-degree murder, robbery and possession of a weapon in the killings of the Rev. Joseph Bissonette, 54, and Monsignor David Herlihy, 75.

Police said the priests had been slain in similar fashion. Each had been tied to a chair, beaten and stabbed, while the killers robbed the rectories of the churches, located about nine blocks apart on the city's East Side.

Bissonette was killed Feb. 24 at St. Bartholomew's Church, and Herlihy, who retired as an active priest earlier this year, was slain at St. Matthew's Church late Saturday night, police said.

The commissioner said a "considerable" — but undisclosed — amount of money was taken in the robberies.

"These were coldblooded killers that we determined should be brought to justice," Chief of Detectives Angelo Alesandra said.

Degenhart said the suspects knew the priests for about a year, and that Simmons had sought counseling from both clerics. Jones was arrested late Sunday night, while Simmons was picked up early Monday by police in San Diego where he had been since Sunday.

"Both priests had counseled Simmons and that led us to want to talk to him," Degenhart said. He said homicide detectives developed a lead in the case Sunday, and additional interviews led them to Jones, "who provided the homicide bureau with a confession to both priest murders."

Degenhart said Simmons was located through information obtained from his family.

Jones was being held without bail, pending a preliminary hearing Thursday, while authorities hoped to begin extradition proceedings in the next few days to return Simmons to Buffalo.