



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on July 16, 2020

Escalating Culture War: Churches and Religious Symbols Come Under Attack

As the culture war continues to transition from a war of ideas to one of physical violence, political and historic statues and other memorials have become the battleground du jour. In recent weeks, religious statues and even churches have been added to that list.

Take, for instance, the attacks this past weekend on Catholic churches and statues. Police in Boston are investigating an act of arson involving a statue of the Virgin Mary located outside St. Peter's Parish in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston. A fire was set late Saturday night when an unknown person or persons ignited plastic flowers in the hands of the statue. The fire caused smoke and flame damage to the upper body and head of the statue.



On July 10 — one day before that attack — the Diocese of Brooklyn released a statement that New York City police were investigating an incident involving the vandalism of a statue of the Virgin Mary outside cathedral Prep School and Seminary in Queens. In that attack, video from the surveillance cameras show an unknown person painting the word “IDOL” down the length of the statue’s torso.

Father James Kuroly, who serves as rector and president of Cathedral Prep, referred to the attack as an “act of vandalism and hatred,” but asks for prayers for the person responsible. The damage to that statue — which is 100 years old — will likely be able to be repaired. The statue in Boston will likely need to be replaced.

In the midst of all of this, the wee hours of Saturday morning also saw the San Gabriel mission in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles almost completely gutted by a fire that is suspected of being an attack of arson. The 249-year-old mission was founded in 1771 by St. Junípero Serra and was part of the original Catholic mission system in California, dedicated to bringing the Christian Faith to native peoples.

That fire began in the choir loft. The church was under some renovations, but no electrical work was being done. The fire is being investigated as arson by the Verdugo Fire Investigation Arson Task Force. The local office of the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms [ATF] is helping with the investigation.

St. Junipero Serra has recently come under attack by militant leftists, so this attack is not altogether unprecedented. Last month, a group of about 60 people — many of them [described](#) as “indigenous activists of all ages” by the *Los Angeles Times* — held a pagan ritual at Father Serra Park in downtown Los Angeles. They burned sage and called on the spirits of their ancestors. Then they bound a statue of Father Serra and tore it down from its pedestal. They then converted the pedestal into a makeshift altar and offered fruit to their pagan gods.



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Leftists in media and academia celebrated the destruction of the statue.

In the days following the destruction of that statue, the San Gabriel Mission moved its statue of Father Serra into a private garden within the compound where the mission is located. That mission is less than 13 miles from Los Angeles, and the mission wanted to protect the statue from a similar fate.

Less than a month later, the church was engulfed in flames and arson is suspected.

And it is not only Catholic churches under attack: On July 5, [Harmony Baptist Church](#) in Leeton, Missouri, was burned to the ground. The fire at the 100-year-old church is being investigated by Missouri State Fire Marshal with assistance from the ATF.

As the culture war continues to increase in violence and destruction, perhaps Americans should come to expect more of this senselessness. But expecting it does not mean accepting it. When political and historic statues and other memorials and then religious statues and even churches come under attack, it is a sure sign that the United States is increasingly becoming the Divided States.

God help us.

Image of burned statue: [Screenshot of a video by CBSN Boston](#)

C. Mitchell Shaw is a freelance writer and public speaker who addresses a range of topics related to liberty and the U.S. Constitution.



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