

Sold for scrap

Stolen chalices recovered

By MIKE SCANLON

Two chalices stolen from St. Aidan's Catholic Church last week while a Mass was apparently in progress were recovered intact by Livonia police Friday at a Dearborn coin store which bought them for scrap.

Meanwhile, another chalice theft — the 11th such metro area robbery since June 28 — was reported following a communion service Wednesday morning in St. Monica's Church on Detroit's west side. Past chalice robberies have also occurred while the churches were open and religious services were in progress.

The two St. Aidan's chalices were recovered Friday at a Michigan Avenue coin shop where for \$244, the scrap value. They were valued at \$4,000.

Police said a son of the owner of the family-run coin shop bought the chalices about 15 minutes before the store was contacted by Det. Sgt. Steven Fulgham. Fulgham was working his way through the phone book, contacting dealers in rare metals, when he called the Dearborn store.

Fulgham and Mark Schultz, a patrol officer assigned to the investigative bureau, recovered the chalices. The coin store owners "were real chagrined about buying" the chalices and preferred to remain anonymous, Fulgham said.

"They could have mashed that up and nobody'd been the wiser," said Fulgham. "Now they're out the \$244."

The chalices were undamaged, but a plate bear-

ing the Rev. Alex Brunette's name had been removed from one of them.

THE COIN DEALER described the seller as an unshaven black man, about 40 years old, 5-9, 170 pounds with dark brown hair. He gave the name "Raymond Carson," but Michigan law does not require identification be presented to sell rare metals and the seller didn't volunteer any.

Since St. Aidan's Church has no black parishoners and the chalices disappeared while some 300 people were in attendance, police believe the seller may not have been the thief.

Livonia police would like to question a 27-year-old Detroit man in connection with the chalice thefts but have been unable to contact him.

Questioned by Detroit police but not charged in connection with another chalice theft on that city's west side, the man was sentenced to three years' probation last week in connection with a July 3 robbery of gold medallions from the Catholic Supply Co. in Redford Township.

"The odds, the longshot of getting them back — they did a super job, those police," said Brunette. "Those other police departments, I don't know what these guys are doing."

Brunette, who said the church has "really tight security," called the theft "well-planned and well-executed."

One of the chalices stolen from Brunette was a gift from his family at his ordination and had been used by both Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII, Brunette said.

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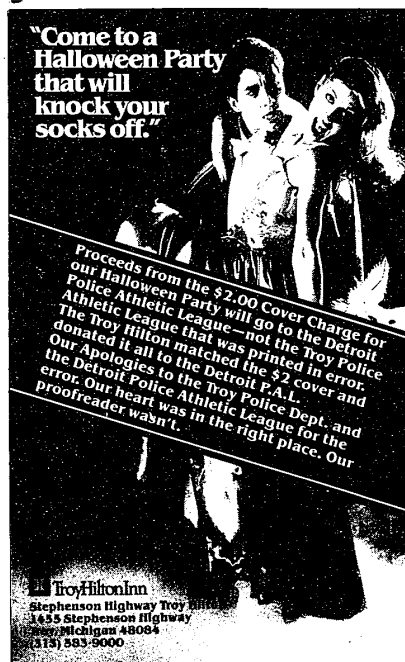
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