



**Response to Marin County DA's Decision to Prosecute for Felony Vandalism Mob who  
Toppled St. Junípero Serra Statue at Mission San Rafael**

Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone  
November 13, 2020

This is a breakthrough moment for Catholics. Marin County District Attorney Lori Frugoli's decision to prosecute on the charge of felony vandalism represents the first time that any of the lawbreakers attacking statues of St. Junípero Serra and other acts of vandalism on Catholic Church property across California will be held accountable for their actions in a court of law.

I would like to thank the hundreds of San Francisco Catholics who have already signed the petition launched this weekend by the Benedict XVI Institute at [FreeTheMass.com/Serra](https://www.freethemass.com/Serra) supporting my call for prosecution of these offenders.

The crime was caught on video. The lawbreakers came prepared with ropes, chisels and spray paint, clearly indicating forethought in committing this crime. If crimes like these are not punished, then the government is telling mobs they get to decide what symbols Catholics and other faiths may display.

Given that this was vandalism at a house of worship, the San Rafael Police Department understandably recommended that the perpetrators be charged with a hate crime. Indeed, to vandalize a house of worship to express one's views is not a mere property crime: it is an attack on the identity and rights of a whole faith community.

In a diverse society we may debate and disagree about many things, including St. Junípero Serra's legacy. But mobs do not get to trespass on other people's holy grounds to destroy their sacred symbols. While a hate crime was not charged in this case, let us hope that this prosecution will nonetheless contribute to putting an end to attacks on all houses of worship.

Father Luella Palacpac, pastor of San Rafael Parish and Mission, added, "The traumatic experience of the parishioners at Mission San Rafael caused my flock to enthusiastically support the Archbishop's call to prosecute those who first desecrated and then toppled the statue of St. Junípero Serra. St. Junípero Serra is the first Latino-American saint, canonized by Pope Francis. Whether you agree or disagree with the historic record of St. Junípero, no one has a right to trespass on a faith community's sacred grounds to destroy property and even more importantly the symbols of its faith."

###