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Vandal Defaces Arrupe Jesuit Residence

Liam Lawless, Staff Reporter

Students walking to their 8 a.m. classes may have noticed some crude inscriptions covering the main entrance of the Arrupe Jesuit Residence Monday, Oct. 11. The words graffitied on the wall conveyed a message hard to misconstrue: ‘rapists’ and ‘they were children.’

The keycard reader in front of the entrance was also damaged. One student, who has chosen to stay anonymous due to work policies, reported seeing both Seattle University Public Safety and Seattle Police Department (SPD) officials on the scene to assess the damage to the residence.

Craig Birkliid, executive director of Public Safety, places the time of the vandalism at roughly 4 a.m. the morning of Oct. 11.

“We were made aware of [the vandalism] not too long after [4 a.m.], and contacted the SPD to respond to the graffiti and property damage,” Birkliid said.

With no obvious leads on who the perpetrator could be, Birkliid and Public Safety passed the case on to SPD, who might have more evidence to aid their investigation.

“You may have seen in the news,” Birkliid said. “There has been some similar property damage to the other local Catholic Churches.”

A King 5 article ties the similar cases of vandalism at St. James Cathedral, St. Benedict and St. Edward’s Church to the discoveries of mass graves in Canadian boarding schools for Indigenous children. Damage done to the Arrupe Jesuit Residence took place on Indigenous People’s Day.

On that same day, Seattle U President Eduardo M. Peñalver released a statement aimed at addressing tensions with complete transparency and accountability. It included encouragement for the Seattle U community to engage in conversations about the pernicious history between the Jesuits and Indigenous peoples. When asked about the property damage, the Jesuits living in the Arrupe House deferred to the statement released by President Peñalver.

Director of Campus Ministry, Tamara Liddell, noticed the apparent uptick in vandalism and other adverse events and pointed out their potential harm to students and other members of the community.

“I would imagine that folks might feel scared,” Liddell said. “Our young adults especially can be a strong instrument of change in the Church.”

Liddell looks toward the community to work through these issues, calling on the communal experience of religion to move forward and embrace justice.

“I think that continuing as we’ve been doing to have transparent conversations and stay intellectually curious and critical,” Liddell said.

