

ITALY: African Muslim destroys invaluable historic Statues in 4 Roman Churches, terrorizes Tourists

([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Italian police have arrested a 39-year-old Ghanaian man who entered several historic churches in central Rome Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, destroying a number of statues and creating panic among the faithful and tourists who were there at the time.

The vandal went into action around 7:30 pm on Friday evening in Saint Praxedes Basilica. He destroyed a statue of Saint Praxedes, and then did the same with a miniature reproduction of Saint Anthony, cutting off the head, according reports by various Italian media.

The pastor, Father Pedro Savelli, explained that “right away I thought it was an attack by ISIS. The man was outside himself, but thank God we were able to get him out before he could destroy everything. He said children cannot be taught to believe using sacred images as we do.”

The attacker also tried to destroy a crucifix but the priest managed to grab him by the leg and stop him.

The act occurred a few minutes after the end of a Mass and just before a concert for the Slovak community. “I don’t know if he was a terrorist, but there certainly was an enormous lack of respect for religion,” Father Savelli said. “People were fleeing, escaping. I was able to stop him when he was on top of the altar. Some other people came to help me, but he managed to escape; we were afraid, we were terrorized, we didn’t know if he was armed.”

After this attack the man went to Via de Colle Oppio where the other church he entered are located: Saint Silvester and Saint Martin in the popular Monti neighborhood. There he beat on one of the statues situated in the central nave of the church.

But the attacker did not give up, and Saturday he began a new round of attacks 21 hours later. It was San Vitale’s turn on Via Nazionale – one of the main streets of the city – where he attacked another three statues and a candelabrum.

Before being arrested, the attacker made a final incursion in San Giovanni ai Fiorentini church in Piazza dell’Oro. There also, in front of terrified faithful and tourists, he attacked several statues. He was able to escape again, but shortly after police arrested him in a nearby street.