



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
**ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON**

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ, the parish and the diocese prepared this press statement (below) in case we were contacted by the local press. So far it has not been needed, and so, instead we share it with members of the parish so that they may be aware of what happened. Fortunately, due to the vigilance of local residents who contacted the Fire Brigade the damage was minimal, and no one was hurt. Fr Simon.

**\*\*Press statement - for release on demand\*\***

- The arson attack on the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Sidley took place on the afternoon of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021. It was reported to the emergency services by residents living in neighbouring flats.
- The church served the local community for 65 years, unfortunately, significant ongoing maintenance costs eventually exceeded parish resources. In 2019 the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton made the difficult decision to close the Church and put the site up for sale.
- There is a flourishing Catholic community in the parish of Bexhill served by the churches of St Mary Magdalene and St Martha's.

**Parish priest Fr Simon Dray said:** "We are deeply saddened by the arson attack on the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary and are thankful that no one was hurt. The parish wishes to thank our neighbours who reported the fire, and the Fire Brigade who acted swiftly to extinguish it. We would urge anyone with information about the incident to contact Bexhill police."

**A spokesperson for the Diocese said:** "We are thankful that no one was injured as a result of the fire. We are extremely grateful for the work of the emergency services and all those who contacted them. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of the parish at this time."

**For further information please contact:**

Laura Maydew-Gale E: [communications@abdiocese.org.uk](mailto:communications@abdiocese.org.uk) T: 07552 249829

[www.abdiocese.org.uk](http://www.abdiocese.org.uk)

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