



## **JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

June 25, 2024

### **Fire damages steeple at St. John the Baptist Church in Jefferson**

JEFFERSON, WI — On Monday night, June 24, on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, crews responded to a fire at St. John the Baptist Church, located at 324 E. North St, Jefferson.

The fire was reported in the steeple around 9 p.m. after a loud boom was heard. Firefighters from the Jefferson Fire Department were the first to arrive on the scene, later assisted by crews from neighboring communities.

Msgr. Donn Heiar, the Parochial Administrator of St. John the Baptist Church, arrived shortly after the fire started. According to Monsignor Heiar, the cause of the fire is believed to be a lightning strike and it is under investigation. “We are incredibly grateful to the Jefferson Fire Department and to the fire crews from cities in the area who responded to assist,” said Heiar. “They did an amazing job getting the fire out quickly and minimizing damage to the church.” Monsignor Heiar added, “We are also very blessed and grateful that the Blessed Sacrament, the Body of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, was safely removed from the church and the Adoration chapel.”

The fire was put out by around 1 a.m.

Bishop Donald Hying, Bishop of the Diocese of Madison, said, “We give thanks to God there were no injuries and express gratitude for the response of the emergency crews on the scene of the fire. On behalf of the Diocese of Madison, I offer prayers and support to the St. John the Baptist Church community and Monsignor Heiar.” The Bishop added, “For more than 150 years, St. John the Baptist Church has been an important part of the Jefferson community and I know it will come together in strength at this time.”

Crews were already on-site Monday night to begin clean-up work. Structural engineers, electricians, and restoration teams are working at the church to conduct further assessments. Damage appears contained to the steeple area, with water damage mostly in the back third 1/3 of the church. Crews will be on the scene Tuesday to take down the steeple cross at the cap of the steeple which may have stability issues.

Masses and events scheduled at the church are canceled, but Msgr. Heiar indicated that they were hoping to open the church again soon.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

Kris Kranenburg  
Director of Communications  
Diocese of Madison  
608-821-3168  
[Kris.kranenburg@madisondiocese.org](mailto:Kris.kranenburg@madisondiocese.org)

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