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Relic of Blessed John Paul II reported stolen

by Francis X. Rocca by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — Thieves reportedly stole a relic of Blessed John Paul II from a country chapel 85 miles east of Rome.

Italian media reported Monday that the relic, a piece of fabric soaked in Blessed John Paul's blood, had disappeared over the preceding weekend from the church of San Pietro della Ienca. The church is located near the city of L'Aquila, in the mountainous Abruzzo region where the late pope frequently went on brief vacations.

One of the volunteers who takes care of the church, where Blessed John Paul often prayed, discovered that intruders sawed through bars over the one of the windows and made off with the relic as well as a cross.

The local "carabinieri" military police were reportedly searching the surrounding woods with dogs, in case the thieves had discarded the relic there.

Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz of Krakow, who served as Blessed John Paul's personal secretary during his pontificate, gave the relic to the chapel in recognition of the late pope's many visits. The fabric was reportedly soaked in Blessed John Paul's blood following the attempt to assassinate him in 1981.

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