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View of the church interior and the altar of the Stadtkirche Sankt Oswald in Traunstein, Germany, Tuesday June 20, 2023. The pectoral cross of the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was stolen from a display case in an anteroom. The former pontiff had bequeathed the pectoral cross to his home parish in Traunstein, as the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office announced on June 20. There, the "papal pectoral" had been stolen from the town church of St. Oswald on June 19. (Peter Kneffel/dpa via AP)

by Associated Press

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Berlin — June 20, 2023

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A cross bequeathed by the late Pope Benedict XVI to a parish in his German home region of Bavaria has been stolen from the church where it was exhibited, police said June 20.

A display case on the wall of the town church in Traunstein was broken open by unknown perpetrators and the cross was taken sometime between 11:45 a.m. and 5 p.m. on June 19, Bavaria's state criminal police office said in a statement.

The cross was described as a pectoral cross — one worn on the chest. Police said that cash also was stolen from the till of a magazine stand in the church.

“For the Catholic church, the value of the religious object is not quantifiable,” the police statement said. It called for people who may have seen suspicious individuals around the church on June 19 or can give any other information to come forward.

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Benedict died on Dec. 31, nearly a decade after becoming the first pope in six centuries to resign.

The missing cross is one of several of its kind, Munich archdiocese spokesman Christoph Kappes said. It was sent to Traunstein after Benedict resigned, and went on display at the location it was stolen from in 2020, he told German news agency dpa.

The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was born in the small Bavarian town of Markt am Inn, but his father moved the family to Traunstein when Joseph was 2. He studied for the priesthood at a seminary there.