

## The Pieta statue casting donated to Socorro church

BY MEGHAN LOPEZ | SUNDAY, JANUARY 25TH 2015

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An El Paso couple donated an exact re-creation of the La Pieta statue to a local parish. The statue depicts the irgin Mary holding the body of Jesus after he was taken down from the cross. The original statue is housed at the Vatican and was carved by Michelangelo in 1498 out of a single block of Carrera marble the artist picked out of a quarry in Tuscany.

Richard and Esther Stewart had the casting created along with 10 other identical statues to donate to churches around the world. Each one costs \$330,000.

"These are beautiful beacons of love, they're magnificent. You can feel the energy from them and I envision people going around the world to see them," Richard Stewart said.

La Purisima Parish unveiled the statue during a church ceremony Saturday evening, where dozens gathered to take pictures.

The Stewarts say they felt a calling to invest in the project.



"I heard it and I thought, wow this is life-changing. It's not about a glamorous life, it's a glorious life and we can do something glorious for all humanity," Richard said.

The statues were created from a mold created by the Vatican in 1938. The church created it in case the original was damaged in World War II. The statue survived the war but sustained extensive damage at the hands of a Hungarian man in 1972 who jumped the gates at St. Peter's Basilica and took a hammer to the sculpture, striking it 12 times. Hundreds of fragments were knocked off the statue, including the Virgin Mary's nose. The statue has since been repaired.

This is not the only statue the couple plan on recreating and then donating. " After we are done with La Pietà, we will do the Madonna and child so we will have two of the greatest pieces that Michelangelo did to bless the world with," Richard said.

