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## The unveiling of 'The Pieta'

By Gary Liberatore Apr. 26, 2015

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ROME, N.Y. - A replica of Michaelangelo's 'The Pieta' is unveiled at St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church in Rome.

The pastor of St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church in Rome, Father Paul Angelicchio, grew up in Rome, and was excited as any of the more than 1,000 people who were at the church for Sunday's 11:00 A.M. mass. (continued next page)



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During that mass, Fr. Angelicchio pulled a grand cloth off of a brand new statue that now sits in the back of the church. That statue is an exact replica of Michaelangelo's 'The Pieta', which sits under bullet proof glass at St. Peter's Basilica at The Vatican, in Italy.



That replica was paid for by Richard and Esther Stewart of Southern California. Why would this couple spend more than one million dollars for such an act some 3,000 miles away from their home? Richard Stewart is a Rome native and was an altar boy at St. John the Baptist Church while growing up in Rome in the 1960's.

This is the third replica approved by The Vatican paid for by the Stewarts, who are entrepreneurs in Southern California.

The first one the Stewarts commissioned was put into a Catholic High School near where they live in Mission Hills, California, the second is now in Socorro, Texas, at the family church of Esther Stewart, and the third now sits here in Rome, New York.

Richard Stewart says the decision to bring one here was easy, "This is my hometown, this is where I was born, I love this place. This will become a place, like where we brought one to my wife's church, she grew up in, in Texas, and already it's becoming a tourist location." Fr. Angelicchio says this addition to the church is monumental, "It's very difficult to put into words and the beauty of this, the gathering of people and people coming together to see The Pieta is a marvelous thing. It becomes a gathering space, as I said in my talk today, it becomes a tabernacle, a spot where we can say thank you to Jesus for dying on the cross, but seeing the beauty of seeing his Mother holding him, it's a magnificent, magnificent statue."

During the mass, Rome Mayor Joseph Fusco spoke and proclaimed, April 26th, 2015 as Richard and Esther Stewart Day in Rome.

Fusco says this is an incredible day for our entire area, "Like Father said, instead of going all the way to Rome, Italy, people in the Northeast can come here to Rome and witness this beautiful statue, and it is absolutely gorgeous, I would implore everyone to come and see it first hand."

Stewart says the Vatican approved recreations are made from a mold of the original work of art, "It was made from the original marble from the exact quarry that Michaelangelo got his marble from, and they powderized it and they poured it into the mold with resin, so it is exact the same marble."

St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church is located at 210 E. Dominick St. in Rome. Father Angelicchio urges anyone to come see the statue for themselves.

[http://www.wktv.com/news/local/The\\_unveiling\\_of\\_the\\_Pieta.html#sthash.MJopcf1a.dpuf](http://www.wktv.com/news/local/The_unveiling_of_the_Pieta.html#sthash.MJopcf1a.dpuf)