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Crowds flock to New Jersey tree with a scar some claim resembles Mary

Catherine McDonough | Jul. 19, 2012

A scar resembling the shape of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen on a tree July 14 in West New York, N.J. (CNS/Reuters/Keith Bedford)

WASHINGTON -- A scar on a tree on a West New York, N.J., street that some claim looks like Our Lady of Guadalupe is "a natural occurrence," said Jim Goodness, a spokesman for the Newark Archdiocese.

But he told Catholic News Service he hopes the devotion it has prompted might lead people to think more deeply about their faith. Crowds began to form at the site July 14.

News reports indicated that hundreds of people have come to the site, now dubbed the "Virgin Mary tree." Located on the corner of 60th Street and Bergenline Avenue, the tree has been taped off and is under watch by city police and volunteers.

"What we can say is that it was looked at by one of the priests in the area. It's deemed to be a natural occurrence in a tree," Goodness told CNS in a telephone interview July 17. "It does have some of the markings of the overall outline of the icon.

"We are just hoping that when people speak to the priests that they can get guidance ... in terms of looking for this as an opportunity for finding a deeper meaning of faith," he added.

Other news outlets reported that the tree site and those gathering around it have caused unrest in the neighborhood, including bickering that broke out when a passing jogger declared the tree "idolatry."

Shop owners say they are concerned about how the crowds are affecting business.

"Business has died since this started," Moshe Fernando, the owner of a T-Mobile shop, told The Jersey Journal daily newspaper.

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