severe damage to the fittings and furnishings of the sacristy. There was also considerable smoke and water damage to the sacred vessels, vestments, linens and other objects used in the liturgy.

Quick response by the Abbeville fire department contained the fire in the sacristy area and prevented the flames from entering the main sanctuary of the church, according to Msgr. Richard Mouton, pastor.

Msgr. Mouton said one of the firefighters told him the original brick wall of the church, which separated the sacristy from the main body of the church, probably helped prevent the fire from entering the main church.

As the word spread about the town about the fire, friends and parishioners gathered to watch the firemen fight the flames, someone started to say the rosary.

One parishioner recalled, "At one time we thought it was a losing battle, but we continued to pray the rosary and the firemen did contain the blaze."

At the same time, water and smoke did penetrate the Blessed Sacrament chapel, below the sacristy, where weekday Mass was celebrated. There was also smoke and water damage to the main church.

Msgr. Mouton said it was too early to estimate the total damage. "Only time and careful examination by experts will determine the extent of the damage," he explained.

The fire was discovered by a parishioner arriving about 4:30 p.m. for the 5:15 evening mass in the Blessed Sacrament chapel. The Abbeville fire department was assisted by firemen from Maurice, Henry and Erath in containing the fire.

Msgr. Mouton said he and his parish council are making plans for the complete restoration of the sacristy, chapel and main church. He said the congregation will be kept informed of the plans and its sentiments will be respected, as much as humanly possible, as the restoration takes place.

In the meantime, the weekday Mass will be celebrated in the community center, adjacent to the church. Sunday Masses will be celebrated in the auditorium of Vermilion Catholic high school.

SACRISTY GUTTED — This interior view shows part of the sacristy of St. Mary Magdalen Church in Abbeville. The sacristy was gutted, but the rest of the church suffered only water and smoke damage.