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Grand Larceny Charges Dropped Against Burke

Priest Says Harm to Church Outweighs Financial Loss

By Karen M. Franz

The case of the \$10,000 taken from the foot of the statue of St. Jude at St. Jude's Church, Gates, has gained great media attention and comment from Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It has brought to the fore such conflicts as the Old Testament edict against graven images, the question of superstition in extremes of devotion to various saints and the Holy Spirit, and speculation about the role of Christian charity in the handling of the matter.

Although Father John Steger, pastor of St. Jude's, was initially steadfast in his belief that police intervention was necessary in this case, he has since decided that the commotion created by media coverage of the case is harmful to the Church and to devotion and faith in St. Jude. He has notified Gates Police Chief Thomas Roche of his intention to drop charges against Margaret Burke, who in February of 1984 took an envelope containing \$10,000 in cash from the foot of the church's statue of St. Jude. Monroe County District Attorney Howard Relin says the charges will officially be dismissed Tuesday, July 23, at Burke's scheduled hearing in Gates Town Court.

The money had been left in an envelope at the foot of the statue by an anonymous donor who was hoping for intercession in a career change he was undergoing. Father Steger says the envelope was there for a period of two to three hours.

Sometime during that period, Margaret Burke and her daughter entered the church to complete the ninth day of a novena to St. Jude. She found the envelope and took it.

The donor later called Father Steger, asking whether he had found the money. He did not, nor did he find out what had happened to it until Sunday, July 14, 1985, more than a year later. That day, another woman told him that Burke had taken the money.

Father Steger completed a police report on the incident in order to file a claim with the parish's insurance company. Burke was then charged with second-degree grand larceny and was to have faced a grand jury inquiry this week.

Aside from the legalities of the case, some had speculated on whether it was handled in the best possible way by Father Steger. Should he have confronted Burke with his knowledge and attempted to work out a solution without police intervention?

Last Friday, Father Steger said no. "First of all, I didn't feel as though I could confront the person or search her out — she's not from this parish," he said. Moreover, he said he didn't confront Burke because "I could have left myself open to something very serious if I had. I don't know this woman personally."

He said he had also received from various persons a "vague insight into her character." "She may try to come off as a destitute woman, but there are certain aspects of her life and character that do not fit," he said, refusing to clarify that statement for the record. Under these circumstances, he said he believed it was better to let the authorities deal with the case.

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JUDAS THADDEUS (ST. JUDE)

From an engraving by the German master, "E. S."

Little Is Known About St. Jude

The 11th Apostle named by Luke is Jude, whereas Matthew and Mark name Thaddeus as the 11th; both names refer to the same person. It has been suggested that the name Thaddeus was used to avoid confusing Jude with Judas Iscariot. It is unclear if Jude the brother of James the Lesser as is sometimes alleged. St. Jude the Apostle is considered the author of the Epistle of St. Jude, contained in the New Testament.

Little certain is known about Jude's ministry. The Roman Breviary mentions only Mesopotamia and Persia as theaters of operation. He supposedly died a martyr and in art he is represented with a halberd, the supposed instrument of his martyrdom. Is is not known how St. Jude became known as the patron of hopeless cases, although the devotion to him for such cases is said to have originated in France and Germany in the late 18th century.

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Margaret Burke Maintains Faith, Prayers in St. Jude

By Teresa A. Parsons

Margaret Burke started praying to St. Jude as a child back in her native Ireland, lighting candles and asking for "silly things." She has continued her devotion to the saint and says her prayers have usually been answered — when one of her daughters suffered a fractured skull, when she was given custody of her children in a divorce settlement — and in countless smaller ways.

Last February, Burke was completing her customary novena to St. Jude at St. Jude the Apostle Church in Gates with her 10-year-old daughter. She remembers asking not for money, but for better living conditions. "I was praying that some nice lady would come along and say we could live with her or some off-the-wall thing like that," she said. Her daughter spotted a white envelope at the foot of the statue of the saint, which on examination, proved to contain \$10,000 in cash.

"There's no way I can tell people how I felt at that time," Burke said. "I had a dollar in my pocket. The way it was left, I think it was left for me. It never entered my mind to go to Father (John Steger). I believe it was left for me."

Burke was charged with second-degree grand larceny last Wednesday after Father John Steger, pastor at St. Jude's, reported to police that he had learned she found the money. The 37-year-old Gates woman faced a grand jury investigation this week to determine whether she had criminal intent when she took the money, but over the weekend, Father Steger reconsidered and asked police to drop charges. Burke was unavailable Monday morning for comment.

She has steadfastly maintained that she had no intention of taking anything not meant for her. In thanksgiving to St. Jude, she remembered laying a bouquet of orchids on the altar at the foot of his statue and said she put the money in a bank account. "If I was hiding it, would I have put it in the bank?" she questioned.

Since finding the money, Burke and her three daughters have become embroiled in a bitter divorce from Burke's second husband, a private contractor in Maryland. Although she said he has been ordered to pay her \$1,200 a month, she claims she hasn't received anything at all from him so far. Meanwhile, the money from St. Jude is all gone, spent on bills and furniture, fixing her car, and sending her oldest daughter to beauty school. For the past two months, she said she's had to depend on public assistance to get by.

Meanwhile, Burke had said last week she would gladly take a lie detector test. "I can't believe this so-called person left it (the money) there. What kind of businessman leaves cash in a plain white envelope? I'd love to see him take a lie detector test."

"This is the end result of three years of turmoil... I just don't know how much more of this my kids can take," Burke said of the publicity and controversy coming after her divorce and the frequent moves the family has made recently.

While she is skeptical of events that lead to her being charged with a crime, Burke believes she has found some sense in the turn her life has taken. "At first I asked why?" she recalled. "Maybe it's his way of me paying for his favor. That's the only sense I can make out of it. I don't believe he wants to torment me. Maybe I was picked to spread his name. Anyway, I'm still praying to him." And apparently he's still listening.

Diocesan Officials Object to Gannett Teen Pregnancy Articles

By Teresa A. Parsons

Two diocesan officials have written separate letters to the Times-Union and Democrat & Chronicle protesting the newspapers' editorial stance and coverage of the issue of teen pregnancy.

Father Charles Mulligan, formerly director of the diocesan Office of Social Ministry, was for three-and-a-half years co-chairman of the Teen Pregnancy Coalition, a group of more than 30 representatives from churches, agencies, and other community organizations that have convened to study and combat teen pregnancy in Monroe County. William Privett, director of Catholic Charities for the diocesan Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, is also a member of the coalition.

Father Mulligan took issue with the Times-Union's recent series of articles on teen pregnancy as a community issue. He believes the articles placed too much emphasis on conflict among members of the Teen Pregnancy Coalition and failed to provide long-term, in-depth coverage of the group's accomplishments, including areas where cooperation was achieved, such as rewriting a family life education curriculum



Father Charles Mulligan



William H. Privett

for the seventh and eighth grades in the City School District.

His letter described as "extensive and spirited" the paper's coverage of recent efforts to approve a package of proposals for state funding designated to prevent teen pregnancies at the county level.

"Clearly the differences within the Teen Pregnancy Coalition are sharp, and, no doubt, a reporter looking for a 'conflict' story will find one. But something new happened in the coalition and it appears that it takes the public media some years to adjust routine approaches. At times, reporters seem to look for what they expect to find. If they don't, then they rush by what might be new to dig deeper for what 'must' be there," Father Mulligan's letter read.

The letter further stated: "It is no victory for this community when families compromise their values. Organizations and groups should not have to compromise values to address this problem... Our community needs to help teens avoid choices which can stunt their lives. The seventh and eighth grade curriculum demonstrates that collaboration is possible."

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Inside This Week's Edition:

Along The Way

Bishop Clark shared his thoughts and activities in a letter while on vacation at the beach — Page 3.

Gospel Workshop

The walls of St. Bridget's Church were rocked by a week-long celebration of the parish's 131st anniversary, including a gospel workshop on Saturday — Page 5.

Downtown Rally

Demonstrators marked the 67th birthday of Nelson Mandela last Tuesday, drawing attention to the plight of political prisoners everywhere — Page 6.

News From Elmira

A brand-new young adult ministry team sponsored a coffeehouse — Page 13 — and the Dominican nuns of the Monastery of Mary the Queen offer a new retreat facility — Page 11.