

Melkite priest released on bail

One of three charged in heist of armored car

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Melkite Father Patrick M.J. Moloney, one of three men arrested Nov. 12 and charged with possession of money stolen in an armored car robbery, was released on \$1 million bail Nov. 19.

He was required to wear an electronic ankle bracelet and restricted to his Manhattan residence except for visits to his lawyer or performance of religious duties.

The bail was obtained by relatives of the priest, one of whom put up his home.

In a telephone interview Nov. 22, Father Moloney said he was totally innocent of the charges. "I had nothing to do with anything involving that robbery," he said. He declined to speculate on why he may have been charged.

He said that he did not even know one of the other men charged, Thomas F. O'Connor, a retired Rochester police detective. O'Connor was working for Brink's armored car service and charged by the FBI with being an accomplice to two masked men who robbed \$7.4 million in Rochester Jan. 5.

O'Connor was taken away by the robbers, but dropped off a few miles away. Investigators reportedly suspected him from the beginning because of doubts about elements of his story and his refusal to take a lie detector test.

Father Moloney said he knew the third man, Samuel I. Millar, and had received donations of equipment and supplies from him. He said Millar was in the United States illegally, and had not sought amnesty.

Millar served time in an Irish prison on weapons and explosives charges. But Father Moloney said Mil-

lar was convicted in Northern Ireland without a jury trial and under a system lacking the judicial protections necessary to ensure fairness.

Agents who arrested the three men said they had been observed spending large amounts of cash, and that Father Moloney paid \$26,000 in cash for a minivan last summer.

The priest said in the interview that he bought a vehicle for someone else, something he said he often did, and paid for it with a \$20,000 bank loan. The person he bought it for was to repay him, he said.

Father Moloney is director of Bonitas House, a shelter he said he established in 1961 as an outgrowth of Bonitas Youth Services, which he had founded in 1957.

He also heads the Lazarus Community, a religious association with about seven members that he said he began in 1970 and which was recognized by the Melkite bishop of Newton, Mass., in 1973. As a layman he changed to the Melkite rite because of a devotion to Eastern-rite spirituality, and was ordained a Melkite priest in 1977.

The three suspects were said to be supporters of the Irish Republican Army. Father Moloney, a native of Ireland, said he had spoken for Noraid, which raises money in the United States for the Catholic cause in Northern Ireland, but was not a member.

"I am not now nor have I ever been in any way connected with the IRA or their political wing, the Sinn Fein," he said.

Father Moloney also said he doubted the robbery was committed by members and that "based on my knowledge of the IRA and Sinn Fein, this particular action would be repugnant to them. They see America as a fertile field for help and would do nothing to alienate supporters here."

In 1982, Father Moloney had been arrested on a charge of attempting to smuggle weapons for the IRA into Ireland, but was released. His brother, John, who now lives in Manhattan, was convicted and served a sentence.

Pro-life protest



AP/Wide World Photos

Move to toughen laws

The Rev. Norman Weslin (center, wearing glasses) links arms with other pro-life activists in front of the West Loop Clinic in Houston, Texas, in August. The U.S. Senate Nov. 16 moved toward arming the Justice Department with new powers to stop abortion clinic blockades and go after violent protesters.

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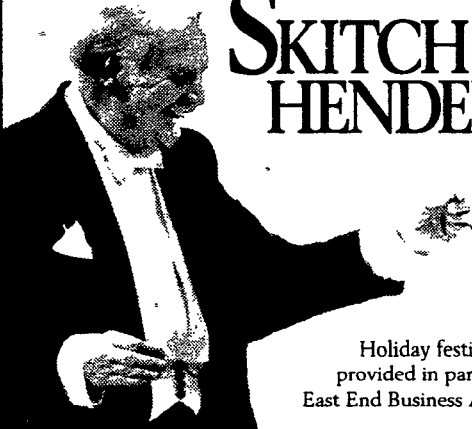
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