

WORLD & NATION

Agency leader resigns, admits abuse of funds

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CNS)—The Sept. 25 resignation of Food for the Poor founder and CEO Ferdinand Mahfood came after he admitted using donations to benefit two female members of his staff and their families, say the group's new chairman and a Catholic bishop on the agency's board.

Speaking with *The Florida Catholic* newspaper Oct. 2, Bishop Paul Boyle of Mandeville, Jamaica, and Robin Mahfood, now CEO and president of the south Florida-based organization, confirmed that Ferdinand Mahfood also admitted to allegations of sexual misconduct with the two women prior to his resignation.

They said he admitted to inappropriately using funds from the agency's sister company in Jamaica — an estimated \$150,000 — to assist the women and/or members of their families, including the homeless brother of one.

Food for the Poor officials say the Mahfood family later returned the full amount to the agency.

Founded in 1982, Food for the Poor raises funds and provides direct relief assistance to the poor in more than 16 countries, mostly in the Caribbean and Central America.

When Ferdinand Mahfood's resignation was first announced, Robin Mahfood said his brother had engaged in inappropriate behavior and was being treated aggressively for manic-depressive illness. Robin Mahfood said his brother's actions were related to his mental illness.

"People who are manic do a lot of particular things," he said. "Not one cent was

put in his (Ferdinand Mahfood's) pocket. He was constantly giving people money and I personally insisted the money be put back."

According to an Aug. 22 internal Food for the Poor memo obtained by *The Florida Catholic*, executive director Jim Cavnar wrote that the company's chief financial officer had uncovered a scenario that provided Mahfood an offshore account, which he used to give gifts to the two employees.

The Florida Catholic obtained the memo — and one other mentioning similar allegations — from former Food for the Poor executives who said they were recently terminated for their refusal to sign confidentiality agreements with the company.

Agency officials later acknowledged several employees had been terminated for not signing the agreement, while other positions were simply eliminated.

Cavnar and Russ Russell — formerly director of Food for the Poor's North American ministries — expressed in their memos concern that the financial scandal would greatly harm the agency's relations with the Catholic and Episcopal churches, donors and the community unless the board acted quickly and appointed an outside management team.

Bishop Boyle added that the board hired a criminal attorney to look for criminal activity, and so far the lawyer "says he found nothing and feels there will be nothing (illegal)."

Because of the allegations, Bishop Boyle said, Food for the Poor is "trying hard to put every type of safeguard in place so that nothing like this could ever happen again."



Reuters/CNS

Turmoil claims another

Palestinians raise the body of Abed Hamid Taeh Zek as it is carried out of a mosque for his funeral in Ramallah on the West Bank Oct. 9. Taeh Zek, wounded three days earlier in clashes with Israeli soldiers, died from his injuries.

Vatican, diocese to mark Jubilee

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As Rome and the rest of the Northern Hemisphere moved into autumn, the Vatican prepared to celebrate a new spring with the Jubilee for Families.

With the theme "Children: Springtime of the Family and Society," Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, head of the Pontifical Council for the Family, said the Oct. 14-15 jubilee event would usher in a new season of hope.

Simultaneously Sunday, Oct. 15, the Diocese of Rochester will sponsor its own Jubilee Family Pilgrimage 2000 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the New York State Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls, with Bishop Matthew H. Clark attending. Information and tickets are available at each parish.

At an Oct. 3 press conference, Cardinal Trujillo said that even amid phenomena that might point to a "winter" of attacks against life and the family, such as abortion,

divorce and child exploitation, "it is possible to speak of a spring that God offers us and in which he invites us to take part, through the church."

"Springtime (is) when the church, the heart of the world, brings and proclaims with strength the sacred dignity of every child and the duties and rights of the family," he said.

Organizers expect at least 150,000 people for the Jubilee for Families, which includes an Oct. 14 afternoon encounter with Pope John Paul II and culminates in an Oct. 15 papal Mass in St. Peter's Square.

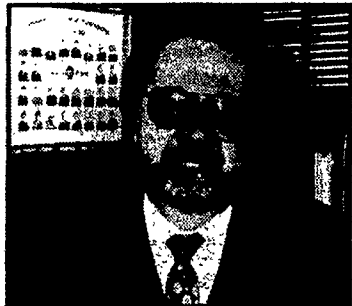
Participants will all don official Jubilee for Families scarves depicting the Holy Family in a nativity scene. Cardinal Lopez said the scarves would represent a "memento, or better yet, a message that (families) can keep in their home hearths afterward as a flag of hope."

The springtime of change, he said, "does not belong to rhetoric."

New strength against inhuman, anti-family policies worldwide can be drawn from the church's pastoral care, local dioceses and the pro-life movement, said the cardinal.

But he said real change can happen only when "political leaders (and) lawmakers decide to believe in the truth of mankind, to defend it, to respect it, and unjust and murderous laws are replaced by laws in the service of families and children, because they are the most precious resource."

Thoughts to Consider



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No two people react in exactly the same way to the death of a loved one! Some people do well by plunging into old routines or setting up new ones. Others need time to adjust without the deceased. They need time to express feelings, to learn new ways of doing things and to put affairs in order. The critical matter is that the grieving person be aware of and willing to deal with the changes death has created. Activity solely for the purpose of escaping feelings and running from the pain will not work. On the other hand inactivity can further depression. The newly bereaved should take time to deal with feelings and then begin the tasks necessary to make life meaningful.

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Westside Podiatry Group is pleased to introduce Beth Renee Freeling, D.P.M.

Dr. Beth Freeling is the daughter of Dr. Ronald Freeling and will practice podiatric medicine and surgery with her father and the other members of the Westside Podiatry Group, Dr. Daniel Caiola and Dr. Domenick Calise.

Dr. Freeling received her Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree from the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine at Temple University, and completed her residency at St. Barnabas Hospital in Livingston, NJ.

Dr. Beth's special areas of interest are in the treatment of the diabetic foot, including wound care, and the surgical and medical treatment of the deformed foot. She also has specialized in the management of acute and chronic foot pain.



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