Priest, Teacher At DuBourg Charged With Sexual Assault

By E.S. Evans
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

A Catholic priest and a lay teacher at Bishop DuBourg High School in south St. Louis were charged Thursday with deviate sexual assault involving a 16-year-old male student.

The priest, the Rev. James A. Funke, 38, was accused of sexually assaulting the boy earlier this month at the rectory of St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Lemay. Funke is the associate pastor there.

Police say pornographic material was taken by authorities from the priest's room in the rectory, which is on Sherman Avenue near Jefferson Barracks.

Jerome B. Robben, 44, a lay teacher at the high school, was charged in warrants issued in St. Louis County Circuit Court. Funke was held in the County Jail Thursday night in lieu of $25,000 bail, but Robben was released on bond.

Police said they had seized a large quantity of child pornography from the suspects' homes. Some of the pornography may lead to additional charges.

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charges.
Robben, who lives in the 5100 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, did not actually take part in the incident charged but had encouraged the victim to participate, police said.
The suspects have admitted the offense, authorities said. They were arrested Wednesday after an investigation by county and city police. The investigation was prompted by a call on the child-abuse hot line Tuesday.
Auxiliary Bishop Edward O'Donnell of the St. Louis Archdiocese said in a statement Thursday night that the church, "like the rest of the community, was deeply concerned about the allegations, especially when people holding positions of trust are involved. We are concerned especially about any young people involved."
O'Donnell said the church had already taken steps to assist the youths and their families.
"We are also concerned about the accused," O'Donnell said. "It is our hope and prayer that truth and justice will prevail."
Detective Susan Carr of the county's sex crimes unit said the victim's mother had become suspicious of his relationship with Funke because the priest bought things for the boy but never visited with the family. When she questioned her son, he told her of several incidents at the rectory, Carr said.
She then took the boy to a counseling service, which called the hot line, Carr said.
Detectives said the victim had been enticed rather than intimidated or coerced and had consented to Funke's advances. They said the priest had bought beer for the boy and given him money for a car.
Warr said that after Funke's arrest, he voluntarily took police to his room at the rectory, where some sexual photographs of boys were found. She said police found scenes that were more than 10 years old.
Most of the materials were found when Robben was arrested at home, including numerous photographs, videotapes and commercial films.
St. Louis police investigating Funke's activities said he had taken pictures of victims and tapes. About six other potential victims are being questioned, investigators said.
They said some of the victims had told them they consented to Robben's propositions for money, some for better grades and others out of fear. The two suspects did not always work together, investigators said.
Authorities said that the teachers' activities apparently had been going on about two years and that the additional victims may be former DuBourg students. Police said they knew of no other current students involved.
Funke, a biology teacher, and Robben, a history teacher, had both been with the school at 5850 Eichelberger Street for seven years. School officials said they have been suspended pending disposition of the case.
Floyd Hacker, DuBourg principal, said two special counselors would be at the school today to assist staff counselors "in helping any student or family member who may be hurt by this thing."
Hacker and Sister Mary Ann Eckhoff, superintendent of St. Louis archdiocesan schools, said officials were cooperating with the investigation. Both said they were shocked and saddened by the charges and were surprised by the arrests.
"We had no evidence that they were anything but dedicated teachers who were very supportive of the school," Eckhoff said. "They were very involved in school activities and well liked by many students."
Parishioners at St. Bernadette's, who were setting up a Thursday night bingo game in the school hall, expressed shock at Funke's arrest. But they declined to talk about it and referred a reporter to the pastor, Rev. Jerome Keaty.
Keaty said Funke had been at St. Bernadette's for three years. "I'm certainly saddened by it," Keaty said.
Bill Bryan and William C. Lhotka contributed information for this story.

Vatican

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other reason for producing the document, the officials said.
The document criticizes the homosexual rights movement in a passage that a Vatican official said was a clear reference to the disease AIDS.
"Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people," it said, "its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved."
A large proportion of the people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome are homosexuals." Health authorities have warned that the AIDS virus can be spread through

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