

January 3, 2001

Concerning:	Fr. Donald J. McGuire, S.J.
By:	Fr. Richard H. McGurn, S.J., Socius
For:	Fr. McGuire's Account of the () and Complaints

Don McGuire came to the province office today at my request, so I could hear his detailed account of how he sees the complaints lodged in early autumn of 2000 against him by the parents of and . Both families are members of a Catholic charismatic community in Augusta, Georgia. The head of the community is a psychiatrist, , who has functioned as Don's personal psychiatrist.

Don, as he has said before, re-stated that has selected the young men who have worked as Don's assistants in recent years. Don said that he talked on the phone yesterday with to review these 2 complaints.

Without re-stating here the complaints of these 2 families, I note that both their sons were not minors at the time they entered the role of being assistant to Fr. McGuire on his retreat circuit. However, they are both under 21, which directly violates the existing guidelines of 1995, in which the provincial stated that he may not travel with anyone under 21.

Fr. McGuire's response to the complaint of the parents of is:

Don said it was "a real shock" to him when they lodged their complaint concerning his relationship with their son, when was his assistant in 1998-99. Don's shock is due to his saying that the had never expressed any complaint prior to their recent one.

Don thinks the were induced to lodge a complaint because the (their neighbors) were looking for support for their own complaint against Don. Regarding their claim that their son told them that Fr. McGuire "was overwhelming him with pornographic pictures," Don replied that brought 3 pornographic magazines—Playboy, etc.—to Don, which Don said told him he had "found in a closet" (apparently in the apartment provided for his use by the Mission Fides office). I asked Don if he had supplied those magazines to , and he said "No." Don said he had no idea where those magazines came from.

I asked if Don ever looked at those pictures with when discussing the matter with him, and he said "No" (However, he did say that "brought" the magazines to him). Don talked with about this several weeks later, but that concluded the matter, according to Don's account.

Regarding the complaint that Fr. McGuire monopolized their son's time, and discouraged his communicating with his parents, Don said that e-mailed his parents frequently. In general, Don said of his relationship with this family: "I've had open, friendly contact, with no sign of unhappiness on their part" (prior to this complaint).

Fr. McGuire's response to the complaint of the parents of is:

Regarding the complaint that Fr. McGuire monopolized their son's time, and discouraged his communicating with his parents, Don said that the , especially 's mother, wanted him to e-mail them daily. Don said phoned them weekly.

Don said that, in his view, their complaint originated in late summer of 2000, when [redacted] approached [redacted] (who operate Mission Fides, the corporation that manages Don's retreat ministry finances), without Don's knowledge, and asked if he could stay on as Don's assistant for a further 6 months, even though his 1-year commitment was then expiring. Don said he did not know of [redacted] request until 6 weeks later (How could he not know, since [redacted] committed time had expired, and he was not showing any signs of departing?).

Don says that [redacted] s parents were so upset that he was not coming home at the end of his 1-year term, that they rallied their sub-group of their charismatic community in their home, and that this assembled group confronted [redacted] when he returned to visit in the late summer, and that they insisted he return home. Don said [redacted] was so upset by this that he asked to stay in the home of the head of the community, [redacted] rell, during the remainder of his visit, which Dr. [redacted] acceded to. Parenthetically, [redacted] said that [redacted] parents had named him for [redacted].

Don said the [redacted] requested a meeting with him which, in retrospect, he now says was a mistake on his part to agree to. He said the meeting took place in a restaurant, and he did not expect them to launch a confrontation. Don said his surprise at this was due to the fact that the [redacted] had never previously mentioned any accusation that he was in any way manipulating their son.

Don says that, after this confrontation, [redacted] talked with his parents, and that [redacted] came to him and said he'd had a "great talk" with them. Don says that [redacted] told him yesterday in their phone conversation that, since the time of this complaint in early autumn, that [redacted] has done very well, and that he is impressed by him.

The [redacted] specifically have alleged that their son has often slept overnight in the same room with Don, and this includes at least one night in the home of [redacted]. I asked Don if [redacted] had ever spent the night in his room, and Don answered, with oblique humor, "Yes, helping me pack." I then asked if [redacted] had ever slept overnight in the same room with him at Dr. [redacted] home, and [redacted] said, "Yes, accompanied by their son, [redacted]."

I asked if it was true that [redacted] had slept overnight in the same room with Don on other occasions, and he said "Yes, on numerous occasions when we were traveling, as on trips to Calcutta, etc."

I told Don that the [redacted] allege their son [redacted] told them he had on more than one occasion slept in the same bed with Don. Don said "No, that never happened."

Additional comments:

Although neither the [redacted] or the [redacted] stated any complaint about their sons helping to dress or bathe Fr. McGuire, I asked him if they ever did. He said that both, on various occasions, helped him bathe his right foot, which he can't bend to reach. He said he would stick his foot out of the shower stall, so they could do so. I asked if they were always fully clothed when they did this for him, and he said "Yes."

Don says he has recently heard from [redacted] —whom Don says heard via Fr. Brett Brammen, vocation director of the diocese of Savannah, GA (which includes Augusta, the home of the [redacted]) —that the [redacted], back around October, Don thinks, sent a letter of [redacted].

complaint about him to the bishop of Savannah. Don was scheduled to give a retreat in that diocese in early January, 2001, but has heard via this indirect communication that the bishop does not think it wise for him to give this retreat until the current complaints are settled, so Don has withdrawn from the retreat. I asked if he'd had any direct communication, written or otherwise from the bishop's office, and he said "No" (nor has the province office had any such communication).

Don had also noted, early in our conversation today, that a Fr. Tony Thurston--who was involved in a 1993 complaint against Don by the parents of Don's assistant (then a minor)--had made it impossible recently for Don to give a retreat at Steubenville Univ., where Fr. Thurston is currently located. I did not go into all the details of this.

Conclusion:

I did note to Fr. McGuire that these two difficulties with faculties for giving retreats point out the serious threat to his retreat ministry and his reputation as a priest, in that, if these complaints persist and/or proliferate, they could result in bishops refusing him faculties in many dioceses.

I also noted that, if the current complaints, or similar ones, ever proceeded to legal action against him and the Chicago province, that it would pose very serious trouble for him and the province.

I said that I was grateful to hear his account of these recent complaints, but that, of course, I was also obligated to hear the accounts of the complainants as well.

Fr. McGuire said he was being very obedient about the verbal directive given to him by the provincial, Fr. Baumann, in our conference of Dec. 15, 2000, when Fr. Baumann told him he should not have his young assistants present, as they frequently have been, in his community residence. He even said that he had _____, rather than one of these young men, drive him to today's conference.

I told him to expect that the provincial would be issuing him new directives before the end of the month, and that he might well find them burdensome, but that they were designed to be for his own good, as well as to be protective of the good of the province.

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