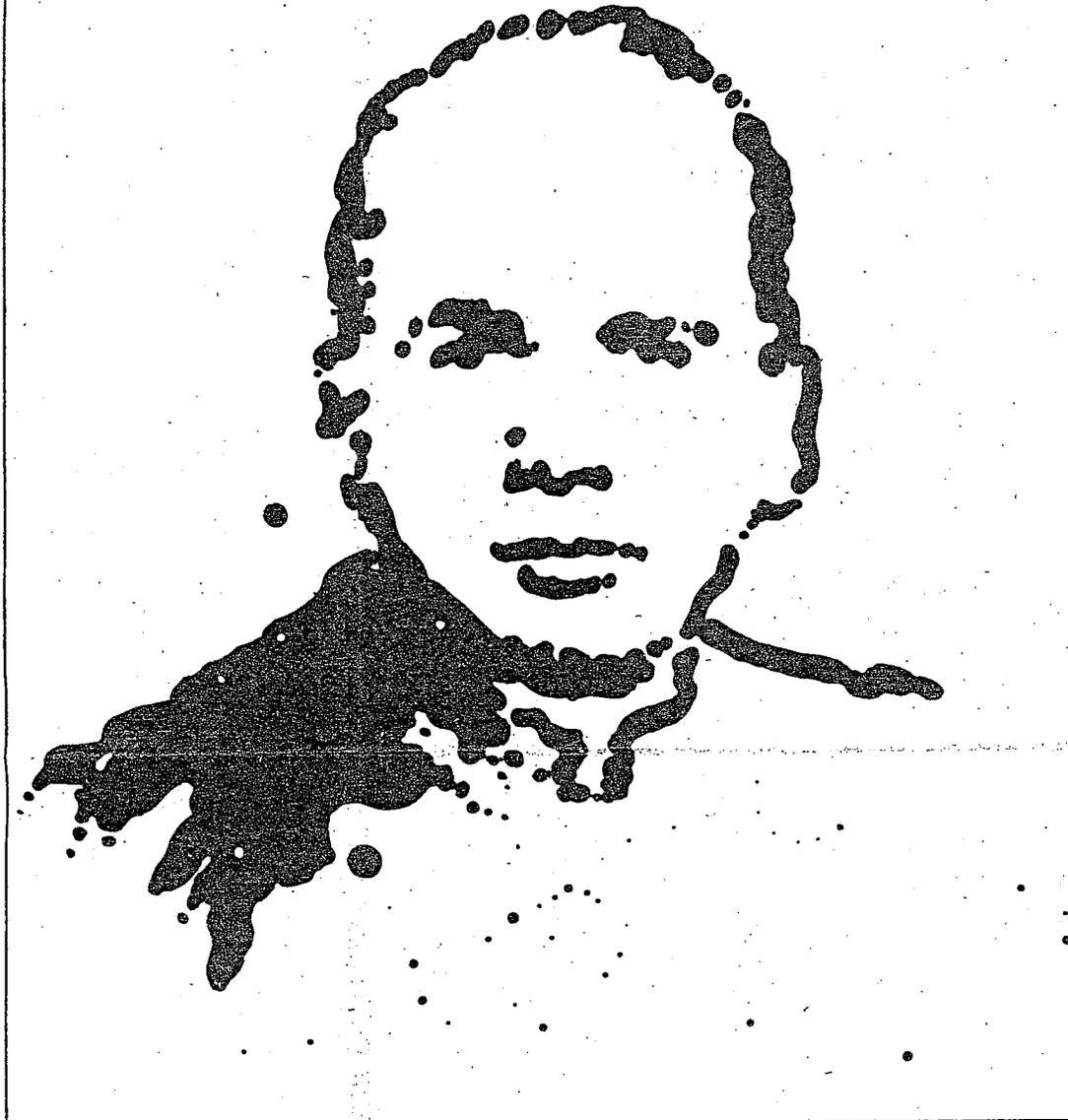


## Departure Of William Spain

Monsignor William Spain is a long, long way from home as he descends the carpeted stairway and greets the visitor from San Diego. It is Saturday, June 23, the visitor is a reporter who has traveled to the Maplegrove Drug Rehabilitation Center fifty miles north of Detroit, and he is not a good sight for Msgr. Spain's sore eyes. As far as the monsignor knew, no one besides a few San Diego diocese officials and his immediate family was aware that he was in Michigan. Though Spain is counseling patients here today, he is actually a patient himself at Guest House, a treatment facility a few miles to the north for priests who suffer from drug and alcohol dependencies. For fifteen years, until early last April, Msgr. Spain was the pastor in charge of St. James Catholic Church in Solana Beach, then one day he was abruptly called into Bishop Leo Maher's office and whisked away to a hospital. But judging by his physical appearance now, Msgr. Spain does not look like a man who has been undergoing intensive treatment for more than two months.

He is fifty-six years old, six feet tall, and very flabby, and his gait is slow and careful. He is mostly bald, and his bloodshot eyes pierce through the spotty red folds of his face. This day he is wearing dark slacks, a blue shirt, and no shoes on his black-stockinged feet. Spain guides the reporter to a vacant office



Monsignor William Spain

and the two sit down to talk. The monsignor is nervous. The reporter hands him a business card and explains that he knows something about Spain's activities prior to his sudden departure from San Diego and that he needs to ask the monsignor some questions. The reporter

mentions some names of people who were intimate friends of the monsignor in San Diego. "It doesn't sound like it could be a very positive story," says Spain. "I'm here for health reasons, but beyond that you'll have to talk to Bishop Maher." The reporter then asks if the

monsignor would mind answering some specific questions. Spain says it depends upon the questions and asks the reporter to shut off a tape recorder that is lying on the seat between them. "Monsignor, do you know a man named Rick Bates?"

Illustrations by David Diaz

tucking his hands under his knees.

"How long have you known Rick Bates? Six years or so?"

"Five or six years," Spain says, his face blushing and twitching.

"Where did you meet Rick Bates? In Las Vegas?"

Spain looks stricken. "I'm not going to answer without my legal counsel," he says evenly.

"What about Jim Hiller, Ken Lucas, Pete Phillips the drug dealer in Chula Vista? How long have you known them?"

"Those names mean nothing to me."

"Why are you here?"

"Health problems . . ."

"Are you here because of a cocaine problem?"

"I'm not going to answer without my legal counsel."

"I know you spent a month at Peninsula Hospital in California before coming here."

"Who's your source on these things? It sounds like he's trying to do me harm."

"We've spoken to a lot of people. Do you deny that you're here because of a cocaine problem?"

"I'm not going to answer without my legal counsel."

"Okay then, let's change subjects."

"Please do."

"Bishop Maher. Did you ever loan him a lot of money?"

Spain tenses. "I'm not going to answer without my legal counsel."

"Why? Is there some legal problem?"

"You're being judge and jury here."

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