

S.F. priest sentenced to house arrest

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1996-05-23 04:00:00 PDT SAN FRANCISCO -- The Rev. Martin Greenlaw, convicted of embezzling more than \$200,000 from the Catholic church, was sentenced Thursday to one year of home detention and ordered to make full restitution.

Retired Superior Court Judge Jack Berman ignored district attorney arguments that Greenlaw, 53, should be sent to state prison for violating his trust with the church and parishioners.

"Mr. Greenlaw is a thief," Chief Assistant District Attorney David Millstein said. "He stole with a pen instead of a gun or by force."

Joseph Morehead, one of Greenlaw's attorneys, told the court that the probation department recommended against imprisoning the dishonored priest.

Morehead said that Greenlaw is disabled - physically and emotionally - because of a severe beating he received three years ago.

Berman agreed, saying that sending Greenlaw to prison would serve no purpose and would cost taxpayers at least \$50,000. He said justice is better served with home detention.

"I don't think punishment in a case like this proves anything," said Berman, who created a firestorm of protest from the district attorney's office when he announced his sentencing plans last month after Greenlaw pleaded guilty to 22 counts of fraud, embezzlement and grand theft.

The judge, who fills in on the bench when requested, said a major consideration was that Greenlaw make full restitution for his crimes.

Paul Gaspari, attorney for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, told the court that Greenlaw has turned over a home he owns in the East Bay.

Gaspari said the Church expects to sell the property for a net gain of between \$180,000 and \$200,000, which would be enough to repay the money stolen from the archdiocese.

Although Millstein earlier had criticized Berman for the house arrest, the prosecutor did not mention the issue at Greenlaw's sentencing, saying only that it was a serious "breach of faith and trust" by the priest.

Greenlaw will be on probation for three years after finishing his year of house arrest, during which time he will

wear a bracelet that monitors his movements.