

# 2 priests trade accusations at sentencing

By Marylynne Pitz  
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Two Catholic priests who admitted misusing hundreds of thousands of dollars in charitable donations traded accusations of coercion in U.S. District Court yesterday.

The **Rev. Francis G. Bolek** of Donora testified that he was a 15-year-old altar boy when the **Rev. Bernard Kaczmarczyk** of Belle Vernon initiated a sexual relationship; **Kaczmarczyk** testified that he paid Bolek's credit card bills and that Bolek had threatened to betray him to church authorities.

After listening to testimony in separate sentencing hearings yesterday, U.S. District Senior Judge Gustave Diamond sentenced **Kaczmarczyk** to a 27-month term and Bolek to 18 months in prison. Each will also be on probation for two years after being released.

The priests had previously pleaded guilty to charges of mail fraud for their involvement in the Mary Mystical Rose Foundation, which sent letters to potential donors saying its purpose was to raise money to purchase a ceramic tile mosaic at Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Donora from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and turn it into a shrine.

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# Two priests trade accusations at sentencing for misuse of funds

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Kaczmarczyk set up the foundation in 1987 and Bolek was accused of soliciting donations from 1987 to 1993 from people who signed a guest register at the church.

Although Holy Name contains an arched ceramic tile mosaic depicting the Virgin Mary, it never was designated a shrine by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, which would have meant that the faithful would have been encouraged to visit it and pray there. The church was closed in October 1992 as part of a diocesan reorganization. It was then that the dioceses discovered the unauthorized foundation.

Bolek, 35, who has admitted spending \$340,000 in charitable donations on vacations, entertainment and Florida home, testified that Kaczmarczyk fondled him as the two rode home from a gambling outing at harness racing track in 1978. Kaczmarczyk, now 67, of Belle Vernon, was pastor of Holy Name in Donora.

Bolek testified that he allowed the sexual relationship to continue because his family was in financial need and Kaczmarczyk gave them money from his winnings at the track.

Bolek testified that Kaczmarczyk paid for two of his family's cars and gave the family money for a down payment on the home they now occupy. He said the elder priest also bought him a new car during his senior year in high school.

Bolek's testimony followed Kaczmarczyk's two-hour sentencing hearing. His lawyer, David McMullin, argued that his client was coerced into giving Bolek money to pay off substantial credit card debts that averaged \$5,000 a month.

Kaczmarczyk testified that Bolek threatened to expose him and the unauthorized foundation to Bishop Donald Wuerl. Kaczmarczyk admitted taking \$495,000 in foundation donations and spending it on gambling trips and a \$48,000 Cadillac. Kaczmarczyk

gave \$340,000 of that money to Bolek.

In addition to travel, cars and entertainment, the priests owned adjacent ranch-style homes in Coral Springs, Fla. The properties were sold before either was charged.

Diamond said the priests had made it difficult for other charitable organizations to raise money.

"This type of conduct creates a cynicism that can hurt those organizations," he said. Bolek appeared contrite.

"I am very sorry for what I've done. I ask for mercy from the court. I ask for an opportunity to begin my life again," he told Diamond.

Bolek, who pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud, testified that he began cooperating with federal authorities in November of 1994.

Kaczmarczyk continued giving him money, sometimes as much as \$1,000 in cash.

Diamond asked Kaczmarczyk why he continued giving Bolek money after diocesan officials learned about the unauthorized charity in October of 1992 and told Kaczmarczyk to resign from the board.

Kaczmarczyk replied that he felt obligated, out of "compassion" for Bolek, to help the young priest pay off his credit cards.

But the judge was not persuaded.

"Those payments come perilously close to obstruction of justice," Diamond said. "I think that the payments made to Father Bolek in 1995 come perilously close to an attempt to keep him from cooperating with the government. At that point, it begins to verge on a

much more serious matter than diverting these funds out of compassion."

Bolek, who wept after his sentencing, was greeted by more than 50 members of St. Bernadette parish in Monroeville, where he served from 1988 to 1995. The parishioners packed the courtroom and two of them testified as character witnesses.

Bolek has turned over to the government \$30,800 worth of goods he acquired on credit card buying sprees.

They include two ladies' mink coats valued at \$5,000 each, a \$3,500 statue of Walt Disney World, a leather coat, a \$1,700 cocktail dress and four gold rings.

The property will eventually be auctioned by the U.S. Marshals Service and the proceeds given to Edward J. McGratty, a Morristown, N.J., man who gave \$150,000 and \$99,049 in two separate checks to the foundation.

Diamond directed that a two-acre plot of land in Economy, Beaver County, be sold and the money given to McGratty. Kaczmarczyk testified yesterday that the land was valued on tax reports at \$21,000.

Both men are on leaves of absence and cannot present themselves as priests in good standing, said the Rev. Ron Lengwin, a spokesman for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

He said diocesan officials will speak with Bolek and Kaczmarczyk in the future to discuss voluntarily resignation from the priesthood or the canonical process for their removal from the priesthood.

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