

Long Island Voice of the Faithful Vigil Committee

This month, we again bring you news that never made it into the pages of the Long Island Catholic:

Priest Charged With Stalking (from the blog Northport Patch)

By Kelly Campbell (October 19, 2010)

A priest given hospitality privileges in the St. Philip Neri rectory was asked to leave following his arrest for stalking. On Sept. 21, the Rev. Rashid Peter Francis was charged with fourth-degree stalking, a misdemeanor, according to Suffolk County police records. The incident occurred April 1, 2007.

Since 2005, Francis, a Franciscan friar who is not a priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, was granted hospitality to live in the parish while pursuing his work as a chaplain at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Francis' home parish is St. Anthony of Padua in downtown Manhattan.

Upon hearing of the arrest, Bishop William Murphy revoked Father Francis' hospitality privileges. As a result, Father Francis has left the parish rectory.

The church is cooperating fully with law enforcement, according to a letter in the parish bulletin to the congregation from Father Peter Dooley, who replaced Father Peter Garry when he retired in May.

Francis has retained Commack attorney Anthony Gallo. His next court appearance is scheduled for Nov. 22.

In New York State, a person is guilty of stalking in the fourth degree when he or she "intentionally, and for no legitimate purpose, engages in a course of conduct directed at a specific person, and knows or reasonably should know that such conduct is likely to cause reasonable fear of material harm to the physical health, safety or property of such person, a family member, or an acquaintance; or causes material harm to the mental or emotional health of the victim by following, telephoning or initiating communication or contact with such person, a family member, or an acquaintance, and the actor was previously informed to cease that conduct; or is likely to cause the victim to reasonably fear that his or her employment, business or career is threatened by appearing, telephoning or initiating communication or contact at the victim's place of employment or business, and the actor was previously informed to cease that conduct."

Long Island Voice of the Faithful commends the Diocese of Rockville Centre for "cooperating fully with law enforcement" in this case, but isn't cooperation with law enforcement a basic requirement of every citizen in a civilized society? It should go without saying that the diocese will cooperate; Catholics and all concerned citizens should expect no less.

We call on the editors of the Long Island Catholic to print this story and to follow up periodically on the disposition of the case. We ask that the newspaper of the Diocese of Rockville Centre actually keep us informed on all aspects of the news in the diocese. We would also like the diocesan hierarchy to describe the screening and explain the vetting that is required of anyone who is given "hospitality privileges" in the rectories and convents of the diocese.