

Counselors Now at DuBourg After Two Teachers Arrested

Catholic Family Services counselors were sent Oct. 31 to Bishop DuBourg High School after last week's arrest of two teachers — a priest and layman — for alleged deviate sexual assault involving a 16-year-old male student.

Archdiocesan officials expressed shock over the allegations and moved quickly to help those persons involved along with students and staff at DuBourg.

The priest, Father James A. Funke, 38, a biology teacher at DuBourg for seven years, was accused of sexually assaulting a DuBourg student earlier this month at the rectory of St. Bernadette Parish in Lemay,

where he serves as part-time associate pastor. Father Funke was arrested Oct. 29. He was later released on \$25,000 bond.

Jerome B. Robben, 44, a history teacher at the high school for seven years, was charged in warrants issued in St. Louis County Circuit Court. He has also been released on bond.

Both teachers have been suspended pending disposition of the case.

St. Louis County Police said a large quantity of pornographic material was seized at Robben's home and from Father Funke's room at the rectory of St. Bernadette. As a result, additional charges may be filed, police said.

Authorities said the suspects have admitted the offense. They were arrested after an investigation by St. Louis County and St. Louis City Police. The investigation was prompted by a call on the child-abuse hotline Oct. 28.

Archbishop John L. May says in his column on Page 4 in the St. Louis Review this week that he was "shocked" by the allegations of sexual abuse at DuBourg.

"Our first response was to the youth allegedly victimized and to his family who have been offered whatever help we can provide," Archbishop May said. "Our second concern was

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for the DuBourg community. They are weathering this suffering very well."

Archbishop May said the archdiocese is cooperating with authorities, hoping that "truth and justice will prevail for the accused faculty members. We will try to help there, too. This is a heavy sorrow for all our Catholic community and we must face it together with the charity of Christ."

In a statement issued shortly after the teachers were arrested, Auxiliary Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell said the archdiocese began to assist concerned families within 24 hours of learning about the allegations.

"Like the rest of the community, the Catholic Church of St. Louis is deeply concerned about any allegations of child abuse, especially when people holding positions of trust are accused," Bishop O'Donnell said.

Sister Mary Ann Eckhoff, SSND, superintendent of Catholic schools, said the incident has caused a "great deal of pain for the DuBourg community." She said the Catholic School Office will help those persons who need more counselling.

Sister Mary Ann said teachers met Monday in small groups to discuss the incident. In addition students met with their advisors on Tuesday. "If we need to do something further, we will do it," she said.

Father Mark C. Ullrich, ad-

ministrator of Catholic Family Services, said two counselors were sent to DuBourg last Friday and he joined them later in the day. Another counselor was sent to St. Bernadette Parish School to provide assistance with children there and concerned parishioners.

Father Ullrich said the counselors at DuBourg will be available to talk with any student or faculty member "who needs to work through and understand the whole crisis." The counselors would also be available to talk about the situation to larger groups at the school.

Father Ullrich said the counselors will try to help the students understand that what allegedly happened was definitely wrong. "There is no way that we can condone it, but we've got to accept the fact that it happened," he said.

Father Ullrich said the counselors are at the school to help the victims as well as those students who had heard of any incidents. "Maybe a best friend of one of the victims heard about it and is struggling with it. We want to be able to help them, too."

If additional incidents are reported, Father Ullrich said those persons will be put in touch with police authorities.

Counselors are also available to talk to parents, he said. "The main thing we want to do is to have the parents talk it through with their children," he said.

Floyd Hacker, principal at

DuBourg, said Oct. 31 in an interview with the Review, that the school is getting back to normal. "It hasn't been a fun two days," he said.

Hacker described Robben and Father Funke as dedicated teachers who were very active at the school. He said Father Funke helped coach the football team. Robben, he said, was involved with the congressional award program in his classes.

"We're going to do everything we can to try to help the students and faculty deal with this situation as best we can," he said. "We want to help in any way we can."

He said they have had a few "crackpot" callers. "A couple of people called to gloat over this," he said. Also, he added, some of the students had reported that their friends in other schools had called and made derogatory comments about DuBourg.

However, Hacker said, the majority of the calls had come in from parents, friends and other school officials who were supportive. "All in all in the midst of this terrible thing there have been some rewarding aspects," he said. "We've had a lot of people call and tell us about the tremendous amount of good we've done in the community."

Father Funke was ordained in May 1974. He taught at Mercy High School before teaching at DuBourg. He has served as part-time associate pastor at St. Bernadette since May 1983.