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A Priest Is Accused of Sexually Abusing a 16-Year-Old Girl

By Chuck Sudetic
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A Roman Catholic priest from Nigeria was arrested Tuesday afternoon on charges that he sexually groped a 16-year-old girl and exposed himself to her at a Queens motel room, the police said. The girl made the charges after she and a 21-year-old woman were apprehended for stealing the priest's car.

The Rev. Bennet Akuzie, 44, of 88-19 Parsons Boulevard in Jamaica, Queens, was facing charges of third-degree sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child, Mary De Bourbon, a spokeswoman for the Queens County District Attorney, said.

The police have not identified the women. A police official who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the 21-year-old had spent time with the priest on at least four occasions and that he had given her \$75 and had paid to have her hair done.

The incident that gave rise to the charges against Father Akuzie began about 3:30 P.M. Monday when he invited the two women to a room in the Cross Bay Motor Inn at 137-27 Cross Bay Boulevard in Howard Beach, Officer Noreen Murray, a police spokeswoman, said.

"At the location, he did request sexual acts from these females," Officer Murray said. "He did expose himself to both females and fondled the breasts of the 16-year-old."

When Father Akuzie went to take a shower, the two women left the motel and took his car without permission, Officer Murray said.

At 7:15 P.M., Father Akuzie reported his car stolen, said another police spokeswoman, Officer Valerie St. Rose. Police officers apprehended the two women in the car early Tuesday several miles away in Brooklyn, Officer St. Rose said.

"During the arrest debriefing, the two females made the allegations against the priest," Officer Murray said. Father Akuzie surrendered to the police on Tuesday afternoon, she said.

The priest refused to press charges against the women for taking his car, Officer St. Rose said.

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