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## **Priest Arrested on Sex Charge**

A Roman Catholic Clergyman Was Charged Thursday with Committing a Lewd and Lascivious Act

By Yvette C. Hammett  
Stuart News/Port St. Lucie News [Stuart FL]  
November 15, 1997

White City — A local Catholic priest was arrested Thursday and charged with masturbating in front of another man at White City Park.

The Rev. Peter L. Duvelsdorf, 67, a priest at St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church, 1257 N.W. Bentley Circle, Port St. Lucie, was charged with committing a lewd and lascivious act, a misdemeanor.

A man whose truck had broken down in the park said Duvelsdorf circled his truck several times in his 1997 Buick Century before stopping at about 12:55 p.m. to ask the man whether he needed help. The man walked over to Duvelsdorf's car, noticing when he got there that Duvelsdorf was masturbating.

The man said when the tow truck arrived to pick up his truck, he used the driver's cellular phone to call 911 and report the incident to St. Lucie County sheriff's deputies.

Duvelsdorf admitted to deputies that was masturbating, reports said. He was questioned at the sheriff's detective bureau, then released with a notice to appear in court.

A church secretary who answered the office phone Friday afternoon at St. Paul of the Cross said she knew nothing about the priest's arrest. "I'm sure no one at the church will want to talk to you about this," the woman said, declining further comment.

The Rev. Michael Edwards, chancellor for the Diocese of Palm Beach, said such reports are investigated thoroughly before a decision is made about any disciplinary action.

"Obviously, this is the first I've heard of it," Edwards said. "We will immediately try to ascertain the truth and will conduct our own investigation. We will talk to the priest involved and if the charges are upheld, the priest will be put on administrative leave."

Edwards said if the priest is found guilty, he will be encouraged to seek "appropriate" counseling.

Duvelsdorf could not be reached to comment Friday.

Sheriff's spokesman Mark Weinberg said sheriff's deputies often target White City Park because they often receive complaints about illicit sexual activity there. But he said deputies haven't been working undercover at the park any time recently.

A Greek Orthodox priest was arrested at the park in June 1993 and charged with exposure of sexual organs after reportedly soliciting an undercover deputy for sex.

In that case, Daniel Sfikas of Port St. Lucie drove to a secluded area off 25th Street to meet the deputy, then allegedly started masturbating. He was a priest at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Fort Pierce.

**CORRECTION-DATE:** November 18, 1997

**CORRECTION:**

On page B1 Saturday, under the headline "Priest arrested on sex charge," the News incorrectly identified the location of church where the priest is assigned. The church is in North Palm Beach.

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