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Jesuit barred from ministry over sex abuse

Nancy Frazier O'Brien Catholic News Service | Jun. 23, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The Maryland province of the Society of Jesus has permanently removed Jesuit Father J-Glenn Murray from ministry after an allegation that he improperly touched a minor in the 1980s was found to be credible.

Although no details about the alleged incident were released, Father Murray served as vice principal of St. Frances Academy in Baltimore, believed to be the oldest black Catholic high school in the Western Hemisphere, for most of the 1980s.

A well-known speaker who often addressed national Catholic gatherings on topics related to liturgy and African-American life and worship, Father Murray was the principal drafter of the U.S. bishops' 1990 document, "Plenty Good Room: The Spirit and Truth of African-American Catholic Worship."

In recent years, Father Murray was parochial vicar at St. Aloysius Gonzaga Church in Washington. He had taught at the nearby Gonzaga College High School from 1974 to 1976 but not during his more recent stint in Washington.

The Jesuit province's June 21 statement said he is now living in a monitored Jesuit residence.

In a separate statement, Jesuit Father Joseph E. Lingan, president of Gonzaga College High School, said he wanted to "assure all members of the Gonzaga community of our deep commitment to the safety and well-being of our students and all minors."

"I ask you to join in praying for the healing of the young person, now an adult, who came forward and for all those who are affected by this sad matter," he added.

A Jesuit for more than 40 years and a priest since 1979, James Glenn Murray was raised by a father he called "a diehard atheist" and a "nominally Baptist" mother who occasionally took him to services at an African Methodist Episcopal church.

In a 2002 interview with U.S. Catholic magazine, Father Murray said his parents sent him to Catholic school "because it was considered the way out of the projects" and he decided to become a Catholic when he was 10.

He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and communications from St. Louis University in 1970, a master's degree in divinity with a concentration in liturgy from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., in 1983 and a doctorate in ministry with a concentration in liturgy from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in 2006.

Following his June 1979 ordination, he was an associate pastor at Holy Cross Church in Durham, N.C., while serving as a campus minister at Duke University. From 1981 to 1988, he taught and was vice principal at St. Frances Academy.

From 1989 until June of 2007, Father Murray worked for the Diocese of Cleveland in the Office of Pastoral Liturgy, serving as its director from 1995.

During that time, he was a frequent speaker at national conferences for such organizations as the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, International Catholic Stewardship Council, Southwest Liturgical Conference, National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, National Conference of Catechetical Leadership and National Catholic Educational Association.

In a talk to some 23,000 young people and their chaperones at the 1999 National Catholic Youth Conference, Father Murray said, "We are mindful that we are not always what we want to be or what we should be."

"And yet we stand in the presence of a God who is slow to anger and rich in mercy," he said, recalling that Jesus told Peter he should forgive someone who wrongs him "70 times seven" times.

Urging the youths to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, Father Murray added, "Christ Jesus does indeed come among us to fix us. As my grandmother used to say, 'There is a doctor in the house.'"

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