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BY REV. FR. ORLY MENDOZA

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DAILYNEWS
Church defends priest vs 17-yr-old boy's rape case

WRITTEN BY BPNEWS TEAM | 18 NOVEMBER 2010



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By Juan Escandor Jr.

NAGA CITY --- Even as the provincial prosecutor's office of Camarines Sur has yet to act on a rape case filed Monday by a 17-year-old boy against a priest, the Archdiocese of Caceres has taken under its mantle of protection the accused priest by totally denying the charge.

In a statement released Tuesday, Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi warned that "the Archdiocese of Caceres is prepared to take appropriate legal action against the people behind these defamatory accusations."

"Attempts to destroy and discredit the church have been made by some sectors and individuals. The church is currently looking into the possibility of some malicious ploy against the church and its priests," the prelate precluded.

Provincial Prosecutor Agapito Rosales revealed the rape charge against the accused priest is yet to be raffled among the prosecutors even as he assured that the accused would be given chance to answer the charges filed against him.

Rosales said it would still take due process to determine whether or not there is probable cause against the priest.

Senior Inspector Santiago Orozco, police chief of Camaligan, Camarines Sur, a neighboring town of this city, admitted it took them five days to uncover the identity of the accused priest which they traced through the plate number of the car allegedly used by the suspect to bring the victim to a motor lodge.

Orozco recalled that on Nov. 1, the 17-year-old boy reported at about 3:30 p.m. to the Camaligan police station that he escaped from a policeman who sexually molested him in a "boarding house" in that town.

He said the alleged rape victim was able to write down the plate number of an Innova car which was later traced to the name of the accused priest.

Orozco said they searched Facebook and matched the name of the owner of the Innova car whose photo was posted in his Facebook account which the boy identified to be his molester.

"It was only during that moment that we were able to identify the alleged molester who happened to be a priest," he said.

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Police Officer 2 Sonia Z. Florece, investigator of the women and children division, said the boy told investigators he was asked by a man with a car to help him bring a sack of rice somewhere.

The boy narrated he boarded the Innova car and motored towards an elementary school in Naga City and then drove back to Camaligan in a place which the boy erroneously identified as a “boarding house.”

The “boarding house” turned out to be a drive-in motel in Camaligan town.

The boy told Florece he was able to escape while the accused priest was cleaning himself up inside the motel’s bathroom.


The boy said he was helped by the motel’s room boys who hid him from the suspect who also immediately left the motel when the boy was nowhere to be found.


It was the boy who wrote down the plate number of the Innova car when the suspect hastily left the motel.



Archbishop Legaspi named Msgr. Peter Beriña as the one being referred to by the boy through the photograph in Facebook. Through that photo Beriña is being accused of committing “sexual offense against a 17-year-old boy in a local hotel.”.

But he said it was not Beriña who was using the Innova car at the time of the alleged incident. The archbishop said it was the priest’s driver who used the car “without the knowledge and permission of the monsignor and entered a local motel with a female companion on the date and time of the alleged incident.”

“We are saddened by the fact that this false and malicious accusation is being made at the time when our priests are having their annual clergy retreat. Thus, we beg for prayers especially at this time,” Legaspi said.


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