

*St. Louis
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Article*

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Priest In Sex Case Called 'Sick,' Gets 10-Year Term

By Mary E. Chollet
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

A St. Louis County circuit judge called a priest "sick" and a disgrace to his religion, his profession and the community in sentencing him Friday to 10 years in prison for sexually molesting two male students.

The priest, James A. Funke, 39, is a former teacher at Bishop DuBourg High School in south St. Louis. He pleaded guilty Oct. 8 on 10 counts of second-degree deviate sexual assault.

The charges involved the sexual molestation of two teen-age boys over a two-year period. Authorities say that Funke also assaulted a third boy but that the case was too old to prosecute.

Funke's attorney had pleaded for leniency, saying Funke had been similarly molested by a priest when he was a young boy in a seminary. But Judge William M. Corrigan angrily rejected the plea and said he would have given Funke 50 years in prison — the maximum — had prosecutors asked for it.

Prosecutors recommended the 10-year sentence.

"You don't deserve and can't have probation," Corrigan told Funke, who remains a priest but was wearing no clerical garb. "If these young men were women, we'd say you were a rapist. If you had sold them cocaine, we would say you had fried their brains.

"But what you have done is far more insidious... You have assaulted them, you have raped them, you have fried their brains.

"You are sick, there isn't any question about that. But you have perpetrated crimes of violence against young people, and I don't care how sick you are — you need to go to the penitentiary," Corrigan said.

The victims' parents sat in the front row of the courtroom and wept.

Funke said: "I realize what I did was wrong, that I took advantage of trust placed in me as a teacher and as a priest. I'm truly sorry for the harm

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Wentzville.
"It is kind of depressing," said James I. Miller, 28, an assembly-line worker from O'Fallon, on his way into the plant. "Everybody here is like a big family."

A GM spokesman said the lay-off had been caused by poor sales of the cars built in Wentzville: Buick Electras, Oldsmobile 98s and Oldsmobile Delta 88s. The cars are some of GM's most ex-

Volkswagen Plant Its Only Auto F

Compiled From News Services

DETROIT — Volkswagen will close its only U.S. assembly plant before the end of next year and return all production of its Jetta and Golf models to West Germany, the company said Friday.

About 2,100 hourly workers and 400 salaried workers will lose their jobs when Volkswagen closes its assembly plant in Westmoreland, Pa. Volkswagen has been running the plant at less than half its capacity for five years, said a company spokes-

Priest

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I've done."

The victims were students and former students of DuBourg, in south St. Louis. Some of the incidents took place at Funke's rectory at St. Bernadette Church in Lemay.

Jerome B. Robben, 45, another former DuBourg teacher, was arrested with Funke in October 1985. He is serving a six-year prison term for involvement with the same victims.

Robben pleaded guilty on counts of sodomy and deviate sexual assault and on 17 counts of promoting child pornography. St. Louis Circuit Judge Thomas W. Challis said he would review Robben's sentence next week and consider releasing him from prison and granting him probation.

But Funke will do his time, Corrigan said.

"I think you are very fortunate that the state has more mercy than I do," Corrigan told Funke.

The judge said Funke had betrayed the years of respect he had enjoyed in the community as a teacher and priest. He accused Funke of targeting slow students who were too scared or ignorant to resist his advances.

Corrigan and Al Johnson, the prosecutor in the case, both said that if Funke had indeed been molested by a priest in the St. Louis area, he had an obligation to identify that priest to authorities.

Johnson also noted that police had seized from Funke's rectory "a large amount of pornography," including a homemade notebook containing several dozen sexual photographs of young boys. Johnson said Funke had refused to help authorities identify those boys.

Authorities said Funke had paid the boys he was involved with and had threatened them with bad grades if they refused to cooperate. Johnson said one boy had been recovering from drug and alcohol problems when Funke befriended him.

"The first thing Mr. Funke did was offer that boy a beer," Johnson said.

Funke's attorney, Martin J. Hadican, spoke of his client's years of service in the community, describing him as "a caring individual" who had suffered "mental anguish" since his arrest.

He asked for a sentence "tempered with logic and saturated with mercy."

"Jim does suffer from an affliction, an affliction that can be treated," Hadican said. "This is not a predator lurking in the dark to take advantage of young boys."

Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, said in a prepared statement Friday that Funke's crimes had compromised his priesthood and hurt the Roman Catholic Church.

"Today, the Archdiocese of St. Louis is very sad and hurt. Today, we are reminded that young people have been harmed by a person of trust, a priest," O'Donnell said. "We pray for all victims of abuse, we pray for Father Funke and we pray that the community and the church in St. Louis will never be confronted with a situation like this again."

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