



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Priest has to step down as police investigate finances of parish



Kilcoo Roman Catholic chapel

A County Down priest has stepped down from all ministerial duties pending the outcome of a police investigation, the Roman Catholic Church has said. Police have visited the home of “Father” John McCallum, the parish priest of Kilcoo, near Castlewellan, and removed computers and financial records for examination.

No allegations whatsoever - about financial impropriety or any other issue - have been made against the priest, “Father” McCallum, at the time of the police action.

Mass

Parishioners in his parish, which is in the Diocese of Down and Connor, were informed of the development by Bishop Donal McKeown during Mass on Saturday 21st August. A statement issued by the Roman Catholic church said: “Bishop McKeown met the priest and the priest has stepped down from all ministry pending the conclusion of that investigation.” “Since that police investigation is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for the diocese to make any further comment at this time.”

Renovations

Renovation work costing hundreds of thousands of pounds is being carried out at Kilcoo church. SDLP councillor Peter Fitzpatrick said that the suspended priest had been working in the parish for more than a year. “The priests in this parish have always been loved and cherished,” he said. “The parish work continues just as normal. I think it's very important that none of us should jump to conclusions in advance.” The police would not comment on the investigation.