

of Prayer'

Christina had heart attack from stress, says spiritual director



Sarah Mac Donald

THE parish priest with strong links to the House of Prayer has defended Christina Gallagher, saying she had become so stressed that she had suffered a heart attack.

In his first interview with the media in a decade on the House of Prayer, Fr Gerard McGinnity told the *Irish Independent* that "the impression was conveyed wrongly that money donated for religious purposes was personally perhaps used by her for her own comfort."

He added: "That is totally, totally wrong."

Fr McGinnity said Ms Gallagher had put up a wall at the front of the house near Newport, Co Mayo, to gain privacy after media intrusion.

He said there were donations from devotees who wanted to ensure her safety.

He also recalled how the Co Mayo mystic had suffered a heart attack, which he said was due to stress.

He said that devotees had "tried to get her away from the public eye where she could rest and have peace. That was entirely their motivation."

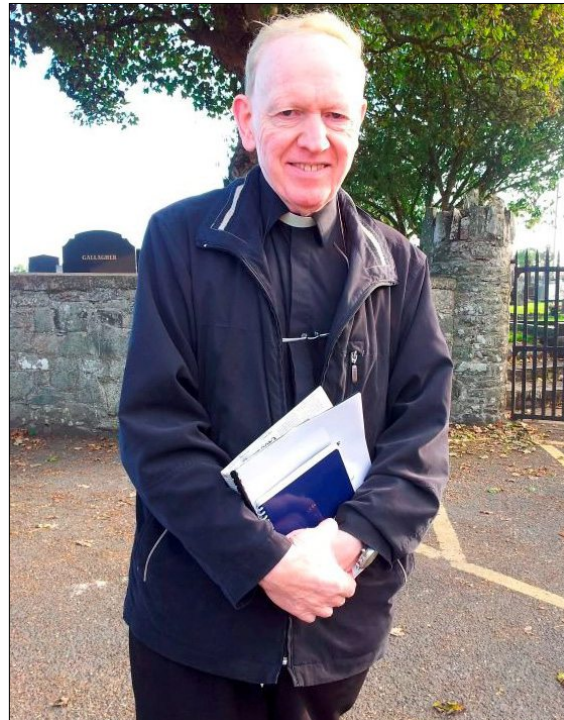
"Any that helped in donations gave for that purpose, and that went through a solicitor," he added.

The Co Louth priest said that people who go the House of Prayer, in Achill, "are all going freely" and "anyone can walk in off the open road and pray there".

He denied that either he or Ms Gallagher had threatened the demise of the state of Texas.

"Never at any point did she refer to the end of the world or receive anything from God about the end of the world," the priest told the *Irish Independent*.

He blamed tabloid newspapers for sensationalising the divine messages of the visionary and accused them of "wild inventiveness" and hype.



Far left: pilgrims gather at the House of Prayer, on Achill Island, Co Mayo, which was founded by Christina Gallagher (centre). Left: Fr Gerard McGinnity, the House of Prayer's spiritual director.

Fr McGinnity rejected suggestions that Ms Gallagher or he were in schism with the Church.

"I have always followed the Church's direction in every matter," he said.

He also cited a decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions in March 2009 that there should be no prosecution against the House of Prayer, following a Garda investigation over complaints by a number of people who had donated money to the Achill centre.

The DPP concluded that there was "nothing which warranted their attention in the House of Prayer," he said.

He said the House of Prayer's initial messages were to come back to confession and be reconciled to God.

He referred to "many young people" who had returned to the practise of

their faith as a result of the House of Prayer. He said: "That is the kind of fruitfulness that the Church is looking for."

Referring to more than 700 alleged healings with medical endorsements, he added: "The fruitfulness is there — all that the Church could look for in abundance as far as I am concerned."

He said everything had been recorded from the beginning so there is "nothing to fear" from a Church investigation.

"In fact, the healings are of such quality that we were very disappointed that they had never been properly investigated by the Church, although they were aware of them."

Fr McGinnity said Ms Gallagher had always been obedient to the Catholic Church.

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