

Friend Says Slain Priest Target of Other Attacks

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A Catholic priest found beaten to death Nov. 30 had been the target of at least two previous near-fatal attacks, including one at a home he established for recovering alcoholics, a Colorado priest told The Oklahoman.

The body of the Rev. Richard Frank Dolan, 66, was found at his apartment, 130 NW 17, as the apartment manager made a routine check of the complex.

Oklahoma City homicide Lt. Steve Upchurch said police have not made any arrests in the killing.

The Rev. Bill Groves of the St. Columba parish in Durango, Colo., said he and Dolan became friends in 1986 when Dolan served as an associate pastor at St. Francis Catholic Church in Pueblo, Colo.

"People came after him all the time, to kill him, to rob him I suppose," Groves said, referring to Dolan's work with alcoholics.

Groves said Dolan told him about the attack during which a man and a teen-age boy beat Dolan with a baseball bat, and tried to set Dolan on fire.

Groves said the attack occurred several years ago.

"I remember him telling me that they beat him on the head with the bat, and then threw gas on him. He said he escaped to a car when he threw his billfold down a hallway. Apparently, they were after money," Groves said in a telephone interview from Durango.

Dolan apparently knew his attackers, Groves said, because "he told me he trusted them, and that they were a middle-aged guy and a kid."

Groves said Dolan never filed a complaint in connection with the attack.

In 1977, a shotgun-wielding robber attacked Dolan and another man and got away with more than \$1,000, which included funds from a bingo game.

"Being a priest is not a protected position," Groves said.

"It's extremely vulnerable. You end up befriending these people, and you're called out in the middle of the night. Many priests and nuns are killed that way."

Upchurch said investigators have determined previous attacks Dolan was involved in are unrelated to his death.

"The only suspects we had have been eliminated," Upchurch said.

"However, we believe it was someone he knew. He may have had problems with people we didn't know about."

Dolan, a recovering alcoholic, was known in Oklahoma City for helping other alcoholics in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

In 1968, he established The Main Artery, 3501 NE 23, which was one of the few alcohol recovery programs at the time. BIOG: NAME:

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