News

A white man with brown hair wears a clerical collar. His hair is shorter on the sides and longer

Fr. Alex Crow, former parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Mobile, Ala., is pictured in an undated photo. The 30-year-old priest was publicly placed under restriction by the Mobile Archdiocese for walking away from his parish and reportedly leaving the country with a recent Catholic high school graduate for an exorcism. In a July 26 statement, the archdiocese announced Crow exhibited behavior "totally unbecoming of a priest." (OSV News photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Mobile)

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July 28, 2023

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The Mobile County District Attorney's office is asking the public for information about a young Alabama Catholic priest who was publicly placed under restriction by the Mobile Archdiocese for walking away from his parish and reportedly leaving the country with a recent Catholic high school graduate for an exorcism.

The Archdiocese of Mobile issued a July 26 statement announcing that Fr. Alex Crow, 30, who had been parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Mobile, "abandoned his assignment in the diocese" and exhibited behavior "totally unbecoming of a priest."

According to the statement, Mobile Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi told Crow that "he may no longer exercise ministry as a priest, nor to tell people he is a priest, nor to dress as a priest."

The archdiocese also said that "due to the circumstances of his departure, we have reported this to the district attorney."

Mobile County District Attorney communications director Tara Zieman confirmed to OSV News July 27 that her office had received from the archdiocese "an initial report ... of a local priest and a local 18-year-old who had left the country together."

"It was communicated to us that the 18-year-old was a woman," said Zieman, adding she could not "confirm where they went" or their current location.

"We are working with very little information," she said.

Asked by OSV News if other law enforcement agencies could become involved in the matter, Zieman said, "Potentially."

In a statement to OSV News, Mobile County District Attorney Keith Blackwood said, "We are awaiting more facts and encourage anyone with information to contact the DA's office."

Zieman told OSV News that at this time the DA's office has "no evidence or information that would give us the impression" the young woman is in danger or that criminal action has taken place.

No missing persons report has been filed for the young woman, she told OSV News.

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The Archdiocese of Mobile declined OSV News' request for additional information, saying in an email that "out of respect for the privacy of innocent parties, the archdiocese will offer no further comment."

Local media outlet Lagniappe reported the woman is a recent graduate of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School in Mobile, which Crow had attended from 2007-2011, and where he had previously served on staff. Lagniappe also said Crow -- alleged to have spoken about demonology to McGill-Toolen students -- may have traveled with

the young woman to Spain for an exorcism.

Ahead of his June 2021 priestly ordination, Crow admitted to previously experiencing his own struggles with faith in God. In an interview with the Archdiocese of Mobile's newspaper, The Catholic Week, Crow -- a Semmes, Alabama, native who had attended St. Ignatius Parish in Mobile -- said as a young man he had been "as far away from the church as one could be."

"Not only did I not live the Catholic faith, I wasn’t even sure if I believed in God. I have said jokingly before that my call to the priesthood is proof that God exists," he said at the time.

Crow was baptized as an Episcopalian and later joined the Presbyterian Church in America, according to a biography on a now-cached page from the Corpus Christi Parish website.

Following high school, Crow attended college from 2011-2012 before leaving to become a musician. He told The Catholic Week he had a sudden prompting one day to go to confession and about three months later began discerning a call to priesthood.

He had told The Catholic Week he hoped to use his own return to the faith "to help others find their way back" and that as priest he was "excited to offer the sacrifice of the Mass every day, hear confessions and provide spiritual direction."

Crow received a master of divinity degree from St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in Indiana and a bachelor’s degree in sacred theology from Collegio Sant'Anselmo in Rome, with a concentration in demonology and exorcism.

As a priest, Crow also appeared in several Catholic podcasts and videos, some of which dealt with the topic of demons. He was known to be a priest interested in also celebrating the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal, commonly called the "traditional Latin Mass."

OSV News requests for comment by McGill-Toolen school officials and by Fr. Pat Arensberg, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish, were not immediately returned.

Arensberg posted a message to the parish's Facebook page July 26, saying, "It is with great sadness that I announce that Fr. Crow has left the Archdiocese and is no longer the Parochial Vicar at Corpus Christi Parish. Please keep Fr. Crow in your

prayers. I also ask that you pray for me and for our parish as we adjust to this unexpected change."