

Catholic Dean held over child porn

by Philip Nettleton

The Roman Catholic Dean of Reading was arrested in a dawn raid today on suspicion of importing child pornography.

Father Michael O'Kelly was being questioned by Customs and Excise and police after he was arrested at his home at the English Martyrs Church in the town.

Officers took away videos, documents, computer equipment and CD roms for examination.

The 52-year-old dean is one of the most senior priests in the county and oversees the running of all Catholic churches in the town.

Father O'Kelly, who was ordained in 1982, took up his post in Reading four years ago after working as a missionary in Africa for eight years.

Father Crispian Hollis, the Bishop of Portsmouth and head of the diocese, said he was shocked by the arrest of the dean, who he described as "a larger than life character" who is "very committed to the Church" and "much loved".

He added: "I am appalled and saddened by the news of the arrest on charges relating to child pornography and the internet.

"My heart goes out particularly to the community of the parish of English Martyrs, where Father Michael is their priest. They will be devastated by the news and I hope to be with them to support them over the weekend.

"I would ask everyone to keep the community in their prayers, not forgetting, of course, Father Michael himself. This case is being dealt with in accordance with the Diocesan Child Protection Procedures and Father Michael is on administrative leave until it is resolved."

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