

# Priests forgiving after theft

## Man accused of posing as restaurant valet wasn't one after all

By Jennifer Baker • [jbaker@enquirer.com](mailto:jbaker@enquirer.com) • January 22, 2009

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**GLENDALE** - A 42-year-old Greenhills man might need to go to confession.

Chris J. Burnett was charged with driving a stolen church minivan after Glendale police say he lied to a priest by posing as a valet driver outside a restaurant and then took off in the vehicle.

"That is someone who has no fear of God at all," said Glendale Police Officer Sheldon Rox, who arrested Burnett.

Burnett is accused of approaching two priests and the father of one of the priests as they got out of a 2005 Chrysler minivan Tuesday night outside the Grand Finale restaurant. The vehicle belongs to Immaculate Conception Church rectory in Norwood.

The Rev. William Jenkins, Immaculate Conception pastor, drove to Grand Finale for dinner with his associate pastor, the Rev. Joseph Greenwell, and Jenkins' father, who is in his 80s.



The Enquirer/Ernest Coleman

**The Rev. Joseph Greenwell is happy to have the church's minivan back after a man posing as a valet took it for a spin. Police in Glendale arrested a suspect and recovered the vehicle.**

Jenkins, 58, got out to help his father from the passenger seat. Greenwell got out of the back seat and went behind the steering wheel to park the van.

That's when they say Burnett approached both men and asked several times to park the car. Both kept turning him down, but Burnett persisted and offered to do it for free.

"I said, 'Oh, it's free, OK,'" Greenwell, 47, recalled Wednesday. "We thought he was the valet because he was standing outside."

Greenwell handed over the keys. But as the priests walked into the restaurant, Jenkins asked Greenwell: "Do you think it's a good idea?"

No, as it turned out. When dinner was over and the trio returned for their van, the valet was nowhere to be found. Employees told the priests that the restaurant didn't have one.

"We should have looked for a uniform and should have asked if there was valet service at the place," Greenwell said.

Police pulled Burnett over as he drove the van on Sharon and Southland roads.

He denied stealing it, saying a woman at a local tavern where he had been drinking earlier in the night told him that he could drive it, police said. They didn't buy the story.

Burnett, who was released from jail because of overcrowding, pleaded not guilty Wednesday to a charge of receiving stolen property in Hamilton County Municipal Court. He declined comment.

The van was undamaged and returned to the priests. They also received an apology from Burnett at the Glendale police station.

"He said he made some bad judgments and apologized several times," Greenwell said. "He said that he is working on getting help from his church."

The priests forgive Burnett and only want what's best for him, Greenwell said.

"We have our faults, too, and if we want our Lord to forgive us, we need to forgive others."

*Staff writer Sharon Coolidge contributed to this report*