



DIE-HARD FOLLOWERS: Pilgrims at the House of Prayer, Achill Island, Co. Mayo recently. Right, Christina Gallagher, who is lying low since Sunday World exposed the church

Former members seek legal help to get donations back

By JACK GLEESON

GARDAI have launched an official probe into huge cash donations made by devotees to the controversial House of Prayer on Achill Island.

Detectives are planning to interview key figures involved in the church and have already quizzed former members about a number of large donations.

The investigation follows Sunday World's exclusive revelations that self-proclaimed visionary and founder of the House of Prayer, Christina Gallagher, is living a life of luxury in a 64-million mansion.

The House of Prayer is also facing more criticism from pilgrims around the country. Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Michael Neary, will distribute a letter to all parishes warning Catholics that the Archbishop of Tuam doesn't approve of the centre on Achill.

Warned

The statement will be sent out in the coming weeks and each parish will decide whether to read it from the altar or publish it in church newsletters.

Former leading member of the House of Prayer, Michael McCoy, said members were now coming forward with even more allegations about Christina Gallagher.

"The good people of Achill Island warned me repeatedly about her years ago but I was hard-headed and wouldn't listen," he said.

"Now I urge others not to be intimidated."

"It is time for the laymen of followers and donors who, like me, have seen the light - and I know of so many that need to - come

COPS PROBE HOUSE OF PRAYER CASH



LETTER: Archbishop Neary



DISCREPANCY: Christina's mansion in Mayo (left) and Dublin (right). Inset, former leading member Michael McCoy



EXPENSIVE: Christina Gallagher in her 7-seater BMW

forward."

McCoy says members who made large donations have now sought legal representation in an effort to get their cash back.

He claims some have made donations totalling €200,000 made up of individual cheques for as much as €50,000.

"Some have donated hun-

dra of thousands of dollars and some, maybe even millions. Our call now is, 'we want our money back'."

"I'm sure people will find a sympathetic ear if they call the Tuam Archbishop's office in Galway with their story."

The House of Prayer's publicity shy founder, Gallagher, is coming under

increasing pressure following revelations about her wealth in Sunday World.

We revealed how the woman who claims she has no interest in material wealth scored into an Italian style mansion set in 12 acres in Malahide two years ago.

Exposed

Followers were also stunned when we exposed how Gallagher, who doesn't work, had splashed out on nearly €1 million on another mansion outside Enniscorthy where her daughter Mary lives.

The bar will not explain how the funds for her lavish lifestyle which includes a top-of-the-range seven series BMW worth at

least €150,000.

Michael McCoy said followers were now questioning where the money used to fund her apparent luxury lifestyle had come from.

"If we are to judge only by what we can see - her jewellery, clothes, cars, sumptuous meals, houses, cars, jewelry, second houses, artwork, furniture and accessories - we would have to conclude that here is a woman who has gone from rags to riches double quick," he said.

"There is no evidence of a single life on her part, yet many of her followers who do lead a simple life are the ones who have sacrificed and donated to her cause."

McCoy told Sunday World yesterday that sever-

al members had defected and those who have donated large amounts could join the legal battle to get their money back.

"We have some people who already have representation," he said.

Several members have abandoned the church since our revelations despite constant denial and attacks on this newspaper from die-hard followers.

Rise

Gallagher's astonishing rise from being an ordinary housewife and mother-of-two began when she claimed she was receiving regular messages from God two decades ago.

She later added that she had developed the stigmata wounds of Christ - a claim corroborated by church officials.

A spokesperson for Archbishop Neary said a commission set up to investigate the stigmata "found no evidence to substantiate any supernatural happening."

The House of Prayer has fallen from favour since it was opened in 1991. The Church initially backed it because it was believed it would be used as a place of minor first priority to pray.

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