

King Marchers Convicted

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

Fr. James Markunas of St. Joseph's Episcopal Church has been convicted of illegally marching last April during the so-called "emergency" following Martin Luther King's assassination. (See Fifth Estate, April 16-30, 1968.)

Markunas was arrested April 7, 1968 with 107 others while attempting to march to the Royal Oak City Hall in memory of Dr. King. A ban had been put on all gatherings of over three people by then Gov. Romney.

Markunas was found guilty by Oakland County Circuit Judge William R. Beasley and will face sentencing on April 15. He could receive a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and a \$100 fine.

Markunas was found guilty in May of the charge in Royal Oak Municipal Court, but had appealed the judge's decision to the Circuit Court. His attorney James Lafferty said he will appeal the case further. The basis of the appeal will be that the ban was unconstitutional in nature.

Markunas testified that he went ahead on the march even though he realized he might face arrest.

"I did it for religious reasons," the priest said. "I consider the march as part of an extension of my prayers in church. As a priest it is my responsibility to bring us all around to being more human in our relations to one another. This was one way to do it."

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor John J. Davey said there was a practical need for restraint on assembly in the civil unrest following King's murder.

"When somebody like Fr. Markunas does something like this, it erodes the credibility of our system," Davey said, "Our whole democratic system is based on voluntary obedience to law."

A very nice statement by Davey except that there was no real emergency besides the one created by armed carloads of police riding around the city, a ridiculous and capricious curfew, and a curtailment of all civil liberties.

If Davey and other pigs think folks are going to sit by while politicians try to enforce a police state, they are crazy.

Attorney Lafferty said the trial was the first testing of the governor's proclamation and that others were pending in Detroit Recorders' Court.



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