

Priest arrested for baby milk 'scam'

Queenstown cleric claims formula sold to raise funds for church

By **BONGANI FUZILE**
Crime Reporter

POLICE have arrested a 67-year-old Catholic priest at his Queenstown church mission for allegedly selling baby formula meant to be given out free to underprivileged children.

The priest, who cannot be named as he hasn't yet appeared in court, was arrested yesterday afternoon as a number of people were buying the milk.

One of the customers, Nontsapho Tshaya, said she was frightened as about five police officers had questioned her.

"I am coming from a village and I didn't know that this was illegal. Am I to be arrested? I am scared," she said.

Police didn't arrest her but took the milk that she had just bought from the church.

"I've been buying here for the past three years. I won't come back," she said.

Another customer, Bukelwa Nobaza, demanded her money back as police confiscated her milk. "I spent my money on this milk, and if you are taking it bring back my money," she said in vain, as police told her to go home.

Queenstown police spokesperson Warrant Officer Namhla Mdleleni confirmed the arrest and said police were busy with their investigations.

"We can confirm the arrest of a 67-year-old father from the Roman Catholic Church. He will be charged with dealing and possession of suspected stolen baby formula," said Mdleleni.

The police, together with the Eastern Cape Health Department, received information that the church was selling the milk to people in and around Queenstown.

Police and department officials set up a trap and bought a tin of milk from the church for R35.

Yesterday, the priest, who was with a few members of his congregation, was surprised when he saw members of the media, together with police and health officials, enter his house.

"What is happening," he asked, visibly shaken and shocked. "That is enough now, don't take more of my pictures. What is happening," he asked a Daily Dispatch photographer.

Police told him why they were there and he led them to a back



NOT MEANT FOR SALE: Detective Constable Lefty Coetzee of the Queenstown police with infant milk formula seized from St Theresa's Catholic Church yesterday afternoon. Picture: MLONDLOZI MBULO

room in the church mission where more than 1 400 400g tins of baby formula were found neatly packed. Near them was a cash till with cash in it.

Police confiscated the milk, which filled two police vans, and the money was also counted and taken by police.

The priest said he didn't know what he was doing was illegal.

"I have been doing this for the past 24 years. My predecessor also sold the same milk and we are doing this as part of fundraising for the church. I am shocked,

I didn't know it was illegal," he said.

Health spokesperson Siyanda Manana said they were shocked to learn people were selling the formula, which is intended to be given to the poor for free. "Worst of all, this is happening on church premises. We are shocked by this and want to send a clear message that this is not going to be tolerated. Those involved will be arrested," said Manana.

Manana stressed the milk, from Nestlé, was not for resale. "This milk, which is sold here at

a discount, is really not for sale. They are selling it for R35. Nestlé was dismayed to hear this, but it will be thoroughly investigated," said Manana.

Asked if are there were any health officials involved, Manana said the department did not know at this stage.

"Police are working hard to get those who are behind this."

The priest confessed that other Catholic churches - in Lady Frere, Cofimvaba and Dutywa - were also selling the milk. — bonganif@dispatch.co.za

'Jesus problem' helps solve 'unsolvable' maths mystery

A RECLUSIVE Russian maths genius who solved one of the world's most perplexing maths problems said in a rare interview yesterday that he began his training by figuring out how Jesus walked on water.

Grigory Perelman shot to international fame by solving the

circulation Komsomolskaya Pravda daily that his grammar school class never encountered

an "unsolvable" problem but faced a tricky one when

asked to solve the biblical mystery of how Jesus managed to walk on water.

"I had to solve how fast he had to be walking across the water in order

