

The Miami Herald

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

Miami Murder Trial Has Satanic Twist

A former adherent to the Church of Satan came to trial after picking jurors who said they could put his religious past aside.

BY SUSANNAH NESMITH
snesmith@MiamiHerald.com

MIAMI—The judge asked the potential jurors whether any had ever been the victim of a crime. The prosecutor asked them questions about what kind of evidence each would expect him to present.

And the defendant, well, he asked about Satan.

Lazaro Galindo, accused of second-degree murder, is representing himself. As recently as last week, he'd said he was a member of the Church of Satan and even insisted he be allowed to wear special Satanic garb—a cap and jewelry—during his trial.

On Monday, the judge asked Galindo about the Satan issue before the potential jurors were brought in and Galindo responded that it needn't come up.

"I gave myself to God not too long ago," he said.

But Assistant State Attorney Herbert E. Walker III warned that he planned to bring up Satan.

After court, he explained that he is planning to present a Miami-Dade police sergeant who will testify that after he was arrested, Galindo told him he had "an insatiable desire to eat human flesh."

Walker said he also plans to show the jury certain passages from the Satanic Bible, including one that refers to human sacrifice. Galindo was planning to keep the Satanic Bible with him at the defense table but apparently changed his mind when he converted to God sometime over the weekend.

When it came time to pick a jury Monday afternoon, Galindo was the one to ask if the jurors would be able to put aside any uneasiness they might have about the Prince of Darkness and judge the case solely on the facts presented.

After some hemming and hawing, everyone said they could.

Galindo persuaded the judge to send one man home because he had said he was a Seventh Day Adventist who couldn't judge anyone because he has forgiven everyone.

"He seemed to be very deeply grounded in his faith, Your Honor," Galindo said.

"Doesn't that help you?" Circuit Judge Peter Adrien asked.

"I just don't think we're on the same page," Galindo replied.

Galindo is charged with stabbing and beating Argelio Gonzalez to death in 2000. Gonzalez's body was discovered in a Brownsville park after children saw a leg that had been cut off the body. Gonzalez was missing all of his fingers.

Galindo and Gonzalez loved the same woman, Walker said.

Galindo has fired a series of attorneys since his arrest several days after Gonzalez's body was identified. He finally decided to represent himself, with attorney Tom Cobitz standing by to advise him on the law.

Cobitz said Galindo has called several doctors who treated him after he was arrested to testify on his behalf. He believes they will bolster his claim that police beat him until he confessed to a crime he now says he didn't

commit. Walker has pictures he plans to show the jury of Galindo after the confession, showing police where he put the murder weapon.

On Monday, Galindo denied having any mental problems but said he was taking medication to control flashbacks from when he used LSD.

