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Pope Francis accepted the resignation of a Brazilian bishop who was arrested and charged with embezzling thousands of dollars in diocesan funds.

In March, Bishop Jose Ronaldo Ribeiro of Formosa was arrested and charged, along with four diocesan priests, with stealing about $606,000 of diocesan money.

The Vatican also announced Sept. 12 that Archbishop Paulo Mendes Peixoto of Uberaba will continue to serve as apostolic administrator of the diocese. The archbishop was first named apostolic administrator by the pope March 21, two days after Ribeiro's arrest.

Prosecutors in the state of Goias allege Ribeiro and the four priests purchased a cattle ranch and a lottery store with the diverted money. The courts authorized prosecutors to wiretap the telephones of the accused.

Officials also issued warrants and searched the bishop's home where they found money hidden in a secret compartment in a closet.

Douglas Chegury, the lead prosecutor of the case, told Brazilian journalists at the time of the arrest that Ribeiro also was suspected of stealing from parishioners in another diocese, in the state of Minas Gerais, where he served from 2007 to 2014.

"The bishop faced this same type of problem in the Diocese of Janauba. He was transferred from there to here, where he implemented a similar scheme," Chegury was quoted as saying by G1 news site.

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Prosecutors also were investigating allegations that priests paid Ribeiro monthly "allowances" so that they could be placed in more profitable parishes.

On March 20, the Brazilian bishops' conference issued a statement expressing solidarity with the parishioners of the Formosa Diocese.

The statement said the bishops reminded Ribeiro "that justice is to abandon oneself to the merciful will of God. The truth of the facts must be determined with justice and transparency, for the good of the individual church and the bishop."