News



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Authorities have arrested a 56-year-old priest from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia who is facing accusations that he stole more than $98,000 from a parish and used some of it to finance what the archdiocese says were "personal expenses of an inappropriate nature."

The Chester County District Attorney's office announced in an Aug. 21 news release the arrest of Msgr. Joseph McLoone, the former pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Downingtown, Pennsylvania, whom it accuses of stealing $98,405 to fund a "a beach house, travel, dining and spending on adult men with whom he maintained sexual relationships." He is charged with "theft by unlawful taking and related offenses," the district attorney's office said in the release.

"Fr. McLoone accomplished this theft by diverting parish funds into a secret account, misappropriating fees charged to parishioners and other fraudulent activity," said

Chester County officials.

In detailing his actions, they said the priest opened an account called the "St. Joseph Activity Account" and for six years allegedly funneled to it special collections, fees for weddings and funerals, and other donations that were meant for the parish. He also allegedly took "the entirety of the All Souls' collection each year" and would "convert checks" to himself and "others within the parish," the district attorney's office said.

In a statement, the archdiocese said it does not believe "Sunday collections, contributions to the parish capital campaign, or school and PREP tuition fees" were deposited into it.

"In early 2018," the statement said, "it came to the attention of archdiocesan administration that McLoone had established a bank account in the name of the parish that was not on the parish books." The archdiocese then froze the account.

After questioning him, he acknowledged that he had spent some of the funds on "personal expenses of an inappropriate nature."

"Those expenses were related to relationships with adults that represented a violation of 'The Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries' established by the archdiocese. None of this activity involved other members of the St. Joseph Parish community," the archdiocese said.

He later tendered his resignation and a new pastor was appointed to St. Joseph in August 2018. Of the arrest made a year later, the archdiocese said the charges "are serious and disturbing," and said it would continue to cooperate with authorities.

"Pending the outcome, Msgr. McLoone remains on administrative leave," the statement said.

The Chester Country news release said McLoone would use the money in the account and pay his personal credit cards and made "thousands of dollars in payments directly to men with whom he maintained relationships."

Chester County's District Attorney Chief of Staff Charles Gaza said McLoone held a position of leadership and "his parishioners trusted him to properly handle their generous donations to the church," and in turn, he "violated the trust of the members of St. Joseph's for his own personal gain."

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