News



The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is seen in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 6, 2025. (OSV News/Patrick Stoops)

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November 9, 2025

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A former director of stewardship and development for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri, has been arrested and charged with theft, with federal prosecutors alleging he stole more than $150,000 using his diocesan credit card.

Court documents show that a grand jury indicted 44-year-old Jeremy Lillig Oct. 29 on one count of wire fraud for the offenses, which were reported to have taken place from 2017 to about March 2021.

Lillig had worked for the diocese until October 2023 as director of the Bright Futures Fund, an independent nonprofit within the diocese providing tuition for three Catholic schools in Kansas City that operate independently of parishes and depend exclusively on private donations.

Lillig was arrested and arraigned Nov. 4. He pleaded not guilty and was released on his own recognizance. His trial — which will take place in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri, located in Kansas City — is scheduled for March 16, 2026.

If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment, a $250,000 fine and three years' supervised release.

In a Nov. 5 letter to the faithful, Bishop James Johnston Jr. of Kansas City-St. Joseph said he was "shocked to learn of such a gross violation of the trust and integrity that is essential to any institution, especially one upheld by Catholic teachings."

The diocese "became aware of Mr. Lillig's potentially criminal financial activity shortly after his departure," and had "promptly reported" the matter "to local law enforcement and the FBI," he said.

"Importantly, the FBI has assured us that their investigation did not find any individual donor funds which were diverted prior to secure deposit into the Bright Futures Fund," the bishop stressed.

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He said the diocese has "cooperated fully with law enforcement's investigation," with "all financial records ... provided to the FBI's forensic accountant for review."

According to the indictment, Lillig used a diocesan-issued credit card to access grant money provided to the Bright Futures Fund in 2017 by the Kauffman Foundation for "emergency expenses and assistance."

With his diocesan credit card, Lillig allegedly purchased and activated 436 Visa gift cards totaling $155,050 from 2017 to 2021, claiming the cards were for legitimate purposes.

The indictment said he falsified his monthly expense reports regarding the diocesan credit card charges, while utilizing the Visa gift cards "for his own personal benefit and for the benefit of others."

In his letter, Johnston said that "a full audit was completed" by the diocese "to identify the extent and circumstances of any malfeasance," a review that "included a full financial audit from an expert third-party firm, RSM."

Johnston also noted the amount of the funds allegedly stolen by Lillig "is within the range of what is covered by insurance."

The bishop said that the Bright Futures Fund — established in 2012 as a successor to the Central Cities School Fund — had seen growth that resulted in "more diverse and material" transactions.

He said that effective December 2023, he had ordered the fund to "be governed by standard diocesan policy as it relates to the management of funds."

Specifically, said Johnston, the fund's accounting and donor tracking has been fully integrated into the diocesan system, with regular oversight by the diocesan finance office.

Annual audits of the fund by the third-party RSM firm have been "strengthened," with the diocesan finance officer now attending the fund's board meetings, he said. The bishop added that the fund's building projects have also been "integrated into the diocesan processes."