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Probation for Chicago priest-thief

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

A Roman Catholic priest was sentenced today to four years of probation for stealing \$40,000 from his former North Side parish.

From July 2001 to just prior to his removal from St. Ita's Church in Edgewater in August 2005, the Rev. Steve Patte, 65, issued checks and wired money to his personal accounts as reimbursement for expenditures that never occurred, according to Cook County prosecutors.

They said Patte used the money to pay for: vacations to California; laptops and computer accessories; massages and personal training sessions; and other personal expenses.

Patte ? who originally had faced charges of theft, wire fraud, money laundering and continuing a financial crimes enterprise ? left St. Ita's in 2006 when he was reassigned to St. Emily Parish in Mount Prospect. By the time he left St. Ita's, the church, which previously had a budget surplus, faced debts totaling \$400,000, prosecutors said.

Patte was so busy taking the money for his personal use that he neglected the church, according to Podlasek, who said the priest also disbanded the church finance committee so he could continue the scheme.

Archdiocese of Chicago officials weren't immediately available for comment this afternoon.

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