

Millionaire priest dies in squalor, relatives to inherit \$

Tom Gallagher | Mar. 9, 2010 NCR Today

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In a strange, but apparently true, story, a Wheeling-Charleston, W.Va., diocesan priest, died while living in "appalling" conditions without a will, [according to this story](#) [1].

"Twelve brothers and sisters in Poland will soon receive about \$150,000 each from the estate of a Kanawha County priest who lived like a pauper, despite having nearly \$2 million stashed away in cash and investments.

For nearly three years, Chief Tax Deputy Allen Bleigh and members of the tax department have been investigating the estate of Fr. Anthony Wojtus. Following his death in 2007, the millionaire priest was discovered to have been living in squalor.

Wojtus left no will or known family members. The county was appointed as estate administrator shortly after the priest's death, leaving officials with the job of tracking down next of kin."

The story goes on: "Wojtus was a retired member of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese. Diocesan priests are not required to take a vow of poverty, said Father Anthony Cincinnati, the Episcopal vicar for clergy. But priests are supposed to live simple lives, he said "His wealth was certainly unusual," Cincinnati said. "Most priests do not have those kinds of resources, at least to my knowledge."

So many questions arise from this story, e.g., How could the diocese not know of the living conditions of this priest? Isn't this priest connected to a deanery? How many priests lack wills and living wills? A best-practice is for priests to be required by dioceses to fill out an asset-liability financial disclosure form and keep it updated annually for a host of reasons, not the least of which is to have a layer of defense against embezzlement charges. Perhaps the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston needs a new Vicar for Clergy and a new person overseeing the deanery responsible for this particular priest.

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