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# Buffalo pastor admits theft of $213,000 from parish

Tom Gallagher | Jul. 17, 2009 NCR Today

A Buffalo pastor, now retired, has admitted in court that he stole $213,000 from his last parish. He has, apparently, escaped jail time by paying it all back. Here's the story from *The Buffalo News*:

> For a diocesan priest who made $20,000 a year for most of his career, the Rev. F. Norman Sullivan lived pretty well.
>
> He owns a home on nine acres of wooded land in Colden, a condominium at the Estero Beach & Tennis Club in Fort Myers, Fla., and another condo in the U. S. Virgin Islands.
>
> And on Thursday, when he pleaded guilty to stealing $213,732 from Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Cheektowaga ? including taking money out of the collection plate?he avoided a prison term by repaying every cent of his theft.
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> Because he repaid the money he stole, including a last check for $94,619.88 on Thursday, Buscaglia said he had agreed to impose five years' probation on Sullivan when he returns for sentencing Oct. 5.

Prosecutors got onto the case with two anonymous tips. The story details how Sullivan skimmed the money and how he got way with it and then adds some Buffalo church history:

> The thefts are believed to be the largest from the Diocese of Buffalo since Anthony F. Franjoine, who as diocesan comptroller stole $1.4 million in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
>
> Franjoine was sentenced to 2 to 8 years in prison for his thefts. Doscher also was the prosecutor in that case.

It's interesting that the Buffalo diocesan lay employee-thief, Franjoine, gets 2-8 years in prison, and Fr. Sullivan gets probation. How did the priest come up with $213,000 to pay-off his theft? Since the priest is retired, the diocese apparently has no ability to discipline the priest, and of course, he remains a priest in good standing with the diocese.

Further, it's interesting to note that the diocese's and the parish's internal controls were non-existent and when tipped off, the diocese's own investigation was dramatically insufficient.

And the beat goes on...

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