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Philadelphia employee charged with stealing \$900,000 from archdiocese

by Catholic News Service

PHILADELPHIA -- Anita Guzzardi, former chief financial officer of the Philadelphia Archdiocese, turned herself into Philadelphia police March 13 after she was charged with theft, forgery and unlawful use of a computer.

Guzzardi, 43, is believed to have embezzled more than \$900,000 from the archdiocese's general operating fund to pay her own gambling debts and credit card bills before she was fired in July 2011.

In a March 13 statement, the archdiocese said insurance had covered the loss of the embezzled funds and part of the costs of an internal investigation.

"Donations to the 'Heritage of Faith -- Vision of Hope' capital campaign and the annual Catholic Charities Appeal were not impacted," the statement said. "The theft had no effect on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission or the decision to close or regionalize any school."

The district attorney's office said Guzzardi had returned \$150,000 to the archdiocese.

In a Feb. 3 column in *The Catholic Standard & Times*, the archdiocesan newspaper, Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput said, "People are angry about this loss, and they're right. So am I."

He said nonprofit organizations "tend to draw mission-driven people as staff" and most of their employees are honest. But "in a work environment based on shared beliefs and service, a dishonest person can do massive damage," he added.

Chaput said he ordered "a comprehensive legal and financial review of archdiocesan operations" by

outside experts and that "new and much more rigorous internal controls" would be put in place this year.

"Protections are already in effect to help prevent this kind of damaging criminal activity in the future," he added. "I do promise that every aspect of our shared life as a church will be subject in the years ahead to the kind of clarity, greater accountability and careful stewardship our people deserve."

Meanwhile, an accounting clerk in the Department of Education Finance Office in the Archdiocese of New York entered a not-guilty plea March 1 to charges of grand larceny, falsifying business records and forgery.

Anita Collins, 67, has been held at Rikers Island since her Jan. 30 arrest. She is accused of embezzling more than \$1 million and is due back in court April 19.

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