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Va. pastor to serve time for embezzlement

by Dennis Coday

LOUISA, Va. ? Fr. Rodney L. Rodis, a suspended priest of the Diocese of Richmond, was sentenced Jan. 14 to 13 years in state prison for embezzling funds from two parishes he served as pastor.

He will serve the sentence, handed down by Judge Timothy K. Sanner of the Louisa County Circuit Court, after he completes a 63-month term in federal prison.

He received the federal sentence in February 2008 for pleading guilty to the embezzlement scheme; he was charged with several counts of money laundering and mail fraud. At that time the former pastor also was ordered to pay \$591,484 in restitution.

According to a report by The Associated Press, many of his former parishioners were not happy with the federal sentence and wanted him prosecuted by the state. In October 2008 a Louisa court jury convicted the former pastor on 10 counts of embezzlement.

At the Jan. 14 sentencing hearing, Sanner sentenced him to a maximum term of 200 years, then suspended all but 13 years.

A native of the Philippines, Father Rodis embezzled the money when he was pastor of St. Jude Parish in Mineral and Immaculate Conception Parish in Bumpass.

Now 52, he retired in 2006 for health reasons. He has prostate cancer and also suffered a stroke. The embezzlement scheme was discovered not long after he retired. Officials said he directed parishioners to send contributions to a post office box. He set up parish bank accounts for those funds, then transferred the money to his own account.

He cannot call himself a priest or administer the sacraments. His retirement and health benefits were cut

off by the Richmond Diocese, which also initiated the as-yet-uncompleted process to have the Vatican laicize him.

According to diocesan records, he was ordained in 1985 in the Philippines, but was secretly married there two years later, in 1987. Father Rodis became administrator of the two Virginia parishes in 1993 and was named pastor a year later.

While pastoring the Virginia parishes, unbeknownst to his parishioners or the diocese, he lived with his wife and three daughters in Fredericksburg, 50 miles from the churches, in the Diocese of Arlington. According to the AP, his wife and children now live in New Mexico.

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