

Hartford archdiocesan priest arrested on charges he stole parish funds

HARTFORD, Conn. - Hartford archdiocesan officials said they were “deeply saddened” by the “profound effect” on a Waterbury parish of the July 6 arrest of its former pastor on charges he stole \$1.3 million of the church’s money over a seven-year period.

Police said Father Kevin J. Gray, a Hartford archdiocesan priest, used the stolen funds to hire male escorts, buy designer clothing, stay in fancy hotels and dine in expensive restaurants during trips to New York City and Boston.

The priest, 64, was charged with first-degree larceny and arraigned in Waterbury Superior Court. According to court documents, he was being held on a \$750,000 bond and faced a July 21 court date to enter a plea.

Father Gray was pastor of Sacred Heart/Sagrado Corazon Parish from 2003 until April 15 of this year, when the archdiocese put him on medical leave because he said he was suffering from cancer. He was later suspended from priestly ministry.

The priest has since admitted he does not have cancer.

According to an Associated Press story, archdiocesan officials asked the police to launch an investigation following a review of the parish finances that indicated Father Gray might have stolen more than \$1 million for his own expenses. AP reported that the money came from a parish savings account and that he also took money that was meant for paying the parish’s bills, including insurance premiums.

The Hartford Archdiocese said in a statement that on a financial level, it “continues to work with the parish to improve its financial controls and to address issues arising from the situation such as insurance coverage and outstanding indebtedness.”

“At the spiritual level, we continue to pray for healing and consolation for the parish

family as it moves forward, and for guidance and reconciliation for Father Gray as he encounters the legal proceedings that await him," it said.

The AP quoted Capt. Christopher Corbett of the Waterbury Police Department as saying that until the investigation, Father Gray "had an excellent reputation," but was obviously "leading a double life."

The news agency said that according to his arrest records, the priest was the only one at the church with access to its financial records and there was no committee or council with financial oversight.