

# **More than \$600,000 stolen from Des Moines Diocese in bank-related fraud**

DES MOINES, Iowa - Thieves electronically stole more than \$600,000 from a Diocese of Des Moines bank account on two days in August, the diocese and the bank involved said.

As of Sept. 2, \$202,000 had been recovered by the bank, according to Anne Marie Cox, director of communications for the diocese.

The theft occurred Aug. 13 and 16 after thieves illegally obtained information on the diocesan accounts at Bankers Trust and electronically transferred funds to “numerous recipients” across the United States, the diocese said in a statement Aug. 26.

Bankers Trust reported the transfers to the diocese Aug. 17 and diocesan financial officials immediately asked the bank to close the targeted accounts, Cox told Catholic News Service.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating the thefts. As part of its probe, FBI agents took several diocesan computers.

The diocese is cooperating with federal agents, Cox said. She declined further comment Sept. 2, citing the ongoing investigation.

The diocese’s statement said law enforcement officials believe the thieves are part of “a highly sophisticated operation, most likely based overseas.”

“No diocesan or bank staff is suspected” of involvement in the theft, the diocese said.

Des Moines Bishop Richard E. Pates said in the statement that the loss is covered by insurance.

“We have been advised that such criminal activity is rampant,” he said. “We trust, however, that legal authorities are doing all they can to investigate this matter.”

A spokesman for Bankers Trust, which identifies itself on its website as the largest locally owned bank in Iowa, could not be reached for comment.