

Priest indicted for embezzlement denies he is married

By the Associated Press, The Daily Press (VA), January 14 2007

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. -- A priest suspected of stealing more than \$600,000 from two churches denies accusations in court documents that he was living a double life as a family man in a neighboring county.

The Rev. Rodney L. Rodis, 50, acknowledged that there is a woman and three girls that live at the home, but denied he was married and declined to comment if the children were his daughters, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Sunday. Rodis also said the woman he lives with knew he was a Catholic priest.

Rodis was indicted Monday on a felony embezzlement charge. A document included in papers committing Rodis to jail listed him as living with a wife and three children in Fredericksburg. It wasn't clear from the documents whether Rodis is the children's father.

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond was surprised to hear about Rodis' living arrangements, diocese lawyer William Etherington said, as were neighbors in the subdivision where the family had lived in a two-story brick home for at least eight years.

Neighbors said Rodis--who lived with a woman he referred to as his wife and a daughter about 20, one in her early teens and another as young as 5--told them he was in the import-export business. They said he often was gone for days or weeks at a time.

The Spotsylvania County real estate assessment Web site lists Joyce Sillador as owner of the house, and neighbors said Rodis' wife's name was Joyce.

No one answered the phone at a number listed for the address.

The Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo, bishop of the Richmond Diocese, already has suspended Rodis' faculties, meaning Rodis is not allowed to represent the diocese or perform priestly duties.

Rodis, a Philippine citizen, was pastor at St. Jude Catholic Church in Mineral and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Bumpass, both in Louisa County, until May, when he retired due to health problems.

An investigation began in November after church officials found that a donation to the parishes had not been recorded. Rodis allegedly set up a separate church bank account, where he funneled some donation money from September 2001 through October 2006, Etherington said.

Rodis appeared in Louisa General District Court on Thursday, when he agreed to surrender his passport as part of an agreement in which his bond was reduced from \$100,000 to \$10,000.

He is scheduled to appear in court again on Thursday. If convicted, he could face up to 20 years in prison.

Rodis was ordained a priest in the Philippines in 1986 and has been living in the United States since 1991.

After coming to the Richmond diocese, Rodis served as parochial vicar at St. Mark Catholic Church in Virginia Beach for one year and then chaplain at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News for a year before going to St. Jude and Immaculate Conception, parishes he had led since 1993.