



*St. William the Abbot*  
Roman Catholic Church

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July 13, 2022

Dear Saint William the Abbot Family –

It has been an incredible gift for me to serve as your pastor for three years now, and in our time together we have navigated amazing joys, and also difficult challenges. Your openness, spirit of generosity, willingness to be present, and witness to faith have blown me away since I first arrived. It is in that same spirit of openness that I wanted to share some unpleasant and unsettling news with you.

Last December, while reviewing our budget, we became aware of what appeared to us to be irregularities in our end-of-year expenditures. After an internal investigation, we discovered unsubstantiated charges of hours worked by a part-time lay employee that were being approved by their direct supervisor, a full-time lay employee. Ultimately, it was decided that these employees could no longer work for St. William's, and both were terminated.

After these terminations, other information came to our attention prompting us to conduct a broader inquiry into the matter. Unfortunately, we uncovered more irregularities, which I immediately reported to the Nassau County Police Department. We have been cooperating with the Nassau County PD Fraud and Forgery Unit, which has conducted a full investigation into these matters, and, today (July 13, 2022), arrested and charged our former employee with grand larceny.

It is important that you know that these charges are in no way connected with the collection, counting, or depositing of money nor are they associated with any money or accounts for St. William the Abbot School. The charges involve vendor billings, subsequent payment of those billings, and other accounting irregularities that were not readily apparent to our professional accountants. This experience prompted us to immediately re-evaluate our core policies and procedures to prevent a situation like this from happening again.

In discussion with our parish trustees, we also hired an outside forensic accountant to be sure that we had an independent set of eyes looking over these matters. In addition, we are reviewing our insurance coverage to determine the possibility of a recovery of these losses. We will update the parish as information becomes available.

Since this is an active case, this is all the information I can share with you at this point. I know it's natural to want to discuss this with your friends and neighbors, but I ask you to not pay heed to any rumors that may circulate at a time like this. My promise to you is to remain transparent and keep you updated as the situation progresses.

I am grateful to Nassau County District Attorney Anne T. Donnelly and her team for their professionalism and the seriousness with which they investigated this matter in order to help the church and to the Nassau County Fraud and Forgery Unit for their extraordinary work and communication with the parish as the case developed.

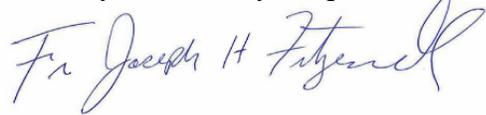
No pastor ever wants to come before his people with news like this, and I want you to know how seriously I take my role and responsibilities as pastor of St. William's and in the spiritual and temporal responsibilities that go along with it. I hope you know how much I love this parish and all of you. I am so grateful for all of you and thank you for your patience as we journey through this difficult time together.

We are a people of hope, compassion, mercy, and as today's Psalm reading reminds us – trust – ***“the Lord will not abandon His people”***. We know that the Lord gave us a strict command to love our neighbor and to forgive our enemies. This can be difficult at times, but I ask everyone in the parish to pray for those charged in this matter. By doing so we will communicate to all that we truly are a Catholic family of St. William, and that we practice what we preach – and we follow what Jesus directed us to do – to go and do likewise.

For 95 years we have existed as a parish community, and even through the effects of a global pandemic, we have continued to do wonderful work for our Lord Jesus in building up our faith here on the South Shore of Long Island. God has blessed us abundantly as a parish and we must never become discouraged or lose hope in the Lord or the church, even when trouble comes.

Please keep our parish community and all those working on this matter in your prayers.

Thank you, and may the peace of Christ be with you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Joseph H. Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "F".

Rev. Joseph H. Fitzgerald  
Pastor