



In this June 1, 2017 file photo, the Rev. Jonathan Wehrle appears in court for a preliminary hearing over embezzlement allegations at the 55th District Court in Mason, Mich. An auction is underway near Lansing at the mansion of Wehrle, a Catholic priest who was accused of embezzling millions of dollars before he died while awaiting trial. There are nearly 1,000 items for sale Saturday, Aug. 29, 2020 including about 100 pieces of furniture from the six-bedroom home. (Lansing State Journal via AP, File/Julie Nagy)

by The Associated Press

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Williamston, MI — August 31, 2020

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An auction was held Saturday at the Lansing-area mansion of a Catholic priest who was accused of embezzling millions of dollars before he died in March while awaiting trial.

There were nearly 1,000 items for sale, including about 100 pieces of furniture from the six-bedroom home, the Lansing State Journal reported.

"It's about four sales in one with the amount of stuff that's out here," auctioneer Mel White said.

Fr. Jonathan Wehrle was pastor at St. Martha Church in Okemos.

He lived in a 12,000-square-foot mansion in Wheatfield Township, near Williamston, which included an indoor pool, an elevator, baby grand pianos, a pipe organ, three sets of washers and dryers and enough kitchen supplies to outfit a restaurant, the newspaper reported.

Wehrle was charged with six counts of embezzling \$100,000 or more from his church, although auditors said more than \$5 million was missing. Police discovered \$63,000 stashed above ceiling tiles.

Wehrle's attorney claimed he had family money and an agreement with a bishop, now deceased, to use parish money for a private home. Wehrle died in March at age 69.

The Internal Revenue Service, an insurance company and others are seeking money.

"There are a lot of creditors lining up," attorney Pat Gallagher said.

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