



FINANCE

DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

2110 Broadway • Sacramento, California 95818 • 916-733-0266 • FAX 916-733-0195

Memo

To: Pastors, Parochial Administrators, Parish Stewards, School Administrators
From: Glen Faulkner – Parish Security Coordinator
Date: December 19, 2022
Re: More scamming attempts

Unfortunately, parishes in the Sacramento Diocese are again encountering instances in which swindlers are using emails or text messages to fraudulently represent themselves as a parish priest to ask unsuspecting parishioners to buy gift cards. These scammers are almost always very convincing and communicate a sense of urgency to the parishioner, telling the parishioners they need immediate help buying gift cards for someone in need.

We believe the scammers obtain contact information and names from a parish's weekly bulletin or other parish communications (the parish that reported the most recent scam attempt stopped including phone numbers and email addresses in their weekly bulletins years ago, but older archived bulletins that pre-date this practice are available on the parish website).

Although these incidents may occur more during the holidays, they are not limited to this time of year or this method of fraud. Last week, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California published a scam alert warning of other fraud attempts, including individuals posing as law enforcement officials or as sweepstakes managers in efforts to swindle money from victims. This bulletin offers some common sense tips to prevent these scams from succeeding (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edca/pr/scam-alert-warning-fake-calls-scammers-posing-united-states-attorneys-office>).

As I have messaged before, please consider reminding parishioners that pastors or other clergy members will not solicit donations via emails or texts and that they should verify the legitimacy of any such request personally with the purported sender before making any type of gift purchase, regardless of the nature of the story that may have accompanied the request. If a parishioner believes they have been victimized, they should report the incident to local law enforcement and to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (<https://www.ic3.gov/>).