


What's Your Parish's F-IQ? (Financial Integrity Quotient)

Is your parish's (or diocese's) primary source of income adequately protected?

Or, as all too often occurs, is that bag of cash and checks more like the proverbial *sitting duck*: highly vulnerable to theft?

Take this F-IQ questionnaire to see how your parish measures up!

1. Does your parish have written collection and counting procedures? Yes No
2. When the ushers consolidate their collection baskets, are the contents placed into a serially numbered, self-sealing, tamper-evident bag or a lockable container that is then sealed or secured with a serially numbered, tamper-proof seal? Yes No

3. Do the counting procedures explain, in detail, how to perform and then verify the counting and banking processes? Yes No
4. Does your parish have at least two (preferably more) counting teams, each with a minimum of three individuals, scheduled on a rotating basis? Yes No
5. Do the counting procedures require at least three counters to be present before any collection containers are opened? Yes No
6. Is the cash portion of the collection counted by two persons, and do they conduct the count independently of each other and record their results on a form specifically designed for that purpose? Yes No
7. Are collections deposited in their entirety—with no pre-deposit deductions allowed for any reason? Yes No
8. Is the bank deposit prepared and sealed in the presence of at least one witness who, with the preparer, then initials the deposit slip to indicate they agree with the total shown? Yes No

9. Are the counting forms reviewed each week to ensure compliance with the written guidelines? Yes No

10. Are the counting forms kept on file for examination by diocesan auditors and other authorized persons? Yes No

Evaluate Your Score

If you were inclined to answer “I don’t know” on any of the questions, that’s a bad sign. Worse if it applied to every question.

If you answered *Yes* to every question, congratulations, your parish is more secure than most when it comes to the weekly collection. It’s not invulnerable, because despite the best procedures and ongoing vigilance in applying those procedures, theft may still be possible. But there’s no sense making it easy and then hoping nothing bad happens.

The more *No* answers you gave, the weaker your security. Your collections are vulnerable to repeated (think *weekly*) theft—and by virtually anyone, from altar server to cantor, usher or counter to business manager or secretary or custodian, to pastor or visiting priest.

To ensure that every dollar parishioners place in the collection baskets each weekend is, in fact, properly deposited into the parish’s bank account, we encourage you to use the results of the F-IQ test to convince your pastor and parish finance council of the need to implement proper safeguards.

You can find an excellent, thorough set of safeguard guidelines through the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, which adopted as a “best practice” the guidelines implemented in 2005 by the Archdiocese of Chicago. When fully implemented and monitored, those guidelines virtually guarantee that every dollar going into collection baskets is properly deposited into the parish bank account.

You can download those guidelines and their important Addendum, free, from the NLRCM website: www.theleadershiproundtable.org/churchpedia/finance/parish-finance.html.

Preventing theft is far better than trying to recover the money afterwards—or realizing how much money was siphoned off over the years without ever being discovered.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” – Benjamin Franklin

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