

## **Letters to the Editor Letters, January 24, 2007**

### **Church embezzlement**

It was déjà vu, reading Donna Farrell's Jan. 9 letter on behalf of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Her response to a study reporting widespread embezzlement in Catholic archdioceses will remind Catholics of the years of assurances that our children were safe in the hands of these very leaders.

She ignores one crucial failure of the archdiocese in ensuring the safety of our church's funds - the failure to make systematic, annual disclosure of the diocese's financial status to all Catholics. The last financial disclosure was more than three years ago, and it reported one year's data from a period beginning in 2002.

This is woefully inadequate disclosure to thousands of hardworking Catholics who place their church-supplied envelopes in the basket every week.

The archdiocese's 2003 report was not a standard audit statement, such as one might receive from any large charitable corporation. The report did not disclose important information, such as how much money was spent on lobbying in Harrisburg, lobbying that we recently saw in action as the archdiocese joined in efforts to kill child-protection legislation.

It also did not disclose how much was spent that year as a result of sex-abuse cases, which then were still secret.

Since December 2003, Voice of the Faithful of Greater Philadelphia, a group of more than 300 Catholics from parishes across the archdiocese, has called for the archdiocese to become fully transparent in its finances.

Embezzlement, like sex abuse, is the product of secrecy. We urge our bishops and pastors to publish transparent annual financial reports.

### **Marita Green**

Chair, Voice of the Faithful of Greater Philadelphia