

April 19, 2004

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Glenn T. Suddaby, United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, announced today that MARK R. COLE entered a plea of guilty to a criminal Information before Senior District Judge Howard G. Munson in Federal District Court in Syracuse, New York. In his plea, COLE, age 47 from Johnstown, NY, admitted to committing a felony offense of filing of a false tax form in violation of 26 U.S.C. Section 7206(1). This count carries a maximum sentence of 3 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In entering his guilty plea, COLE, the former priest at St. James Episcopal Church in Oneonta, NY, admitted that on or about September 20, 2001, he filed an IRS Form 1040, Personal Income Tax Return, which falsely omitted over \$128,000 in income that he had taken from St. James Church in the prior year.

In Court today, the Government noted that COLE took money from St. James Church, in addition to his salary, over several years, characterizing the taking as "embezzlement." The plea focused on a single tax year, in which COLE took, without

declaring on his tax return, over \$128,000. COLE's attorney stated that his client did not admit the money was embezzled, but did not contest that he took the money and that he did not report it on his tax return, which was sufficient to prove guilt on the federal charge.

Sentencing has been set for September 10, 2004 at 2:00 pm in Syracuse. COLE was required to surrender his passport and was restricted in his travel pending his sentencing.

The entry of this guilty plea is a result of a continuing investigation undertaken by agents from the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation and the New York State Police into embezzlement and tax violations. Further information concerning the case can be obtained by calling Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael C. Olmsted at (315) 448-0672.