



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**MANHATTAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO DEFRAUDING
AT LEAST 60 PRIESTS NATIONWIDE**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that ROBERT RIGGIO, a/k/a "William Kelley," a/k/a "Tim Ryan," pleaded guilty this afternoon to participating in a scheme to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars from at least 60 priests throughout the country. According to a criminal Information filed today, statements made by RIGGIO at his plea, and other publicly filed documents:

From approximately March 2004 through September 2006, RIGGIO called at least 60 priests across the country and, using fake names and bogus stories, asked the priests to wire transfer money to New York, New York and elsewhere. RIGGIO obtained contact information for these priests from a clergy directory in the New York Public Library in Manhattan. During some of the calls, RIGGIO claimed to be affiliated with the priest's parish and promised to repay the funds. RIGGIO also falsely claimed that he needed money to help a relative in urgent need of assistance. At least 60 priests agreed to the bogus requests for money, sending anywhere from a few hundred dollars to more than \$3,000 per transfer to RIGGIO and his co-conspirator, who picked up some of the fraudulent proceeds and then shared the money with RIGGIO. RIGGIO defrauded some individual priests of more than \$10,000 and sometimes targeted priests who he had previously defrauded. The money sent to RIGGIO and his partner often came from personal savings. In total, the scam generated more than \$200,000 in proceeds, and to date, none of the money has been repaid.

RIGGIO was arrested in September 2006 shortly after he requested money from an undercover FBI agent who was posing as the niece of a priest who had been defrauded. At one point, as RIGGIO spoke on the phone to the undercover agent and claimed he was calling from West Virginia, another Federal Bureau of Investigation

("FBI") agent watched RIGGIO, who was actually calling from Manhattan.

RIGGIO entered his guilty plea before United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of wire fraud. RIGGIO faces a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison.

RIGGIO is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge KOELTL on April 27, 2007 at 9:30 a.m..

RIGGIO, 60, resides in New York, New York.

Mr. GARCIA praised the efforts of the FBI in conducting this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney NICHOLAS S. GOLDIN is in charge of the prosecution.

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