

Mother gets €1k bill and no jail for €25,000 theft



Gift: Margaret McDonnell

A SINGLE mother who went on a 'massive spending spree' after €51,000 was accidentally deposited into her bank account will only have to pay back €1,000 of the €25,000 she spent.

For two weeks, Margaret McDonnell ate out every night, brought her friends and family out for dinner and bought gifts including two crystal vases, Dublin Circuit Criminal Court heard.

It was heard that when she was arrested, she said she knew she did wrong but added: 'Any young girl on social welfare like me would have done what I did.'

McDonnell of Rathvilly Park, Finglas, Dublin, pleaded guilty to 13 counts of theft of cash from Bank of Ireland on dates

By Declan Brennan

between March 7 and 16, 2013. A total of €24,946 was taken.

Defence said McDonnell was in receipt of €250 lone-parent allowance each week and could only afford to pay €15 out of this to make up the stolen money.

It was heard that a customer was given the wrong IBAN code to transfer €51,808 between two accounts. This led to McDonnell's account getting the money.

Judge Cormac Quinn suspended a sentence of 18 months on condition that McDonnell, 23, pay €1,000 back to the bank within 18 months.

He also ordered her to do 150 hours of community service.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Our children's big day bound us all together

WE sat in silence and, dressed in their white robes, the three boys began to sing. Their voices were those of the angels: gentle, pure and clear. The words were immediately recognisable as those of Fr Liam Lawton:

'Even when the rain hides the stars,

Even though the mist swirls the hills,

Even when the dark clouds veil the sky,

You are by my side.'

Accompanied by a child choir of more than 100, and set in a 200-year-old church, the three soloists gave new meaning to that familiar song. It was the occasion of our eldest son's Confirmation, and his classmates sang with deep emotion and reverence. It was one of the many moving moments in a ceremony which proved why First Communion and Confirmation are such precious milestones.

The three altars were ablaze with candlelight. The liturgy gave faithful expression to the sacred. Fr Aquinas Duffy, who confirmed the boys, showed how a priest can truly be 'another Christ'.

It was, however, the boys themselves who made the ceremony unforgettable. Under the direction of their fine teachers, Ms Cadogan and Ms Hayes, each student contributed either in song, word or deed. Each rose to the occasion with a profound sense of respect, reverence and camaraderie.

In perfect synchrony, they each approached the altar, bowed reverentially and undertook their tasks without putting a single foot wrong. In an age when so many people have ceased to believe, these wonderful boys revealed the very best of religion. As one woman said to me: 'That would make anyone want to go back to Mass.'

'Even when the sun shall fall in sleep,

Even when at dawn the sky shall weep,

Even in the night when storms shall rise,

You are by my side.'

They sang and tears flowed through the old church. On the cusp of their teenage years, they somehow retain their primal innocence. The hymn is, of course, addressed to the Creator, but they might well have been singing to each other.

'Even in the night when storms shall rise', you will still be at my side. For eight years, they have

been with each other nearly every day. And now, as they turn to face a fresh future, they showed the meaning of friendship, of solidarity and faithfulness.

Religion comes from the Latin word 'religare', meaning 'to tie' or 'to bind'. Last Friday, we enjoyed a stunning illustration of just how true this is. Our children bound us together in a shared sense of communion. We were tied together by being part of something so sacred and yet so tangible.

The boys sang, read the scriptures, and showed the power of the sacraments to heal and inspire. There was no seeking to outdo one another. It was simply a beautiful display of solidarity by those bound together by the Spirit.

'Bright the stars at night that mirror heaven's way to you. Bright the stars in light where dwell the saints in love and truth.' When sung by an adult, those words are pure poetry. When sung by a child, they contain a meaning that is not of this world.

AS new paths stretch out before them, as they bid farewell to Ms Cadogan, Ms Hayes and Fr Duffy, the boys showed us what can be accomplished when we support and co-operate with each other. Olivia O'Sullivan arranged and conducted the choir, inspiring the boys to sing at their best. She was central to the ceremony and yet she was rarely seen.

This was something that worked because everyone humbly played their part without any showmanship. It was a celebration of union, communion and belonging. It was undoubtedly the highlight of the eight years those boys have spent travelling together. And it was so because they knew they could depend on each other.

The ceremony lasted nearly two hours yet few wanted it to end. It was the last time we shall all be gathered with such a sense of purpose. Our boys have grown up together and now, as a new chapter opens, their voices seemed to sing as one:

'Held in memory

The thoughts we have of yesterday,

May our future be

A resting place

Where love will stay.'

We left the church as mist was swirling around the hills and clouds had veiled the sky. It didn't matter, for somehow we all knew that, even when storms rise, there is someone at our side.

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