Cybersecurity Risk Management for Parish Leadership

2025 Clergy-Laity Assembly

Metropolis of Atlanta

Outline

- Introduction
- Why cybersecurity matters
- Data and assets to protect
- Common cybersecurity threats
- Where to begin?

Introduction

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- Chair – Cybersecurity Committee, Metropolis of Atlanta
- Chair – Parish Cybersecurity Subcommittee, Archdiocese of America
- Assistant Professor, Kennesaw State University
- Anything I say is my own opinion and does not represent KSU or the University System of Georgia

Why cybersecurity matters

- We have a responsibility to protect systems and data entrusted to us
- We must balance our protection efforts with system access and usability for:
  - Priests
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Visitors

Why cybersecurity matters

- Parishes are stewards of sensitive data

- Failure to take reasonable and prudent steps to protect data potentially exposes the parish and its members varying types of harms:
  - Spiritual
  - Financial
  - Civil
  - Reputational

Data and assets to protect

- Membership records
  - Names
  - Addresses
  - Phone numbers
  - Email addresses
  - Financial details
  - Photographs

Data and assets to protect

- Financial data
  - Donation processing
  - Bank accounts
  - Payment systems

Data and assets to protect

- Parish operations
  - Sermon archives
  - Event plans and registration details
  - Pastoral counseling notes
  - Other sensitive parishioner information

Common Security Threats

- Phishing emails
- Ransomware
- SMS messages

Phishing Email

- Victim receives an email asking about availabililty
- Victim responds
- Scammer asks victim to make a gift card purchase and send details

From: Alex Miltiades <desskoffice22@gmail.com>
Date: Thursday, June 13, 2024 at 10:02 AM
To: Dr. Andy Green <andy@andy-green.org>
Subject: <no subject>

Andy

Are you available at the moment?

Regards.

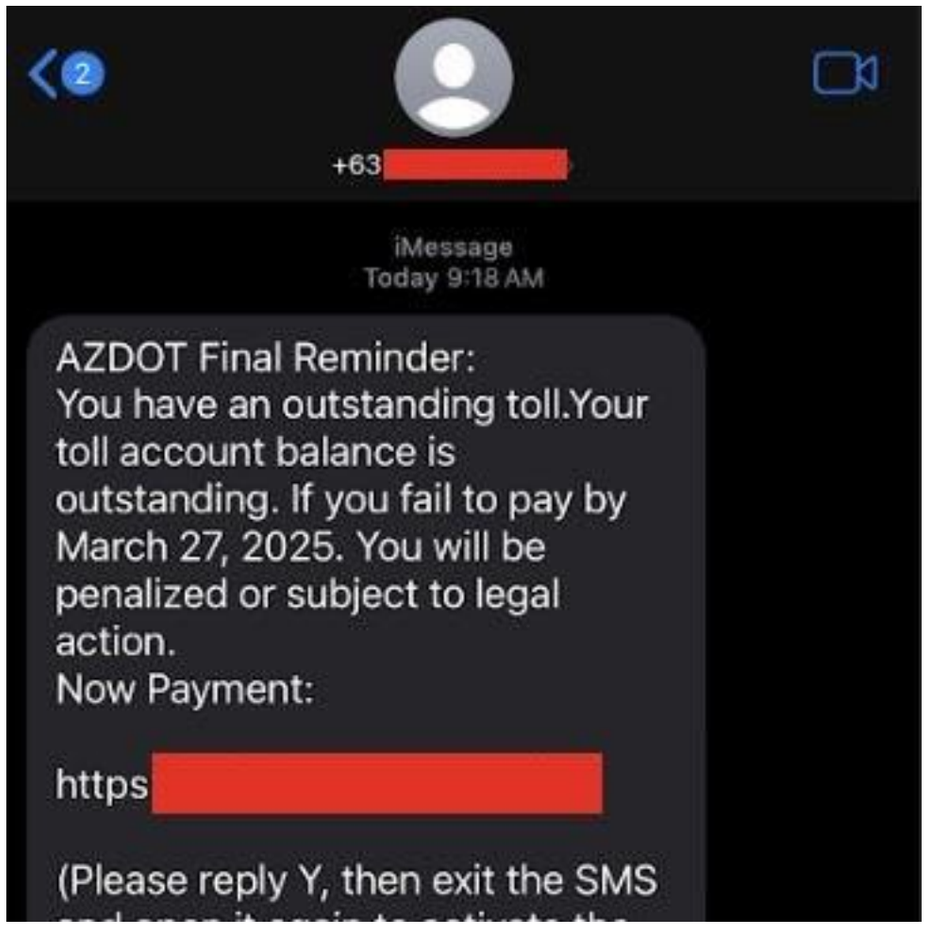
Ransomware

- Type of attack that prevents victims from using their computer systems by using encryption.

- Attackers demand victims pay ransom in cryptocurrency to decrypt systems.

- Payments made in 2024 estimated to be more than $800 million USD

SMS messages



Where to begin?

- Identify your assets
  - Where is your data
  - Who has access to it
  - How do they access it

Where to begin?

- Policy creation
  - Policy is a written expression of Parish leadership’s intent on a matter
  - It provides direction for Priests, staff, volunteers
  - If you write it, enforce it
  - If you don’t write it, you can’t enforce it
  - If you don’t want to enforce it, don’t write it

Where to begin?

- Start small and build
- Find your local expertise and ask for help
- Promote cyber hygiene for Priests, staff, volunteers

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Slides: https://andygreen.phd/presentations