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Novel Fundraising!

A young Catholic priest in the US has taken fundraising matters into his own hands, ignoring the more conventional fundraising activities. In August, Father Andrew Trapp of South Carolina was concerned that the building fund at his St Michaels parish was not moving fast enough and, at the same time, he'd become interested in a new television show that was selecting the best poker players in the country.

"Our parish, St Michaels, is in the final stages of fundraising for a new church building, which we very desperately need," said Trapp, 37, who was ordained only two years ago. So I thought to myself how cool it would be, to try to get on the show and see if I could win the money and donate it to the church fund. And even if I didn't win an money, it would be an opportunity for people across the country to see that there are still young men choosing to be priests, and that one can have fun as one serves God."

Trapp sought the approval of his bishop and was given the green light to take part in the competition.

With 10,000 people playing at a time, it was no easy feat. Trapp skilfully worked his way through the competition though and made it through to the last group, winning US\$100,000 in prize-money.

But there could be more in store for the man dubbed "the poker-playing priest". In December there will be a play-off between four contestants who have been chosen to compete for US\$1 million. If he wins, Trapp has pledged to donate all to his parish, putting a sizeable dent in the \$1.5 million

building debt.

Come December, the St Michaels parishioners will surely have another item on their prayer list.