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Students sit in a classroom in this 2018 file photo. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

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April 17, 2023

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An Oregon parish music minister has been arrested as part of an undercover child predator sting, according to the Washington County Sheriff's office.

Sean Baba, the director of music ministry at St. Pius X Parish in Portland, was one of six men taken into custody April 13 by the sheriff's office. Investigators posed as underage boys and girls on a number of online dating platforms and social media sites. The suspects contacted the profiles and offered to meet in person for sex. Authorities arrested the men upon arrival.

Baba, 29, was the oldest of those arrested, with the other suspects ranging in age from 19 to 27. All were charged with the felony crimes of luring a minor and online sexual corruption of a child in the first degree.

In an April 13 press release, the sheriff's office stated that St. Pius X Parish and its school "were notified of his arrest and have fully cooperated with the investigation."

Detective Mark Povolny of the Washington County Sheriff's Office told OSV News that after an April 14 arraignment Baba was released, following a July 2022 Oregon bail reform law that permits pretrial conditional release of nonviolent offenders.

Baba is set for a pretrial hearing on April 21 and has a court-appointed attorney through Metropolitan Public Defenders, Povolny said.

In a statement, the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon said it was "shocked and saddened" to learn of Baba's arrest.

"This predatory behavior is a crime, a sin, and a clear violation of our employment policies, the teachings of the Catholic Church, and our mission as Christians," the statement said, adding that the archdioceses "requires clergy, employees, and volunteers to complete thorough background checks and rigorous child abuse prevention training."

According to the statement, Baba's employment has been terminated from St. Pius X, and he is no longer allowed on parish or school property. "We are committed to creating a safe environment for all and are fully cooperating with the investigation," it said.

According to Povolny, during Baba's pretrial release, he must avoid contact with minors and must not use electronic devices with internet access. Baba must also abide by other standard conditions, such as keeping the court advised of his address, and avoiding the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and dangerous or deadly weapons.

Povolny could not give specific details about the sting operation through which Baba was arrested, but noted such efforts were ongoing year-round within the sheriff's office as part of an effort to identify child predators.

"Hopefully we can get them to talk to us before they find actual child victims," he said.

Such operations are conducted on "a variety of traditional social media platforms, including Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook," along with dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr, and the gaming sites Discord and Roblox, he said.

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Baba's LinkedIn page lists a number of music ministry assignments at various Catholic parishes, schools and organizations, some of them concurrent.

According to his online resume, Baba has served at St. Pius X since November 2019. Other positions listed are choral section leader at St. Monica Catholic Community in Santa Monica, California, from November 2017 to November 2019; accompanist at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Los Angeles from April 2017 to November 2019; "teaching artist" at the SOL-LA Music Academy in Santa Monica from September 2016 to November 2019; accompanist at Nativity Catholic Church in Torrance, California, from June 2016 to November 2019; and piano instructor at Loyola High School of Los Angeles from June 2018 to July 2019.

The LinkedIn page also notes a volunteer teacher's aide position at the Braille Institute of America from January 2011 to January 2012. Baba states on the page that he is a 2016 graduate of Loyola Marymount University and a 2012 graduate of Loyola High School of Los Angeles.

Washington County Sheriffs are concerned there may be additional victims of the six suspects and have asked anyone with additional information to call the sheriff’s office at 503-846-2700.