News

A person's fingers are visible on the keyboard of a laptop while a search is being entered on t

This illustration shows a laptop user browsing the internet. In California Sept. 13, 2023, Fr. Rodolfo Martinez-Guevara, 38, was arrested in Long Beach by members of the Ventura County Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force and charged with possessing hundreds of images of child pornography. The priest had been serving in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, but his religious order has removed him from ministry and withdrawn his priestly faculties. (OSV News photo/Yui Mok, PA Images via Reuters)

Gina Christian

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

September 19, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A religious order priest serving in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been arrested and charged with possessing hundreds of images of child pornography.

Fr. Rodolfo Martinez-Guevara, 38, a member of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, was taken into custody Sept. 13 in Long Beach, California, by members of the Ventura County Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force.

Martinez-Guevara is currently held in Ventura County's main jail, with bail set at $750,000. He has been charged with felony possession of more than 600 images

and videos of child pornography -- including material depicting minors under the age of 12 -- the depicted victims being mostly boys. The priest's arraignment was scheduled for Sept. 15.

Search warrants also were served at the order's formation house in Long Beach, where the priest resides, by the task force with the assistance of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. The formation house is adjacent to St. Maria Goretti Church and the parish school. The church and school are named for a 20th-century 11-year-old Italian girl who was brutally murdered in the course of an attempted sexual assault by an adult male. Considered a martyr by the Catholic Church, St. Maria is considered a patron saint for victims of rape and other crimes.

Investigators believe there could be additional victims and are urging anyone with information regarding the priest to contact their local police department to make a report.

In a Sept. 14 statement, Missionaries of the Holy Spirit provincial superior Fr. Pedro Arteaga announced that he had removed Martinez-Guevara from ministry and withdrawn the priest's faculties.

In a statement emailed to OSV News Sept. 18, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles said that Martinez-Guevara "is not a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles" but of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit order who until now had "faculties to minister in the Archdiocese."

Advertisement

The statement confirmed the priest "has been removed from ministry by the Archdiocese and his order."

"The Archdiocese stands against any sexual misconduct and is resolute in our support for victim-survivors of any misconduct. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to ensuring that parishes, schools and ministries are safe places for everyone in our community," the archdiocese said in its statement.

The archdiocese also noted in its statement that Martinez-Guevara had served "as a transitional deacon and newly ordained priest" at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Oxnard from July 1, 2021, to Sept. 30, 2022.

OSV News also asked the archdiocese Sept. 18 if it received any complaints about the priest during his time at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Oxnard but did not receive an immediate response.

Arteaga said in his statement the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, which received safe environment accreditation from Praesidium, had "notified all the corresponding authorities and begun an internal investigation" that "includes transparent work with our Independent Review Board."

According to Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko, Martinez-Guevara became the focus of an investigation after several reports were made to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. In April 2023, the Ventura County task force launched its own investigation.

OSV News has reached out to Nasarenko's office for additional details on Martinez-Guevara's arrest but did not receive an immediate response.