News



Bishop Emanuel Shaleta of the Chaldean Catholic Diocese of St. Peter the Apostle in San Diego was "contacted and detained" March 5 at that city's international airport while "attempting to leave the country," according to a statement issued that same day by the San Diego County Sheriff's Office. He is pictured in an undated photo. (OSV News/Chaldean Eparchy of St. Peter the Apostle of San Diego)

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A Chaldean Catholic bishop in California has been arrested and jailed on several financial crimes charges.

Bishop Emanuel Shaleta of the Chaldean Catholic Diocese of St. Peter the Apostle in San Diego was "contacted and detained" March 5 at that city's international airport while "attempting to leave the country," according to a statement issued that same day by the San Diego County Sheriff's Office.

The 69-year-old bishop was arrested for eight counts of embezzlement, eight counts of money laundering and one count of "aggravated white collar crime enhancement" under California law.

The last charge, also known as the state's "freeze and seize" law, applies in cases of multiple felony fraud offenses or embezzlement resulting in alleged losses of over $100,000.

Shaleta is currently being held in San Diego's central jail on $125,000 bail, with court approval required for payment and release.

His arraignment takes place March 9 at California's Superior Court in El Cajon, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office told OSV News.

On March 4, The Pillar — which has posted several stories on the embattled bishop — reported Shaleta "was expected to travel to Rome," having "submitted his resignation to the Vatican earlier this year."

The Chaldean Catholic Church is one of the 23 Eastern Catholic churches that together with the Latin Church, headed by Pope Leo XIV as the bishop of Rome, make up the global Catholic Church.

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In its press release, the San Diego County Sheriff's Office said it had been contacted Aug. 19, 2025, by an unnamed representative of St. Peter Chaldean Church in El Cajon, California.

The individual had "provided a statement and documents showing potential embezzlement from the church," and following an initial investigation, the case was investigated by the agency's fraud unit, said the sheriff's office.

The Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate issued a statement regarding the accusations against Shaleta, who was appointed to San Diego in 2017 after serving at the Chaldean Church's diocese in Toronto.

The patriarchate's message, shared on the website of the Michigan-based Chaldean Catholic Diocese of St. Thomas the Apostle, said that "some members" of the Diocese of St. Peter the Apostle had filed complaints against the bishop "in relation to the mishandling of certain diocesan funds and allegations of inappropriate relationships."

"This information has circulated on social media platforms before all facts were fully clarified," said the patriarchate, stressing that "allegations or complaints require careful and objective review and should not be resolved outside of the appropriate process."

In addition, said the patriarchate, "the Apostolic See, with the knowledge and cooperation of the Patriarchate, has conducted thorough investigations in order to ascertain the facts and reach a just and impartial decision, so that no one may be wronged."

The patriarchate added, "The situation has prompted a range of responses from those who devote themselves to the diocese. All perspectives are being taken seriously and require careful review, proper documentation, and time so that the truth may be fully and fairly discerned."

In February, The Pillar reported that Shaleta had tendered his resignation in late January, following "a Vatican-ordered investigation into allegations of substantial embezzlement and personal misconduct."

Among the accusations were claims he had taken "hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash from his cathedral, attempting to reimburse missing funds with checks

signed by him from a cathedral charity account," said The Pillar.

The outlet also said it had "reviewed financial records indicating that he 'reimbursed' his cathedral with checks from its own charity account, signed by him, after reportedly directing a parish tenant and others to make payments to the parish through him in cash, which went unaccounted for."

Along with the financial misappropriations, Shaleta was "also accused of visiting regularly the Hong Kong Gentlemen's Club in Tijuana, which operates as a brothel close to the U.S.-Mexican border," reported The Pillar.

The club's website describes the establishment as an "adult playground" featuring "100s of gorgeous international showgirls."

The investigative think tank InSight Crime, which focuses on criminal dynamics in Latin America and the Caribbean, notes that the club is deeply embedded in the area's sex work and human trafficking landscape.

Citing "a private investigator's report sent to the Vatican," The Pillar said it had learned from retired FBI special agent Wade Dudley that the bishop's car had been seen in a Hong Kong Club patron parking lot.

In addition, Dudley told The Pillar he had seen the bishop "get picked up by a third-party ride share that exclusively takes customers to that establishment."

Along with the alleged club visits, the report claimed Shaleta maintained a personal joint bank account with a woman who had been the parish secretary when the bishop was a Michigan pastor. Extended visits between the woman and the bishop in Toronto and in San Diego — to which the woman allegedly moved — were also noted.