



PRESS RELEASE

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Pennsylvania Priest Sentenced to 200 Months for Sexually Abusing Minors

A priest of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was sentenced today to 200 months in prison to be followed by lifetime supervised release for offenses related to his sexual abuse of two minor boys during trips to Honduras over a five-year period, announced Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney David J. Hickton of the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Joseph D. Maurizio Jr., 70, of Central City, Pennsylvania, was convicted on Sept. 22, 2015, following an eight-day jury trial, of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places, possession of child pornography and international money laundering. Maurizio was also ordered to pay a \$50,000 fine and \$10,000 in restitution to each victim.

According to the evidence introduced at trial, in 2001, Maurizio created a charitable organization, then known as Honduras Interfaith Ministries (HIM), which was funded by donations from community members, including parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Angels Church in Central City. HIM became the largest donor for Pro Niño, a non-profit organization that provided shelter and rehabilitative services to poor, abandoned and at-risk children residing in a rural town near San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Between 2004 and 2009, Maurizio used HIM moneys to fund 13 separate trips between the United States and Honduras, during which he sexually abused two minor boys living at Pro Niño shelters.

Evidence presented at trial demonstrated that Maurizio used his position with HIM, Pro Niño's largest donor, to gain unfettered access to the minors, as well as to purchase them gifts, including clothes, shoes and jewelry, in order to build the boys' trust and to ensure their compliance during his sexual abuse. During his final trip to Honduras, Maurizio paid the boys to engage in sexual acts with him.

In addition, trial evidence showed that Maurizio kept digital media depicting the minors he sexually abused and other images of child sexual exploitation in the Our Lady Queen of Angels Church rectory.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation in Pittsburgh investigated the case. Trial Attorney Amy E. Larson of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) and Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Haines of the Western District of Pennsylvania prosecuted the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and CEOS, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc.

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