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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Diocese of Stockton Issues Warning About Imposters Posing as Catholic Clergy in Modesto**

**Stockton, CA.** - The Diocese of Stockton is alerting the public to a concerning issue in Modesto, where individuals purporting to be Spanish-speaking Catholic bishops and priests engage in fraudulent activities related to the sacraments and sacramentals. These imposters are misappropriating the identities of genuine priests in Mexico and conducting unauthorized celebrations of baptism, confirmation, First Communion, and house blessings under false pretenses.

#### **Key Information:**

**Imitated Names:** The imposters in Modesto have been using the names of legitimate priests in Mexico. Two confirmed identities being exploited are Father José Adán González Estrada and Bishop Raúl Gómez González. Officials of the Diocese of Stockton have verified the veracity of this deception in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Toluca in Mexico.

#### **Illicit Practices:**

These imposters have been discovered to:

Charge exorbitant fees for celebrating the sacraments, teaching classes, and issuing certificates.

Demand the submission of birth certificates for individuals participating in these sacraments, raising concerns about human trafficking and identity theft.

**Intimidation Tactics:** They resort to intimidation tactics against anyone questioning their identity or authority, often threatening legal action for defamation, although these threats lack substance.

**Law Enforcement Response:** The Diocese of Stockton has alerted Modesto law enforcement authorities about this issue. However, it has been communicated that only individuals who have personally fallen victim to these imposters can file complaints and initiate investigations.

**Community Warning:** The Diocese strongly advises the public not to be deceived by these "wolves in sheep's clothing."



**Immediate Action:** Anyone victimized by these imposters is urged to dial 911 without hesitation and report the crime. It's imperative to note that the police do not inquire about the caller's immigration status; their primary concern is combatting criminal activities.

**Catholic Sacraments:** The Diocese of Stockton underscores that, with few exceptions, Catholic sacraments are typically administered within Catholic churches. Celebrations of baptism, confirmation, and First Communion in outdoor locations like parks are not aligned with established Catholic practices.

**Spread Awareness:** The public is encouraged to inform friends and family about the existence of these imposters and their unscrupulous activities, primarily motivated by financial gain.

**For Media Inquiries, Contact Erin Haight**

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**About the Diocese of Stockton:** Established on January 13, 1962, by Pope Saint John XXIII, the Diocese of Stockton comprises the Christian faithful in the Central California counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Mono, and Alpine. Under the leadership of Bishop Myron, J. Cotta, the sixth Bishop of Stockton, the Diocese of Stockton has thirty-five parishes, two Catholic high schools, eleven elementary schools, and eight preschools.