

Former Megachurch Pastor Speaks Publicly About Sex-Crime Charges

Former megachurch pastor Geronimo Aguilar recently discussed the charges filed against him for the first time publicly.

Aguilar, founder of the Richmond Outreach Center (ROC) in Richmond, Va., stepped down from the megachurch in May after being charged with aggravated sexual assault. After a judge lifted the gag order, he sat down with CBS-6 reporter Sandra Jones in an interview that aired Monday.

He is currently facing seven charges in Fort Worth, Texas, in two cases of sexual assault against two sisters under the age of 14. The alleged assaults—which were said to have taken place before Aguilar founded ROC in 2001—date back to 1996. Four of the felonies he faces carry potential life sentences.

“No, absolutely not, absolutely not,” Aguilar replied when Jones asked if he committed the crimes of which he is accused. “There’s obviously going to be some people that judge you from the 30 minutes they see you on television or what they hear in the news. But the people that really matter—the people that I want to love me—love me and believe the best, and those are the ones I focus on.”

The former megachurch pastor said he was “very surprised” when the alleged victims, who are now adults, made the accusations, which he called “extremely hurtful.”

When Jones asked Aguilar what he says to people who have already decided he is guilty, he said, “Well, you know, it’s a shame. I wish people would wait until they hear all of the facts—all of the information. It would be wonderful if people would wait until the end to find out that this isn’t true.”

Aguilar said the hardest part of dealing with all of this has been seeing his family suffer.

"I can't think of anything that quite compares to seeing my wife and children have to struggle with things being said and the obvious change in our lifestyle as far as having to deal with something so devastating to ourselves and to our church."

The experience has tested his faith, Aguilar admitted.

"It's made me lean on God more than ever," he told Jones. "Obviously, I've never been through anything, any trial quite at this level before in my own personal life."

ROC is currently seeking to fill two positions left open when Aguilar and three other pastors stepped down in May. Aguilar and his family must leave their home granted by the church by the end of the year and do not yet know where they will go.

"It's very difficult walking away from the church," Aguilar said. "But I love the church, and I want what's best for our church. I felt like this was best for the church."

Though he did not comment on why his brother, Matthew Aguilar, and two other pastors—Jason Helmlinger and Andrew Delgado—resigned with him, Geronimo Aguilar said his vision of the church will continue.

"I believe in the leadership of the ROC, that they will make the right decision and they will find people or several people to come in and do a great job," he commented.

"I believe that I am not going to be found guilty," he said. "I believe that I'm going to be able to move on from all of this and life is going to be wonderful."

When asked if he would go back to the ROC if he was found not guilty, Aguilar told Jones, "To be honest with you, my mind is not even that far as to what I'm going to do in the future, once this is all over and put behind me. I know that I am

going to serve God for the rest of my life. That's what I've been called to do, and that's what I've been doing for 25-plus years now."