

Leader of Mexican Church With 5 Million Worldwide Followers Convicted of Sexually Assaulting and Trafficking Minors

Naasón Joaquín García, the leader of the massive Mexico-based global church La Luz del Mundo pled guilty Friday and was convicted for multiple felony counts of sexual assault involving three separate minors who were members of his congregation.

The former pastor had faced jury selection Monday in his trial on charges that included child rape and human trafficking to produce child pornography.

Garcia was the leader of a church, also known by its English name The Light of the World, which was founded by his grandfather. It has 5 million worldwide followers. He was considered the “apostle” of Jesus Christ who could lead worshippers to salvation.

Prosecutors said he abused his spiritual influence to have sex with several female followers.

“García used his power to take advantage of children,” California Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a statement. “He relied on those around him to groom congregants for the purposes of sexual assault. Today’s conviction can never undo the harm, but it will help protect future generations.”

Garcia faces up to 16 years and eight months in prison when sentenced Wednesday. He remains jailed on \$90 million bail.

The four-year investigation by the California Department of Justice culminated in the arrest of García, Susana Medina Oaxaca and Alondra Ocampo in 2019 for conduct that occurred over several years in Los Angeles County dating back to at least 2015.

The former pastor was arrested in 2019 and charged along with Oaxaca and Ocampo, two followers who were accused of helping facilitate the abuse.

In addition to facing his accusers at trial, Garcia was also facing the prospect of having to challenge one of his accomplices.

Ocampo, who had pleaded guilty and admitted to helping find his victims and participate in the abuse, was poised to testify against him.

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