

Jackie Lacey

District Attorney

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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Allegedly Posing as Priest Charged With Stealing From Parishioners

A man accused of posing as a Catholic priest is scheduled to be arraigned today on charges of stealing funds from churchgoers, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Erwin Mena (dob 9/8/56) was charged in case BA442970 with 19 counts of grand theft, eight counts of misdemeanor petty theft and one count each of perjury, procuring and filing false documents and practicing medicine without a license, all felonies. Mena is expected to make his first court appearance today in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

Mena allegedly passed himself off as a priest dating back to October 2014 at a pair of Catholic churches in Los Angeles where he performed Mass, confessions and a wedding.

Mena is accused of swindling parishioners at Saint Bernard Catholic Church in Glassell Park and Saint Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Highland Park by selling tickets for a pilgrimage to see Pope Francis during his visit to the United States last September. Prosecutors said he never made the arrangements and the trip didn't take place.

Total losses are estimated to be \$53,000.

Prosecutors are recommending bail be set at \$100,000. If convicted as charged, Mena faces a possible maximum sentence of 21 years in state prison to be served in county jail.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 71,000 felony defendants and nearly 112,000 misdemeanor defendants.