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by Associated Press

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Santa Fe, N.M. — June 30, 2023

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A former Catholic priest with a lengthy career at parishes across New Mexico has been arrested on criminal charges of coercion and enticement of a minor to engage in sexual activity through text messages, federal law enforcement authorities announced June 29.

The U.S. Attorney's Office and FBI field office in Albuquerque said that Daniel Balizan of Springer, New Mexico, was arrested in connection with a grand jury indictment.

A redacted copy of the indictment accuses 61-year-old Balizan of knowingly attempting to coerce an unnamed minor into sexual activity in August and September 2012 in Santa Fe County.

The charges carry a minimum sentence of 10 years in prison upon conviction and up to a lifetime behind bars.

It was unclear whether Balizan had a legal representative. An initial court appearance was scheduled for June 30.

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A timeline of Balizan's church assignments from investigators show that he served at Santa Maria de la Paz Parish, starting in June 2012. Previous assignments include parishes in Raton, Albuquerque, Clovis, Chama and Socorro.

In a statement, the Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe said it received abuse allegations against Balizan in 2022 and promptly reported the information to authorities, leading to Balizan's removal from service.

The diocese last year reached a \$121.5 million agreement to settle nearly 400 claims made by people who say they were abused by Roman Catholic clergy.

In New Mexico, about 74 priests have been deemed "credibly accused" of sexually assaulting children while assigned to parishes and schools by the archdiocese, which covers central and northern New Mexico.