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DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

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PRESS RELEASE

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Man Claiming to Be the Angel of Death Who Drove from Alabama After Threatening to “Do the Lord’s Reaping” at St. Michael’s Abbey in Silverado Canyon Charged with Criminal Threats, Possession of Brass Knuckles, Sword and High-Capacity Gun Magazines

No guns or ammunition were recovered when man was arrested one day after mass shooting at Minneapolis Catholic Church that left two children dead, 21 others wounded.

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A man claiming to be Michael the Angel of Death who drove from Alabama to St. Michael’s Abbey in Silverado Canyon after sending an email threatening to “do the Lord’s reaping” at the church been charged with felony criminal threats and possession of six high-capacity gun magazines, brass knuckles, and a sword. Investigators also recovered several knives, a stun gun, body armor, duct tape, rope, walk-talkies and other tactical gear from the man’s truck. No guns or ammunition were recovered.

On August 19, 2025, St. Michael’s Abbey received a threatening email from an individual later identified as Joshua Michael Richardson (aka Joshua Michael Jericho), 38, of Jemison, Alabama, claiming to be the “rider of the pale horse,” a reference to the last of the Four Horsemen in the Book of Revelation, and that he was “sent to do the Lord’s reaping before his harvest,” an apparent reference to the end of the world. According to the Book of Revelation, the rider of the pale horse is the personification of Death who is given the power to kill through the sword, famine, disease, and wild animals, and is closely followed by Hades, who swallows the souls of the condemned.

In his email, Richardson claimed to be Michael the Angel of Death and explained that he chose St. Michael’s Abbey as it is one of the few churches in the nation that still practices Michaelmas. St. Michael’s Abbey is set to celebrate the Feast of St. Michael, who is regarded as the greatest of the archangels and a defender of the church against Satan, on September 29, 2025. In his email, Richardson stated that he would be traveling to the church from Alabama soon.

On Tuesday, August 26, 2025, a man later identified as Richardson, attended afternoon church services at St. Michael’s Abbey and following the service, is accused of following the priest into a private area of the church. Richardson told the priest that he came to do the Lord’s work, to separate the weak from the weeds, and that he rode his white pale horse from Alabama.

In addition to multiple public church services, St. Michael’s Abbey is also home to dozens of parishioners who live on the church’s compound.

Richardson was arrested in Santa Monica two days later on Thursday, August 28, 2025, one day after a gunman opened fire during mass at a Catholic school near Minneapolis, killing two schoolchildren and injuring 21 people, including 18 children. Bail was initially provisionally set at \$50,000 for Richardson during his first court setting on September 2, 2025.

Richardson has been charged with one felony count of criminal threats, one felony count of possession of brass knuckles, one felony count of possession of a dirk or dagger, and one misdemeanor count of possession of a large-capacity magazine.

Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer and Senior Deputy District Attorney Kelly Manley appeared in court Wednesday and successfully argued for Richardson to be provisionally held without bail based on the serious danger he poses to the public. Richardson is scheduled to be arraigned at the Central Justice Center on Thursday, September 4, 2025, in Department C57.

“The walls of our churches are not just symbols of sanctuary; they represent the most sacred places of worship and of peace,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “No one should have to worship in fear that a stranger would walk through the door with the intent to carry out their own day of judgement and determine who lives and who dies. A threat on one house of worship is an attack on every place of worship, and we refuse to allow threats and terror dissuade any person from practicing their faith without fear. Public safety is all our responsibility, and we are grateful for the quick action of the church officials and the Sheriff’s Department to prevent another tragedy from occurring.”

Senior Deputy District Attorney Kelly Manley of the Special Prosecutions Unit is prosecuting this case.

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