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Cops: 'Pastor Pete' accused of raping clients of Eustis homeless shelter

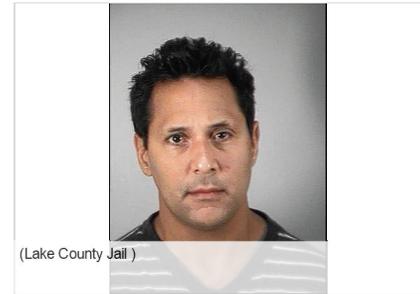
July 15, 2014 | By David Harris, Orlando Sentinel

A pastor who founded a shelter for homeless women in Eustis has been accused of sexually assaulting and attempting to sexually assault three female clients, according to police.

The allegations against Pedro L. Custodio, 44, known as "Pastor Pete" who runs the Our Father's House of Refuge Ministries, Inc., came to light in August while Eustis police were investigating another crime that took place at the shelter. A woman at the shelter said Custodio tried to force himself on her in July 2013. Later, two other victims came forward and accused Custodio of raping them. Custodio said all sexual relationships were consensual, according to police.

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Custodio "exploited them by gaining their trust," Eustis police said in a statement.

According to an arrest affidavit, Custodio took the client from the shelter to the shelter's food pantry late at night in July 2013 to help him move some boxes. When they went into the pantry, Custodio allegedly locked the door behind him, blocked it with boxes and removed his pants, the report said.

Custodio allegedly told her that he could "help her out sexually" since he heard she hadn't had sex since her boyfriend was in jail, the report says. He grabbed her hips and began kissing her face and neck before she was "able to convince him" to stop because Custodio was married with kids, according to police.

Police interviewed another victim last month who said she had a consensual sexual relationship with Custodio for more than a year, but also accused Custodio of raping her on her birthday in May 2013. She said she went out for drinks with friends and met up with him later. He took her to the pantry where he forced himself onto her.

"(The victim) advised she was crying during the entire incident and (was) repeatedly begging for Pastor Pete to stop," the report said.

She told police she moved out of the shelter a few days later, but continued to have a consensual sexual relationship with Custodio until the middle of this year because she was in love with him, according to the affidavit.

The third woman told police that after being released from jail, she moved into the shelter last August.

Eustis Police
Food Pantry

She felt "pressured" to have a sexual relationship with him.

"Pastor Pete would tell her she could always go find another shelter in Orlando if she did not do what he wanted to do," the report said.

He is charged with two counts of sexual battery and one count of attempted sexual battery. He was given a \$30,000 bond.

According to its website, Custodio founded the shelter in 2010. A woman who answered the phone there declined comment.

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