



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

7/23/18

BAKERSFIELD COUPLE CONVICTED OF MURDERING PASTOR

Late in the afternoon on Friday, July 20, 2018, in Department 5 of the Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Judge Joseph Kalashian presiding, a jury convicted Jesus Jeronimo, age 24, and Angelita Reyes, age 42, both of Bakersfield, of murder. Both were convicted of first-degree murder along with the special circumstances of lying in wait and kidnapping. Jeronimo was also found to have personally and intentionally discharged a firearm causing death. Additionally, the jury found true the special allegation against Reyes that a principal was armed with a firearm during the commission of the murder.

In the mid-afternoon of April 3, 2016, Reyes lured her ex-boyfriend, a 40-year-old Hanford associate pastor at a small community church, to a remote vineyard near Earlimart under the guise that her car over-heated. Once there, Jeronimo emerged from his hiding place and physically attacked the victim and forced him into Reyes' truck. Jeronimo then drove the three to a secluded almond orchard where he forced the victim out of the truck and walked him into the orchard at gun point while Reyes remained in the truck. The victim told Jeronimo that "You don't have do this, it's the devil's work. But if you do it, God can still forgive you."

Ignoring the plea, Jeronimo put the gun against the victim's head and pulled the trigger, killing him instantly. Jeronimo rejoined Reyes and drove to Shafter where they picked up empanadas before going home to their shared Bakersfield residence. Two days later on April 5, orchard workers discovered the victim's body around the same time law enforcement discovered his car near the vineyard. Cell phone forensics and statements by the victim's family revealed Reyes to be the last person to speak to the victim before his disappearance and murder. The victim had been designated a missing person in

Kings County the morning after he gave his last church sermon. Reyes' and Jeronimo's statements to law enforcement implicated them in the murder.

Sentencing is scheduled for both defendants on October 19, 2018, in Superior Court where they face life without the possibility of parole in prison.

The case was prosecuted by Senior Deputy District Attorney Samantha Arnerich and investigated by Detective Miguel Franco of the Tulare County Sheriff's Office and Investigator Mario Martin of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations.

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