

Vatican ousts rogue African archbishop: Milingo excommunicated after installing married bishops

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The Vatican on September 26 announced the excommunication of African archbishop emeritus Emmanuel Milingo as a penalty for his having installed four married men as Roman Catholic bishops two days before. The four men consecrated by Milingo during ceremonies in Washington, D.C., were also excommunicated.

The Archdiocese of Washington stated that the ceremonies will not be recognized, and the Holy See press office issued a release citing church law that regards the naming of bishops without papal approval as a schismatic act that results in a self-imposed excommunication for those taking part in the consecration.

Prior to this episode, the 76-year-old Milingo had had several other run-ins with the Vatican. In 1982 he resigned as head of the archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia, after the Vatican opposed his endorsement of faith healing and exorcism. In 2001 he scandalized the Vatican by marrying Maria Sung, an acupuncturist from South Korea, in a ceremony conducted by the Unification Church and arranged by Sun Myung Moon. The rebel cleric avoided excommunication in that instance by renouncing the union following a personal appeal from John Paul II.

Returning to the fold, Milingo was assigned to a convent on the outskirts of Rome. But last May he went missing from the convent, then a month later gave a press conference in Washington at which he urged the Vatican to drop the priesthood's celibacy requirement. Commenting on Milingo's "state of irregularity," the Vatican said the cleric's actions put him in "a progressive, open break in communion with the church," and it accused him of "spreading division" within the church.

One of the four men ordained by Milingo was George Stallings, pastor of Washington's Imani Temple. Stallings broke with the Roman Catholic Church in 1989 and was excommunicated a year later. He also married a member of the Unification

Church in 2001.

In a news conference at Stallings's church, Milingo joked about his excommunication and said he would continue to function as an archbishop regardless of what the Vatican says. He called on the pope to rescind the celibacy ruling and to recall into service all the married priests disowned by the church. He also said he received the authority to consecrate bishops when he was consecrated as a bishop by Pope Paul VI in 1969. -*Religion News Service*