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Papal arch enemy Archbishop Vigano found guilty of schism and excommunicated

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Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano speaks during a pro-life youth Mass at the Verizon Center in Washington, U.S., January 22, 2015.

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VATICAN CITY, July 5 (Reuters) - Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, a fierce ultra-conservative critic of Pope Francis, has been found guilty of schism and excommunicated, the Vatican's doctrinal office said on Friday.

Vigano, the papal envoy in Washington from 2011-2016, went into hiding in 2018 after alleging that the pope knew for years about sexual misconduct by U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and did nothing about it.

He had said the pope should resign and subsequently branded him a "false prophet" and a "servant of Satan".

The Vatican rejected Vigano's accusations of a cover-up of sexual misconduct and last month summoned him to answer charges of schism and denying the pope's legitimacy.

In a statement on Friday, the doctrinal office said his public comments made it clear that he refused "to recognize and submit" to Pope Francis. He had also rejected the legitimacy of liberal reforms made by the Roman Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, it said.

"At the conclusion of the penal process, the Most Reverend Carlo Maria Vigano was found guilty of the reserved delict (violation of the law) of schism," the statement said, adding that he had been excommunicated, or banished, from the Church.

In a message on X, the 83-year-old Vigano remained unrepentant, publishing the full text of the decision against him, which warned that he could be expelled from the Roman Catholic priesthood if he persisted in his stance.

He urged Catholic faithful to voice their support for him, quoting Jesus in the New Testament: "If they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting."

The Vatican ruling was signed by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, head of the Doctrine of the Faith office, and by its secretary, Father John Joseph Kennedy. As is normal in such matters, it was not signed by the pope, but it is highly unlikely that the punishment was meted out without his approval.

ATTACKING THE POPE

Vigano, who mostly communicates via the X social network, said last month that he had refused to take part in the disciplinary proceedings because he did not accept the legitimacy of the institutions behind it.

"I do not recognize the authority of the tribunal that claims to judge me, nor of its Prefect, nor of the one who appointed him," he said, referring Fernández and to Francis.

In a lengthy text, Vigano referred to the pope only by his surname, "Bergoglio", and accused him of representing an "inclusive, immigrationist, eco-sustainable, and gay-friendly" Church that had strayed from its true message.

Francis has angered many conservatives by making overtures towards divorcees and the LGBT community, and by saying that mercy and forgiveness should come before the strict enforcement of

Catholic doctrine.

The pope has also put himself at odds with conservatives and traditionalists by championing migrant rights and the fight against climate change, and condemning the excesses of capitalism.

Last year, Francis took action against another arch-conservative critic from the U.S., dismissing Bishop [Joseph E. Strickland](#) of Tyler, Texas, after he refused to step down voluntarily following a Vatican investigation.

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