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Junno Arocho Esteves

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Pope Francis expelled from the priesthood the founder of Miles Christi, a religious institute based in Argentina, after he was found guilty of sexual and physical abuse.

In a statement published Feb. 2, Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez of La Plata announced that the pope dismissed Roberto Juan Yannuzzi from the clerical state after he was found guilty of "crimes against the Sixth Commandment with adults, absolution of the accomplice and abuse of authority."

Canon law classifies sexual abuse under the Sixth Commandment, which says, "You shall not commit adultery." The phrase "absolution of the accomplice" indicates that the priest attempted to grant forgiveness to his victim in the confessional.

Francis' decision, Fernandez said, means "Yannuzzi can no longer exercise the priestly ministry in any way, either in a public or private manner." He also is barred from teaching in seminaries or schools that are "under ecclesiastical authority."

The accusations, which Fernandez reported to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith last March, were made by members of the religious institute Yannuzzi founded in 1994.

According to its website, Miles Christi was first established as a public association of clerical faithful in the Archdiocese of La Plata before being recognized as a religious clerical institute in 1999.

Comprised of priests and religious men, the institute's website states that members of Miles Christi seek holiness by "dedicating ourselves with ardor to the sanctification of the laity, mainly young university students."

After the announcement of Yannuzzi's expulsion, Miles Christi released a statement Feb. 3 stating that it began the canonical process against the founder in 2016 after informing Fernandez of the accusations.

"All the religious men and women and authorities of Miles Christi deeply regret the acts committed by their ex-superior general and, from the first moment, accompany those affected, seeking all material and spiritual assistance necessary to overcome this painful situation," the institute said.

In addition to communities and seminaries in Argentina, Miles Christi has communities in Mexico and in the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of San Diego.

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