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Pope Francis dedicates a plaque before celebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in

Pope Francis dedicates a plaque before celebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome Nov. 11, 2019. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

by Associated Press

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Rome — April 20, 2023

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The pope's cathedral in Rome, St. John Lateran Basilica, acknowledged April 20 that an Anglican bishop and 50 priests celebrated an Anglican service on the main altar and blamed the "unfortunate" incident on a miscommunication.

A statement from the office of the archpriest of the basilica expressed "profound regret" and said the Anglican celebration April 18 in the Catholic basilica violated canonical norms. As the seat of the pope in his capacity of bishop of Rome, St. John Lateran ranks highest among the four Vatican basilicas in Rome.

Anglicans split from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 when English King Henry VIII was refused a marriage annulment. While popes for decades have forged warm relations with the Anglican Communion and its leaders on a path toward greater unity, the Vatican still at least officially considers Anglican ordination to be "null and utterly void."

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