News

Michael Voris, founder of Church Militant, leads the praying of the rosary in Baltimore Nov. 16

Michael Voris, founder of Church Militant, leads the praying of the rosary in Baltimore Nov. 16, 2021, during the organization's rally near the hotel where the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was holding its fall general assembly Nov. 15-18. (CNS/Catholic Review/Kevin J. Parks)

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The founder of a far-right, unofficial Catholic media group has resigned for an unspecified violation of the organization's morality clause, the group said in a statement Nov. 21.

Michael Voris stepped down as president of St. Michael's Media and Church Militant, a Michigan-based enterprise established to address what Voris' official biography calls "the serious erosion of the Catholic faith in the last 50 years."

"Michael Voris has been asked to resign for breaching the Church Militant morality clause," the organization said in its statement. "The board has accepted his

resignation." More details were not provided, and the board said it "has chosen not to disclose Michael's private matters to the public" but asked for prayers for him as he is "focusing on his personal health."

Voris declined to specify what happened in a repetitive, nearly 14-minute video statement on X, formerly Twitter.

"There are things I have to go away and address and work on, horrible, ugly things," he said. "Not going to share them, nobody else's business but mine. The consequences of me not dealing with those obviously are some people's business."

"I need to conquer these demons," he said, adding that they are "like spiritual terror" to him. He asked people to continue supporting the organization he founded.

The Church Militant site and its sleek newscasts have drawn a loyal following with a mix of fiercely right-wing politics and radically conservative Catholicism in which many of America's bishops are viewed with suspicion and disgust. It "is not recognized as a Church apostolate" and lacks authorization to promote itself as Catholic, according to a 2020 statement by the Archdiocese of Detroit, in whose territory it is based.

The organization says on its site it has more than 40 full-time employees.

"As long as I'm physically able and mentally able to do this, this is my work," said Voris in a 2022 interview with the AP. "I consider this a gift from God."

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Church Militant is often critical of Pope Francis, and has elevated extremist voices like those of Milo Yiannopoulos and echoed popular refrains from mainstream conservatives.

Current articles on the site feature a climate crisis denier, criticize efforts at LGBTQ+ inclusion and platform Bishop Joseph Strickland — recently ousted from his Texas diocese by Pope Francis after his increasingly severe criticisms of the pontiff.

In 2016, Voris acknowledged that when he was younger, he had for years been involved in "live-in relationships with homosexual men" and multiple other sexual relationships with men and women, actions he later abhorred as "extremely sinful."

In 2021, Voris' group was initially denied permission to rally outside a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, with city officials saying it posed a threat to public safety in part because they said the site "promoted and exalted" the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol. Voris claimed the city wrongly blocked the event because it disapproved of the group's message, and a federal appeals court overturned the city's decision.

In 2017, a confidant of Pope Francis singled out Church Militant for criticism. Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro said the site framed the 2016 presidential election as a "spiritual war" and Donald Trump's ascent to the presidency as "a divine election."

Voris said at the time he was shocked and claimed Spadaro was among those "using a leftist agenda to pursue leftist goals."

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