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Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, then nuncio to the United States, congratulates then-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington at a gala dinner sponsored by the Pontifical Missions Societies in New York in May 2012. Vigano has been found guilty of schism and excommunicated, the Vatican announced July 5. (CNS/PMS/Michael Rogel)



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Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the disgraced former papal nuncio to the United States who questioned the legitimacy of Pope Francis and the authority of the Second Vatican Council, has been found guilty of schism and excommunicated, the Vatican announced on July 5.

"His public statements manifesting his refusal to recognize and submit to the Supreme Pontiff, his rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council are well known," stated a Vatican bulletin that announced the ruling.

The decision of Viganò's excommunication was widely expected following the archbishop's June 20 announcement that he had been charged with schism by the Dicastery for the Doctrine for the Faith and that he would not be cooperating with the Vatican penal process.

At the time, Viganò said he would not comply with the request to present himself in person to formally receive the accusation and evidence against him and said he considered the charges brought against him to be an "honor."

The June 11 Vatican decree stated that if Viganò remained unresponsive through June 28, he would be sentenced in absentia. The July 5 Vatican statement announcing the excommunication noted that the Congress of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith met on July 4 to conclude the penal process against Viganò.

The statement also noted that the archbishop was notified with news of his excommunication on July 5 and that the reversal of such a decision is reserved to the Apostolic See.

The weighty decision by the Vatican to excommunicate Viganò comes six years after he published an unprecedented 11-page letter in 2018 alleging a widespread Vatican cover-up of allegations against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and called on Francis to resign.

Although many of his initial claims he alleged have been discredited, the Italian archbishop was lionized by some right-wing Catholics for his support of former U.S. President Donald Trump, opposition to the COVID-19 vaccines and spreading of Q-Anon conspiracy theories.

While many mainstream Catholics have dismissed the former Vatican diplomat, he has continued to use his website and social media to promote his radicalized views, with his posts being shared by high-profile individuals such as Trump and being widely promoted within certain pockets of the U.S. Catholic Church.

The rare excommunication of one of the church's own prelates is likely to put a number of U.S. bishops in an awkward position given that following his initial 2018 allegations against the pope, more than two dozen issued statements attesting to his credibility, including some of the current leadership of the U.S. bishops' conference.

At the time of publication, Viganò had yet to issue a statement in response to his excommunication. His last public posting on social media, published on the same date of the Vatican's statement on his excommunication, was a request for donations for his foundation in support of the "traditional training" of young seminarians.

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