

# Archbishop ordains woman priest

By Mark Pattison  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Archbishop George Augustus Stallings Jr. ordained former Roman Catholic nun Rose Vernell into the priesthood of his breakaway African-American Catholic Congregation Sept. 8.

Earlier in the day, Bishop Stallings took the rank of archbishop in a ceremony presided over by two prelates from Old Catholic churches. The two prelates were among those who ordained him a bishop last year.

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes bishops of Old Catholic denominations as having been validly ordained in apostolic succession. But the Vatican does not view

such ordinations as licit — or lawful — meaning that they were performed without the proper procedures or the proper authority.

"God preordained this day to happen," Archbishop Stallings said in his sermon during the four-hour ordination service, replete with African-styled song, dance and garb.

Much of the rest of his sermon was filled with invective against Roman Catholicism. He asked whites at the ordination to "help speak truth to power and clean up this dirty act" of Roman Catholicism.

Also ordained with the 50-year-old Rev. Vernell — "she won't be 'Father Vernell,'" remarked spokesman William Marshall — was Carlos Harvin. Harvin,

32, quit a job coordinating black youth ministry in the Washington Archdiocese to join Archbishop Stallings.

At the earlier liturgy in which Archbishop Stallings was elevated, a Catholic priest, Father August Griffin, and another priest identified as Episcopal Father Trevor Bentley, were ordained for the African-American Catholic Congregation.

Father Griffin was a Divine Word priest. His former vice-provincial, Father Stanley Uroda, said he did not know Father Griffin, 34, was going to depart.

"At the present time, he is still a member of our society," Father Uroda said. Father Griffin, ordained in 1987, had taken a one-year leave of absence this summer from his assignment as associate pastor at a Chicago parish.

Marshall said Father Bentley was an Episcopal priest, but his name did not appear in the Episcopal Church's clergy roster. He will establish a temple in Los Angeles Nov. 10 and eventually be made a bishop.

Two priests who have been with Archbishop Stallings since the early days of his breakaway movement, Fathers Charles Stephney and H. Randolph Caines Jr., received the titles of monsignor Sept. 8.

The previous week, Father Glenn V. Jeanmarie, who broke from Roman Catholicism last December to join Archbishop Stallings, was appointed a bishop. Marshall said the installation would take place in early 1992.

The African-American Catholic Congregation now has six churches in five cities. It is negotiating with the royal family of the southern African nation of Swaziland to open a temple there next year.



File photo  
Then-Father George A. Stallings Jr. danced during a 1989 service of his breakaway congregation. Now an archbishop in the denomination, he has been excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop Stallings, a former priest of the Washington Archdiocese, started Imani Temple in 1989, citing dissatisfaction with Roman Catholicism's response to the needs of its black members. He incurred automatic excommunication in March 1990 when he said he no longer accepted papal authority.

## Catholic group supports choice of Judge Thomas to high court

(CNS) WASHINGTON — The newly organized Catholic Campaign for America has come out in support of Clarence Thomas' nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. A spokeswoman for the group said the campaign will "stand and be ready" to field attacks on Thomas based on his Catholic upbringing.

In its mission statement, the group said it hopes to "increase the Catholic electorate's influence in formulating public policy."

Among the Republican figures on the campaign's advisory board are Richard Allen, William Bennett, Patrick Buchanan, William Simon and the campaign's national chairman, William Wilson, a former ambassador to the Vatican.

Spokeswoman for the group is Marlene Elwell, a staff member of Legatus, an organization of Catholic corporate executives. Previously she worked on the Rev. Pat Robertson's 1988 campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. The group's lone elected Democrat is ex-New York Gov. Hugh Carey.

Campaign members expressed concern over what they called "Catholic bashing."

"We can take kidding. We can take disagreement," Bennett said. "But there's a big difference between ('Saturday Night Live' character Father) Guido Sarducci and someone taking a host, breaking it and stomping on it on the floor of St. Patrick's" Cathedral in New York City, site of a 1989 demonstration by homosexual rights activists.

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