

THE DISMISSED PRIESTS HAVE VOWED TO PETITION THE BISHOP'S ACTION AND CALLED FOR HIS RESIGNATION

Defrocked priests accuse bishop of witch-hunt

By Wilson Asimwe

The five priests, who were defrocked by the Bishop of Ruwenzori Diocese Reuben Kisembo allegedly over immoral behaviour and lack of integrity, have spoken out, accusing the bishop of witch-hunt.

They said their dismissal was wrong because the bishop did not follow the proper procedures.

In an interview with the *New Vision* on Saturday, the Rev. Jonathan Kyangasha, who spoke on behalf of the others, accused Kisembo of witch-hunting the clergy and causing divisionism among the Christians.

"I don't know what exactly happened. I received the news of my dismissal on Monday, while in Church serving the Lord. I am still shocked. The bishop was not advised well," Kyangasha said.

He said, they were in the process of petitioning Kisembo's conduct to the Archbishop of the Province of the Church of Uganda, Stanley Ntagali.

"Bishop Kisembo should resign because he is losing the vision for the

diocese. He is a spiritual terrorist. He is causing confusion in the church," Kyangasha said.

Kyangasha said that the Human Resource Manual of the Church of Uganda, Section 6, outlines the procedures of dismissing a priest.

"If a priest is in the wrong the first step is to call and counsel him, then give three warning letters and after he is subjected to a tribunal for a fair hearing before dismissal. This was not done in our case," Kyangasha said.

Kyangasha said that the bishop has no powers to withdraw any certificate of ordination. He vowed that they will not hand them back.

"A priest, once ordained, is a priest forever. We are not going to hand back our ordination certificates because the bishop has no powers to recall them," Kyangasha said.

He said that the group has already finalised plans to break away from the Church of Uganda and form



The Rev. Kyangasha

another church if the archbishop doesn't intervene and solve their misunderstandings with Kisembo.

"We have all it takes to start a Church

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and declare a break away because we were ordained as priests," Kyangasha added.

Kyangasha said the group had spent over one year without receiving their salaries and yet they have been active in church work.

"When the bishop posted me at Bumadu archdeaconry in Bundibugyo district, the church was engulfed in conflicts, but when I tried to bring out the issues to the bishop, he refused to give me audience," Kyangasha said.

"I don't know about all the allegations being labeled against me and I am still serving. I have not handed over my office," he noted.

Kisembo identified the defrocked priests as the Rev. Joel Manyindo, who was parish priest Rwimi All Saints church, the Rev. Jonathan Kyangasha, the chaplain of Canon Apollo Primary Teachers' College, the Rev. Felix Batalingaya, the Rev. Paul Kinyerere and Deacon Abel Alinaitwe, who was on pastoral work at Bunyonyi Church of Uganda Parish in Kijura sub-country, Kabarole district.

Kisembo responds

According to Kisembo, the diocesan tribunal convened a meeting two weeks ago and after analysing the behaviour of the five priests, the tribunal agreed that the priests be defrocked.

The bishop explained that the priests are not allowed to perform and preside over any pastoral work on behalf of Church of Uganda or the Ruwenzori Diocese.

Kisembo also ordered the priests to return the ordination certificates they received at their ordination day with immediate effect.

"The Diocesan tribunal convened a meeting two weeks back to look into the behavioural conduct of the concerned priests and passed a resolution that they should stop serving in the church of Uganda with immediate effect," Kisembo said. But the bishop didn't go into the details of what had caused trouble for the priests.