



People pray the Rosary during a rally outside of the Baltimore hotel where the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are holding its Fall General Assembly meeting in Baltimore, Nov. 16, 2021. The city of Baltimore has agreed to pay \$275,000 toward the legal fees of a far-right Catholic media group to settle a lawsuit over the city's unsuccessful attempt to block a rally in 2021. (AP/Julio Cortez, File)

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The city of Baltimore has agreed to pay \$275,000 toward the legal fees of a far-right Catholic media group to settle a lawsuit over the city's unsuccessful attempt to block a rally in 2021.

The agreement with St. Michael's Media, the parent firm of the Church Militant website, comes even as the site's future remains in flux. It follows just days after St. Michael's itself agreed to pay \$500,000 to settle a defamation lawsuit.

Baltimore's Board of Estimates approved the rally-related settlement Wednesday.

In 2021, St. Michael's Media 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. Church Militant has been known for publishing stories against LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Catholic Church and strongly criticizing its advocates, among other controversial topics.

The group “planned to have speakers at this event with a known track record of inciting and fomenting violence, most notably including individuals that were directly tied to the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol,” Deputy City Solicitor Stephen Salsbury told the board.

St. Michael's claimed the city wrongly blocked the event because it disapproved of the group's message, and the [rally went forward](#) without incident after federal district and appeals courts [overturned](#) the city's decision.

St. Michael's continued to press for damages before ultimately agreeing to settle, according to Salsbury.

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He said the city was unlikely to be assessed damages because the rally took place, but it could have been required to pay even higher legal fees if the case continued. The money is going to the group's law firm, not the group itself, he added. “While the city vehemently objects to the group's message of hate,” it decided to settle, he said.

The agreement comes as St. Michael's — which lacks recognition as an official Catholic entity — appears to be settling legal accounts.

Church Militant last week posted an apology to the Rev. Georges de Laire, an official with the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, and St. Michael's agreed to pay him \$500,000 as part of a court judgment in a defamation suit he filed over a 2019 article. Church Militant now disavows claims in the article, which depicted him harshly.

In November, the group's founder and president, Michael Voris, [resigned](#) over an unspecified breach of its morality clause. 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.”

Church Militant's YouTube channel included a video posted Wednesday featuring a former Church Militant staff member, Joe Gallagher, representing a new organization called Truth Army. He said the group is now managing the assets of St. Michael's, including the Church Militant site, and is soliciting funds to run the site with a focus more on Catholic spiritual topics than current events.

Church Militant and its sleek newscasts drew a loyal following for years with a mix of fiercely right-wing politics and radically conservative Catholicism in which many of America's bishops were viewed with suspicion and disgust. It “is not recognized as a Church apostolate” and lacks authorization to promote itself as Catholic, according to the Archdiocese of Detroit, in whose territory it is based.