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Obama quits his church; 'deeply disappointed' in priest's remarks

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Update

Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama has resigned his long-standing membership in Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, a move that came just months after Obama distanced himself from the retiring pastor of the church, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

"I have no idea how it will impact my presidential campaign but I know it was the right thing to do for me and my family," Obama said in an announcement. "This was a pretty personal decision, and I was not trying to make political theatre out of it."

Sen. Barack Obama said he was "deeply disappointed" by remarks made by a Catholic priest speaking at his Chicago church on May 25, who said Sen. Hillary Clinton felt she was "entitled" to win the Democratic nomination for the presidency.

"I really believe that she just always thought this is mine," said Fr. Michael Pfleger, pastor of the predominantly black St. Sabina Catholic Church in Chicago, who later apologized for his words.

"I'm Bill's wife. I'm white and this is mine. I just got to get up and step into the plate and then out of nowhere came, hey, I'm Barack Obama and she said, 'Oh damn, where did you come from? I'm white. I'm entitled. There's a black man stealing my show.'"

Many in the congregation stood and applauded Pfleger, a white priest who has spoken at the church in the past and was called a "prophetic, powerful pulpiteer" when introduced by Trinity's new pastor, the Rev. Otis Moss III.

Pfleger mocked the tears Clinton, D-N.Y., shed during the run-up to the New Hampshire primary. Wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, he added: "She wasn't the only one crying. There was a whole lot of white people crying. I'm sorry, I don't want to get you in any more trouble."

Obama, D-Ill., issued a statement expressing his disapproval of Pfleger, whose remarks have been posted on the Internet.

"As I have traveled this country, I've been impressed not by what divides us, but by all that unites us. That is why I am deeply disappointed in Father Pfleger's divisive, backward-looking rhetoric, which doesn't reflect the country I see or the desire of people across America to come together in common cause."

About a month ago, Obama declared that the controversial words of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the recently

retired pastor of Trinity, were "destructive" and contradict "everything that I'm about and who I am."

Fr. James Martin, associate editor of the Jesuit weekly, *America*, called Pfleger's words "deeply offensive" and "uncharitable" in an online column.

"Seeing a Catholic priest belittle another human being, and publicly impugn her motives, from a pulpit was shocking to many people," Martin wrote. "It seemed fundamentally wrong. And it is, for contempt has no place in Christian discourse."

Pfleger issued an apology May 29 for the remarks.

"I regret the words I chose on Sunday," he said. "These words are inconsistent with Sen. Obama's life and message, and I am deeply sorry if they offended Sen. Clinton or anyone else who saw them."

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