Archbishop George Stallings told an audience at LSU that he plans to open an Imani Temple in Baton Rouge.

Makethingshappen

Breakaway priest tells black people to take control of their destiny

By JUNE JOHNSON HALL;
Special to SATURDAY - Catholic Congregation (AACC).

There are three kinds of people in this world. Those who make things happen. Those who watch things happen. And those who wonder what happened.

Archbishop George A. Stallings, the founder of an Afrocentric form of catholicism, told a Baton Rouge audience this week that African Americans need to be making things happen.

“We need to take ownership and control over our lives,” he said. Stallings addressed an audience of about 80 people at the LSU Union Tuesday evening as a part of the LSU African-American lecture series.

Six years ago the 47-year-old Washington, D.C., priest broke away from the Roman Catholic Church to found an Afrocentric form of catholicism called the African-American Catholic Congregation (AACC).

His churches are called Imani Temples. Imani is a Swahili word for faith.

“It was literally impossible for a Eurocentric, white male, racist and sexist institution to be sensitive enough to the needs of African Americans to give them an access as well as a sense of ownership and control over their destiny,” he said.

Stallings recently moved to Lafayette as part of a campaign to establish more of his Imani Temples throughout South Louisiana.

There are temples in Lafayette, New Orleans and Opelousas. He said he plans to open a temple here next month.

AACC services infuse African elements into the traditional Mass, he said. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, AACC allows birth control, priests to marry, non-Catholics to participate in Communion and members to divorce without annulment.

Women can also become priests.

While AACC believes in the sanctity of life, it also holds that women have the right to end an unwanted pregnancy.

Stallings said the Roman Catholic church will eventually have to adapt these reforms to survive.

Stallings said many African Americans feel Christianity does not meet their spiritual needs because they believe it to be a white man's religion and therefore they have no desire to be part of it.

However, Stallings pointed out that Christianity is not white or European in its origin.

*Christianity is black. And

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Christianity, which is almost synonymous with Catholicism, was not established in Europe, but in Africa," he told the audience.

Stallings explained that Jesus Christ was not a European with blond hair, blue eyes, thin lips and a pointed nose as he is often portrayed in drawings and statues. "Jesus was black."

All religion is man- or woman-made, he said. God never created any religious institution. Therefore no one religion can claim it is the one true church. "It is the responsibility of every human being...to create a religious expression that enshrines its knowledge, its notions, its understanding of God," he said.

Stallings said that is what he did when he established the African American Catholic Congregation.

The archbishop urged the audience to take similar moral stands.

He called for the African American community to support black-owned businesses, get involved in politics and to take ownership of their communities and nation.

"It's morning in America. It's time for us to wake up," he said. "...If we wait for America to give us access it will never happen."