

Former Paraguayan bishop, now president, admits to fathering child

ASUNCION, Paraguay – Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo, the former bishop who was elected in 2008, admitted April 13 that he had fathered a child, now nearly two years old, who was born before Lugo was laicized.

In a televised statement, President Lugo said, “It is true that there was a relationship with Viviana Carrillo. I assume all responsibilities that could result from that, acknowledging paternity of the child.”

Bishop Mario Medina Salinas of San Juan de las Misiones, a member of the permanent council of the Paraguayan bishops’ conference, told the Paraguayan newspaper ABC Digital that President Lugo’s admission was an “act of courage and sincerity.”

The case came to light April 8 when two lawyers filed a paternity suit on Ms. Carrillo’s behalf. The woman distanced herself from the lawsuit later that day, but Paraguayan newspapers reported that President Lugo, 57, was a friend of her godmother’s family and had met Ms. Carrillo, now 26, 10 years ago, when she worked as a maid in her godmother’s home.

President Lugo’s political colleagues said they were blindsided by the announcement and did not know the accusations were true when they called a press conference to defend the president after the lawsuit was filed.

President Lugo resigned as bishop of San Pedro in early 2005 and worked as the principal of a school in Asuncion until December 2006, when he announced his intention to leave the priesthood and run for president. His child, a boy, was born in May 2007.

President Lugo won the presidential election in April 2008, but the Vatican did not laicize him until the end of July 2008, just two weeks before his inauguration.

Bishop Medina said that since President Lugo has been laicized there would be no

sanction from the church. Liz Torres, head of the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, called President Lugo's acknowledgment "the right thing to do" and said the next step would be for him to officially register the child as his son.

President Lugo, who was known as "the bishop of the poor," campaigned against corruption and for greater equality for the country's indigenous people and poor peasant farmers. His election broke the 60-year rule of Paraguay's Colorado Party.