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Bolivian people march under a roofed passage holding large black and orange banners

Activists in La Paz, Bolivia, protest against the Catholic Church June 2, 2023, after an investigation by a Bolivian newspaper revealed that more than 170 claims of clerical sexual abuse have surfaced since early May. (OSV News photo/Claudia Morales, Reuters)

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The mostly "silent and hidden" work of the Servants of the Paraclete, a religious order that ministers to priests and religious banned from ministry because of abuse allegations or who are experiencing other difficulties, must focus on honesty, conversion and purification, Pope Francis said.

"I invite you to deepen the spirituality of reparation, starting from the need for purification, in the service of the holiness of the pastors of the people of God," the pope told members of the order's general chapter during an audience June 24 at the Vatican.

"Duplicity," the pope said, "is not to be tolerated but brought to light, to the light of the Spirit. He alone heals us from infidelities. He alone, not other methods. The one who heals us from infidelities is the Holy Spirit."

The Servants of the Paraclete is a religious order founded in the United States in 1947 to minister "to fellow priests and religious by offering spiritual, holistic programs for vocational renewal through spiritual direction, individual and group therapy, supervised living, ongoing education and formation, prayer and contemplation," according to the order's website.

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The order's vocation, the pope said, is to serve the church by being "at the service of Christ in his priests."

"At the present time," he said, "this also means sharing in the particular journey of purification that the church is going through because of the tragedies of abuse."

Francis quoted from remarks he made to priests of the Diocese of Rome in 2019: "Sin disfigures, and we have a painful, humiliating experience of it when we ourselves or one of our brother priests or bishops falls into the bottomless pit of vice, of corruption, or even worse, of crimes that ruin the lives of others."

"In a situation like this," the pope said, "being 'servants of the Paraclete' requires you to dedicate your life to accompanying some brother priests and consecrated men by offering each one a path of asceticism, conversion and spiritual and vocational renewal."