News



Paper covers the mosaics of Fr. Marko Rupnik July 23, 2024, in the Luminous Mysteries Chapel at the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington. (OSV News/Mihoko Owada)

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Two weeks after the Vatican said its canonical criminal trial of Fr. Marko Rupnik was ongoing, OSV News has learned that 22 previously undisclosed letters from women who belonged to the Slovenian Loyola Community and described alleged abuse by the famed mosaic artist are part of the records of alleged abuse.

The letters, written in 2000 at the request of the community's superior, Sr. Ivanka Hosta, and addressed directly to Rupnik, are held in the archives of the Loyola Community, which are now in the custody of the Archdiocese of Ljubljana, Slovenia, according to people familiar with the case. In the letters, 22 women described alleged spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse by Rupnik while he was their spiritual director.

On Dec. 15, 2023, the Archdiocese of Ljubljana announced that the Vatican had ordered the Sisters of the Community of Loyola to be dissolved within one year, following a decree issued by the Vatican's Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

OSV News was told by a source close to the case that it is presumed the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith knows about the letters.

Letters written during Easter 2000 account for alleged abuse

A former Jesuit, Rupnik is accused of abusing more than two dozen women over several decades. He has denied wrongdoing. The Vatican said July 22 that reports of his acquittal circulated by an Italian website were "completely unfounded" and that "the review of the case is still ongoing."

The Holy See said the panel of judges is examining documentation from dioceses, the Jesuits, the concerned parties and the press. The Vatican has not publicly described all the evidence in the case file.

Fabrizia Raguso, a former member of the Loyola Community, said the 22 letters that account for alleged abuse were written during Easter 2000. She is the only former sister cited in the material who agreed to be identified publicly.

"During Easter 2000, Ivanka Hosta, superior of the Loyola Community, forced us to write a letter to Marko Rupnik in which we described our relationship with him, what he had done to us, and then to forgive him," Raguso told OSV News.

"The reason Ivanka gave us when she forced us to write about our experience with Rupnik," Raguso continued, "was that on the occasion of the Jubilee (of the year 2000), we needed to seek reconciliation with him; I don't know if she then had the letters delivered to Marko."

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Early complaints unheard, priest-artist enabled international career

The letters were written years after early complaints about Rupnik had reached Jesuit superiors and the late Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar of Ljubljana in the early 1990s. Rupnik was removed from the Loyola Community in 1993 and moved to Rome, where he founded Centro Aletti, or the Aletti Center, which over the years became a headquarters for the artists gathered around creating his works.

By 2000, Rupnik had gained prominence for installing a new mosaic program in the Vatican's Redemptoris Mater Chapel, a private papal chapel. He went on to create large-scale commissions at the Basilica of San Pio da Pietrelcina in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy; at the Sanctuary of Lourdes in France; the Sanctuary of Fátima in Portugal; Almudena Cathedral in Madrid; and the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington.

In late 2018, the Jesuits received an allegation that Rupnik had sacramentally absolved a woman after engaging in sexual activity with her, what canon law describes as "absolution of an accomplice" in a sin against the sixth commandment. The Jesuits' preliminary investigation found the allegation credible, and the order's leaders sent the case to what is now the DDF, which convened a penal administration process that ultimately found the priest guilty. He was briefly excommunicated in May 2020. Meanwhile, the Jesuits restricted Rupnik's ministry.

The following year, in 2021, the now-DDF notified the Jesuits of sexual and spiritual abuse allegations against Rupnik by members of the Loyola Community, which ultimately led to the Vatican trial underway.

The public only learned about the case on Dec. 18, 2022, when allegations emerged in the media, published first by Italian newspaper Domani. Around the same time, news broke about lifting Rupnik's 2020 excommunication by Pope Francis.

Accounts of spiritual and sexual abuse in previously unknown letters

Raguso is an assistant professor of psychology at the Portuguese Catholic University of Braga. While she agreed to speak publicly about the letters for the first time, she has spoken previously on behalf of other former sisters and alleged victims of Rupnik. She said she is a victim of spiritual, not sexual, abuse by the priest-artist.

She was among alleged victims who in 2023 publicly responded with shock after Pope Francis met with the leader of the Alleti Center, and days later the center revealed that an investigation by the Diocese of Rome into its affairs revealed "a healthy community life," with a final report suggesting the allegations against Rupnik had "helped those living the experience of the Aletti Center to strengthen their trust in the Lord."

Raguso and several other alleged victims of Rupnik, including Mirjam Kovac and Gloria Branciani, said at that time in an open letter to Pope Francis that "the events and communications that have taken place in recent days ... leave us speechless, without a voice to shout our consternation, our outrage."

The accounts in the 22 letters reportedly describe alleged manipulation, pressure, abuse of authority, and physical and sexual assaults. Several women allegedly described how spiritual direction and religious language were used to pressure them into actions they believed were presented as expressions of purity or God's will.

OSV News learned that the accounts include the sisters' testimonies about Rupnik allegedly using their past experiences of abuse to further abuse them.

Of the approximately 40 women in the community who were asked to write Jubilee-connected letters, 22 reported abuse, according to people familiar with the records.

Nine of those women testified in a 2021 preliminary investigation commissioned by the Jesuit order and "conducted by someone external to the Society," as reported by

the Jesuits in a Dec. 18, 2022, statement.

The preliminary investigation concluded in January 2022 "with the finding of the validity of the allegations."

The case still ongoing with little information reaching the alleged victims

In October 2022 the DDF declared that the reported facts "are to be considered statute-barred due to the expiration of the terms" and that at the time it was not possible to proceed with the trial.

Pope Francis lifted the statute of limitations in October 2023, the panel of judges for that trial was named in July 2025, and this is the trial that is ongoing today.

Raguso and other sources confirmed to OSV News the testimonies in the letters recount similar alleged abuse to the reports already publicly known from Gloria Branciani and other alleged victims who went public with their accusations.

OSV News learned about the letters two weeks after Laura Sgrò, a civil and canon lawyer representing five women who have accused Rupnik of abuse, told OSV News she and her clients had received little information about the proceedings.

In a July 21 letter to Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the DDF, Sgrò said her clients felt "abandoned and betrayed" and "victims, once again, of a system that has never welcomed, protected, or comforted them."

The Vatican responded the following day by confirming the trial was underway and describing it as judicial in nature. It also said the case is not subject to the statute of limitations for any alleged offenses.

The Jesuits expelled Rupnik in 2023 after he refused to comply with restrictions imposed in connection with allegations of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse. As of Aug. 6, 2026, Fr. Marko Rupnik is listed on the Aletti Center's website as dean of the atelier of theology.