

How Fr. Maciel built his empire

Jason Berry | Apr. 12, 2010

Legion of Christ investigation



In a file photo, Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado greets Pope John Paul II during a papal visit to Mexico City. (Notimex/Foto/Cortesia)

Second of Two Parts

Rome in 1946, following World War II, was in an economic shambles when an obscure young priest with deep pockets arrived seeking meetings with Vatican officials. The scion of a provincial Mexican aristocracy, Marcial Maciel Degollado had been a priest only two years, yet when a cameraman filmed his ordination he was already leading his own religious order, the Legion of Christ.

Maciel had gone to Rome by way of Madrid, Spain, where he sought scholarships the Franco government had offered for Latin American seminarians to study in Spain. The Spanish foreign minister, Alberto Martín Artajo, told him he needed Vatican approval for the "apostolic schoolboys" back home to qualify.

With funds from several of Mexico's wealthiest families and its president, Miguel Alemán Valdés, he wrangled a meeting with Clemente Micara, a newly named cardinal and veteran papal diplomat. Micara, 67, was obsessed with rebuilding Rome. Maciel, tall and lean with fair brown hair and searchlight eyes, spoke no Italian, but Micara spoke Spanish. Maciel gave Micara \$10,000, "a huge sum in a city reeling from the war," said a knowledgeable priest.

Related story, April 13: [Commissioner likely to oversee Legion of Christ](#) [1]

The Legion of Christ: A History, dictated by Maciel and published by a Legion imprint in 2004, doesn't mention the payment to Micara, but the book says that Maciel traveled with "a confidential document and a sum of money" from Mexico's papal nuncio for delivery to Cardinal Nicola Canali, the governor of the Vatican city-

state. The two cardinals helped Maciel gain an audience with Pope Pius XII, who proved sympathetic. Maciel went back to Madrid with letters of approval. In August 1946, Maciel and 34 apostolic schoolboys from Mexico sailed to Spain.

Why would the Holy See, with established channels to transmit documents, entrust sensitive material to a priest without diplomatic passport? The other part of the story ? "a sum of money" ? was the shape of things to come.

Maciel forced all Legionaries to take private vows, never to speak ill of Maciel or any superiors, and to report to their superiors anyone who did. The vows ensured his cult of personality. Juan Vaca and seven other early victims of Maciel who first spoke publicly, in the 1997 *Hartford Courant* report by Gerald Renner and this writer, gave graphic accounts of how, in Spain and Rome in the 1950s, they watched Maciel inject himself with a morphine painkiller called dolantin, as the drug was called at the time. In 1956, a strung-out Maciel entered Salvator Mundi Hospital in Rome. Cardinal Valerio Valeri, a reed-like former diplomat and prefect for Congregation of Religious, was furious over letters from an older seminarian in Mexico City who had seen Maciel self-inject and worried about his overly affectionate behavior with boys. The priest who ran the Legion high school was also concerned about Maciel's drug use and advances on youths. Valeri suspended Maciel and arranged for Carmelite priests to assume control of the Legion house. They began questioning the boys, who admitted years later how they lied to protect him, and themselves. "We didn't know what to do," Vaca, now a psychology professor in New York, reflected. "Our lives would have ended." They feared the investigating priests would deem *them* sinners.

Valeri did not publicize Maciel's suspension. Maciel traveled between Spain and Latin America, raising money for a big project underway in Rome: Our Lady of Guadalupe Basilica. Maciel got his break in 1959 when Pius XII died. Micara, by then the vicar of Rome, signed an order reinstating Maciel ? something for which, in the interregnum between popes, he had no authority to do. Canon law puts official duties in abeyance in the interim. What were Valeri and other officials who were offended by Maciel to do? Expend what capital they had with the new pontiff, challenging Micara over a druggie priest with a vice for boys but cash lines to build a basilica? Maciel was redeemed by an illegitimate order from a cardinal to whom he had given \$10,000 13 years before, according to a priest with access to Legion files. Micara, who had blessed the cornerstone, wanted infrastructure. Maciel had the money.

Like the captured U.S. soldiers brainwashed by Chinese communists in "The Manchurian Candidate," a Cold War film, the seminarians from Mexico carried traumatic scars of Maciel's psychological tyranny for decades. Unlike the movie characters, Maciel's victims never forgot. In 1998, José Barba, a Mexico City college professor and former Legion seminarian with Vaca, went to Rome with another of the original victims and filed a canon law appeal in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then under Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, requesting a Vatican prosecution of Maciel.

Targeting women of wealth

Maciel's financial strategy targeted the wives of wealthy men. A crucial supporter was Flora Barragán, the widow of an industrialist in Mexico's steel-producing city of Monterrey. After Barragán's death, her daughter told Barba that she had donated \$50 million to the Legion. Barba, who teaches at the Autonomous Technical Institute of Mexico, said that he cannot verify the \$50 million figure but said "Flora's support was substantial."

Barba entered the Legion in 1948, at 11, and left in 1962. He earned a doctorate at Harvard in Latin American literature.

"Maciel was in the habit of buying things in cash," Barba told *NCR* during a March 4 interview in Mexico City.

Barba continued: "Maciel was 27 when he purchased the [first seminary] estate. In 1950 he began construction

on the Instituto Cumbres, the first prep school, in Mexico City, the land for which Flora provided. That summer he also inaugurated Collegio Massimo in Rome. He was 30. In 1953 he tried to start construction of a college in Salamanca. I was there," said Barba. "The bishop was sick; he failed to lay the cornerstone. He began the work in 1954 and completed it five years later. It was also in 1954 that he [Maciel] purchased the old spa in Ontenada, Spain, which had its own lake, for another seminary. Again, he paid cash. Fr. Gregorio López, a Legion priest, told me he delivered the money, wrapped in thin paper, to Leopoldo Corinez," who represented the family that owned the property. "I do not know the exact amount."

In 1958 he built a seminary in Salamanca, Spain, thanks to the largesse of Josefita Pérez Jiménez, the daughter of a former Venezuelan dictator.

Maciel reaped lasting dividends in Monterrey with the Garza-Sada families. The dynasty dates to 1890, when Isaac Garza and his brother-in-law, Francisco Sada, opened a brewery. Isaac's sons, Eugenio and Roberto Garza Sada, both graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, built a bottling factory in 1943. As they branched into other industries, the Garza brothers founded a university, TEC ? the Technical Institute of Superior Studies in Monterrey.

Maciel launched private schools in Monterrey, one for boys, one for girls. He exported to America a model for prep schools to attract well-heeled families who would join Regnum Christi, which organized study groups to discuss Maciel's letters. Lay celibates, the highest level of Regnum Christi members, live in communities and work relentlessly on fundraising. The Web site www.Life-after-rc.com [2], run by a former Regnum Christi leader, documents the cult-like dynamics with messages of people who have lost loved ones to "the Movement."

Monterrey was Maciel's financial springboard. After Dionisio Garza died in 1991, his wife and several of his children donated to the Legion. Media reports have likened the Garza family wealth to that of the Rockefellers.

"One of my aunts gave Maciel a house," said Roberta Garza, 44, the youngest of the eight siblings, and editor of *Milenio* newspaper's magazine in Mexico City. In a March 2 interview in Mexico, she described her late father as "a conservative Victorian gentleman, incredibly well loved. Our family rarely watched TV. We came together after dinner and we talked."

After the patriarch's death, Maciel courted the widow for support. "My mother gave him jewels and a lot of money," said Roberta Garza. Her mother, now quite aged, "never learned about his kids. He targeted women in Mexico of a certain class who were not allowed to work. I had to fight to go to college. For cultured women who were bored, Maciel offered a sense of purpose."

Roberta Garza studied as a boarder at Catholic schools in France and Germany, reading voraciously, "developing a critical mind that got me into trouble back in Monterrey." She returned in 1980 for a Legion high school but found it "rigid, highly traditional, and not analytical. One of my in-laws had a daughter who was not learning English. She complained to the Legionary priest. He actually told her: 'The final judgment will not be in English.'

"They were grooming us for Regnum Christi ? the Movement. If your family had money, power, influence, they wanted you. They kept telling me, 'God gave you everything, you must give back by fighting the forces of evil.' ? Their whole discourse was this paradise of moral rectitude. After France, where I could think freely, I was crying every night, thinking this is my family, my home, I don't want to be here. I almost cracked up."

Two of her siblings joined the Movement. Paulina, now in her 50s, is a Regnum Christi consecrated woman in Rome. A brother, Fr. Luis Garza Medina, graduated from Stanford University in California in 1978 with a degree in industrial engineering and entered the Legion. At 32 he became vicar general, the second highest position. Through the two siblings, Maciel secured a continuing flow of money from the family. Fr. Garza

donated \$3 million of his inheritance to the Legion, according to a colleague at the time. In an e-mail exchange, Fr. Garza would neither confirm nor deny the amount or the donation.

Today, the Garza family is splintered. "One of my brothers hates the Legion more than I do," said Roberta Garza, who abandoned religion after college.

The eldest sibling, Dionisio Garza Medina ? paternal namesake and CEO of Alfa, the multinational founded by the grandfather ? told *The Wall Street Journal*: "The Legion is the only Mexican multinational in the world of religion."

When the Garza siblings gather as a family, they use good manners to avoid discussing the Legion. At Christmas 2009, she said, Luis hung his head, and to Roberta seemed deeply depressed.

In an exchange of several e-mails, Fr. Garza refused to answer questions.

Flashpoint of the scandal

Mexico City has become the flashpoint in the deepening Legion scandal. The catalyst in both the media coverage and the legal saga is attorney José Bonilla.

The revolution in his life began in 2006 when he sued the Legion for the sexual abuse of his 5-year-old son by a lay teacher at the Legion's Oxford School in Mexico City. The boy told his mother that a male teacher had bitten his penis. After getting the child medical care, Bonilla and his wife, Lisset Aldrete, also a lawyer, met with the principal. He said the principal took no action. They filed criminal charges against the teacher, Joaquín Francisco Mondragón Rebollo, who disappeared and is a fugitive from justice. The family has won initial rounds in a civil case against the Legion school, said Bonilla.

Bonilla, 50, earned his bachelor's and law degrees from the Jesuit-run Ibero-American University in Mexico City. Sitting in a sun-dappled parlor, he spoke tenderly of his child (the youngest of five). Bonilla's blog ? conlajusticia.wordpress.com [3] ? is a moral excavation of the Legion. "The blog," he said, "is how Raúl found me."

Raúl -- José Raúl González Lara, 29, the Maciel middle son -- asked Bonilla for legal help against the Legion. After his father's death, priests at Anáhuac, the Legion's flagship university in Mexico City, guided Raúl to a trust account Maciel supposedly established for the family, but it was empty, said Bonilla.

"The Legion gave Raúl a copy of a trust they told him was taken away from Norma [the daughter in Spain]," said Bonilla. He believes the Legion officials in Mexico were trying to make the half-siblings get into a legal conflict over Maciel's estate. Raúl's efforts for a family settlement failed.

On March 3, the family did a one-hour interview on MVS Radio with Carmen Aristegui, who also hosts a CNN Mexico newsmaker show. Aristegui won a Columbia University 2008 Maria Moors Cabot Prize. (Disclosure: Aristegui did the Spanish narration for my film "Vows of Silence.") The radio program, simulcast on video and posted on YouTube, made international news. Raúl; his mother, Blanca Lara Gutiérrez; and his brother, Omar, 33, spoke traumatically of life with Maciel.

Bonilla's interview adds additional details of the family history.

In 1977, Blanca, 19, was working in Tijuana as a domestic when she met "Raúl Rivas," 57, a self-described widower and international detective for oil companies. Despite his travels, he wooed her by buying a house in Cuernavaca, a colonial town outside Mexico City. Though they didn't marry, he became adoptive father of her 3-

year-old son, Omar, from a previous relationship. Bonilla said that the adoption paper and the birth certificates for their natural sons, Raúl, and Christian, now 17, are "legally a mess. Maciel made up his name and gave it to the younger boys." He was away long stretches as the boys grew. But Blanca Gutiérrez, who grew up poor, had a house and income. "I loved him very much," she told Aristegui. "I never suspected."

On the program, Raúl bristled: "When I was 7 years old, I was lying down with him like any boy, any son with his father. He pulled down my pants and tried to rape me."

Self-effacing in Cuernavaca, careful to not be photographed, "Rivas" began taking Omar and Raúl on trips to Europe, molesting them between the ages of 8 and 14. "As teenagers they began pushing him off," said Bonilla.

A few years after buying the house for Blanca, Maciel met Norma Hilda Baños, in Acapulco. In 1987, age 26, she had his child, also named Norma Hilda. What little is known of them comes from Spanish reporters Idoia Sota and José M. Vidal, who located them in an upscale Madrid apartment building, eliciting brief comments for an article last year in *El Mundo*. "When I met this man I was underaged," the mother, Norma Hilda Baños, identified as 48, is quoted. "Neither my daughter nor I knew who this man really was until the very end." The daughter "was abused by her father, Maciel," the mother is quoted in *El Mundo*. "She suffers from severe trauma from her childhood and I don't believe she is ever going to get over it."

The article said that Maciel left Baños "two homes in her name in the exclusive Madrid building where she lives and three [other] places, all valued at about 2 million euros."

According to the Spanish reporters, Maciel also had three children with another Mexican woman, who now lives in Switzerland, which would make six natural children by three women, and the adoptive Omar as a seventh.

When Raúl was 6, Maciel sent him to boarding school in Ireland for several years. In 1991, when Raúl was 10 and Norma 4, Maciel took them to the Vatican; they received Communion from Pope John Paul II, according to Bonilla. His Web site has a photograph of the two children holding hands with a Swiss Guard. Many priests and bishops have taken children to meet the pope. More interesting is how Maciel got them to receive Communion. Presenting his children to John Paul suggests a reckless cynicism in Maciel's behavior, gambling with his public image as a priest by showcasing the progeny of his private life, putting both of his lives on simultaneous display.

In America the major media ignored the Feb. 23, 1997, *Courant* investigation until the 2002 Boston scandal. But in Mexico, a daily paper ran a series and a cable TV station did a documentary. In spring 1997, Maciel called Raúl, 16, and told him to buy up all available copies of *Contenido* magazine and get rid of them. On the cover, Raúl saw his father in a Roman collar with a different name. The older boys refused to let Christian, 4, be alone with their father. As Maciel became more distant, he still supported them financially, said Bonilla.

About that time, Maciel moved Norma and 10-year-old Normita to Spain. Within a year or so, he sent Raúl to live with them for several months as the teenage boy saw a psychotherapist for issues caused by incest and discovery of his father-as-Father.

Both families had to keep the secrets for financial survival.

Several years ago, said attorney Bonilla, Normita, the daughter, studied at Anáhuac University in Mexico City. "The Legion knew who she was," insisted Bonilla.

"I don't know whether that's true or not," said Legion spokesman Jim Fair. "We wouldn't comment on former students, if they were former students. You'd have to get that from her."

The day after the Rivas family's radio interview, the Legion released a Jan. 5 letter that rebuffed Raúl's demand for \$26 million, for which he had reputedly promised silence in return. Bonilla withdrew as legal counsel, citing professional ethics over a client bargaining silence for money. He has 70 other clients who were abused or have children who were abused, not just by religious figures. As the Legion engages in a financial chess game with Raúl, his demand for the family's compensation has become a Vatican issue. In November, Bonilla and the family met with Bishop Ricardo Watty, the Mexican visitor in the Legion investigation. "I have met with Watty twice," Bonilla told NCR. "He was very concerned about the children not having support. He tried to bring the parties together to resolve this. I saw him as having instructions from the pope or [Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio] Bertone to solve the problem."



Sodano, the patron in Rome

The centerpiece of Maciel's plan to secure his legacy in Rome was the Legion's university, Regina Apostolorum, where Harvard Law Professor Mary Ann Glendon, the former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, taught courses. She has been an advisor to the Legion, which has expanded in America with the University of Sacramento in California.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state from 1990 to 2006, was a pivotal figure in the university's growth in Rome.

Maciel and Sodano forged a friendship in Chile in the 1980s during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. The Legion needed Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez's permission to function. Haunted by the regime's torturing and abducting of people, Silva had a tense relationship with Sodano, who as papal nuncio appeared on TV in support of Pinochet. Several Chilean bishops implored Silva not to admit Maciel's group, which had a tainted reputation as "*millonarios de Cristo*" for their obsessions with fundraising. "In a society as polarized as Chile," Andrea Insunza and Javier Ortega wrote in a book on the Legion in Chile, "the Legionaries found a key ally: the apostolic nuncio, Angelo Sodano." Silva approved the Legionaries' presence in Chile.

Back to Rome in 1989, Sodano, in preparing to become secretary of state, took English lessons at a Legion center in Dublin, Ireland. He vacationed at a Legion villa in Southern Italy. An honored guest at Legion dinners and banquets, Sodano became Maciel's biggest supporter. Glenn Favreau, a Washington, D.C., attorney and former Legionary in Rome, said: "Sodano intervened with Italian officials to get zoning variances to build the university" on a wooded plateau of western Rome. Maciel hired Sodano's nephew, Andrea Sodano, as a building consultant. Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum is the name of the complex.

But Legionaries overseeing the project complained to Maciel that Andrea Sodano's work was late and poorly done; they were reluctant to pay his invoices. To them, Maciel yelled: "Pay him! You pay him!"

Andrea Sodano was paid.

In 2008, a flashy Italian businessman, Raffaello Follieri, was indicted in New York on fraud and money-laundering charges for his business that bought shuttered church properties and parishes for commercial resale. Andrea Sodano was Follieri Group's vice president. Cardinal Sodano attended the company's 2004 launch party in New York, accorded to press reports. As NCR reported March 3, 2006, the firm's literature trumpeted its "deep commitment to the Catholic church and its long-standing relationship with senior members of the Vatican hierarchy."

After the company secured major backing from billionaire Ron Burkle's Yucaipa development company, Follieri spent wildly on his jet-set romance with movie star Anne Hathaway. As the Follieri-Yucaipa partnership found properties, Follieri sent payments to Andrea Sodano's office in Italy by bank wire transfer.

Documents obtained by the FBI show that Follieri fabricated backdated invoices from Sodano to justify a two-month flurry of payments in 2005 that Follieri had already obtained from the investors. These included: \$75,000 on Aug. 22, for "Engineering Services"; a Sept. 12 invoice for \$15,000 for work in Atlantic City, N.J., and \$80,000 in Orland Park in the Chicago archdiocese; Oct. 21, for \$70,000 in Canyon City (no state given in the invoice); another \$50,000 for Orland Park; and \$75,000 for unspecified "Engineering Services," making a tidy \$225,000 net on that single day. None of the single-page invoices has a paragraph on work done.

In the weekly conference calls with Burkle's company, Follieri escalated his request for funds to pay Sodano, stressing that the Vatican needed the engineering reports in order to grant approval for the sales of church property. Yucaipa paid \$800,000 to that end, with Follieri providing fabricated, backdated invoices to document payments purportedly made to Andrea Sodano.

On March 8, 2006 ? two months before Maciel was banished from the priesthood ? Cardinal Sodano sent a letter of complaint to Follieri. "I feel it is my duty to tell you how perturbed I am," he wrote, "to hear that your company continues to present itself as having ties to 'the Vatican,' due to the fact that my nephew, Andrea, has agreed on some occasion to provide you with professional consulting services. I do not know how this distressing misunderstanding could have occurred, but it is necessary now to avoid such confusion in the future. I do, therefore, appeal to your sensibility to be careful with respect to this matter. I shall accordingly inform my nephew Andrea as well as anyone else who has asked me for information regarding your firm. I take this opportunity to send you my regards."

The letter came just after [NCR's report](#) [4] by Joe Feuerherd that quoted an unnamed religious order official on Follieri Group saying, "This thing smells."

As Andrea Sodano was promoting the business, Cardinal Sodano ? having lent his sacred office to handshakes and chatting up potential backers at the Follieri Group's launch ? began backpedaling. Follieri had begun bragging to potential investors that he was the chief financial officer of the Vatican. Nevertheless, four months after the cardinal's letter, Raffaello and Andrea Sodano flew to Latin America on a property-scouting trip. Follieri handed a check for \$25,000 to one archbishop and a check for \$85,000 to another archbishop. "The recipients of these donations did not know that Follieri had stolen the money to give to them," states an FBI sentencing memorandum on the Follieri case.

In spring of 2007, Burkle wanted to see the engineering reports. Follieri made a secretary stay up all night writing the reports, which he backdated and disgorged to Burkle's people.

"The reports were in Italian," explains FBI agent Theodore Cacioppi. "Each one was about two to five pages long. None of them contained any schematics, technical drawings, diagrams, or anything that appeared to relate to engineering." The reports "were almost worthless, did not reflect any engineering work, and were certainly not worth over \$800,000."

Burkle's Yucaipo Companies had its own investors, notably the New York State Common Retirement Fund, the California Teachers' Retirement Fund and California Public Employees' Retirement Fund. Yucaipo sued Follieri for \$1.3 million. Follieri scrambled to repay the partnership, but was indicted.

On Oct. 23, 2008, he pleaded guilty to 14 counts of wire fraud, money-laundering and conspiracy, and is now serving 54 months in a federal prison.

"We believe Studio Sodano [Andrea's corporate name] took in fraudulently earned money," stated Cacioppi. "We considered these people unindicted co-conspirators."

Cacioppi continued, "We did not need to put those people on the stand. We did get intimations from the State Department that they were not inclined to talk with us. As a matter of resource allocation it was not worth trying to get them."

Andrea Sodano was safely back in Italy at the time of Follieri's arrest. The government document that accuses him of receiving payments also says that the Vatican itself received "donations" from Follieri's scam, an assertion that raises a question about Cardinal Sodano's judgment. What explains his trust in a flimflam man like Follieri?

The government sentencing memorandum on Follieri by the U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, further explained: "Follieri created the false impressions that he had ties to the Vatican, which enabled him to obtain church properties at below-market values, through his relationship with Andrea Sodano, the nephew ("Nephew") of the then-Secretary of State of the Vatican Cardinal Angelo Sodano ? and making unauthorized donations to the Vatican with investor money. Follieri misused investor funds to pay the Nephew for 'engineering' services that the Nephew never performed so that the Nephew could travel with Follieri when visiting church officials and help Follieri obtain access to the grounds of the Vatican. It was through this connection that Follieri was able to attend one of the Pope's services and, along with many others, get his picture taken with the Pope ? show the private gardens of the Vatican to Follieri's friends and associates, and arrange for guided tours of a museum at the Vatican."

The sentencing memorandum continues: "Follieri also falsely represented that he needed over \$800,000 to pay for the engineering reports prepared by the Nephew. Follieri claimed that the Vatican needed to review these engineering reports before Vatican could make any decision about whether to sell the properties to Follieri."

While Follieri found a friend in Andrea Sodano, Maciel had found one in Andrea's uncle, the cardinal. But Maciel's resource allocation ran into problems with the building of the university, Regina Apostolorum. He was hungry for Vatican approval for the highest level of recognition as a full pontifical academy, to put the freshly minted university on equal footing with the much older Lateran and Gregorian universities in Rome. To secure that standing, sources told NCR, the Legion in 1999 offered a Mercedes Benz to the late Cardinal Pio Laghi, who was prefect of Congregation for Catholic Education (and former papal ambassador to the United States). Appalled, Laghi rejected the offer, according to a priest who witnessed the exchange.

Laghi's successor, Polish Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, refused the authorization too. Cardinal Sodano secured a status below the prestigious level Maciel and the Legion had sought.

Maciel died in a surreal drama where his life pieces converged with shuddering fall. In late January 2008, he was in a hospital in Miami, according to a Jan. 31, 2010 report by reporters Sota and Vidal of *El Mundo*. Although the article (available in English on exlcblog.com [5]) is layered in opinion about Maciel's character, it provides a detailed look at the crisis he created for his followers. In the hospital gathered Alvaro Corcuera, Maciel's successor as director general; the Legion's general secretary, Evarista Sada; and numerous other associates. Maciel reportedly refused to make a confession, stirring such concerns that someone summoned an exorcist, though the article does not describe a ritual. The men around Maciel were jarred when two women appeared: Norma the mother, and Normita, 23. At that point, Maciel reportedly said of the Normas: "I want to stay with them."

The *El Mundo* article continues:

The Legionary priests, alarmed by Maciel's attitude, called Rome. [Fr.] Luis Garza knew right away that this was a grave problem. He consulted with the highest authority, Alvaro Corcuera, and then hopped on the first plane to Miami and went directly to the hospital.

[Garza's] indignation could be read on his face. He faced the once-powerful founder and threatened him: "I will give you two hours to come with us or I will call all the press and the whole world will find out who you really are." And Maciel let his arm be twisted.

After the priests got Maciel to a Legion house in Jacksonville, Fla., he reportedly grew belligerent when Corcuera tried to anoint him, yelling, "I said no!" The article says Maciel refused to make a final confession, and states flatly that he "did not believe in God's pardon."

That is an opinion that Maciel's sordid life might well support, but for which, in fact, we have no proof. In announcing his ascent to heaven, immediately following Maciel's 2008 death, the Legion high command took propaganda to a level beyond category.

Luis Garza, in a March 15, 2010, e-mail response to an NCR request for comment on the *El Mundo* article, replied as follows: "I understand that you have many questions. But as I said in my earlier mail, at this point in time with the situation as it is, there really isn't more I can provide. I am sorry.

"I will continue to pray for all who suffered from Fr. Maciel's actions. And I hope you and your readers will keep us in their prayers. I pray for you and your mission as a journalist."

[Jason Berry is author of *Lead Us Not into Temptation* and other books. His film *Vows of Silence* explores the Vatican investigation of Maciel. An investigative grant from The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute supported research for this article. www.VowsofSilenceFilm.com.]

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