

Pope meets with investigators of disgraced Legion

Francis X. Rocca Religion News Service | Apr. 30, 2010

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI met on Friday (April 30) with the leaders of a Vatican investigation of the Legion of Christ, a conservative Catholic movement whose founder fathered at least one illegitimate child and sexually abused minors.

Five prelates from Europe and the Americas, including Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, met with Benedict to discuss the results of their probe into the Legion, also known as the Legionaries of Christ, which began in July 2009 and concluded last March.

The investigation was prompted by revelations last year that the Rev. Marcel Maciel, founder of the Legion, had fathered an illegitimate daughter.

Controversy around Maciel dates at least as far back as 1997, when nine former Legionaries accused him of sexually abusing them decades earlier, while they were studying to become priests under his authority.

Maciel was not disciplined during the reign of Pope John Paul II, who favored the Legion and its lay arm Regnum Christi.

But in 2006, under Benedict, the Vatican announced that Maciel had been ordered to lead a "life reserved to prayer and penitence, renouncing all public ministry."

In an interview published Thursday in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, the Legion's No. 2 official said that he learned about Maciel's daughter only in 2006.

The Legion continued to honor Maciel in its official literature and to deny the allegations against him until last year.

Earlier this year, two Mexican men also stepped forward to claim that Maciel was their father.

The Legion claims to have 800 priests and more than 2,500 seminarians in 21 countries, including the United States. Regnum Christi claims 70,000 lay members in 45 countries.

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