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# Vatican to appoint new leadership to overhaul Legionaires

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Maciel with Pope John Paul II

The Vatican May 1 released a comminque summarizing the results of a year-long investigation of the Legionaries of Christ, indicating that Pope Benedict XVI will shortly appoint a special delegate to lead the order and a commission to review its founding documents.

The language of today's statement is remarkably blunt, referring to a "system of power" created by the founder of the Legionaries, Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, designed to hide "true crimes" and a private life "without scruples or authentic religious sentiment." The statement indicated that the Legionaries must follow a "path of purification," including a "sincere encounter" with victims of sexual abuse inside and outside the order.

After years of denial, the Legionaries have recently been forced to acknowledge that Maciel lived a double life, including having a child out of wedlock with a woman with whom he was in a long-term relationship and to whom he provided financial support. Maciel has also been accused of sexual abuse of former members of the order.

The Vatican statement expressed Pope Benedict's gratitude for the "courage and steadfastness" of those who brought charges against Maciel over the years.

The following is an NCR translation of the Vatican communique, released this afternoon Rome time in Italian.

COMMUNIQUE OF THE HOLY SEE

1. From April 30 to May 1, the Cardinal Secretary of State presided over a meeting in the Vatican with the five bishops who had been charged with carrying out the Apostolic Visitation of the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ (Archbishop Ricardo Blázquez Pérez of Valladolid, Spain; Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, Colorado; Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati Andrello of Concepción, Chile; Bishop Giuseppe Versaldi of Alessandria, Italy; and Bishop Ricardo Watty Urquidi of Tepic, Mexico).

The prefects of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and the substitute for General Affairs of the Secretary of State, also took part in the meeting.

One of the sessions took place in the presence of the Holy Father, to whom the Visitors presented a synthesis of their presentations, which had already been sent in.

In the course of those visits, more than 1,000 Legionaries were met, and hundreds of written testimonies were evaluated. The Visitors went to virtually all the religious houses and many of the apostolic works directed by the congregation. They listened, either in person or in written form, to the judgments of many diocesan bishops in countries in which the congregation works. The Visitors also met numerous members of the ?Regnum Christi? movement, even though it was not the object of the visit, in particular consecrated men and women. They also received considerable correspondence from laity involved in the movement and from the families of members. The five Visitors testified to the sincere welcome they received, and the spirit of active cooperation demonstrated by the congregation and by the individual religious. Although the Visitors acted independently, they arrived at an amply convergent evaluation and a shared judgment. They attested that they had met a great number of exemplary, honest religious, full of talent, many of them young, who seek Christ with authentic zeal and who offer the whole of their existence for the diffusion of the Kingdom of God.

2. The Apostolic Visit was able to determine that the conduct of Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado has caused serious consequences in the life and the structure of the Legion, which requires a path of profound revision. The extremely grave and objectively immoral behavior of Fr. Maciel, which has been confirmed by irrefutable testimony, takes the form of true crimes and demonstrates a private life without scruples or authentic religious sentiment. That life was hidden from the great majority of Legionaries, above all because of a system of relationships constructed by Fr. Maciel, who was adept at creating alibis for himself and winning the trust, confidence and silence of those around him, reinforcing his role as a charismatic founder.
By discrediting and pushing away those who doubted the correctness of his behavior, as well as through a mistaken desire not to undercut the good he was doing for the Legion, they created a mechanism of defense around [Maciel] that made him immune to attack for a long time, consequently making an awareness of his real life extremely difficult.

3. The sincere zeal of the majority of the Legionaries, which also emerged during the visits to the houses of the congregation and their many works, which are widely appreciated, caused many in the past to believe that the accusations ? which gradually became more insistent, surfacing here and there ? could only be calumnies.

For that reason, the discovery and realization of the truth about the founder has provoked among the members of the Legion surprise, upset, and profound sorrow, which were distinctly manifested to the Visitors.
4. From the results of the Apostolic Visit, the following points, among others, have emerged with clarity:

a) The necessity to redefine the charism of the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, preserving the true nucleus, that of being a ?Militia Christi,? which distinguishes the apostolic and missionary action of the Church, and which is not identified with efficiency at any cost;
b) The necessity to review the exercise of authority, which must be connected to truth, in order to respect conscience and to develop it in light of the Gospel as authentic ecclesial service;
c) The necessity to preserve the enthusiasm of the faith of the young, the missionary zeal, the apostolic dynamism, through an adequate formation. In fact, delusion about the founder could call into question the vocation, and that nucleus of a charism, which belongs to the Legionaries of Christ and is rightfully theirs.

5. The Holy Father wants to reassure all the Legionaries and the members of the ?Regnum Christi? movement that they will not be left alone: The Church has a firm determination to accompany them, and to help them in the path of purification which awaits them. This path also implies a sincere encounter with all those, inside and outside of the Legion, who have been victims of sexual abuse and of the system of power put in place by the founder. The thoughts and prayers of the Holy Father are with these victims right now, together with gratitude

for all those who, despite great difficulties, had the courage and the steadfastness to insist upon the truth.
6. The Holy Father, in thanking the Visitors for the delicate work they performed with competence, generosity and deep pastoral sensitivity, has taken it upon himself to indicate very soon the form this ?accompanying? will take, beginning with the appointment of a Delegate and a commission of study of the order?s constitution.

For the consecrated members of the ?Regnum Christi? movement, who insistently asked for it, the Holy Father will send a Visitor.

7. Finally, the Holy Father renews his encouragement for all the Legionaries of Christ, their families, and the laity involved in the ?Regnum Christi? movement, in this difficult moment for the Congregation and for each of them. He exhorts them to not lose sight that their vocation ? which comes from the call of Christ, and which is animated by the ideal of giving witness of his love to the world ? is an authentic gift of God, a richness for the Church, and is the indestructible foundation upon which to build their personal future and that of the Legion.

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