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## Mahony backlash reaches Italy

by John L. Allen Jr.

NCR Today

Conclave 2013

**Rome** — Fairly or not, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles has become the latest symbol of the Catholic church's failures on the child sexual abuse scandals, and like Cardinal Bernard Law in 2005, his participation in the looming papal election is stirring controversy.

Spokespersons both in the Vatican and in Los Angeles have said Mahony will take part in the conclave, insisting it's not a personal choice but a duty of office that comes with being a cardinal and that only grave health problems could relieve him from fulfilling it.

That, however, has not stopped a backlash from forming in various quarters. Today it reached Italy, with *Famiglia Cristiana*, a newsmagazine published by the Paolini fathers with one of the largest circulations in the country, splashing "the Mahony case" on the cover and launching an online poll asking readers whether Mahony should stay away.

Unsurprisingly, the "stay home" vote took a strong early lead.

The following are some of the reader comments posted on the *Famiglia Cristiana* website, with English translations by *NCR*.

*Io so solo che Pietro rinnegò Gesù, pianse amaramente, non fu cacciato dagli altri 10. Dipende da lui, se veramente si è pentito ... .Io, personalmente lo dimostrerei coi fatti ... tornerei a vivere come i primi cristiani nei primi 2 secoli dopo Cristo. ("I only know that Peter denied Jesus, wept bitterly, and was not kicked out by the other ten. It depends on him, if he is truly sorry ... Personally, I would show [sorrow] with my deeds ... I would go back to live like the early Christians in the first two centuries after Christ.")*

*mi sembra inconcepibile che non senta il dovere morale di astenersi dal conclave. la sua partecipazione arrecherebbe ulteriore scandalo ai più piccoli, ai deboli, agli indifesi. dovrebbe restare a casa sua, a*

*pregare.* ("It seems inconceivable to me that he doesn't feel the moral duty to abstain from the conclave. His participation would cause further scandal to the little ones, to the weak, to the defenseless. He should stay at home, and pray.")

*Il solo fatto che si ponga la questione dimostra quanto poco sia stato fatto nella nostra Chiesa da Chi avrebbe dovuto.* ("The very fact that the question is being asked demonstrates how little has been done in our church by those who should have done it.")

*Non può assolutamente partecipare e dovrebbe essere destituito da ogni suo incarico, se non lo fa da solo lo deve fare qualcun altro.* ("He absolutely cannot participate and should be removed from all his positions, and if he doesn't do it himself it should be done by someone else.")

*Mi sembra logico che debba rinunciare ... non è nella grazia di dio per poter eleggere il papa ! Deve rinunciare!!! a tutti i costi ... e vi scrive un cattolico praticante!!!* ("It seems logical to me he should renounce [the conclave] ... it's not a grace from God to be able to elect the pope! He must renounce! At all costs ... I write as a practicing Catholic.")

*Si, dovrebbe rinunciare al Conclave. E, forse, non lui soltanto ... Ma non c'è un'invocazione "preventiva" allo Spirito, perché illumini le coscienze? Dopo questo gesto di Benedetto (che dice, senza possibilità di dubbio, chi è il solo Signore da cui TUTTO dipende) nulla nella Chiesa potrà continuare allo stesso modo. Amo QUESTA Chiesa, che mostra finalmente un "volto conciliare".* ("Yes, he should renounce the conclave. And, perhaps, not just him ... Isn't there a 'preventive' invocation of the Spirit, so that the conscience will be illuminated? After this gesture of Benedict (which says, without the possibility of doubt, that it's only the Lord upon whom EVERYTHING depends) nothing in the church can go on in the same way. I love THIS church, which is finally showing a 'conciliar face.' ")

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