

Legionaries, Regnum Christi members begin novena of atonement, healing

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | May. 29, 2013
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As the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi prepare for a new beginning after a Vatican-ordered reform, the groups are asking members to participate in a novena of atonement and healing in the aftermath of their founder's misconduct.

"In each of us, the healing process has been and continues to be deeply personal," said a letter signed by Legionary Fr. Sylvester Heereman, acting superior; Gloria Rodriguez, director of the consecrated women's branch of Regnum Christi; and Jorge Lopez, director of the consecrated men's branch of Regnum Christi.

The general chapter of the Legionaries and the general assemblies of Regnum Christi's male and female branches are likely to be held early in 2014, bringing the election of new superiors and the adoption of new constitutions and statutes, the three leaders said in a letter Tuesday to members.

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI ordered the reform and reorganization of Regnum Christi and the Legionaries after revelations that their founder, the late Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, had fathered children and sexually abused seminarians.

The three leaders told members: "We have to bear the wounds of a painful institutional past, above all the feeling of a broken fatherhood and the pain associated with the human errors that have been committed and that have made us suffer."

As Regnum Christi and the Legionaries move toward adopting their new constitutions and norms and return to a more normal way of working, they must prepare with prayer, the leaders said, suggesting the prayer begin with the May 29-June 7 novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Members want to prepare for the feast of the Sacred Heart "by making atonement for our offenses against love, and consoling and accompanying the heart of Jesus," the leaders said. And they want to prepare for the chapter and assemblies with "a journey of conversion" in order to know Christ's will better and to put it into practice.

"The renewal of the Legion and Regnum Christi in holiness depends upon our capacity of living up to the truth in our own lives and of being open to embracing the grace of conversion to the heart of Jesus," they said.

Pope Francis met privately Monday with Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, whom Pope Benedict had appointed in 2010 to oversee the reform of the Legionaries and Regnum Christi.

A statement on the Legionaries' website said, "During the 45-minute meeting, Cardinal De Paolis updated Pope Francis on the different steps of the path that the Legion and Regnum Christi have undertaken" and on the work of drafting the new constitutions of the Legion of Christ.

The cardinal also "informed the pope that he foresees the need for a specific statute, or rule, for Regnum Christi that would regulate the life of the members and their relationship with the Legion," which had exercised almost complete control over the lay branch. "This statute will also have to be approved by the general chapter of the Legion, by the general assemblies of the consecrated men and women and by an assembly of the entire movement," the statement said.

It added, however, that "the whole outcome of the journey of renewal that Regnum Christi and the Legion of Christ have undertaken" under the guidance of De Paolis "will be presented to the Holy Father, who will have the final say."

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