

Legionaries adopt new constitutions; papal delegate ends oversight

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Feb. 26, 2014
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Celebrating the closing Mass for the extraordinary general chapter of the Legionaries of Christ and ending his service as papal delegate overseeing the order, Cardinal Velasio De Paolis told the priests that the Lord had healed their order and reaffirmed his love for them.

With the adoption of a new constitution, the election of new officers and a statement of apology to the victims of the orders' founder, the late Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, "the Legionaries have been reconciled with themselves, with their history, with the world and with the church," De Paolis said in a homily Tuesday.

De Paolis was appointed to oversee the reform of the Legionaries in 2010 after the Vatican announced Maciel had been guilty of "seriously and objectively immoral behavior" and "real crimes," including the sexual abuse of boys in his seminaries.

In his homily, he said, "great strides have been made in the issue regarding the founder and his personal life on the one hand, and on the other, the evaluation of the congregation that recognizes that it was founded by him."

Members of the general chapter had issued a statement Feb. 6 expressing "deep sorrow" for Maciel's "reprehensible and objectively immoral behavior" and regret that it had taken them so long to reach out to and apologize to his victims.

The statement also "affirms that the personal behavior of the founder cannot be seen as personal faults of the other Legionaries, as if they should be held responsible for his actions," the cardinal said at Mass. "Rather, the Legion itself can be seen as a victim of the founder's wrongful actions."

The new constitutions, which will be sent to Pope Francis for approval, explain "the charism and spirituality, the spiritual patrimony and the identity" of the Legionaries of Christ and "the norms necessary to conserve and promote them," the cardinal said.

De Paolis said the 61 chapter delegates, who came from 11 countries, "renewed their 'yes' to their Legionary vocation" and, in doing so, "they have been freed of the burden that weighed on their backs."

He told the chapter members, "Raise up a hymn of thanksgiving to the mercy of God who has tended your wounds, who has healed you and who has once again affectionately reaffirmed the love he first had for you."

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