

Ex-Nuncio Accuses Pope Francis of Failing to Act on McCarrick's Abuse

In a written testimony, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò claims Pope Francis withdrew sanctions against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick.

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*In an extraordinary 11-page written testament, a former apostolic nuncio to the United States has accused several senior prelates of complicity in covering up **Archbishop Theodore McCarrick's** allegations of sexual abuse, and has claimed that **Pope Francis** knew about sanctions imposed on then-Cardinal McCarrick by **Pope Benedict XVI** but chose to repeal them.*

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, 77, who served as apostolic nuncio in Washington D.C. from 2011 to 2016, said that in the late 2000s, Benedict had “imposed on Cardinal McCarrick sanctions similar to those now imposed on him by Pope Francis” and that Viganò personally told Pope Francis about those sanctions in 2013.

Archbishop Viganò said in his written statement, simultaneously released to the Register and other media, (see full text below) that Pope Francis “continued to cover” for McCarrick and not only did he “not take into account the sanctions that Pope Benedict had imposed on him” but also made McCarrick “his trusted counselor.” Viganò said that the former archbishop of Washington advised the Pope to appoint a number of bishops in the United States, including **Cardinals Blase Cupich** of Chicago and **Joseph Tobin** of Newark.

Archbishop Viganò, who said his “conscience dictates” that the truth be known as “the corruption has reached the very top of the Church’s hierarchy,” ended his testimony by calling on Pope Francis and all of those implicated in the cover up of Archbishop McCarrick’s abuse to resign.

On June 20, Vatican Secretary of State, **Cardinal Pietro Parolin**, on the order of Pope Francis, prohibited former Cardinal McCarrick from public ministry after an investigation by the New York archdiocese found an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor was “credible and substantiated.” That same day, the public learned that the Archdiocese of Newark and the Diocese of Metuchen in New Jersey had received three accusations of sexual misconduct involving adults against McCarrick. Since then media reports have written of victims of the abuse, spanning decades, include a teenage boy, three young priests or seminarians, and a man now in his 60s who alleges McCarrick abused him from the age of 11. The Pope later accepted McCarrick’s resignation from the College of Cardinals.

But Viganò wrote that Benedict much earlier had imposed sanctions on McCarrick “similar”

to those handed down by Cardinal Parolin.

“The cardinal was to leave the seminary where he was living,” Viganò said, “he was also forbidden to celebrate [Mass] in public, to participate in public meetings, to give lectures, to travel, with the obligation of dedicating himself to a life of prayer and penance.”

Viganò did not document the exact date but recollected the sanction to have been applied as far back 2009 or 2010.

Benedict’s measures came years after Archbishop Viganò’s predecessors at the nunciature — **Archbishops Gabriel Montalvo** and **Pietro Sambì** — had “immediately” informed the Holy See as soon as they had learned of Archbishop McCarrick’s “gravely immoral behavior with seminarians and priests,” the retired Italian Vatican diplomat wrote.

He said Archbishop Montalvo first alerted the Vatican in 2000, requesting that Dominican **Father Boniface Ramsey** write to Rome confirming the allegations. In 2006, Archbishop Viganò said that, as delegate for pontifical representations in the Secretariat of State, he personally wrote a memo to his superior, then Archbishop (later Cardinal) Leonardo Sandri, proposing an “exemplary measure” be taken against McCarrick that could have a “medicinal function” to prevent future abuses and alleviate a “very serious scandal for the faithful.”

He drew on an indictment memorandum, communicated by Archbishop Sambì to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, then Secretary of State, in which an abusive priest had made claims against McCarrick of “such gravity and vileness” including “depraved acts” and “sacrilegious celebration of the Eucharist.”

Memos Ignored

But, according to Viganò, his memo was ignored and no action was taken until the late 2000s — a delay which Archbishop Viganò claims is owed to complicity of John Paul II’s and Benedict XVI’s respective Secretaries of State, Cardinals Angelo Sodano and Tarcisio Bertone.

In 2008, Archbishop Viganò claims he wrote a second memo, this time to Cardinal Sandri’s successor as *sostituto* at the Secretariat of State, then Archbishop (later Cardinal) Fernando Filoni. He included a summary of research carried out by Richard Sipe, a psychotherapist and specialist in clerical sexual abuse, which Sipe had sent Benedict in the form of a statement. Viganò said he ended the memo by “repeating to my superiors that I thought it was necessary to intervene as soon as possible by removing the cardinal’s hat from Cardinal McCarrick.”

Again, according the Viganò, his request fell on deaf ears and he writes he was “greatly dismayed” that both memos were ignored until Sipe’s “courageous and meritorious” statement had “the desired result.”

“Benedict did what he had to do,” Archbishop Viganò told the Register Aug. 25, “but his collaborators — the Secretary of State and all the others — didn’t enforce it as they should have done, which led to the delay.”

“What is certain,” Viganò writes in his testimony, “is that Pope Benedict imposed the above canonical sanctions on McCarrick and that they were communicated to him by the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Pietro Sambì.”

The Register has independently confirmed that the allegations against McCarrick were certainly known to Benedict, and the Pope Emeritus remembers instructing Cardinal Bertone to impose measures but cannot recall their exact nature.

In 2011, on arrival in Washington D.C., Archbishop Viganò said he personally repeated the sanction to McCarrick.

“The cardinal, muttering in a barely comprehensible way, admitted that he had perhaps made the mistake of sleeping in the same bed with some seminarians at his beach house, but he said this as if it had no importance,” Viganò recalled in his testimony.

In his written statement, Viganò then outlined his understanding of how, despite the allegations against him, McCarrick came to be appointed Archbishop of Washington D.C. in 2000 and how his misdeeds were covered up. His statement implicates Cardinals **Angelo Sodano, Tarcisio Bertone** and **Pietro Parolin** and he insists various other cardinals and bishops were well aware, including Cardinal Donald Wuerl, McCarrick’s successor as archbishop of Washington D.C.

“I myself brought up the subject with Cardinal Wuerl on several occasions, and I certainly didn’t need to go into detail because it was immediately clear to me that he was fully aware of it,” he wrote.

Ed McFadden, a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Washington, told CNA that Wuerl categorically denies having been informed that McCarrick’s ministry had been restricted by the Vatican.

The second half of Viganò’s testimony primarily deals with what Pope Francis knew about McCarrick, and how he acted.

He recalled meeting Cardinal McCarrick in June 2013 at the Pope’s Domus Sanctae Marthae residence, during which McCarrick told him “in a tone somewhere between ambiguous and triumphant:

‘The Pope received me yesterday; tomorrow I am going to China’” — the implication being that Francis had lifted the travel ban placed on him by Benedict. (Further evidence of this can be seen in this [interview](#) McCarrick gave the National Catholic Reporter in 2014.)

At a private meeting a few days later, Archbishop Viganò said the Pope asked him “‘What is Cardinal McCarrick like?’” to which the archbishop replied:

“He corrupted generations of seminarians and priests and Pope Benedict ordered him to withdraw to a life of prayer and penance.”

The former nuncio said he believes the Pope's purpose in asking him was to "find out if I was an ally of McCarrick or not."

Freed From Constraints

He said it was "clear" that "from the time of Pope Francis's election, McCarrick, now free from all constraints, had felt free to travel continuously, to give lectures and interviews."

Moreover, he added, McCarrick had

"become the kingmaker for appointments in the Curia and the United States, and the most listened to advisor in the Vatican for relations with the Obama administration."

Viganò claimed that the appointments of Cardinal Cupich to Chicago and Cardinal Joseph Tobin to Newark "were orchestrated by McCarrick," among others. He said neither of the names was presented by the nunciature, whose job is traditionally to present a list of names, or *terna*, to the Congregation for Bishops. He also added that **Bishop Robert McElroy's** appointment to San Diego was orchestrated "from above" rather than through the nuncio.

The retired Italian diplomat also echoed the Register's [reports](#) about **Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga** and his record of cover-up in Honduras, saying the Pope "defends his man" to the "bitter end," despite the allegations against him. The same applies to McCarrick, wrote Viganò.

"He [Pope Francis] knew from at least June 23, 2013 that McCarrick was a serial predator," Archbishop Viganò stated, but although "he knew that he was a corrupt man, he covered for him to the bitter end."

"It was only when he was forced by the report of the abuse of a minor, again on the basis of media attention, that he took action [regarding McCarrick] to save his image in the media," wrote Viganò.

The former U.S. nuncio wrote that Pope Francis "is abdicating the mandate which Christ gave to Peter to confirm the brethren," and urged him to "acknowledge his mistakes" and, to "set a good example to cardinals and bishops who covered up McCarrick's abuses and resign along with all of them."

In comments to the media Aug. 25, Viganò said his main motivation for writing his testimony now was to "stop the suffering of the victims, to prevent new victims and to protect the Church: only the truth can make her free."

He also said he wanted to "discharge my conscience in front of God of my responsibilities as bishop for the universal Church," adding that he is an "old man" who wanted to present himself to God "with a clean conscience."

"The people of God have the right to know the full truth also regarding their shepherds," he said. "They have the right to be guided by good shepherds. In order to be able to trust them and love them, they have to know them openly, in transparency and truth, as they really are. A priest should always be a light

on a candle, everywhere and for all.”

After requests from EWTN News for comment, the Vatican press office has declined to give immediate response to Viganò’s letter.

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