

CHURCH IN CONFUSION

Crisis generates schisms: also Monsignor Viganò goes his own way

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The rumour had already been circulating for months and now the news has been re-launched by several traditionalist websites: Monsignor Carlo Maria Viganò has been re-consecrated bishop by Monsignor Richard Williamson, the English bishop illicitly

ordained by Monsignor Marcel Lefebvre in 1988 and then expelled from the St. Pius X Priestly Fraternity (FSSPX) in 2012. Since then Williamson, who is excommunicated, has dedicated himself to founding a network of groups calling for resistance against any attempt to normalise relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

The episcopal re-consecration of Monsignor Viganò, "sub condicione", means that the former apostolic nuncio to the United States has become convinced of the thesis (first supported and then rejected by Lefebvre) that all the sacraments administered after the Second Vatican Council are "dubious", i.e. their validity would be questionable because of the doctrinal deviations made by the Council itself.

Despite some denials circulating online, several sources have confirmed this 'schismatic' step by Monsignor Viganò. And he himself, questioned by the Daily Compass in an email, did not want to deny the news, declaring only he is astonished by our current interest in his personal affairs. Therefore, if the news were officially confirmed, Monsignor Viganò would be excommunicated *latae sententiae*.

This step by Monsignor Viganò, however clamorous, is certainly not a thunderbolt: having suddenly become famous in August 2018 with his public denunciation against Pope Francis, accused of having covered up for the multiple abuser Cardinal Theodore McCarrick despite knowing the seriousness of the facts concerning him, Bishop Viganò has gradually broadened the horizon of his criticism: certainly ecclesial - to the entire pontificate of Francis, to his predecessors, up to the substantial rejection of the Second Vatican Council -, but also political and economic by even trying to put himself at the head of an international anti-globalist movement. With increasingly heated tones and harsher judgments ("Pope Francis is a false pastor and servant of Satan," he said twenty days ago regarding the green light to the blessings of gay unions), Viganò has accompanied his words with action, weaving a network of relationships that culminated last May in the official announcement of the birth of an association he sponsored, Exsurge Domine. The declared objective: to provide financial and logistical assistance to priests and religious victims of harassment by their bishops or superiors, a phenomenon that has become decidedly widespread in this pontificate.

In reality, behind this façade that smacks of ecclesiastical 'white aid', there are also opaque economic and real estate manoeuvres, which also involve a former Society of Apostolic Life, Familia Christi, first apostolic visitation commissioned and then dissolved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in December 2019, and the Benedictine nuns of Pienza (monastery 'Mary Temple of the Holy Spirit') protagonists of a dispute with the Archbishop of Siena, Cardinal Augusto Paolo Lojudice.

We will return with other articles on this affair, which deserves to be studied in depth, but here it is important to understand how Exsurge Domine presents itself as an attempt to consolidate and institutionalise that network of anti-Francisco resistance that has seen Viganò in the last two years ordain priests in a clandestine and anonymous manner and create communities around Europe. Very serious facts of which there is ample evidence: such as the ordination in 2021 of two monks in France at the Saint-Benoit monastery in Brignoles, diocese of Frejus-Tolon, illicitly usurping the right-duty to screen vocations from Bishop Dominique Marie Jean Rey, who was himself struck by Vatican lightning.

There have been several other illicit and clandestine ordinations by Monsignor Viganò, with priests then left to their own devices, forced to celebrate alone at home, having no mandate. But one clamorous case is at least worth mentioning: that of the diocese of Milan, where a parish priest from a small outlying village is helped by the former apostolic nuncio to set up a sort of clandestine parish seminary that follows the extraordinary rite. Firstly, the 20-year-old man without theological training or the minimum age required by canon law is ordained deacon. But then, in the spring of 2023, relations broke down between Viganò and the small Ambrosian group: Viganò refused to ordain the new deacon a priest, who thus remained in limbo.

In recent months there have also been persistent rumours of an already completed episcopal consecration by Monsignor Viganò, but we have yet to find any certain confirmation of the fact that this has already taken place, even if this intention - following the example of what was done in 1988 by Monsignor Marcel Lefebvre - has been clearly expressed. Monsignor Viganò will be 83 years old next week and evidently feels the need to move quickly to consolidate his reality.

So last 2 December he announced that in the monastic structure of the Eremo della Palanzana in Viterbo, which is being renovated with the money obtained through a fund-raising campaign initially aimed at giving a place to the nuns of Pienza, a house of formation for clerics will be established, which will take the name **Collegium Traditionis**.

This Hermitage is currently home to the four clerics of the former Familia Christi, who share with Monsignor Viganò the project and the aforementioned commercial- real estate operation, which we will deal with in the coming days.

In short, Viterbo, in the designs of Monsignor Viganò, who already spends a lot of time there, should become the new Écône, the Swiss town that is the seat of the international seminary of the FSSPX. And with the news of the episcopal re-consecration, the schismatic nature of this new movement becomes even clearer. Thanks to the consensus built up in recent years around the figure of Monsignor Viganò, the whipping boy of this pontificate, it is easily foreseeable that this initiative too will lead many believers out of the Church, and moreover in conflict with other such initiatives.

This is the drama that the Church is going through: the crisis caused by those who obstinately want to overturn revealed doctrine is being opposed by personalities who, in turn, although starting from justifiable analyses, delude themselves that they will find a solution in building a Church to their own measure. A path that has already failed, as Benedict XVI wrote in his letter-reflection dedicated to sexual abuse and published in April 2019: "What must we do? Do we have to create another Church so that things can be made right? This experiment has already been done and it has already failed. Only love and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ can show us the right way". And this love and obedience comes from persevering in the Truth within the Catholic Church.