

CHARGE

Abuse: the ghosts of Chiclayo haunt Pope Leo

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"On November 13, 2025, the Church informed us in writing that the Pope has granted the dispensation from the clerical state to the priest from Chiclayo, Eleuterio Vásquez González, who sexually abused us when we were children." This is how the press release — a scathing indictment — begins. It is signed by Ana Maria Quispe Diaz, the alleged victim who reported the abuse she suffered when Robert Prevost (now Pope Leo XIV)

was bishop of the diocese of Chiclayo in north-eastern Peru.

Today, she is questioning Pope Leo because, in addition to failing to conduct a thorough investigation when the complaint was received in 2022, he is now granting Father Lute (as he was known) a dispensation that prevents a trial from taking place to determine the former priest's true responsibilities and denies justice to the alleged victims. In the press release, Quispe announces the initiation of legal action against all ecclesiastical officials who participated in or were responsible for such negligence, with reference to 'the person primarily responsible for the case, Bishop Robert Prevost'.

This is a sensational turn of events in a case that emerged just over a year ago, which the *Daily Compass* [reconstructed in detail](#). Unfortunately, there has never been any real desire to clarify the situation, [despite our hopes](#) at the beginning of Pope Leo's pontificate last May.

The case concerns the alleged abuse of three sisters at separate times between 2006 and 2010, when they were aged between 9 and 11. According to Ana Maria Quispe, the eldest sister, there are several other victims of Father Lute, who used to take children to the farm where the abuse took place. The first complaint was made to Bishop Prevost by telephone in 2020, but the face-to-face meeting was postponed until spring 2022 due to the Covid emergency. Bishop Prevost referred the complainants to the diocese's victim support centre, but Ms Quispe has always accused the diocese of never conducting a serious investigation into the allegations. The diocese has consistently maintained that all actions were carried out in accordance with the relevant regulations, and that following an initial report sent to Rome, a second report was submitted regarding the reopening of the investigation requested by Prevost's successor.

However, at a [meeting with the Quispe sisters on 23 April](#), the current delegate of the Diocese of Chiclayo for Father Lute's trial, Capuchin canonist Father Giampiero Gambaro, admitted that the first investigation was 'seriously deficient, superficial and full of procedural errors'. Gambaro said that the canonical investigation was limited to a formal procedure without substance; no questions were asked of the victims or the accused, who 'did not answer anything', and therefore 'the victims' anger is legitimate'.

Cardinal Prevost should have clarified exactly why this happened when the story emerged last year. Instead, the defence claimed that some members of Sodalitium Christiane Vitae were seeking revenge. This Peruvian association was suppressed on 14 April due to allegations of abuse and financial scandals, for which some leaders were

allegedly responsible. Indeed, first as bishop and then as cardinal, Prevost worked hard to prosecute those responsible for Sodalitium and then to dissolve the association. He worked closely with two journalists, Paola Ugaz and Pedro Solinas, who had conducted a documented journalistic investigation, giving voice to the victims.

At the beginning of Leo XIV's pontificate in Rome, these two journalists catechised all the other journalists who had flocked to the event. They guaranteed Prevost's commitment to combating sexual abuse and accused anyone who raised the case of the girls of Chiclayo and Father Lute of dark plots.

In her statement, Ana Maria Quispe refers to them, saying that, in recent months, "we have had to watch as some very influential media outlets and journalists have manipulated our testimony to hide" the mistakes of the Diocese of Chiclayo.

Despite the two Peruvian journalists' huge commitment, questions and doubts about the events in Chiclayo remained unanswered. This is one of the reasons why the idea for the book *León XIV, Ciudadano del mundo, misionero del siglo XXI* (León XIV, Citizen of the World, Missionary of the 21st Century), a **biography and interview with the pope**, was conceived. It was written by American journalist Elise Ann Allen of *Crux*, who is very close to the two Peruvian journalists involved in the investigation. Curiously published only in Spanish and presented in Peru, the book devotes a great deal of space to the story of the Quispe sisters. However, it once again evades the question of whether a real investigation was carried out after the 2022 complaint. Furthermore, in a lengthy article titled, **L'angoscia di papa Prevost** (Pope Prevost's anguish) dedicated to the Chiclayo affair, Italian journalists Giorgio Meletti and Federica Tourn carefully analysed the book and identified several inconsistencies. In short, what was intended as a clarifying exercise has raised further questions and concerns.

Furthermore, Father Lute's request for dispensation from the priesthood has now been granted. Although the letter, delivered to the Quispe sisters on 13 November by Father Gambaro himself, makes it clear that this decision 'should not be interpreted as an absolution', the fact remains that it will prevent a canonical trial of the accused priest and thus prevent the truth from being ascertained. While the Code of Canon Law provides for a priest to request dispensation in such cases, granting it in this instance was a very bad idea. 'Avoiding investigations and closing cases through dispensations that prevent a canonical penal trial,' Ana Maria Quispe rightly states in the press release, 'is a path that should never be taken, because it leaves unprotected those who have had the courage to speak out.' She continues: 'Victims are often questioned and stigmatized, accused of lying, and subjected to public persecution. The lack of an

investigation and a sentence supporting our report leaves us defenseless against the accusations we face when we take this step.'

In short, rather than being resolved through transparency and justice, as we had hoped, the Chiclayo case is set to become a serious embarrassment for this pontificate. Quispe intends to appeal to international associations of abuse victims and the Vatican Commission for the Protection of Minors, in addition to the aforementioned complaint.

It is possible that the Sodalitium environment is related to the publicity surrounding this case, but the fact remains that alleged victims reported a priest and said that there was no real investigation afterwards. The accused priest requested dispensation from the priesthood, which was granted, thus avoiding trial. Therefore, unless there is some rethinking, nothing about this affair will be clarified. All that remains is the perception of negligence on the part of those who should have clarified the matter but did not.