

SEX SCANDAL

Italian media shames Vatican foot dragging over Rupnik case

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No one has ever understood whether Cardinal Victor M. Fernández was being serious or ironic when, a month and a half ago, he **stated** that there were more serious cases than that of Marko Ivan Rupnik; more serious but less publicised. This unfortunate statement

was prompted by a question about the stage of the trial of the Slovenian priest who was dismissed from the Society of Jesus on 14 June 2023, and he added that the trial had not yet begun because of the difficulty in finding "suitable people who would agree" to conduct this trial.

The insistent media focus on the sexual and psychological abuse of nuns and former nuns of which Rupnik is accused should have induced the Holy See to take immediate action, if only to prevent the credibility of the Catholic Church in the administration of justice from being completely trampled underfoot. Instead, on the other bank of the River Tiber, there doesn't seem to be much hunger or thirst for justice, or even understanding of the relative thirst that Rupnik's victims have been suffering for years, and which has worsened every time their complaints to the legitimate authorities have been ignored and covered up.

And so, after confiding in newspapers and magazines, and after a public press conference, some of the former Jesuit's victims told their story to [Le Iene](#), (a popular Italian TV investigative programme on 'hot' issues) which broadcast their report on Sunday evening. The faces are familiar: Gloria Branciani, Mirjam Kovac, both former nuns of the now dissolved Loyola community, and Sister Samuelle, a hermit who took a four-year course at the Aletti Centre. Their stories are well known: psychological pressure, ambiguous advances, sexual abuse, pornography. The need to integrate the father figure, spiritual growth, the purity of sex between a priest and a nun, even involving the Holy Trinity: Rupnik's actions oscillated for years between plagiarism and seduction, abuse of authority and "mystical" delirium.

A priest who seduces an entire community of nuns, sexually abuses some of them, humiliates them, tries to rape others, subjugates them to his vile will and even goes so far as to organise a theologically justified orgy. But Fernández says there are worse cases than this. Gloria adds the disgusting detail that Rupnik often painted naked from the waist down during the creation of his works of art; his painting was linked to physical excitement"; Sister Samuelle tells how Rupnik 'massaged' her back, playing with the elastic of her bra and attempting to seduce her, while the scaffolding was being erected in sacred places to create mosaics. This is the context of the more than two hundred mosaics and frescoes that Rupnik and the Aletti Centre have distributed throughout the world, in the details of which the victims clearly recognise the projection of the Slovenian priest's sexual perversion. Works of art signed by a depravity for which consecrated women have paid with their bodies and continue to pay with their souls, and which in dozens and dozens of places are offered to the gaze of the faithful, called

to live the purest conjugal relationship with the Lord in the Church. A perverse irony.

Nonetheless, for the Cardinal there is something worse. Could it be that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, because of a kind of "theological sensitivity" similar to that of the ex-Jesuit, does not see the enormous gravity of the matter? It is no secret that in a book that bears his signature, the infamous *Sáname con tu boca. El arte de besar*, Fernández gave a detailed account of the peculiarities of the male and female orgasm in order to describe their diversity in the mystical relationship with God.

Meanwhile, the programme 'Le lene' (The Hyenas) is yet another humiliation for the Catholic Church, caused by the inadequacy of those who are called to exercise justice within it, and who instead procrastinate, postpone and aggravate the suffering of the victims, minimising their drama by qualifying the abuses suffered as 'less serious' than others.

Poignant as it is, the programme broadcast on Italian television, Sunday 9 March, makes one serious error which necessarily begs clarification: the pope's involvement. With all due respect for the Holy Father's delicate health situation, it does no good service to the truth if viewers are led to believe that it was Francis who resolved the situation. It is true that the Pope waived the statute of limitations on the crimes of which Rupnik is accused in order to allow a trial, but this only happened on 27 October 2023, after months of media hammering and after Cardinal O'Malley had brought the scandal to the Pope's attention. And let's not forget that the famous excommunication of Rupnik for the absolution of his accomplice *de sexto* could not have been lifted without the Pope's approval.

It's not fair, therefore, to deny that Pope Francis was one of the causes of the despair of Rupnik's victims, who finally had no choice but to turn to the press. And rightly so. We hope that after the umpteenth public statement by Rupnik's victims, the Vatican will wake up and start this blessed process that will reveal not only the direct responsibility of the Slovenian priest, but also that of all those who covered up for him and supported him for years. And continue to do so.