

SEX SCANDAL

Jesuits hold firm to soften sanctions against Rupnik

ECCLESIA

14_02_2023



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Jesuit Johan Verschueren, general councillor and delegate of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus for the Jesuits' International Houses in Rome, indirectly revealed to *Aciprensa*, in its Spanish-language edition, what measures the Society will take against

Father Marko Rupnik.

Fr Verschueren admitted that something definitely did not work with the sanctions imposed so far on the Slovenian Jesuit: "Their weakness lies in the interpretation of the local superior; that is why the last public appearances of Fr Rupnik were in accordance with these measures. The local superior had authorised them". It should be recalled that Rupnik, to date, has received nothing more than a ban on hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction, preaching Spiritual Exercises, and carrying out other activities without the superior's permission. Verschueren added that the leaders of the Society "are aware of this problem, and we are really upset about it. It is obvious that we have to correct the weakness of these measures, as they were taken in the previous decree; we are working on it".

From this statement it therefore seems quite probable that the communication expected in a few days from the Society of Jesus (see [here](#)) on the measures against Father Rupnik will not go in the direction of what remains the only sanction proportionate to the crimes committed by the Jesuit: resignation from the clerical state. According to Verschueren, in fact, the weak point of the sanctions was simply the excessive discretion granted to local superiors; and it is on this point that the Society's leading figures are said to be making corrections. Corrections that would not be necessary if they were oriented towards defrocking the Slovenian Jesuit.

Yet, Canon 1387 provides for the dismissal from the clerical state of the priest who "in confession, or on the occasion or under the pretext of confession, solicits a penitent to commit a sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue in the more serious cases. Further, Canon 1397 provides for punishments up to dismissal from the clerical state, again in proportion to the gravity of the canonical crime, for "a cleric who has committed other crimes [apart from concubinage, ed.] against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, if the offense was committed in public" and for a cleric who "with violence, threats or abuse of authority commits a crime against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue or forces someone to perform or submit to sexual acts".

The 'Rupnik case' therefore does not seem to be taking the direction of justice. On the one hand, the Holy See has closed its game without honour, with a Pontius Pilate approach: it has let the numerous abuses committed by the Jesuit lapse into the statute of limitations and lifted the excommunication after not even a month, thus dropping the hot potato into the court of the Society of Jesus. On the other hand, the Jesuits, according to what Fr Verschueren's statements hint at, do not seem willing to go down

the road of the heavier, but more just sanction.

Father Verschueren also confirmed to *Aciprensa* the identity of Father Marko Rupnik's superiors since 2004. The first on the list is Father Milan Žust (we had spoken about him [here](#)), who was not only Rupnik's superior at the Aletti Centre from 2004 to 2017, but in the three-year period 2018-2021 was also Associate of the Delegate of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus for the inter-provincial houses and works in Rome; i.e. since 2020 he has worked closely with the Belgian Jesuit himself.

Then, Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves, who, from 2017, held the post he would later hand over to Fr Verschueren, when, in November 2019, he was appointed by Pope Francis as Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, to replace Cardinal Pell. It was a short assignment, lasting only three years, which Guerrero gave up "for personal reasons". Finally, from 2020 onwards, Father Verschueren himself, who in essence, points to himself as one of the 'weak points' of the restrictions on Rupnik, because even during his term of office, Rupnik continued to wander around. On 30 November 2022, for example, he was in Brazil to publicly receive an honorary degree from the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná, in Curitiba. And no one had noticed - except the journalists - that Rupnik was scheduled to hold in Loreto at this very time what he was theoretically forbidden to do, namely a course of Spiritual Exercises (see [here](#)).

First question: what is Verschueren still doing in this role? What credibility will the Jesuits' decisions have if, among those who will have to decide and enforce the decisions, is the same Verschueren who allowed Rupnik to continue to move around undisturbed, while he had already been excommunicated and the testimonies to the events of the 1990s were already deemed credible? The same applies to Father Milan Žust, who, it [appears](#), continues to be the Superior of the Aletti Centre.

Second question: if a priest who continually abused nuns, *precisely* by exploiting his priestly authority, who disguised his lust with 'theological' motives, who for years travelled the world talking about discernment, religious life and making his 'works of art' that often drew inspiration from the sensuality of his victims, is not to be defrocked, then who should be? Rupnik did not 'simply' violate the sixth commandment, but abused the authority that comes to him from the priestly order. He has doubly committed the sin of sacrilege, because he has violated his own sacred celibacy and has continually profaned women, mostly young women, consecrated to God with a vow of virginity.

Third question: justice would require that those who covered up for Rupnik be immediately removed from their posts. And that there be clarity as to what happened

regarding the matter of the immediate excommunication.