

WHITEWASH

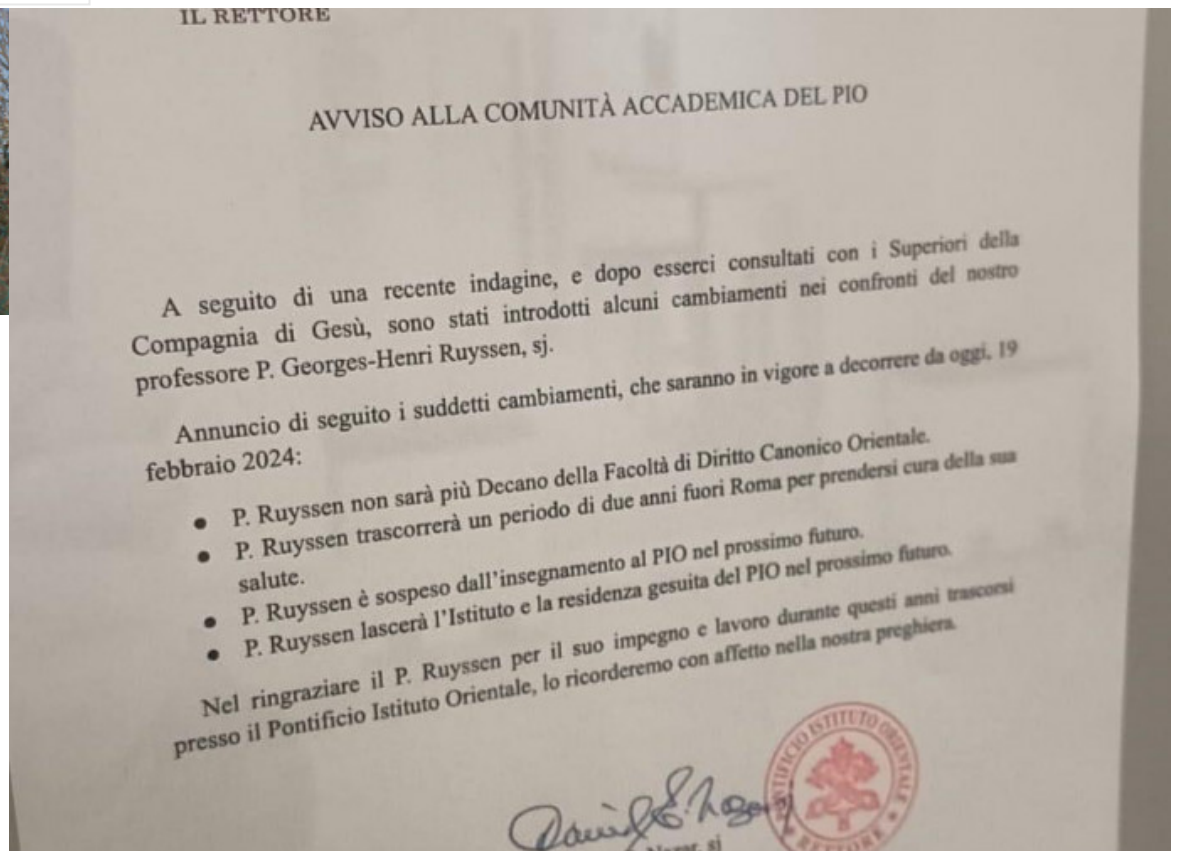
Jesuits make clean sweep after Rupnik disaster

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"In thanking Fr Ruysen for his commitment and work during these years at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, we remember him fondly in our prayers". Thus ends a letter (see photo) posted on the notice board of the Pontifical Oriental Institute (PIO), signed by the Rector, Jesuit Fr. David E. Nazar. Is it the usual academic commendations to a professor who has reached retirement age? Or is it the recognition of a colleague who

has moved on to another university? Not at all.

The first problem is the date. The letter bears the date 19 February 2024, that is in the middle of the academic year, at the start of the second semester. And the day indicated for the new arrangements to take effect is the same day of its publication. The suddenness and untimeliness can only suggest something very serious.

Secondly, the person concerned is not an invited lecturer, or even 'only' an ordinary lecturer, but the Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law of the PIO, Belgian Fr Georges-Henri Ruysen, who has held this position since 2016. Moreover, changing a dean during the course of the academic year is rather unusual and problematic, since he has both a leadership and administrative role. Among other things, Fr Ruysen is the editor, since 2012, of the *Kanonika* series, which is dedicated to publications on Canon Law of the Eastern Churches.

The third reason is no convincing explanation of the decision is provided. The letter states respectively that Fr Ruysen will cease to be dean immediately; that he "will spend a period of two years outside Rome to take care of his health"; that he "is suspended from teaching at PIO for the foreseeable future"; and also in the foreseeable future "will leave the Institute and the Jesuit residence of PIO". It is hard to believe the motivation is his health, given the immediacy of the decision, such that there was not even time for the changes to be enacted in the normal way.

A confidential source explained to the *Daily Compass* that 'it is not clear what is happening beneath the surface and why Ruysen was dismissed at the beginning of the second semester', but 'I have several internal confirmations that, after the Rupnik affair, they are gradually 'sorting out' other difficult brothers'. And who knows what these "difficulties" are for the now ex-dean, who is also a consultant to the Dicastery headed by Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti.

Let us recall that the Pontifical Institute of Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore was founded on 15 October 1917, by Pope Benedict XV, with the motu proprio *Orientis Catholici*, entrusting it to its first prestigious headmaster, the then Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo Fuori le Mura, Blessed Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster, just a few years after the foundation by the same Pontiff of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. The PIO was later placed by Pius XI under the direction of the Society of Jesus and since then has been closely linked both to the Holy See, having as its Grand Chancellor the Prefect of the Congregation, now the Dicastery, for the Oriental Churches (an office, prior to 1993, held by the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education),

and to the Jesuits, the Provost General of the Society being the Institute's Vice Grand Chancellor.

Another PIO Jesuit to be sent 'on holiday' is Fr Germano Marani, who used to teach at the Institute, rector of the church of the Collegio Russicum, and formerly vice-director of the Aletti Centre, Rupnik's creature, at first a rib of the PIO itself. It is rumoured that, in this case, the reason for Fr Marani's dismissal was his shamelessly pro-Putin homilies in front of the students residing at the Russicum, among whom are quite a few Ukrainians.

Then there is a third mystery involving the Congregation of Borgo Santo Spirito.

A Jesuit student, this time from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, also in the hands of the Society of Jesus, was sent to the United States, apparently with a one-way ticket. We have heard the testimony of the person, a male, who had received the student's 'attentions'. What is not clear, however, is why the Jesuits continue to use the same strategy they used with Rupnik, i.e. to simply move the person who is the cause of the trouble, instead of taking more serious action.

The same strategy of simply moving the person out had also occurred with another excellent name, that of Fr Keith Pecklers SJ, Ordinary at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University. Fr Pecklers had been accused in 2010 of molesting a fellow student when they were in seminary ([read case here](#)). Pecklers was 17 years old at the time. The accusation was not enough to keep him away from contact with young seminarians and students, as the Jesuit went on to pursue his academic career undisturbed. In 2019, however, the Northeastern Province of the Society of Jesus in the USA published a list of fifty names of Jesuits implicated in sexual abuse deemed credible, fifteen of them still living. Among them was the name of Pecklers. But, not even this time did the Society take action, so much so that the Jesuit is still in the Gregorian faculty.

The only decision taken was to change Pecklers' residence, placing him under the protective wing of Fr Antonio Spadaro, to the headquarters of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a periodical published by the Jesuits in Rome, in Via di Porta Pinciana. The architect of the soft measure was the Jesuit General's Delegate for international and interprovincial houses and works in Rome, namely Fr. Johan Verschuerer himself, who was Rupnik's direct superior until his resignation from the Order.