

TOWARDS THE CONCLAVE

Prevost and Co, anyone involved in sexual abuse should not be pope

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Contrary to the official narrative - readily reinforced by the secular media - several scandals, both sexual and financial, have been covered up under Pope Francis. And too many cardinals linked in one way or another to these scandals are circulating freely and

playing an important role in the preparation of the conclave.

So much so that it is of paramount importance that the cardinals avoid voting for anyone who has been involved in episodes of corruption and sexual abuse in recent years, or who is under serious suspicion. It would be disastrous to have a Pope who perpetuates the system of protection and complicity that has characterised these years, from the case of the **Chilean Bishop Barros** to that of the **Argentinian Bishop Zanchetta**, from the scandal of **Cardinal McCarrick** to that of **Father Rupnik**. The last thing the Church needs is a Pope who is open to blackmail.

That is why it is disturbing to see among the names of emerging candidates these days that of **Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost**, an American Augustinian who was bishop of the small Peruvian diocese of Chiclayo (since 2014) before being called to Rome in 2023 (the year he became a cardinal) to head the Dicastery for Bishops. Last September the **Daily Compass reported on his case**, with the exclusive publication of a letter from three women accusing Prevost of covering up for two priests accused of paedophilia, of whom they were victims as minors between 2006 and 2010.

B **y possession of a recent letter** sent by the president of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and to Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez (Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), Angel Fernandez Artime (Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life) and Sister Simona Brambilla, Prefect of the same Congregation, denouncing Prevost for "actions and omissions aimed at obstructing or preventing a civil or canonical, administrative or criminal investigation against certain priests of the Diocese of Chiclayo".

The letter, signed by President Shaun Dougherty, is dated 25 March 2025 and accuses Cardinal Prevost of failing to apply the Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi*, which sets out new procedures for dealing with sexual abuse. The American prelate is also accused of 'abuse of ecclesiastical power, office and function which has harmed vulnerable people and caused scandal'.

The letter details the crimes committed by three priests - James Ray, Eleuterio Vasquez Gonzales and Ricardo Yesquen - and how Cardinal Prevost ignored the complaints of the victims and also "misled" the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, preventing it from taking the right decisions. It will also be recalled that Prevost's successor in Chiclayo (chosen by himself) **did everything in his power to cover up for the Augustinian cardinal**, even persecuting the defence lawyer of three victims. It should be

noted that Prevost was called to Rome to preside over the Dicastery for Bishops after the scandal had already broken out in Peru and the report had already reached the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In the letter of 25 March, SNAP asked for a thorough investigation into Cardinal Prevost's responsibilities, but not only did Parolin, Fernandez, Artime and Brambilla fail to respond, but on the eve of the conclave, Prevost was among the names emerging as contenders for the papacy. The situation is scandalous enough as it is, let alone if he is elected.

Moreover, his name is being pushed by another highly controversial cardinal, the Honduran Oscar Maradiaga, a key supporter of Pope Francis who has been appointed to the select council of cardinals who have supported him in recent years. Maradiaga has been accused of mismanagement of diocesan funds, but above all of covering up the terrible abuses of his auxiliary bishop in Tegucigalpa, Juan José Pineda. All this is explained in a book published in 2019 by Martha Alegria Reichmann, widow of the former Honduran ambassador to the Holy See. The book is entitled *Sacred Betrayals*, in which Maradiaga's former girlfriend also claims that she was cheated by the prelate and lost all her savings as a result.

To the list of unpresentable cardinals must be added all those linked to the scandal of the abusive **Cardinal Theodore McCarrick**, and they are not few, given the extensive network of collusion and complicity that allowed McCarrick to continue his abuses for years (Maradiaga was also a friend of his). It must also be said that the method used against him was one that had already been tried in the previous pontificate: when the scandal broke, he was reduced to the state of a layman, without a canonical trial that would have allowed the whole truth to emerge (as well as giving the cardinal the opportunity to defend himself) and also to shed light on those who covered up his misdeeds. As it was, McCarrick was finally convicted, but his accomplices were free to continue their careers. One example is **Cardinal Donald Wuerl**, McCarrick's successor in Washington, who is now 85 years old and therefore excluded from the conclave. But Wuerl was called to Rome to replace Cardinal Raymond L. Burke at the Congregation for Bishops, which proposes names for future cardinals. Blase Cupich was immediately elevated to the cardinalate, followed by **Joseph W. Tobin** and **Robert McElroy**, recently promoted to head the diocese of Washington. We must not forget Cardinal **Kevin Farrell**, the current treasurer, appointed to manage the Vatican State during the period that Saint Peter's Chair is vacant, who lived next door to McCarrick for six years without ever noticing, just as he never noticed the double life of founder

Marcel Maciel while in positions of responsibility in the Legionaries of Christ.

The list could go on, but at least the great protector of **Father Marko Rupnik**, whose case is still unresolved, should be mentioned: **Cardinal Angelo De Donatis**, with whom we have also dealt recently.

These are all people who should not only not be elected, but whose proposals should not even be considered.