DAILY COMPASS
Managing Director Riccardo Cascioli
MADE FOR THE TRUTH

SEXUAL ABUSE

The Rupnik scandal: the trial has become a farce

ECCLESIA 24_07_2026

Riccardo Cascioli

Although a statement from the Holy See Press Office has categorically denied its veracity, the report published by the blog MessainLatino.it claiming that Father Marko Rupnik had been acquitted in the criminal trial currently underway in the Vatican has at least had the merit of shining a spotlight once more on a trial that now smacks of a farce.

It should be noted that the Slovenian priest, who was expelled from the Society of

Jesus in 2023, stands accused of sexually, spiritually and psychologically abusing at least twenty nuns in the 1980s and 1990s. These allegations were deemed credible by Daniele Libanori, the auxiliary bishop of Rome at the time and a fellow Jesuit, who was the first to conduct an investigation into the allegations against Rupnik. However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith closed the case in October 2022 because the statute of limitations had expired. Meanwhile, it emerged that, in 2020, the same Congregation had excommunicated Father Rupnik for absolving an accomplice in confession. This excommunication was lifted within a few days by Pope Francis.

In October 2023, Pope Francis was forced to waive the statute of limitations and ask the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) to initiate proceedings, following damning testimonies from the victims and pressure from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, led by Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley. The DDF had fallen into the hands of the 'trusted' Cardinal Victor M. Fernandez in the meantime.

Almost three years have now passed, and all that has happened is the continuation of a high-level system of protection and cover-up for Father Rupnik. This is a situation that could almost be expected during Francis's pontificate, but it also tarnishes Leo XIV's legacy.

According to *Messainlatino.it*, which published the news on 20 July, 'the criminal trial against Father Marko Ivan Rupnik is said to have concluded with a favourable outcome for him'. Two days and dozens of requests for clarification later, the Vatican Press Office finally provided an official statement from the Holy See. According to this statement, 'reports concerning any decision by the judges hearing the case of the Rev. Marko Ivan Rupnik are entirely unfounded. The assessment of the case is still ongoing, and the panel is examining documentation from the dioceses involved, the Jesuits, the parties concerned, and the press'.

However, rather than clarifying matters, the Press Office's response raises new questions and gives the impression that they are continuing their delaying tactics in the hope that attention will wane over time and Father Rupnik will escape with minimal consequences.

The main stages of the 'process' make this clear: following the reopening of the Rupnik case in October 2023, the secretary for the disciplinary section of the DDF, Archbishop John Joseph Kennedy, stated in March 2024 that the investigation was 'delicate' but at a 'fairly advanced stage'. Exactly one year later, in March 2025, a Vatican source said that Rupnik would be tried for the crimes of 'spiritual abuse' and 'false

mysticism', with the verdict expected 'in the not-too-distant future'. However, in January 2025, two months earlier, Cardinal Fernández had downplayed the seriousness of the Rupnik scandal in an interview, stating that there were 'many other cases, some of which are perhaps more serious but less publicised' with regard to the length of the investigation.

We are still waiting to find out what these cases might be, but regarding Rupnik, Fernández added that 'the Dicastery has concluded the information-gathering phase, which took place in a wide variety of locations, and has carried out an initial analysis. We are now working to establish an independent tribunal to proceed to the final phase through criminal proceedings".

It should be noted that a great deal of information was already available given that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had already examined the allegations of abuse against Father Rupnik, and many new allegations and testimonies subsequently emerged. These were even corroborated by Jesuit superiors, who apologised to the victims albeit with a culpable delay.

However, in July 2025, Fernández finally announced that the five judges for the Rupnik case had been selected. Their official appointment was not to take place until October 2025. Nevertheless, neither the judges' names nor the selection criteria have been disclosed, reflecting a lack of transparency that contradicts the many declarations of commitment to combating abuse.

On 4 November, in response to a question about the Rupnik case specifically, Pope Leo urged patience, stating that 'legal proceedings take time. I know it is very difficult to ask victims to be patient, but the Church must respect the rights of all people".

Almost nine months on, we do not know if he would say the same, but even then, given everything that had happened, we said that respect for the rights of the defence is merely a smokescreen for a system of cover-ups and collusion involving several prelates, which clearly continues to this day. The Vatican Press Office's statement that the judges are still examining the documentation seems like mockery, and the secrecy surrounding this trial (at this point, the conditional must be used) – including the names of the judges – raises fears that the decisions will be rigged.

Perhaps the news of the acquittal is not true, but, given how things have gone so far, we would not be surprised if that were indeed the outcome.