

Your Kingdom Come!

CONGREGATIO  
LEGIONARIORUM CHRISTI

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DIRECTOR GENERALIS

Rome, May 21, 2012

To the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi  
members in North America

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

All of us have had to deal with very difficult news over the past few days. And of course, this comes in light of the terrible news three years ago regarding Father Maciel.

I want to take this opportunity to share with you my part in what many of you may regard as failings – and to explain how the Legion is working to ensure better performance in the future.

While serving as the rector of our seminary in Rome, I had heard rumors about Fr. Thomas Williams' misbehavior. I inquired about them, but Father denied them, and I believed him.

In 2005, I found myself the second General Director of the Legion of Christ. I knew that I would face great challenges, but had no idea of all that was to come. Early in my new assignment, I learned that Fr. Thomas Williams had, in fact, had a relationship with a woman and they had a child. I reviewed the situation with Fr. Williams, asking him to start withdrawing from public ministry. In May of 2010 I placed restrictions on his ministry. Unfortunately, these restrictions were not firm enough as he was not asked to leave teaching. This March I gave Fr. Thomas the explicit indication to fully withdraw from all public ministry. I also must admit that, in the midst of all that was happening I was not diligent in setting proper restrictions and enforcing them.

I say this not to excuse my ineffectiveness, but to explain it – and beg your forgiveness.

# CONGREGATIO LEGIONARIORUM CHRISTI

DIRECTOR GENERALIS

More important than my failings is the need to reassure you that things are handled differently now. Today, when a serious charge is brought against any Legionary, we take precautionary measures, which may include being removed from public ministry, according to the nature of the charge. We immediately investigate, and if there is a legal issue, we report the case to the authorities and cooperate with them completely. If there is an issue that falls under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), we report it to them.

Another important change has already taken place in our system of government. When I started to serve as General Director, I followed at the beginning the basically “one-person” and centralized style of government implemented by the founder. That meant that all personnel issues were reported to me as General Director and I handled them myself. In the last few years, especially since the beginning of Cardinal De Paolis’ mandate, we have begun to involve effectively the respective councils, foreseen by the law of the church, in decision making. The territories are also acquiring a greater relevance in their own governance, allowing a swifter answer to situations. This is already bearing fruit in making our general and territorial government more competent and more assertive.

Since I became General Director, there have been seven cases presented to the CDF that remain under investigation. Two of these cases are of alleged violations of priestly obligations and do not involve the sexual abuse of minors. One is a more recent abuse case. Four are abuse cases dating back one or more decades. None of the cases of abuse presented to the CDF have taken place in the United States.

In the United States, allegations of abuse of minors have been handled using the procedures recommended by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men under the safe environment accreditation program audited by Praesidium, Inc. Investigations are carried out by independent firms. Additionally, the final report is vetted by a Review Board, which provides the Territorial Director with a recommendation regarding the report and the allegation. Using these procedures, allegations of sexual abuse of minors involving three current members have been investigated. The investigations found no evidence to substantiate those allegations. There have been other allegations involving three ex-Legionaries. Those have been reported to

# CONGREGATIO LEGIONARIORUM CHRISTI

DIRECTOR GENERALIS

authorities but are dependent upon the alleged victims' desire to have it pursued. One Legionary is currently under investigation and has been removed from all ministry until his case is resolved.

Our commitment is first and foremost to watch over the safety of children under our responsibility. At the same time justice requires us not to violate the rights to privacy and a good name of those involved in any given situation. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between appropriate action and appropriate communication.

An important part of the Constitution review and renewal process we are undergoing is to determine the best way to live in community, to exercise authority and to ensure that members of the congregation can grow on the path to holiness. If we do that, we minimize the likelihood of future failings. However, we are fallen human beings; as a growing, international congregation, it is likely that some of us will fail to live up to our ideals. But when that happens, every person will be held accountable for his or her actions.

Are there other cases waiting to be discovered, more scandals ready to attack your faith and trust? I can never say for sure. I can, however, tell you that we are following the lead of Pope Benedict XVI in dealing with abuse and sexual misconduct in the Legion. For this reason, in the light of the most recent events, I have determined, with the help of the General Council, to review the handling of allegations received in the past to make sure that in each and every one of them we have undertaken proper action.

Priests who have had misconduct in this area should step forward in order to be held accountable for their actions and to receive the assistance and supervision they need. Also, I ask that any of you who might have been affected by a Legionary in this area to report it to the competent authorities. Everyone has to be accountable for his own actions and must understand that this is for their own good and the good of the Legion and, ultimately and more importantly, of the Church

All of this is to follow the lead given by Pope Benedict: "I urge [anyone who has had some form of misconduct] to examine his conscience, take responsibility for the sins [...] committed, and humbly express [his]

CONGREGATIO  
LEGIONARIORUM CHRISTI

DIRECTOR GENERALIS

sorrow. Sincere repentance opens the door to God's forgiveness and the grace of true amendment. By offering prayers and penances for those you have wronged, you should seek to atone personally for your actions. Christ's redeeming sacrifice has the power to forgive even the gravest of sins, and to bring forth good from even the most terrible evil. At the same time, God's justice summons us to give an account of our actions and to conceal nothing. Openly acknowledge your guilt, submit yourselves to the demands of justice, but do not despair of God's mercy." (Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland, March 19, 2010, n. 7).

Before I finish this letter I want to propose to all of us to continue on the path of healing, renewal, and reparation we have already started. I am confident that, with the help of God, the assistance of Card. De Paolis and the leadership of the General Council, we will carry forward the work of repairing past injustices and confronting these cases in a way consonant with the justice and charity demanded in the Gospel. To tread down this path of restoration and renewal, we need unity, charity, prayer, and mutual support.

I must admit that I have always esteemed and valued very much Fr. Thomas as a brother and as a priest. This makes the current situation so painful, and I ask that you keep him in your prayers. I also ask your prayers for Legionaries who may be a cause of scandal with their sins, for those who have suffered from their actions – and for me. We need to remember Christ's invitation to watch and pray so as not to fall. May the Holy Spirit, comforter, advocate and guide grant us on the day of Pentecost the consolation we need, and inspire a new springtime of holiness, mercy and apostolic zeal for the Legion and for Regnum Christi. God can always bring good from evil – let us be on his side in this effort!

Yours in Christ,

