

AN OUTCAST AMONG ORGANIZATION MEN

FEW CHURCHMEN SPEAK ABOUT THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE ABUSE CRISIS

By Pieter Vree | **December 2018**
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Today's bishops are a frustrating bunch. Sure, a few are courageous and even holy, but these seem to be buffeted by fools, cowards, and Organization Men — a term coined in 1956 by William Whyte that has come to denote those whose personal values and judgments are dominated by the organizations for which they work. Corporate conformists, you might call them. They feel obligated to fit in, to serve and protect The Organization. In a hierarchy so populated, few are the churchmen who are willing to speak publicly about the core problem facing the Church today — more so the higher up the ecclesial ladder they ascend. Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò is one of those few. He is an outlier, even an outcast. His is like the voice of one crying out in the ecclesial wilderness.

Archbishop Viganò recently released his third salvo in the ongoing matter of who knew of Theodore Cardinal McCarrick's habitual sexual predations and when. Initially Viganò testified (Aug. 22) that Pope Francis himself was aware that the former cardinal archbishop of Washington, D.C., was a serial abuser of seminarians and minors, yet the Holy Father nevertheless provided cover for McCarrick

and even made him his “trusted advisor” (see “At Last, a Reckoning?” New Oxford Notebook, Oct.).

Viganò concluded his second missive (Sept. 27) with a direct appeal to Marc Cardinal Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops. “Your Eminence,” he wrote, “you were the one who told me of Pope Benedict’s sanctions on McCarrick. You have at your complete disposal key documents incriminating McCarrick and many in the curia for their cover-ups. Your Eminence, I urge you to bear witness to the truth.”

That, naturally, didn’t elicit a favorable reply. Instead, to Viganò’s undoubted dismay, Cardinal Ouellet stepped smoothly into the role of Organization Man. He issued his own communiqué (Oct. 7) in which he calls Viganò’s claims “sarcastic, even blasphemous” and says emphatically that they “cannot come from the Spirit of God.” If not from God, then they must come from the spirit of Satan. What better way to render Viganò an unperson than to claim that he has thwarted the values that undergird The Organization? In this, Ouellet has echoed Francis’s subtle suggestion that Viganò is in league with the Devil (see “Ecce Papa Franciscus!” New Oxford Notebook, Nov.) — a smear tactic suited more to Soviet apparatchiks of yesteryear than to today’s enlightened ecclesiastics.

Ouellet writes that a review of his office’s archives revealed “no documents signed by either Pope” regarding sanctions against McCarrick and “no audience notes” from Ouellet’s predecessor “imposing on the retired Archbishop the obligation to lead a quiet and private life with the

weight normally reserved to canonical penalties.” It is “false,” therefore, for Viganò to call these measures “sanctions formally imposed by Pope Benedict XVI and then invalidated by Pope Francis.”

But Viganò never once mentioned canonical penalties or formal proceedings against McCarrick. Rather, he wrote (Sept. 22) that both he and his predecessor in the apostolic nunciature had informed McCarrick face to face — i.e., verbally — of Pope Benedict XVI’s sanctions, but McCarrick openly defied the orders. And Ouellet, despite himself, confirms this. He divulges that “it had been requested” of McCarrick “not to travel or to make public appearances, in order to avoid new rumors about him.” Nota bene: To avoid new rumors, not to avoid supplying McCarrick with new victims. Appearances and reputations must be maintained, lest scandal break out. That, friends, is the clericalist mindset, the mindset typical of Organization Men.

Ouellet contradicts himself further. He admits that he had given Viganò “written instructions” when he assumed the role of apostolic nuncio to the U.S. about “certain conditions and restrictions that [McCarrick] had to follow on account of some rumors about his past conduct” — conditions that, he says, addressing Viganò, “I mentioned to you verbally.” Clearly, no thought was given to canonical proceedings; rather, the Vatican used an informal chain of communication to relay Benedict’s sanctions to McCarrick. It’s not difficult to see through Ouellet’s thin sophism.

Viganò had written (Aug. 22) that Francis and McCarrick enjoyed a “long friendship.” Ouellet counters: “I

strongly doubt that McCarrick interested him [Francis] as much as you would like people to think.” That’s weak sauce, sir. The public record overwhelms Ouellet’s wishful rejoinder. Consider this from the National Catholic Reporter (June 21, 2014), a year into Francis’s papacy:

McCarrick is one of a number of senior churchmen who were more or less put out to pasture during the eight-year pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. But now Francis is pope, and prelates like Cardinal Walter Kasper (another old friend of McCarrick’s) and McCarrick himself are back in the mix and busier than ever. McCarrick in particular has been on a tear in the past year, traveling to the Philippines to console typhoon victims and visiting geopolitical pivot points such as China and Iran for sensitive talks on religious freedom and nuclear proliferation....

McCarrick loves the action, of course, and he is well-suited to his roving ambassador role. He speaks several languages fluently and he seems to know everybody — and everybody knows him....

Francis, who has put the Vatican back on the geopolitical stage, knows that when he needs a savvy back-channel operator, he can turn to McCarrick.... [McCarrick] was sort of spinning his wheels under Benedict. Then Francis was elected, and everything changed.

Sorry, cardinal, but Francis, by all indications, was very much interested in McCarrick. And clearly, whatever “conditions and restrictions” Ouellet had communicated to Viganò, including McCarrick’s “not traveling or making public appearances,” were removed when Francis rose to

power — gee, by whom? — or were blatantly disregarded by both McCarrick and his old buddy, Pope Francis.

Yes, buddy. The Reporter's glowing profile of the newly paroled, globe-hopping cardinal contains some curious anecdotes about his and Francis's friendship. One mentions McCarrick's heart problems in 2013, which resulted in his getting a pacemaker. While he was convalescing at — where else? — the U.S. seminary in Rome, McCarrick received a phone call:

It was Francis. The two men had known each other for years, back when the Argentine pope was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, archbishop of Buenos Aires. McCarrick assured Francis that he was doing fine. "I guess the Lord isn't done with me yet," he told the pope. "Or the devil doesn't have your accommodations ready!" Francis shot back with a laugh.

Hilarity! Just a couple of old pals joshing around. Or was there more to it? The Reporter mentions another similar episode:

McCarrick travels regularly to the Middle East and was in the Holy Land for Francis' visit in May. "The bad ones, they never die!" the pope teased McCarrick again when he saw him.

These supposedly friendly jabs take on a dark undertone in light of recent revelations. We all know now — and perhaps Francis knew then — that McCarrick is indeed a "bad one." And the Devil very well may be preparing his "accommodations." The truth, they say, is often spoken in jest.

Despite all this, Ouellet sees fit to chastise Viganò. He finds Viganò's "attitude" to be "incomprehensible" and says it is "abhorrent" for him to use the "clamorous" sex-abuse crisis to "inflict an unmerited and unheard of blow to the moral authority of your superior, the Supreme Pontiff."

"I can only conclude," Ouellet writes, that "this monstrous and unsubstantiated accusation" is a "political plot that lacks any real basis that could incriminate the Pope and that profoundly harms the communion of the Church." Ouellet urges Viganò to "repent of your revolt and return to better feelings towards the Holy Father.... You cannot end your priestly life in this way, in an open and scandalous rebellion." Ouellet wants to make crystal clear that Viganò has broken communion with The Organization.

And that's what prompted Viganò's third letter.

In it Viganò denies responsibility for "creating confusion and division in the Church." Such a claim, he writes, can only be plausible to those "who believe such confusion and division were negligible prior to August 2018." Impartial observers, he says, will have noted "a longstanding excess of both."

Viganò writes that he was "fully aware" that his testimony would "bring alarm and dismay to many eminent persons," including his colleagues and fellow bishops, some of whom would assail him and his motives — as indeed both Francis and Ouellet, among others, have done. Yet he felt compelled to witness to the truth — a truth that many in the Church would prefer to explain

away or ignore entirely. Though it was a “painful decision” to have to expose “corruption in the hierarchy,” Viganò is at peace knowing that he can present himself before the Seat of Judgment with a clear conscience. “I invoked God as my witness to the truth of my claims,” he writes, “and none has been shown false.”

It is here that Viganò hits on the central cause of the clerical sex-abuse scandal that erupted in early 2002 and, over a decade and a half later, is still racking the Church. “In the public remonstrances directed at me,” he writes, “I have noted two omissions, two dramatic silences. The first silence regards the plight of the victims. The second regards the underlying reason why there are so many victims, namely, the corrupting influence of homosexuality in the priesthood and in the hierarchy.” Bingo!

As documented by the John Jay Report (2004) commissioned by the U.S. bishops, 81 percent of clerical sex-abuse cases involved male victims, with 78 percent of those victims being postpubescent males. To call the scandal one of pedophilia is misleading; to blame clericalism is dishonest. The problem, at its core, is, and always has been, one of homosexuality. And McCarrick is the poster-boy of homosexual predator priests: He preyed on seminarians primarily and, in one exceptional case, began raping a boy when he was 11 years old, continuing that sexually abusive relationship for 20 years. (For details, see our final New Oxford Note, “Uncle Ted’ McCarrick: Queen Pin of the Lavender Mafia,” Sept.)

The sex-abuse crisis “cannot be properly addressed and resolved unless and until we call things by their true

names,” Viganò writes. What he says deserves to be considered at length:

This is a crisis due to the scourge of homosexuality, in its agents, in its motives, in its resistance to reform. It is no exaggeration to say that homosexuality has become a plague in the clergy.... It is an enormous hypocrisy to condemn the abusers, claim to weep for the victims, and yet refuse to denounce the root cause of so much sexual abuse: homosexuality. It is hypocrisy to refuse to...take the steps necessary to remedy it.... The evidence for homosexual collusion [in the priesthood], with its deep roots that are so difficult to eradicate, is overwhelming. It is well established that homosexual predators exploit clerical privilege to their advantage.

Finally! A high-ranking prelate has acknowledged the nefarious existence of the Lavender Mafia. It is real.

Viganò knows full well that he is committing career suicide by outing the homosexual subculture in the priesthood. But he also knows that he is already isolated within the hierarchical structure, a persona non grata in Francis’s Vatican, and so he is not deterred. Nor will he be intimidated into silence. Instead, he issues a clarion call that each one of us would do well to ponder:

To my brother bishops and priests who know that my statements are true and who can so testify, or who have access to documents that can put the matter beyond doubt: You too are faced with a choice. You can choose to withdraw from the battle, to prop up the conspiracy of silence and avert your eyes from the spreading of corruption. You can make excuses, compromises and

justification that put off the day of reckoning. You can console yourselves with the falsehood and the delusion that it will be easier to tell the truth tomorrow, and then the following day, and so on.

On the other hand, you can choose to speak. You can trust Him who told us, “the truth will set you free.” I do not say it will be easy to decide between silence and speaking. I urge you to consider which choice — on your deathbed, and then before the just Judge — you will not regret having made.

The gravest danger to the Church isn’t scandal — we’ve had plenty of that. The gravest danger is silence — silence about the root cause of the sex-abuse crisis: the scourge of homosexuality in the priesthood. Silence shields a refusal to address that cause, an eagerness to preserve the status quo. Just as the Lavender Mafia is no mirage, the risk is real that the system of sexual abuse and cover-up will be perpetuated by the conspiracy of silence in the Church.

Archbishop Viganò has thrown down the gauntlet, and each one of us must answer the challenge, not least those in positions of power: Do I stand for truth or falsehood? Will I speak out or hold my tongue? In the wise words in Ecclesiastes, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.... A time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (3:1, 7). Now is the time to speak.

From Viganò's Third Letter

“Denouncing homosexual corruption and the moral cowardice that allows it to flourish does not meet with congratulation in our times, not even in the highest spheres of the Church. I am not surprised that in calling attention to these plagues I am charged with disloyalty to the Holy Father and with fomenting an open and scandalous rebellion. Yet rebellion would entail urging others to topple the papacy. I am urging no such thing. I pray every day for Pope Francis — more than I have ever done for the other popes. I am asking, indeed earnestly begging, the Holy Father to face up to the commitments he himself made in assuming his office as successor of Peter. He took upon himself the mission of confirming his brothers and guiding all souls in following Christ, in the spiritual combat, along the way of the cross. Let him admit his errors, repent, show his willingness to follow the mandate given to Peter and, once converted, let him confirm his brothers (Lk 22:32).”