



"Put an end to covering up abuses, those who see must speak immediately"

The Pope's certificate to the Church of Ireland for how it deals with abuses

"We too can find Jesus' teachings on welcoming the stranger and"

Francis in Knock prays "for the healing" of the abuse survivors

Former nuncio to the USA Viganò: "The Pope must resign"

Facts and omissions of Viganò's testimony against Francis

A lucid reading of the former nuncio's statement requesting the Pontiff's resignation and its contradictory conclusions



2 May 2012, during Benedict XVI's Pontificate, the nuncio Viganò participates to the awarding of the "sanctioned" Cardinal McCarrick (photo taken from Cardinal Sean O'Malley's blog)

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ANDREA TORNIELLI
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"I believe that the Viganò press release speaks for itself, and you have the professional maturity to draw conclusions. With these words, addressed to journalists on the return flight from Dublin, Francis invited them to read the 11-page dossier dropped by the former nuncio to the United States, Carlo Maria Viganò, who asked for the Pope's resignation, accusing him of having covered up the 83-year-old Cardinal Emeritus of Washington Theodore McCarrick, who had



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had homosexual relations with adult seminarians and priests. It is therefore necessary to start from a careful reading of the text, analyze it and separate the facts reported from opinions and interpretations. And above all from omissions.

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The anti-Bergoglio operation

The clamorous decision of the Vatican diplomat to violate the oath of fidelity to the Pope and the official secret represents yet another attack against Francis carried out in an organized way by the same circles that a year ago had tried to arrive at a sort of doctrinal impeachment, after the publication of the exhortation "Amoris laetitia". Attempt failed. Viganò is in fact one of the signatories of the so-called "Professione" in which Pope Bergoglio is defined as divorce-friendly, and well connected to the most conservative circles overseas and in the Vatican. That it is not simply the outburst of a Church man tired of the rotten things he has seen around him, but of a long and carefully planned operation, in an attempt to get the Pope to resign, is demonstrated by the timing and the involvement of the same international media network that for years has been propagating - often using anonymous ones - the requests of those who would like to overturn the result of the 2013 conclave. This is attested by the same testimonies written in the various blogs by the journalists who published the Viganò dossier: always in the forefront in the defense of the traditional family, but careless to drop the bombshell on the very day in which Francis concluded with a great mass the international meeting of families.

The complaint of 2000

First of all, assuming that what Viganò said is true, let's go through the Facts. On 22 November 2000, the Dominican friar Boniface Ramsey wrote to the apostolic nuncio to the USA Gabriel Montalvo and informed him that he had heard rumors over McCarrick having "shared the bed with seminarians". A day earlier, on 21 November, John Paul II appointed McCarrick Archbishop of Washington. Viganò noted that the nuncio's claim to the Secretariat of State, then led by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, had no follow-up. It should be noted: the first complaint that arrives in the nunciature and from there to the Vatican is immediately after the appointment in Washington. One may, however, wonder, if these rumors about McCarrick were so widespread and insistent, why wasn't he prevented from

being appointed as auxiliary of New York (in 1977, at the end of the pontificate of Paul VI), then the appointment as bishop of Metuchen (in 1981, at the beginning of the pontificate of John Paul II), then the transfer to the Archdiocese of Newark (in 1986, again with Pope Wojtyła) and finally the promotion to Washington (2000) and to that of becoming Cardinal (2001).

It's all Sodano's fault

The year following his promotion to Washington Wojtyła therefore included McCarrick in the College of Cardinals. In his dossier Viganò blames the nomination - without any evidence - on Sodano explaining that the Pope at the time was already sick and almost incapable of understanding and governing the Church. Anyone who has knowledge of Vatican things knows that this is not true, at least it was not true in the year 2000: John Paul II will live for another five years. We know that at that time, in the narrow wojtylian entourage that controlled the nominations, there were the Pope special secretary, Stanislaw Dziwisz (a name that Viganò omitted) and the Substitute of the Secretariat of State then Prefect of the bishops, Giovanni Battista Re (whom Viganò mentions for clearing his name). Was that first report, without complainants taking responsibility themselves, perhaps not reliable? Or was McCarrick's power - also financial - able to open Vatican doors that should have remained closed? A doubt can be raised about the appointment to Washington, but why no one think to investigate before he was created cardinal the following year? But why did the nuncio not insist, if he was so sure of the abuses committed against seminarians and priests (always of legal age), asking John Paul II for an audience?

Benedict XVI's sanctions

New complaints arrived in 2006, when the Pope was Benedict, and the Secretary of State was Tarcisio Bertone. This time a former priest and abuser of children Gregory Littleton enters the scene, who gives the nuncio to the USA (at that moment Monsignor Pietro Sambini) a memory in which he tells that he too was sexually harassed by McCarrick (always as over-18). Viganò prepared a note for the superiors, who did not respond. It is worth remembering that at that moment McCarrick had already retired: the new Pope Benedict XVI on 16 May 2006 accepted his resignation duly presented the previous year, 7 July 2005, when the prelate turned 75. If the rumors and complaints were so widespread and known, why wasn't McCarrick dismissed immediately, at the age of 75? In 2008, new accusations on McCarrick's improper behavior started circulating and again, Viganò writes, he had sent another note to his superiors. This time something seems to have moved, though at the not-so-rapid times of the Vatican bureaucracy. In fact Benedict XVI would have intervened against the cardinal by now emeritus and retired with a sanctioning order. Viganò cannot be precise about the date of this sanction: at that time, he had left his post in the Secretariat of State, where he coordinated the work of the nunciatures staff, and was appointed Secretary of the Governorate. Therefore, if Viganò affirms the truth - and we must assume that he does - "in 2009 or in 2010", Benedict XVI intervenes and presumably orders McCarrick to retreat from public life to a life of prayer and no longer to live in the neocatechumenal seminary Redemptoris Mater that he opened in Washington.

Mysterious restrictions

Benedict's order does not become public and is transmitted orally by the Holy See to the nuncio in Washington (Sambi) so that he may communicate it to the person concerned. Indulgence for a cardinal by now old and retired to whom one wants to spare the shame of the public sanction? Or was the evidence not considered sufficient by Benedict XVI, who, if he is at the origin of the sanction, must obviously have been adequately warned of what McCarrick had committed? Pope Ratzinger therefore knew but thought it was sufficient to recommend to the already retired cardinal that he remain calm on the sidelines. It is worth remembering: no one has ever spoken, let alone denounced, about child abuse. We are talking about harassment of people of full age, which - given that it is the bishop who invites his seminarians or priests to bed, are actually an abuse. There is no such thing as a situation of equality, before it being a sexual abuse, it is an abuse of clerical power. Although no one has ever said that to invite seminarians close to the priesthood and young priests to sleep with him, "Uncle Ted" (as McCarrick called himself) used forms of violence or threats. We could ask: but if these serious facts were so evident, why not impose an exemplary and public sanction on the cardinal, asking him to live withdrawn in penance?

Why is nobody watching?

Some doubt about the real content of the sanctions is more than legitimate, especially in the light of what happens after that. The Viganò dossier suggests that in the last three or four years of Ratzinger's pontificate McCarrick lived as a hermit or a cloistered monk and that only after the election of Francis was his cage opened. Once again, we must stick to the documented facts, and that is not the case at all. The reality is different, documented and documentable. At everyone's fingertips, just a click on the web away. During Ratzinger's last years of pontificate, McCarrick's did not change his way of life: it is true that he left the seminary where he resided, but he celebrated diaconal and priestly ordinations alongside important cardinals of the Roman Curia close collaborators of Pope Ratzinger, he gave lectures. On 16 January 2012, he participated together with other US bishops in an audience with Benedict XVI in the Vatican and his name among the participants was indicated in the bulletin of the Holy See's Press Office. On 16 April 2012, he met Benedict again at the audience of the Papal Foundation and celebrated the Pontiff's birthday together with all those present. He traveled and returned to Rome in February 2013 to bid farewell to the Pope who had resigned and shook his hand with a smile (all immortalized by the cameras of Vatican TV). It is clear that his position was not considered so serious, that the indications of guilt were not considered so obvious and that the sanctions should not be so restrictive.

Also Viganò stood beside McCarrick

And even Viganò himself, in the meantime removed from the Vatican by decision of Benedict XVI who "promotes him nuncio to Washington, does not appear at all worried about the situation. His participation in public events with the harassing cardinal is documented, such as concelebrations in the United States or the attribution of an award to McCarrick (on 2 May 2012, Pierre Hotel in Manhattan), a ceremony during which Viganò appears anything but indignant or embarrassed to be photographed alongside the old cardinal harasser. Why now that he had the power to reach Benedict XVI directly, as his representative in one of the most

important diplomatic seats in the world, does Nuncio Viganò not rise up, not act, not ask for an audience, not enforce the restrictive provisions?

Francis' involvement

The current Pope, the only real target of the entire operation, enters the scene in June 2013, a few months after his election. Let's remember: McCarrick, over eighty, did not take part in the conclave, is a retired but hyperactive cardinal. He continues to travel around the world, to give lectures, to preside over celebrations. Viganò goes to an audience with Francis. It was the Pope who asked him a question about McCarrick and Viganò reminded him that the cardinal "corrupted generations of seminarians and priests" and that in the Vatican there is a dossier that attests to this. Beware: it is not Viganò who speaks in a worried way of the cardinal. It is the Pope who asks for a judgment. The nuncio does not say that he has given Bergoglio a note on the matter nor that he has asked him to intervene. Today, outraged, Viganò writes about the sanctions of Benedict XVI that no one knows, but - if they exist - he as nuncio does not seem to have acted to enforce such measures. That answer is all he says to the Pope.

McCarrick Adviser?

Viganò then writes that the old cardinal would have become, in the early years of Francis' pontificate, his counselor, especially for the American appointments. He does not present, at least until this moment, any evidence. Instead he argues - and here too there is no reason not to believe him - that in that first meeting of June 2013 the new Pope would have recommended: "The bishops in the United States must not be ideologized, they must be pastors". Since in the following months McCarrick also made a similar statement speaking with a monsignor of the nunciature (who then reported it to Viganò), the former nuncio who asked for the Pope's resignation deduced that there was McCarrick behind Bergoglio's attitude towards the US Church. A very weak deduction. It is in fact much simpler and more plausible to hypothesize that on his own initiative Francis - who knew the American Church - had repeated to various people that he met that phrase on the bishops that "they must not be ideologized" but must be "pastors". Moreover, to understand that this is one of the insistent points of his magisterium on the episcopate, it is sufficient to read the Pope's speeches, who thought that way well before the 2013 conclave.

The denial of the former ambassador

An interesting confutation of Viganò's theory came yesterday from the former American ambassador to the Holy See, Miguel Diaz, nominated in May 2009, who said he was stunned to read Viganò's testimony on Francis' words on American bishops because "I immediately recalled my first meeting with Msgr. Sambini (Pope Benedict's representative) at his residency in Washington DC " he said that "we needed American bishops who were less political and more pastoral, not cultural war warriors". Therefore, already under Pope Ratzinger the indication that arrived at the apostolic nuncio to the USA was that of appointing bishop pastors and not "cultural warriors". Evidently the question of the excessive collateralism of the US episcopate with certain political positions and a certain unilateral interest only in some ethical questions was already felt as problematic at the end of Ratzinger's pontificate.

The new complaint

Four and a half years go by and in 2018, for the first time, the news of an abuse on a minor committed fifty years earlier by McCarrick, then a young priest, reaches the Vatican. The complaint had never been made before, nor had anyone - according to Viganò's report - ever talked before about the possible abuse of minors involving McCarrick. A regular canonical procedure was quickly opened by the diocese of New York, with the transmission of the documents to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. There are also new reports, made known by the diocese of Newark, concerning two settlements with compensation for damages that McCarrick has paid, relating to allegations of harassment made by seminarians of age at the time of the events. With a decision that has no precedent in the recent history of the Church, Francis not only imposes McCarrick to silence and a withdrawn life (that silence and a withdrawn life that had not been imposed on him before or if it had been imposed on him no one had ensured that he complied with this orders) but also removes his cardinal cap. The cardinal emeritus of Washington is no longer cardinal.

Distorted facts and logics

Not only should we ask ourselves if what Viganò tells is true (as the media repeat like a mantra, asking in a loud voice for Francis' resignation). One should also wonder whether the sequence described by Viganò, his considerations, his omissions, his interpretations are reasonable and really lead to attributing some responsibility to the reigning Pontiff today. In any case, the pure and crude facts, and assuming that every detail told by the former nuncio is true, here is what happened. There is a holy Pope whose entourage (much less holy) promoted and made cardinal a homosexual bishop who abused his power to sleep with seminarians, even if it is not clear how much information had reach directly the ear of John Paul II, then perfectly capable of understanding and willing, to whom certainly could not pass unnoticed the importance of the appointment of the Archbishop of Washington. There is another Pope who has emerged today, Benedict, who (perhaps) would have ordered this cardinal to live withdrawn but without then being able to enforce his orders, who never flinched not even after seeing him arrive at the Vatican on several occasions, and without his nuncio to the USA (Viganò) having any problem in taking pictures next to him, in concelebrating with him, in having dinner with him, in pronouncing speeches in his presence. And finally, there is a Pope, Francis, who stripped the cardinal - despite being old and retired for some time - from his cardinal status after having reduced him to silence, forbidding him from celebrating in public. And yet it was of the latter's head that the former nuncio today indignant is asking for, probably only because Francis had "dared" to appoint in the United States some bishop who are less conservative than those previously appointed, when it was cardinals like Bernard Law who advised on the American appointments. That it is a biased operation, it is evident to anyone who reflects on the succession of events, without the need to revisit information that tends to discredit the figure of Viganò.

A shortened version of this article has been published in today's edition of La Stampa