

Here is the open letter from Cardinal Marc Ouellet followed by Arch Bishop Viganò's response

**“OPEN LETTER FROM THE PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS,
CARDINAL MARC OUELLET, ON THE RECENT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE HOLY SEE**

Dear brother Carlo Maria Viganò,

In your last message to the press, in which you make accusations against Pope Francis and against the Roman Curia, you invite me to tell the truth about certain facts that you interpret as signs of an endemic corruption that has infiltrated the hierarchy of the Church up to its highest levels. With pontifical permission, and in my capacity as Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, I offer my testimony about matters concerning the Archbishop emeritus of Washington, Theodore McCarrick, and his presumed links to Pope Francis, matters that are at the center of your public accusations and your demand that the Holy Father resign. I write my testimony based on my personal contacts and on documents in the archives of the Congregation, currently the object of study to clarify this sad case.

Out of consideration for the good, collaborative relation we had when you were Apostolic Nuncio in Washington, allow me to say, in all honesty, that I find your current attitude incomprehensible and extremely troubling, not only because of the confusion it sows among the People of God, but because your public accusations gravely harm the reputation of the bishops, successors of the Apostles. I recall a time when I enjoyed your esteem and your trust, but now I see that I have been stripped in your eyes of the respect that was accorded to me, for the only reason I have remained faithful to the Holy Father's guidance in exercising the service he has entrusted to me in the Church. Is not communion with the Successor of Peter an expression of our obedience to Christ who chose him and sustains him with his grace? My interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia*, which you criticize, is grounded in this fidelity to the living tradition, which Francis has given us another example of by recently modifying the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the question of the death penalty.

Let us address the facts. You said that on June 23, 2013, you provided Pope Francis with information about McCarrick in an audience he granted to you, as he also did for many pontifical representatives with whom he met for the first time that day. I can only imagine the amount of verbal and written information that was provided to the Holy Father on that occasion about so many persons and situations. I strongly doubt that the Pope had such interest in McCarrick, as you would like us to believe, given the fact that by then he was an 82-year-old Archbishop emeritus who had been without a role for seven years. Moreover, the written instructions given to you by the Congregation for Bishops at the beginning of your mission in 2011 did not say anything about McCarrick, except for what I mentioned to you verbally about his situation as Bishop emeritus and certain conditions and restrictions that he had to follow on account of some rumors about his past conduct.

From 30th June 2010, when I became Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, I never presented in audience the McCarrick case to Pope Benedict XVI or to Pope Francis – not until recently, after his dismissal from the College of Cardinals. The former Cardinal, retired in May of 2006, had been requested not to travel or to make public appearances, in order to avoid new rumors about him. It is false, therefore, to present those measures as “sanctions” formally imposed by Pope Benedict XVI and then invalidated by Pope Francis. After a review of the archives, I find that there are no documents signed by either Pope in this regard, and there are no audience notes from my

predecessor, Cardinal Giovanni-Battista Re, imposing on the retired Archbishop the obligation to lead a quiet and private life with the weight normally reserved to canonical penalties. The reason is that back then, unlike today, there was not sufficient proof of his alleged culpability. Thus, the Congregation's decision was inspired by prudence, and the letters from my predecessor and my own letters urged him, first through the Apostolic Nuncio Pietro Sambri and then through you, to lead a life of prayer and penance, for his own good and for the good of the Church. His case would have deserved new disciplinary measures if the Nunciature in Washington, or any other source, had provided us recent and definitive information about his behavior. I am of the opinion that, out of respect for the victims and given the need for justice, the inquiry currently underway in the United States and in the Roman Curia should provide a comprehensive and critical study of the procedures and the circumstances of this painful case in order to prevent something like it from ever happening in the future.

How is it possible that this man of the Church, whose incoherence has now been revealed, was promoted many times, and was nominated to such a high position as Archbishop of Washington and Cardinal? I am personally very surprised, and I recognize that there were failures in the selection procedures implemented in his case. However, and without entering here into details, it must be understood that the decisions taken by the Supreme Pontiff are based on the information available to him at the time and that they are the object of a prudential judgment which is not infallible. I think it is unjust to reach the conclusion that there is corruption on the part of the persons entrusted with this previous discernment process, even though in the particular case some of the concerns that were raised by testimonies should have been examined more closely. The Archbishop also knew how to cleverly defend himself from those concerns raised about him. Furthermore, the fact that there could be in the Vatican persons who practice or support sexual behavior that is contrary to the values of the Gospel, does not authorize us to make generalizations or to declare unworthy and complicit this or that individual, including the Holy Father himself. Should not ministers of the truth avoid above all calumny and defamation?

Here is the Arch Bishops response

I invoked God as my witness to the truth of my claims, and none has been shown false. Cardinal Ouellet has written to rebuke me for my temerity in breaking silence and leveling such grave accusations against my brothers and superiors, but in truth his remonstrance confirms me in my decision and, even more, serves to vindicate my claims, severally and as a whole.

- Cardinal Ouellet concedes that he spoke with me about McCarrick's situation prior to my leaving for Washington to begin my post as nuncio.
- Cardinal Ouellet concedes that he communicated to me in writing the conditions and restrictions imposed on McCarrick by Pope Benedict.
- Cardinal Ouellet concedes that these restrictions forbade McCarrick to travel or to make public appearances.

- Cardinal Ouellet concedes that the Congregation of Bishops, in writing, first through the nuncio Sambini and then once again through me, required McCarrick to lead a life of prayer and penance.

What does Cardinal Ouellet dispute?

- Cardinal Ouellet disputes the possibility that Pope Francis could have taken in important information about McCarrick on a day when he met scores of nuncios and gave each only a few moments of conversation. But this was not my testimony. My testimony is that at a second, private meeting, I informed the Pope, answering his own question about Theodore McCarrick, then Cardinal archbishop emeritus of Washington, prominent figure of the Church in the US, telling the Pope that McCarrick had sexually corrupted his own seminarians and priests. No pope could forget that.
- Cardinal Ouellet disputes the existence in his archives of letters signed by Pope Benedict or Pope Francis regarding sanctions on McCarrick. But this was not my testimony. My testimony was that he has in his archives key documents – irrespective of provenance – incriminating McCarrick and documenting the measures taken in his regard, and other proofs on the cover-up regarding his situation. And I confirm this again.
- Cardinal Ouellet disputes the existence in the files of his predecessor, Cardinal Re, of "audience memos" imposing on McCarrick the restrictions already mentioned. But this was not my testimony. My testimony is that there are other documents: for instance, a note from Cardinal Re not *ex-Audientia SS.mi*, signed by either the Secretary of State or by the Substitute.
- Cardinal Ouellet disputes that it is false to present the measures taken against McCarrick as "sanctions" decreed by Pope Benedict and canceled by Pope Francis. True. They were not technically "sanctions" but provisions, "conditions and restrictions." To quibble whether they were sanctions or provisions or something else is pure legalism. From a pastoral point of view they are exactly the same thing.

In brief, Cardinal Ouellet concedes the important claims that I did and do make, and disputes claims I don't make and never made.

There is one point on which I must absolutely refute what Cardinal Ouellet wrote. The Cardinal states that the Holy See was only aware of "rumors," which were not enough to justify disciplinary measures against McCarrick. I affirm to the contrary that the Holy See was aware of a variety of concrete facts, and is in possession of documentary proof, and that the responsible persons nevertheless chose not to intervene or were prevented from doing so. Compensation by the Archdiocese of Newark and the Diocese of Metuchen to the victims of McCarrick's sexual abuse, the letters of Fr. Ramsey, of the nuncios Montalvo in 2000 and Sambini in 2006, of Dr. Sipe in 2008, my two notes to the superiors of the Secretariat of State who described in detail the concrete allegations against McCarrick; are all these just rumors? They are official correspondence, not gossip from the sacristy. The crimes reported were very serious, including those of attempting to give sacramental absolution to accomplices in perverse acts, with subsequent sacrilegious celebration of Mass. These documents specify the identity of the perpetrators and their protectors, and the chronological sequence of the facts. They are kept in the appropriate archives; no extraordinary investigation is needed to recover them.

In the public remonstrances directed at me 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. As to the first, it is dismaying that, amid all the scandals and indignation, so little thought should be given to those damaged by the sexual predations of those commissioned as ministers of the gospel. This is not a matter of settling scores or sulking over the vicissitudes of ecclesiastical careers. It is not a matter of politics. It is not a matter of how church historians may evaluate this or that papacy. This is about souls. Many souls have been and are even now imperiled of their eternal salvation.

As to the second silence, this very grave crisis cannot be properly addressed and resolved unless and until we call things by their true names. 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, and it can only be eradicated with spiritual weapons. It is an enormous hypocrisy to condemn the abuse, 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 acknowledge that this scourge is due to a serious crisis in the spiritual life of the clergy and to fail to take the steps necessary to remedy it.

Unquestionably there exist philandering clergy, and unquestionably they too damage their own souls, the souls of those whom they corrupt, and the Church at large. But these violations of priestly celibacy are usually confined to the individuals immediately involved. Philandering clergy usually do not recruit other philanderers, nor work to promote them, nor cover-up their misdeeds -- whereas the evidence for homosexual collusion, 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. But to claim the crisis itself to be clericalism is pure sophistry. It is to pretend that a means, an instrument, is in fact the main motive.

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).

In closing, I wish to repeat my appeal 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.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò
Arcivescovo tit. di Ulpiana
Nunzio Apostolico
19 Ottobre 2018, Feast of the North American Martyrs