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Shut It Down

Michael Sean Winters | Apr. 14, 2010 NCR Today

If you have read Jason Berry?s outstanding expose of the Legionaries of Christ and the methods and crimes of their founder, you know that the Vatican is currently completing an apostolic visitation of the order, and that the Pope is set to soon rule on whether to disband it, reconstitute it under new leadership, or let it continue with its present leaders. The answer is simple: Pope Benedict XVI should shut it down. Period.

Yet, it appears that the protectors of the order remain busy and powerful and, as John Allen reports, efforts are being mounted to choose a compromise, letting the order continue with a Vatican-appointed ?commissioner? to oversee it. Unfortunately, the people advocating for anything short of complete suppression are the same people who, according to Berry, were taking bribes from the Order and its founder over the years. They are hardly disinterested.

Over at America, Austen Ivereigh asks [1]if Cardinal Sodano, defender of the Legionaries-in-Chief, will resign over the scandal. He should not be given the option. The current Dean of the Sacred College of Cardinals should be stripped of his office. The corruption at the center of the story is so great, and so ugly, there is no other way to proceed.

It is fitting that the decision about the Legionaries comes at the same time as the Vatican is grappling with the clergy sex abuse scandal. Father Maciel, it turns out, was among the most egregious of abusers. Any course but full disclosure and a complete shutting down of the organization he began will be seen as an indication of how serious the Vatican is about rooting out the cancer of child sex abuse.

I am certain that the Order contains good people who love the Church. I can think of no better way to honor that love than by sending them to other orders that have not been so grossly tainted.

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[1] http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&entry_id=2749