NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Corapi leaves priesthood, says can't get 'fair hearing'

Mark Pattison Catholic News Service | Jun. 21, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Father John Corapi, a priest of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, declared June 17 he was leaving the priesthood, contending he could not get a "fair hearing" on misconduct allegations that were lodged against him in March and which included what the priest said were sexual abuse charges.

The announcement, which took the forms of a YouTube video and a blog posting on one of his websites, www.theblacksheepdog.us, was made two days before his 20th anniversary of priestly ordination.

"For 20 years I did my best to guard and feed the sheep. Now, based on a totally unsubstantiated, undocumented allegation from a demonstrably troubled person I was thrown out like yesterday's garbage," Father Corapi said. "I accept that. Perhaps I deserve that."

A spokesman for the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity told Catholic News Service June 20 that Father Corapi had not formally notified the order, founded in 1958, of his intent to leave. "Not directly," said Father Gerard Sheehan, the order's regional priest-servant and Father Corapi's superior. "We heard it just like everyone else did, from YouTube. We're as surprised as everyone else is."

Father Corapi had been suspended from priestly ministry by his religious order shortly after the allegations first surfaced. Eternal Word Television Network also took his television program off the air in March, saying it would not knowingly put a priest on the air whose priestly faculties had been suspended.

Although a spokesman for the order had said in March the suspension "in no way implies Father Corapi is guilty of the allegation," Father Corapi had complained from the outset, as he reiterated June 17, that the process means "you are for all practical purposes assumed guilty until you can prove you are innocent."

Father Corapi said in his blog posting he would continue his radio work, but his website indicated his last radiocasts were only online, and the most recent of those were in mid-April, before Easter.

The National Catholic Register, which is published by EWTN, reported that a complicating factor in the case was a breach-of-contract lawsuit filed by Father Corapi against his presumed accuser, forbidding her to reveal details of her tenure at Santa Cruz Ministries, the company owned by the priest that sells his CDs, DVDs and books.

It was not immediately known whether an investigation into the alleged misconduct by Father Corapi would continue given the recent developments. "I don't know if those decisions have been made yet," Father Sheehan told CNS.

"They can't prove I'm guilty of the things alleged because I'm not, and they can't prove I'm innocent because that is simply illogical and impossible," Father Corapi said in his statement.

"I accept moving on, but I am not ready to be altogether extinguished just yet."

Father Corapi's Facebook page, which has nearly 53,000 followers, was filled with posts reacting to his announcement, with many people supporting him and denouncing the allegations and the church, although some lamented his decision to leave the priesthood and others suggested caution in interpreting the events that led to his decision to leave the priesthood.

Santa Cruz Ministries was still offering a half-off discount on his CDs, DVDs and books in recognition of his ordination anniversary. One of Father Corapi's attorneys said in March the business -- which was not under church control -- would continue, with proceeds helping pay attorney fees. The business has its headquarters in Kalispell, Mont., where Father Corapi has a residence, although he did not have priestly faculties in the Diocese of Helena, Mont.

The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, is based in Robstown, Texas, in the Diocese of Corpus Christi.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/21/2014 - 20:09*): http://ncronline.org/news/corapi-leaves-priesthood-says-cant-get-fair-hearing