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Maciel's Legion continues to unravel

by Tom Roberts

NCR Today

Sandro Magister writes about the continuing changes to the Legion of Christ being arranged by Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, the pontifical delegate to whom Benedict XVI has given full power to remake the scandal-plagued religious order and its associated lay movement Regnum Christi, with its hundreds of consecrated men and women.

It is essential to remember that the Legion, a now failed project built on utterly fraudulent life of its founder, the late Marciel Maciel Degollado, was the ideal expression of Catholic priesthood and lay witness for Pope John Paul II. Maciel and the Legion represents more than a blind spot or a dark chapter in John Paul's papacy. It represented, more importantly, the model of priesthood, leadership and witness that John Paul advocated.

As I point out in my book, *The Emerging Catholic Church: A Community's Search for Itself*: Maciel had protectors in very high places. He traveled with the pope on some of his journeys and, as late as 2004, John Paul honored the Legion by entrusting it with the management of Jerusalem's Notre Dame Center. John Paul II also praised Maciel that year for 60 years of "intense, generous and fruitful priestly ministry." In a letter the pope said he wanted to join in the "canticle of praise and thanksgiving" for the great things he has accomplished and said Maciel has always been concerned with the "integral promotion of the person." The Legion was clearly John Paul II's idea of what a religious order and what Catholic expression should be."

Magister writes that De Paolis is making sweeping changes at the top of the Legion, with young clerics who reportedly were not part of Maciel's inner circle and who were open and receptive during an earlier Vatican investigation of the order. The question is whether other areas of church life affected by John Paul's notions of "heroic priesthood" and what is meant by lay engagement in the church will eventually

also get the message and undergo similar adjustments.

Read the full Magister report here.

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