

## Legionaries living 'a process of purification'

Dennis Coday | Feb. 4, 2009

ROME -- The Legionaries of Christ only recently found out that their founder had fathered a child, knowledge that has caused the members great suffering, but has not destroyed the gratitude they owe him, said a spokesman for the religious order.

Fr. Paolo Scarafoni, spokesman at the Legionaries' headquarters in Rome, told Catholic News Service Feb. 4 that, despite the failures and flaws of the late Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, members of the order are grateful to him for having founded the order and its various ministries.

"We found this out only recently," Scarafoni said, referring to the fact that Maciel had a daughter.

Asked how the Legionaries came to know about her, Scarafoni said, "Frankly, I cannot say and it is not opportune to discuss this further, also because there are people involved who deserve privacy."

In the past, Maciel had been accused of sexually abusing young seminarians in the order, accusations that Scarafoni said "have never been proven definitively."

Because the Holy See decided against conducting a canonical trial to investigate the allegations, but rather ordered the then-elderly Maciel to withdraw to a life of prayer and penance in May 2006, "we do not know what allegations were made and examined at that time," Scarafoni said.

Maciel died Jan. 30, 2008, at the age of 87.

The pain the Legionaries are experiencing now "is so great precisely because this is something we did not know before," Scarafoni said.

However, he said, "We are serene. Certainly, it is a time of great trial for us and in the face of this there is great suffering."

Scarafoni had told the Mexican news agency Notimex that the Legionaries were living through "a process of purification."

He told CNS, "When you are faced with such great pain, it means that you must grow, you must be better, you must be purified spiritually because you must continue to move forward motivated by even higher ideals. This is especially true when you are faced with the unexpected."

At the same time, he said, "there is much gratitude. Our gratitude to him remains very strong because we have received so much that is good from him. This is something we cannot and will not deny."

The priest said the Legionaries of Christ and the lay members of Regnum Christi are dealing with the news "as a family. With prudence and charity we are informing our members and trying to help each other overcome this situation. What is important is not to renounce the great mission that we have."

?The priority is the life and the holiness of each of our members,? he said.

Religion News Service reports that Scarafoni said the Legion had no plans to apologize to any alleged abuse victims or offer them pastoral care. "They have surely found a way by now to receive adequate care," he said.

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