

Explanatory Letter from the Little Sisters dated July 2, 2019 to the Support Committee in response to the June 18, 2019 Dicastery's letter

Dear friends,

We have read very carefully the June 18, 2019 letter from the dicastery which is presented as a comprehensive response to the numerous letters sent to the dicastery in support of the Little Sisters.

Obviously, this explanatory letter from the dicastery presents a quite biased vision of the situation and remains silent on a certain number of points which are quite essential to the proper understanding of the issue.

It is perfectly true that the matter was referred to the dicastery in June 2017; the situation was the result of Monsignor Scherrer's reading of the report of the canonical visit which he turned into an indictment and which outraged the sisters within the Congregation.

If, as the dicastery reveals, each of the parties has submitted an argued case, it is clear that none of the probative items in the Little Sisters' brief has been taken into account by the dicastery although each of the points in the canonical visit report, which amounted to an indictment, was validly challenged by the numerous testimonies and statements which we referred to the dicastery.

Therefore, the dicastery has not followed any adversarial process, and at no time did it accept to reconsider its stance following the reception of our very substantiated defense brief.

For that matter, one fact (among so many others) which is typical of this lack of respect for adversarial processes is the following: the canonical advocate appointed by the Little Sisters to defend them was never authorized to defend the case before the Apostolic Signature tribunal to which we had appealed.

As the dicastery states, the commissioners performed a new canonical visit from April to June 2018 and submitted their report in June 2018, with a copy given to us.

In this copy, and contrary to the dicastery's claims, no criticism was made against the Little Sisters of Mary; the document handed to the sisters and presented as the report of this second visit was indeed much less critical than the 2017 report, and yet, the penalties were maintained in full. As a result, either the copy handed to us is a forgery, deliberately watered down, or the dicastery did not take it into account just as it did not take into account our very much substantiated defense brief, with the sole purpose of acceding to Monsignor Scherrer's will, in order to bring the Congregation to its knee.

When the dicastery readdressed the sisters on July 16, 2018, it proposed in fact not a return to normal, as it seems to state in its letter, but it wanted the Congregation's governance to be entrusted to Sister Medevielle in replacement for the Congregation's council which is legally elected by the sisters meeting as a chapter.

As for the challenge to the validity of this chapter, in no way does it take into account the legal reality of the Institute: indeed, the Congregation being legally recognized, is a legal entity under French law subject to the rules of French civil law, which mandates holding a chapter, as the previous term was ended. This chapter is therefore a French legal obligation binding both on the Little Sisters and on the dicastery.

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As a result, it is a lie to claim that his chapter was legally void, since it is in strict enforcement of the Congregation's French civil law status because it is a legally recognized legal entity.

"It seems to us that the sisters, in particular Mother Marie de Saint Michel, regard the Congregation a private property" devoid of "ecclesial conscience", even moved by the will to constitute "an obstruction to personal freedom." How can we, even for one second, believe this interpretation made by the dicastery when 32 sisters individually show their intention not to acknowledge Sister Medevielle authority?

All those among you, and they are many, who are familiar with the Congregation, perfectly know that this accusation is an outright lie and in the nature of defamation, which faces penalties under the French Civil Code. In this respect, Mother Marie de St Michel reserves the right to proceed with the proper consequences of this letter.

The following developments also present a truncated view of reality, as they fail to specify that if the sisters have, at the start, requested an indult of departure, it was only because the huge pressure on each of them made them fear pure and simple excommunication, and they chose the lesser of two evils, thinking that in this way they would avoid incurring the Vatican's wrath before suffering a final penalty.

The dicastery's letter also fails to state that the sisters twice sent a letter to the dicastery confirming their will to remain in the Institute and begging for an appeasement solution, including their proposal to be placed under an impartial bishop's responsibility.

In this respect, the dicastery deliberately fails to report this reality in order to give the feeling that the sisters wish to leave the Institute whereas they have been forced to do it by the psychological, spiritual and moral pressure on them by Monsignor Scherrer, Sister Medevielle and the dicastery, constituting real moral harassment.

As a result, when the dicastery writes, "The indults were notified by mail with acknowledgement of receipt during May 2019. We regret to report that none was refused", it is a distortion of the truth, since the sisters as a group stated to the dicastery that the request for indults was made under duress and that their wish was to stay in the congregation; this was done in two letters in May 2019. Therefore the indults were not accepted by the sisters, since none of them signed the indult of departure, but it is the continuation of the congregation that was refused by the dicastery.

When the dicastery suggests a situation characterized by influence and ascendancy similar to that of a closed sectarian group and when it accuses your support committee of the same, it is guilty of defamatory statements which are clear statutory offenses. Of course, such statements will be the subject of prosecution and French justice will settle the litigation. We will not fail to inform you in due course.

Of course, we are at your disposal should you need any additional explanations so as to leave no doubt regarding our truth, and we take the opportunity with this explanatory letter to tell you again how deeply we appreciate your support and your involvement by our side, and in these particularly difficult moments when we are asked to go through a life change, it is a real comfort.

**Sr Claire-MarieSr
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