



**The Man Who Took On Pope Francis:
The Story Behind the Vignano Letter**

The New York Times

Picture above: Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, in Chicago in 2014, totally shook the Roman Catholic Church.

"When the counterfeiting line was presented in October 2018, it was observed that Francis had powerful enemies among the allies of former Pope Benedict XVI. In particular the Vicar Archbishop, who had written a scathing criticism of Francis asking for his resignation. For those who follow the growing schism within the Catholic Church between this socially conservative faction and the socially liberal Pope Francis, the following articles may be of interest. It shows the socially conservative Catholic faction, whose leaders include Archbishop Viganò and Cardinal Sarah, Cardinal Mueller and Cardinal Zen-their belief in the Coronavirus being a deep-state plot to bring about the "new world order," and similar conspiracy theories.

Élder Tess

Original article

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ROME — At 9:30 a.m. last Wednesday, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò showed up at the Rome apartment of a conservative Vatican reporter with a simple clerical collar, a Rocky Mountains baseball cap and an explosive story to tell.

Archbishop Viganò, the former chief Vatican diplomat in the United States, spent the morning working shoulder to shoulder with the reporter at his dining room table on a 7,000-word letter that called for the resignation of Pope Francis, accusing him of covering up sexual abuse and giving comfort to a “homosexual current” in the Vatican.

The journalist, Marco Tosatti, said he had smoothed out the narrative. The enraged archbishop brought no evidence, he said, but he did supply the flair, condemning the homosexual networks inside the church that act “with the power of octopus tentacles” to “strangle innocent victims and priestly vocations.”

“The poetry is all his,” Mr. Tosatti said.

When the letter was finished, Archbishop Viganò took his leave, turning off his cellphone. Keeping his destination a secret because he

was “worried for his own security,” Mr. Tosatti said, the archbishop then simply “disappeared.”

The letter, published on Sunday, has challenged Pope Francis’ papacy and shaken the Roman Catholic Church to its core. The pope has said he won’t dignify it with a response, yet the allegations have touched off an ideological civil war, with the usually shadowy Vatican backstabbing giving way to open combat.

The letter exposed deep ideological clashes, with conservatives taking up arms against Francis’ inclusive vision of a church that is less focused on divisive issues like abortion and homosexuality. But Archbishop Viganò — who himself has been accused of hindering a sexual misconduct investigation in Minnesota — also seems to be settling old scores.

As the papal ambassador, or nuncio, in the United States, Archbishop Viganò sided with conservative culture warriors and used his role in naming new bishops to put staunch conservatives in San Francisco, Denver and Baltimore. But he found himself iced out after the election of Pope Francis.

Then in 2015, he personally ran afoul of Francis. His decision to invite a staunch critic of gay rights to greet the pope in Washington during a visit to the United States directly challenged Francis’ inclusive message and prompted a controversy that nearly overshadowed the trip.

Juan Carlos Cruz, an abuse survivor with whom Francis has spoken at length, said the pope recently told him Archbishop Viganò nearly sabotaged the visit by inviting the critic, Kim Davis, a Kentucky county clerk who became a conservative cause célèbre when she refused to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

“I didn’t know who that woman was, and he snuck her in to say hello to me — and of course they made a whole publicity out of it,” Pope Francis said, according to Mr. Cruz.

“And I was horrified and I fired that nuncio,” Mr. Cruz recalled the pope saying.

Now, three years later, Archbishop Viganò appears to be trying to return the favor.

Known for his short temper and ambition, Archbishop Viganò has clashed with superiors who stunted his ascent in the church and has played a key role in some of the most stunning Vatican scandals of recent times.



Marco Tosatti, a journalist, helped Archbishop Viganò compose a letter that called for the resignation of Pope Francis.

While Archbishop Viganò, who was once criticized by church traditionalists as overly pragmatic, has aligned himself with a small but influential group of church traditionalists who have spent years seeking to stop Francis, many of his critics think his personal grudges are central to his motivations.

After one church leader shipped him out of the Vatican to America, thwarting his hopes of receiving a scarlet cardinal's hat, Archbishop Viganò's private 2011 memos — many of them deeply unflattering to the leader responsible for his ouster from Rome — were leaked and splashed around the globe.

Supporters of Archbishop Viganò, who did not return a request for comment, bristle at the notion that his letter calling on the pope to resign represents the fury of a disgruntled excellency. They portray him as principled and shocked by what he sees as the destruction of the church he loves.

Mr. Tosatti said the archbishop had explained to him that, as a bishop, he felt a deep responsibility to the church and that, as a 77-year-old man, he wanted to clear his conscience for when his moment came. But he said the archbishop was also infuriated by a recent article in the Italian press sympathetic to Pope Francis and critical of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI — and felt he needed to retaliate.

Archbishop Viganò is well versed in Vatican infighting. In 1998, he became a central official in the Vatican's powerful office of the secretary of state. In the letter, he writes that his responsibilities included overseeing ambassadors out in the world, but also the “examination of delicate cases, including those regarding cardinals and bishops.”

It was then he says he first learned of the abuses committed by Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the American Catholic leader whose history he says Pope Francis knew about for years — and covered up.

In 2009, Archbishop Viganò, then a bishop, was moved to another job in the Vatican with less influence over policy but with power over some of its revenue.

Known as parsimonious, he turned Vatican City's deficit into a surplus. But his hard management style prompted complaints, and anonymous emails alleging that he was inappropriately promoting the career of his nephew began making the rounds in the Vatican. His style and rigor on vetting Vatican contracts also bothered some leaders, including Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone, and an anonymous report in the Italian newspaper *Il Giornale* claimed he had designs on the Vatican's security services.

Cardinal Bertone, who Archbishop Viganò writes in the letter “notoriously favored promoting homosexuals,” banished him to the United States.

Throughout his power struggle, Archbishop Viganò had been writing urgent appeals to Benedict to stay in the Vatican.

He said he needed to stay because his brother, a Jesuit biblical scholar, was sick and needed care, and he accused Cardinal Bertone of breaking his promise to promote him to the rank of cardinal.

In 2012, when he was already in the United States as nuncio, or ambassador, the letters started appearing in leaks eventually pinned on the pope's butler. The scandal consumed the Vatican and prompted intense blowback.

But Archbishop Viganò's brother, Lorenzo Viganò, told Italian journalists that his brother "lied" to Benedict that he had to remain in Rome "because he had to take care of me, sick." To the contrary, he said he had lived in Chicago and was fine and hadn't talked to his brother in years over an inheritance dispute.



Juan Carlos Cruz, a sexual abuse survivor who has spoken with Pope Francis

Archbishop Viganò maintained his position as ambassador in the United States after the election of Francis. But in the letter published Sunday, he alleged that the former Cardinal McCarrick "orchestrated" the selection of bishops blinded by a gay ideology that he blames for the sex abuse crisis.

Yet Archbishop Viganò has been accused of covering up misconduct as well. According to documents disclosed as part of a criminal investigation into the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese, he ordered bishops in April 2014 to quash an investigation into accusations that Archbishop John Nienstedt engaged in sexual misconduct with adult men and adult seminarians.

Archbishop Viganò, anticipating the criticism, gave Mr. Tosatti a statement denying those reports.

After angering Francis during the Kim Davis episode, Archbishop Viganò was called back to Rome to explain himself. In a sign of his desire to move back permanently, he refused to give up his Vatican apartment. Reports in the Italian media this week asserted that after removing Archbishop Viganò from his position, Pope Francis also kicked him out of his Vatican apartment.

But Archbishop Viganò returned from his Milan home often enough, joining forces with traditionalists antagonistic to Pope Francis.

And he returned this summer to get working on the letter.

About a month ago, Mr. Tosatti said he received a call from the archbishop asking if he could meet with him in a discreet place. Archbishop Viganò told the reporter his story, but said he wasn't ready to go on the record.

But when news of decades of widespread clerical abuse in Pennsylvania broke, Mr. Tosatti urged the archbishop to tell his story. On Aug. 22, he returned, this time with a written statement.

Mr. Tosatti said that he saw no documents or other evidence, and after three hours, they finished.

The archbishop asked Mr. Tosatti if he knew anyone who could publish it in English and Spanish. Mr. Tosatti sent the letter to the National Catholic Register, which is owned by a company that runs several conservative Catholic platforms often critical of Francis.

"They are all tied," said Mr. Tosatti, who said that he alone helped draft and distribute the letter.

Its publication was delayed, not so that it would blow up Francis' trip to Ireland over the weekend amid the sexual abuse crisis, he said, but so that it could be translated.

After they were done writing it, Mr. Tosatti said he accompanied Archbishop Viganò to the door and bowed to kiss his ring, only to see the hand pull back.

Mr. Tosatti explained that it wasn't a personal respect he wanted to show, but respect for his office and authority.

"It's not for you," Mr. Tosatti recalled telling him as tears welled in the archbishop's eyes. "It's for the role you have."

The archbishop told him, "Now that I have finished, I can leave, and leave Rome too," according to Mr. Tosatti.

"Where will you go?" Mr. Tosatti recalled asking.

"I will not tell you so that when they ask you, you will not have to lie — and I will shut off my phone," the archbishop said, according to the reporter, who said that both men suspected the Vatican of tapping their phones.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/28/world/europe/archbishop-carlo-maria-vigano-pope-francis.html>