

Your Excellency,

Numerous requests for information regarding the ecclesial position of Rev. Nicholas Grüner continue insistently to reach the Congregation. Rev. Grüner continues to spread inexact information, deceiving even some Bishops. Therefore, following the two circular letters previously sent to Pontifical Representatives, dated 9th July 1994 (N. 94002505) and 11th December 1995 (N. 95003685) respectively, the Congregation wishes to communicate the following information.

1. The current juridical situation

- 1.1. The above priest was suspended *a divinis*, according to Can. 1333 § 1, 1.2. C.IC., by his Ordinary, the Bishop of Avellino (Italy) on 16th May 1996. The Decree was confirmed by this Congregation on 20th September of the same year. Fr Grüner appealed against this decision to the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Segnatura, which rejected the appeal by Decree of the Congress on 20th January 1998 because *quatenus ipse manifeste quolibet caret fundamento*. The priest in question then placed a further appeal to the Plenary of the Same Tribunal.
- 1.2. On the 10th July 1999 two definitive Decrees of the Supreme Tribunal closed the matter. While the first rejected the request for *restitutio in integrum* presented by Rev. Grüner, the second fully confirmed the actions of the Congregation for the Clergy, and both his suspension and the order to return to his Diocese remain in vigour. With permission from the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Segnatura a copy of the Definitive Decree is enclosed (enclosure 1) which gives a detailed analysis of the whole question in the light of present canon law. It constitutes the most authoritative response to the denigratory campaign against persons and Departments of the Roman Curia which unfortunately, in recent times, has been increased by a few followers of the above mentioned priest.

On 28th August 2000 the proceedings will begin of a case brought by Rev. Grüner against the Archbishop of Toronto who, in June 1990, carried out his pastoral duty of communicating publicly the irregular situation of this priest.

On the 5th June 2000, this Congregation, through the Nuncio in Canada, wrote to Rev. Grüner in the spirit of the Jubilee Year, reminding him of his own situation, and specifically of the seriousness of having sued the Archbishop of Toronto in a civil court, (together with Rev. Mons. Alan McCormack, who signed the aforementioned notification) and asking if he wished to make a concrete sign of reconciliation, also to avoid further procedures according to canon law (cf. enclosure 2).

2. Some important clarifications

- 2.1 The measures taken to guarantee respect for ecclesiastical discipline in this case do not intend in any way to weaken the necessary action of Marian apostolate that the whole Church is called to undertake. There are many directives of the Magisterium in this regard (cf. Paul VI Apostolic Exhortation *Signum magnum*, 13.5.1967; the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* 2.2.1974; John Paul II Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* 25.3.1987). The same sentiment of the people of God (*sensus ecclesiae*) has always lived Marian devotion with great affection as a very important element of the faith and has manifested this in various ways which, among other things, constitutes the substratum of popular piety.

- 2.2 Amongst the authentic expressions of Marian devotion, in this century, is the one linked to the events at Fatima that is officially recognised by competent ecclesiastical Authority. The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II affirms that “The message that came to Fatima in 1917, when considered in the light of the teaching of faith contains in itself the eternal truth of the Gospel as applied particularly to the needs of our age” (General Audience 19th May 1982). The Blessed Mother of God, who appeared to the three little visionaries in the ‘Cova da Iria’ at the beginning of the century, traced the outlines of a whole programme, that is ever more urgent in the Third Millennium for the new evangelisation in which the whole Church is engaged. The Holy Father John Paul II spoke of this in the Angelus at Castelgandolfo on 26th July 1987: “The apparitions of Mary at Fatima, proven by extraordinary signs, that occurred in 1917, form a point of reference and a point of departure for our century. Mary, our heavenly Mother, came to stir consciences, to enlighten on the true and authentic meaning of life, to encourage conversion from sin and to spiritual fervour, to enflame souls with love for God and with charity towards their neighbours. Mary came to our aid, because many sadly do not want to welcome the invitation of the Son of God to return to the house of the Father. From her Sanctuary at Fatima, today too Mary renews her motherly and pressing request: the conversion to Truth and to Grace; the life of the sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist, and devotion to her Immaculate Heart, accompanied by the spirit of sacrifice”.
- 2.3 The call back to prayer, - including the hoped for daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, - and to penance also for sinners and for the world, not to mention the heartfelt appeal to conversion, are seen to be constitutive elements of the’ Gospel message. The Virgin of Fatima, as she did with the shepherd children, is a sure guide for the faithful in fulfilling their baptismal commitments. The reference to ultimate realities contained in her message, respect for the real Presence in the Eucharist, frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, trustful abandonment to the Immaculate Heart, love for the Holy Father, among the other precious elements deriving from all the events of Fatima, constitute, therefore, an important catechesis that is very up to date. Pope John Paul II affirms this categorically: “The message, of Fatima, in its fundamental nucleus, is a call to the conversion to penance, just as in the Gospel. This call was pronounced at the beginning of the 20th century and, hence, is particularly addressed to this century” (Homily 13th March 1982, cit.).
- 2.4 The reduction of the rich doctrinal-catechetical content to a few particular details, which are often exploited in an argumentative or even totally imaginary way, apart from causing confusion amongst the faithful, ends up weakening the message itself. This, for example, is the direction taken by the argumentative activity of Rev. Grüner concerning the presumed non-fulfilment, on the part of the Supreme Pontiffs, of the request made by the Holy Virgin to consecrate the whole of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. In reality, the Act of Entrustment, made by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, on 25th March 1984, completely fulfilled what the Virgin Mary had asked, as Suor [sic] Lucia has indeed repeatedly affirmed in recent years.

Having clarified this, it is a duty to restate that the message of Fatima continues to be an important reference point for the missionary work of new evangelisation in the Third Millennium.

This Congregation, which has competence for the suitable guidance of the pastoral ministry of priests, for catechesis and for Sanctuaries, when it intervenes in a disciplinary way, as necessary, does so to protect these values, not having any other consideration than the “*salus animarum*”.

This is being communicated for the appropriate knowledge and guidance of the Ordinaries, asking that Your Excellency might convey the information in this note to them in the manner you consider appropriate.

Final greetings etc.

Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos

Prefect, Congregation for Clergy