

# **Rome Diocese calls for active gay priests to go, stop sullying church**

ROME - In the wake of an undercover video and news report documenting priests in Rome engaged in homosexual acts, the Rome Diocese has called for priests engaged in “unworthy” behavior to leave the priesthood and stop sullying the reputation of the vast majority of honorable ministers.

While the diocese also condemned the article for its overall aim of discrediting the church, it did say it “is committed to rigorously prosecute, according to church norms, any behavior unworthy of priestly life.”

On July 23 the Italian weekly newsmagazine, Panorama, published a lengthy dossier detailing the sexual behavior of some priests residing in Rome.

A journalist and a practicing homosexual male accomplice went undercover with a hidden video camera to several popular gay night spots in Rome for 20 days. The magazine said it discovered “numerous cases” of priests who were “perfectly integrated in the capital’s gay scene.”

The article focused on three priests, two Italian and one French, who, based on the video footage, were seen “dancing half-naked” and engaged in sexual acts.

A written statement issued July 23 by the Diocese of Rome said “the news article’s aim is clear: to create scandal and defame all priests, based on the declaration of one of those interviewed who said ‘98 percent of the priests I know are homosexual,’ to discredit the church and – on the flipside – put pressure on that part of the church they have defined as ‘intransigent, which struggles to ignore the reality’ of homosexual priests.”

“The facts recounted (in the article) can only cause pain and disconcertion in Rome’s church community,” it said, adding that people who were familiar with Rome’s clergy know that its priests do not lead a “double life” but lead “just one life – happy and joyous – consistent with their vocation.”

The diocesan statement also pointed out that there are hundreds of priests living in Rome who are not part of the Rome diocese, but are foreigners accountable to their bishops at home.

Priests who are living “a double life,” the statement said, “have not understood what the Catholic priesthood is and should not have become priests” in the first place.

It said such priests should recognize that “no one is forcing them to be priests (as they are) just exploiting the benefits” of the priesthood.

“Consistency demands that they be discovered. We do not wish them ill, but we cannot accept that because of their behavior the honorability of everyone else is dragged through the mud,” it said.