

# Zenit director resigns, citing differences with Legionaries of Christ

VATICAN CITY - The founder and editorial director of the Catholic news agency Zenit has resigned, citing problems of trust and transparency with Zenit's sponsoring organization, the Legionaries of Christ.

Spanish journalist Jesus Colina, who established Zenit in 1997 and helped build it into a seven-language agency with about 450,000 email subscribers around the world, said he had been asked to resign because he resisted pressures to identify the agency and its work more closely with the Legionaries order.

Colina made the announcement in an email sent to Zenit personnel Sept. 28. A spokesman for the Legionaries of Christ, Father Andreas Schoggl, confirmed Sept. 29 that Colina was leaving and said Zenit planned to publish a message to readers explaining the move.

Colina said one issue of contention was that Legionary officials were less than candid with Zenit about the facts regarding the scandal surrounding the late Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries, who was discovered to have sexually abused seminarians and fathered children.

Colina said his resignation was requested by Legionary Father Oscar Nader, the new president of Zenit's governing council. The reason given, Colina said, was that "my activity in the world of Catholic communications does not demonstrate the institutional dependence of the agency on the congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, an identity that will from now on be underlined."

He said he accepted the decision "with great sadness and respect."

"I think this decision is the logical consequence of the loss of mutual trust between me and the superiors of the Legionaries of Christ. The issue of Father Marcial Maciel and the way in which the congregation informed us, hiding relevant facts,

meant that on some occasions we did not completely fulfill our duty to inform people in a way that corresponds to the vision of the pope and the Holy See,” he said.

Another issue, Colina said, was a debate over the financial transparency of Zenit. He said that two years ago, Zenit had asked that its finances be clearly separated from the Legionaries order; the concern was that accusations of financial scandal connected with the Father Maciel case could undermine the trust needed in its annual fundraising efforts.

Although the order promised to establish separate financial accounts, nothing has been done, Colina said. This caused a “crisis of trust” among Zenit’s editorial team and negatively impacted its fundraising campaign over the last year, he said.

Colina said he wished Zenit well in the future. In the meantime, he said, he would continue to dedicate his time and effort to the multimedia agency H2O News and to Aletheia, an online community that features questions and answers about Catholic teachings.