

**Editor's Note:** Earlier this week, *Church Militant*, the media apostolate run by Michael Voris, published an online article with the shocking headline, "[Is the SSPX Sheltering a Sexual Predator?](#)" The article accuses the leadership of the [Society of Saint Pius X](#) (SSPX) – an international priestly society founded in 1970 by [Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre](#) (1905-1991) – of gross negligence (at best) and deliberate cover-up (at worst) in relation to one Fr. James McLucas, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York who was suspended from ministry due to accusations of sexual abuse (his name appears in a recently published [archdiocesan list](#)) and who has assisted the SSPX on occasion due to his interest in traditional doctrine and liturgy.

Needless to say, the accusatory article published by *Church Militant* has made considerable waves in the Catholic blogosphere, causing scandal and confusion as a result. The SSPX has responded with a [press release](#) (full text below) addressing several relevant points and ultimately reiterating the Society's commitment "to protecting all minors and vulnerable adults and to cooperate fully with civil and ecclesiastical authorities." *Church Militant*, in turn, has doubled down on its stance, publishing two additional articles on the subject to date (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

As longtime *Catholic Family News* readers will recall, Michael Voris and his *Church Militant* organization have long since harbored a [profoundly negative bias](#) against the SSPX, routinely referring to the Society as "[schismatic](#)" and strongly warning Catholics not to attend Masses offered by SSPX priests – even going so far as to [claim](#) that Catholics "*do not* fulfill [their] Sunday and Holy Day obligations through regular, planned, premeditated attendance at SSPX Masses." CFN's longtime editor [John Vennari](#) (R.I.P.) produced excellent [rebuttals](#) to Voris' attacks on the Society, as well as to [attacks](#) on CFN, *The Remnant*, Angelus Press, and other Traditionalist outlets dubbed "Reactionary Catholic Media" by Voris (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Thus, it could be the case that *Church Militant's* recent accusatory articles are simply the latest manifestation of their long-standing campaign to defame and discredit the SSPX, an agenda that *Catholic Family News* continues to find both baffling and abhorrent.

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## **Press Release Concerning Church Militant Article Regarding the SSPX**

On July 23, 2019, *Church Militant* published an article entitled "Is the SSPX Sheltering a Sexual Predator?" by James Baresel. This misleading and slanderous report deserves

clarification. Both charity and justice should be hallmarks of any Catholic.

## History

The main accusation centers around Fr. James McLucas, a diocesan priest who occasionally helps the Society of Saint Pius X. While not a member of the SSPX, Fr. McLucas was named in the August 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report. Even though the information in the report was inaccurate, it has not stopped secular and Catholic outfits from labeling him a “sexual predator.” (For more on the broader question, please see: <https://catholicerald.co.uk/magazine/the-trouble-with-lists-of-credibly-accused-priests/>) As no civil or canonical proceedings have ever found Fr. McLucas guilty, nor has he ever been charged with any crime, these accusations are profoundly defamatory.

Fr. McLucas’ lawyer issued the following statement in 2018 when the recent accusations were first made:

While Father McLucas was not charged with any crime, the shocking and horrible accusations in the report – without published evidence, without trial, and without due process of law – will nevertheless blacken his reputation and destroy him in his profession.

## Context

Less than two weeks ago, *Church Militant*, quoting Pope Francis, used similar terms to defend Father Perrone against the Archdiocese of Detroit:

The right to defense: the principle of natural and canon law of presumption of innocence must also be safeguarded until the guilt of the accused is proven. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent the lists of the accused being published, even by the dioceses, before the preliminary investigation and the definitive condemnation.

(<https://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/msgr-bugarins-ignorance-damaged-fr-perrones-reputation>)

## The Role of *Church Militant*

In both situations, *Church Militant* assumes the place of a judge that only civil or religious

authorities are entitled to.

Furthermore, *Church Militant* displays a double standard. Fr. Perrone and Fr. McLucas are both accused. *Church Militant* defends the one and attacks the other. They play the advocate for Fr. Perrone and the prosecutor for Fr. McLucas. The same principles they enunciate and hold sacred to defend Fr. Perrone, they trample on when it comes to Fr. McLucas.

### **SSPX Response**

Speaking of *Church Militant's* methodology, we must draw attention to this sentence: "SSPX priest Nicholas Stamos informed me by phone on July 18 that McLucas is still participating in the organization's work."

Fr. Nicholas Stamos wishes to make clear: he has never heard of, nor spoken to, the author of this article. He had one call from earlier in the summer, who apparently falsely said he was an old friend of Fr. McLucas, and that he wished to get in contact. Fr. Stamos directed him to a priory that Fr. McLucas sometimes visits. Neither Fr. Stamos nor anyone at the latter priory ever heard from *Church Militant*. Is this Catholic journalism?

### **Protection of All**

The Society of Saint Pius X is committed to protecting all minors and vulnerable adults and to cooperate fully with civil and ecclesiastical authorities. In addition, we are committed to both helping victims as well as those that are accused. We do not unduly assume the role of judge and leave any investigation to the proper authorities.

From our internal policy on these matters:

Our commitment includes the protection of children (i.e. minors), and vulnerable adults from harm, and the protection of workers from false allegations...We provide individual care and counsel both for the abuse victim and his/her family...The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. Clergy will seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the accused and his/her family until the investigation is completed.

### **Why the SSPX Exists**

We stress that the Society of St. Pius X was founded by Archbishop Lefebvre to form and

help Catholic priests. As our Statutes state, the central charism of the SSPX is the Catholic priesthood:

[The Society's activities] include all the works necessary for the formation of priests and whatever pertains thereto, whether the candidates be destined to be members of the Society or not...

The second purpose of the Society is to assist priests in their sanctification by providing them with opportunities for retreats and recollections. The Society's houses could be headquarters for priestly associations, for third orders, for periodicals and magazines dedicated to the sanctification of priests...

The Society will willingly come to the assistance of aged, infirm, and even unfaithful priests.

Faithful to her mission, rather than condemning and casting the first stone, the Society comes to the help of priests to restore their priesthood and sanctify themselves.

## **Conclusion**

To *Church Militant*: we ask you retract this scandalous article. It is easy to contact us. If you are more concerned with the truth than clicks, you can still make reparation. We simply ask that you apply the same principles to your article about Fr. McLucas that you do to your articles about Fr. Perrone. In the meantime, for your readers-whatever they think of the SSPX-we hope this clarification shows which side maintains journalistic integrity, and more importantly, Catholic charity and justice.

US District Headquarters - July 24, 2019

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