

This article first appeared in the January 2021 Print Edition of *Catholic Family News* (click [HERE](#) to subscribe; current subscribers can access the E-Edition [HERE](#)).

The Viganò Chronicles

Since coming on board with *Catholic Family News* in the summer of 2017, one of the most important stories I have followed and chronicled for readers is the story of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò — not only his explosive [testimony](#) concerning Theodore McCarrick, Pope Francis, and “the homosexual current” within the Church’s hierarchy, but even more so his *astounding transformation* (as I’ve called it [before](#)) from retired Vatican diplomat to dauntless defender of Catholic faith and morals. He began by [denouncing](#) “the scourge of homosexuality” within the ranks of the clergy as “the root cause of so much sexual abuse,” but over time he has also come to recognize the close link between “heresy, sodomy, and corruption” — a trifecta of evil which he [says](#) is “a trademark of the *deep state* and of the *deep church*.”

I continue to follow Archbishop Viganò with keen interest and profound gratitude to God for raising him up “for such a time as this” (Esth. 4:14). However, I do so “from a distance,” so to speak, as one who knows *about* him and his position on various subjects (thanks to his regular missives) but does not *know* him personally. Like other observers, I rely on those who are closer to the man himself for deeper insight. One such individual is Dr. Robert Moynihan, the founder and editor-in-chief of *Inside the Vatican* magazine, who has known Archbishop Viganò for nearly a decade (since late 2011, the beginning of Viganò’s term as papal nuncio to the United States) and has shown himself time and again to be uniquely informative and insightful.

Readers may recall that several of my own articles about Archbishop Viganò have featured quotes from “Moynihan Letters” — periodic updates/reflections sent by Dr. Moynihan to those subscribed to his email list — beginning in late July of 2019, when Moynihan revealed to the world that he had met with the former nuncio *in person* (in an undisclosed location). “Today after a long journey I met Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in a quiet place,” he [wrote](#) on July 29, 2019, and [continued](#) the following day, “We have spoken now for many hours, and his central concern is for the safety, freedom and doctrinal purity of the Church — the mystical body of Christ, the people of God, which he has served throughout his life, and still wishes to serve with all his being.”

The fruit of his “many hours” of private discussion with Archbishop Viganò (and no doubt many hours of transcription and meticulous research, as well) is now available in book form — [Finding Viganò: In Search of the Man Whose Testimony Shook the Church and the World](#)

(TAN Books, 2020) — a well-crafted mixture of biography, interview, analysis/commentary, and wonderful insight into the mind and heart of Archbishop Viganò himself. As Moynihan explains in his Preface:

"I went in search of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and found him. But what I discovered in finding Viganò was that my journey had not ended but only just begun. It is a journey that continues to this day and promises to continue for a long time yet.

...

Viganò revealed his hiding place to me and agreed to sit down with me in a monastery for many days to talk over the situation of the Church today. ...

But this is more than the story of a physical finding. It is also the story of finding out the secret and center of a man: what he loves, what he lives for, what he dreams about, what moves his soul, what has broken his heart."[\[1\]](#)

Elsewhere in his Preface, Moynihan clarifies:

"This book is not an attempt either to praise Archbishop Viganò or to blame him. It is, rather, the account of an attempt to find the man, physically and figuratively. Who is this man who, though a high-ranking Vatican official, an 'insider,' dared to denounce a pope? Who is this man who dared to denounce as corrupt a clerical culture that he himself was part of for a lifetime? Who is this man who says he has no eloquence, yet writes with an undeniable, deeply moving eloquence? Who is this man who went into hiding and yet has found a way to speak from his hiding place to the entire world?"[\[2\]](#)

Writing in the midst of the global pandemic, amidst an unprecedented surrender of the Church to the State vis-à-vis coronavirus lockdowns, Moynihan also emphasizes that his book "is an appeal to our bishops, our 'protectors,' our 'guardians,' to truly be protectors and guardians, and not to flee in the face of any wolves who may attack the flock. It is an appeal to our bishops to be that which they should be: guardians, protectors. In a word, fathers."[\[3\]](#)

Getting to Know Viganò

Moynihan's 375-page work is divided into 10 parts of varying lengths, each addressing a particular theme. He begins by sharing with readers how he came to know the Italian prelate and how their friendship developed:

"I had come to meet and know Viganò when he was the nuncio to the United States (2011-2016). I was a reporter on Vatican affairs for *Inside the Vatican* magazine, which I had founded in 1993. He agreed to receive me at the nunciature, and once we began to talk, we realized we had much to say to one another."[\[4\]](#)

Among their topics of discussion were ones near and dear to CFN readers:

"We discussed the 'Third Secret' (and possible 'Fourth Secret') connected with the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917 and whether the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary had ever been truly made as Sister Lucia said that Virgin Mary had requested in one of her apparitions to the shepherd children."[\[5\]](#)

(Regarding Fatima, readers may recall that Moynihan published an [English translation](#) of a bombshell Viganò interview last April in which His Excellency declared, "The third part of the message that Our Lady entrusted to the shepherd children of Fatima, so that they could deliver it to the Holy Father, remains secret to this day," as well as his firm belief that the consecration of Russia remains undone.)

Interestingly, around the same time I was beginning my work with CFN, Moynihan and Viganò met in Rome (July 21, 2017) for what turned out to be a pivotal chat:

"Viganò told me he was worried about many cases of corruption in the Church, but even more so by what he saw as an increasing willingness to abandon traditional Church teaching in a number of areas. ...

Viganò told me on that occasion, sitting on a park bench in Rome at the highest point of Rome as the shadows lengthened, almost exactly what he was to put into his now-famous 'Testimony' of August 2018, a year later. Essentially, what he

told me was that there was an interlocking network at the summit of the Church that covered up cases of sexual abuse and of financial corruption among high-ranking members of the clergy. And though I had felt for many years that a few terrible cases of this type of corruption had occurred...I had not imagined that the cases were as numerous as Viganò told me they were. Nor had I imagined that the number of those in the hierarchy who had participated in the cover up of these abuses was so large.”[\[6\]](#)

The first portion of interview text appears in Chapter 5, “The Faithful Young Priest,” in which the archbishop, who was ordained in 1968 at age 27 for the Italian diocese of Pavia, shares about the early years of his priesthood:

“Archbishop Viganò: I was living with my brother Lorenzo, who had already been ordained, in a very small university student college, just in front of the Pavia seminary, but we were not far from the Duomo and also not far from Santa Maria del Carmine, where we were respectively assigned.”[\[7\]](#)

His Excellency recalls ministering to college students and the local children, as well as speaking out against “the campaign for the approval of divorce in Italy.”[\[8\]](#)

The next few chapters round out Moynihan’s biographical sketch of Viganò — his entrance into the Church’s diplomatic corps (1973), years of service in the Vatican Secretariat of State (1978-1989), consecration as a bishop by Pope John Paul II (1992) and time as papal nuncio in Nigeria (1992-1998), then back to the Vatican for more administrative duties (1998-2011) — all leading up to his appointment as nuncio to the United States (2011-2016), retirement, and publication of his bombshell “Testimony” in Aug. 2018.

Deep Dive into Viganò’s Testimony

Parts II and III of the book (Chapters 9-18) are devoted to exploring the archbishop’s 11-page “Testimony” and its immediate aftermath. Chapter 12, the book’s longest chapter (88 pages), contains the full text of the “Testimony” (all 80 paragraphs) interspersed with the most detailed commentary on the text I have seen in print (almost every paragraph is followed by studious background information on the persons named and meticulous analysis of Viganò’s claims and proposals). As Moynihan explains: “The ‘Testimony’ is almost like a script for a film. The cast of characters includes sixty-six people named by Viganò, and he tells us that he composed or read a half dozen documents which could be used to prove or

disprove the truthfulness of his 'Testimony.'"[9]

To cite one brief example:

"Paragraph 20. Pope Benedict's same dispositions [i.e., restrictions on McCarrick] were then also communicated to me by the new Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, in November 2011, in a conversation before my departure for Washington, and were included among the instructions of the same Congregation to the new Nuncio.

[Moynihan] In paragraph 20, we meet another new character: (18) **Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet**. Viganò claims that Ouellet told him about 'Pope Benedict's same dispositions' against McCarrick in a conversation in Rome on the eve of Viganò's departure to start his service as papal nuncio in America in November of 2011. ... Viganò is *en route* to America to be the pope's representative in America for the next five years (2011 to 2016), and on the eve of his departure, he says, Ouellet told him in a conversation that Pope Benedict had imposed on McCarrick, the most powerful of the American cardinals, 'dispositions' in response to the reports of McCarrick's years of alleged sexual misconduct. We will see [later in the book] that Ouellet and Viganò exchanged open letters touching on this point in October 2018, a few weeks after Viganò's 'Testimony' was released. And we will see that in his letter, Ouellet, while sharply criticizing Viganò for his attitude toward Pope Francis, does not deny that such a conversation as Viganò describes here occurred. This suggests strongly that the conversation with Ouellet that Viganò describes did, in fact, occur." [10]

Interview Highlights

When my copy of *Finding Viganò* arrived in the mail, I must say I was most excited to read the transcript of Dr. Moynihan's extensive interviews with the archbishop, which he tape-recorded over the course of a few days in late July of 2019 (as mentioned above, he published a few tidbits at the time via his "Moynihan Letters").

Initially conducted "in a hotel room in a little out-of-the-way town in an unnamed country" [11] (although somewhere in Europe, since Moynihan describes taking a train out of Rome to the undisclosed town), and later at "a small monastery," [12] the interviews consist of two deeply Catholic men candidly discussing issues related to "the present crisis in the Church" and Archbishop Viganò's understanding of it "as being one not just of

physical sexual abuse, but one, too, of intellectual and spiritual 'abuse,'" as Moynihan explains. "In his [Viganò's] view, this second type of abuse takes the form of bishops and priests, including, on some occasions, the bishop of Rome, the pope, for whatever reason failing to teach effectively, without any ambiguity, traditional Catholic doctrine."[\[13\]](#)

When asked by Moynihan, "What is your hope now for the crisis in the Catholic Church?" Viganò eventually replied:

"In spite of everything, I have full hope for the future of the Church. Why? Because the Church is protected. The Church is the bride of the Lord. How could the bridegroom abandon the bride? Can the mother of the Church [referring to Our Lady] abandon the Church?

In spite of all the human drama of a very disordered kind, I still understand more and more that our time is now the time of the Mother. This is the time of the Mother of the Church. She asks, she has been entrusted to protect the Church. How is she going to do this? In this, we have to have faith in Jesus, the only Savior—the only Savior, there is no other. There is no other Savior. Through the grace of the sacraments, and by returning to the Mother who will protect us in this battle, as it has been entrusted to her, to lead the fight against the devil."[\[14\]](#)

Echoing themes found in *True Devotion to Mary* by St. Louis De Montfort (1673-1716), His Excellency continues: "My hope is with Our Lady, she will lead the Church in the battle against the devil. A time will come very soon. This is my feeling. The Church may lose [its status] as a temporal leader. But we have the one to whom the Church has been entrusted since the beginning, since the first chapter of Genesis."[\[15\]](#)

During these July 2019 discussions, Archbishop Viganò also alluded to celebrating Mass according to "the Ancient Rite," and stressed that "the faithful have the obligation to pray for the pope because he's most exposed to the attack of the devil."[\[16\]](#)

More to Come from Moynihan

In the Epilogue to his book, Dr. Moynihan recalls how he "made a second journey to see Viganò" in Sept. 2019 and how, since then, he and the archbishop "have been in regular contact by telephone and email," discussing such subjects as "the October 'Pachamama' Synod" and other "more controversial topics not covered in these pages." In that context, he

mentions that "[a] second volume" is in the works.^[17] I await it with great anticipation.

For more on this subject, be sure to watch the following interview of Dr. Robert Moynihan conducted by CFN Editor-in-Chief Brian McCall:

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[1] Robert Moynihan, *Finding Viganò: In Search of the Man Whose Testimony Shook the Church and the World* (Gastonia: TAN Books, 2020), pp. xv, xxii-xxiii.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xlv.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. xli.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 9.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 306. In an Ash Wednesday [message](#) (Feb. 26, 2020), one of Dr. Moynihan's colleagues related that Moynihan had recently spoken with Archbishop Viganò over the phone and wished to convey the following to readers: "He [Viganò] is more and more attracted to the Latin language, and has been celebrating Mass in Latin according to the Ambrosian rite - the rite of the land where he was born."

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 369.