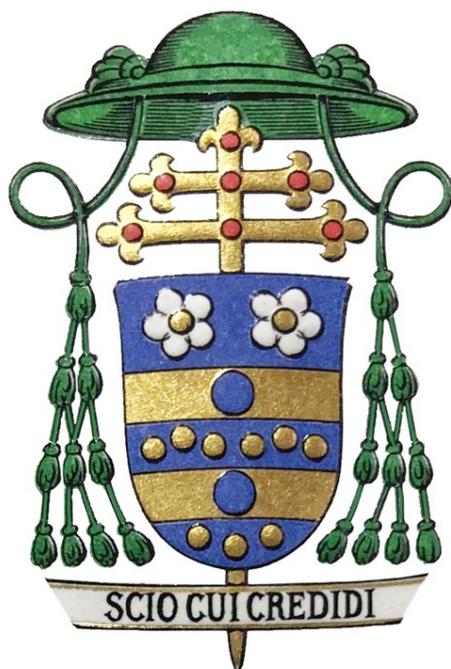


Editor’s Note: In this new text, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò presents “a new piece of evidence” regarding accusations against Mother Teresa Agnes Gerlach (see [this archive of articles](#) for extensive background), evidence which he says “totally defeats [Bishop Michael] Olson’s version of the story.” His Grace also outlines “a series of unprecedented crimes perpetrated by Bishop Olson against Mother Teresa Agnes and the Carmel of Arlington.”

Catholic Family News presents Archbishop Viganò’s statement as a means of informing our readers about his position regarding this ongoing controversy. Since CFN is not privy to all the facts of the case, we cannot evaluate the accuracy of all of His Grace’s assertions. In any event, we should keep the religious sisters in our prayers because we can say for certain that they are experiencing a difficult trial.



DECLARATION

of His Excellency Carlo Maria Viganò

in defense of Reverend Mother Prioress, Teresa Agnes, O.C.D.,
and of the Carmel of the Most Holy Trinity of Arlington, Texas

The persecution of the Carmel of Arlington by the Bishop of Fort Worth, Michael Olson, shows no signs of abating.

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We have witnessed a *crescendo* of aggression, verbal violence, abuse of power, institutional cover-up, intimidation, and outrages carried out against a religious community that is firmly determined to return to Tradition. The targeted victim of this vile operation is the Mother Prioress, Teresa Agnes of Jesus Crucified, who has been publicly defamed in defiance of every legal and moral principle, contrary to justice, truth, and charity. The violations are both numerous and gross, and it is their scandalous evidence that undermines the castle of false accusations constructed by Olson.

Let me make it clear: the behavior of the Bishop of Fort Worth in this specific case should not be evaluated only in itself, but also in the **motives** that have guided him and in the **goals** he is seeking to attain. We must not limit ourselves to aseptically considering his role as Pontifical Commissary, but further consider how the choice made by the Dicastery for Religious to appoint Olson as Commissary was completely aberrant, because Olson was personally and directly involved in the dispute from the very beginning. This appointment reveals the bad faith of the Prefect, Cardinal Braz de Aviz, and the Secretary, Archbishop Carballo.

There is a new piece of evidence, which I have recently received, which totally defeats Olson’s version of the story. I have received a copy of the **letter that the neurologist who has cared for the Mother Prioress since 2020 sent to the Apostolic Nuncio of the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre**. In this letter, the neurologist first lists the interventions and treatments given to Mother Teresa Agnes, and then **declares that it was materially impossible for the Prioress to have committed the sins of which Olson accuses her, and at the same time the doctor testifies to her state of extreme physical suffering and psychic alteration due to the treatments and anti-pain medications in conjunction with Mother’s interrogation, such as to invalidate the reliability of what she “confessed”** to, which furthermore occurred in a situation in which the Bishop was subjecting her to verbal violence and psychological pressure, a fact that has been confirmed by the Sister who assists the Prioress. **We therefore have proof of Olson’s fury towards the Mother Prioress and of both the formal and substantial groundlessness of his defamatory accusations.**

I do not want to repeat all of the observations I made in the declaration I issued about this matter on June 24 ([here](#)). Nevertheless, I would like to point out that this is a classic case of canonical persecution: the *fumus persecutionis* emerges in its evidence in a series of unprecedented crimes perpetrated by Bishop Olson against Mother Teresa Agnes and the Carmel of Arlington.

1. Olson has abused his role as diocesan Ordinary, interfering in the jurisdiction of

a monastery *sui juris* that is exempt from his jurisdiction and directly subject to the Apostolic See. This abuse took the form of a persecutory, intimidating, and seriously defamatory action against Mother Prioress Teresa Agnes, who was accused - without any investigation and without hearing any witnesses - of having broken her Vow of Chastity by sinning with another person, which Olson only later identified as a priest from another diocese.

2. The second very serious violation is **that Bishop Olson disclosed to journalists the recording of the alleged “confession” of Mother Teresa Agnes** during the preliminary phase of the civil trial for defamation brought by the Prioress against the Bishop. This was a disclosure that the Judge should never have authorized, especially since it had not been subjected to any technical verification to ascertain that it had not been tampered with. In that circumstance, the magistrate was called to evaluate whether the Arlington affair fell within the competence of the civil or ecclesiastical courts. He was not charged with collecting alleged evidence of guilt for a canonical offence; evidence that was collected in violation of both civil and ecclesiastical laws by extorting a “confession” from a nun who was physically and mentally exhausted due to repeated surgical interventions and heavy pain-relieving treatments, such as to jeopardize her ability to understand and have free will.

3. The third anomaly is **the pronouncement of the Texas Judge who, by ruling that the Texas state court is not competent, violated the rights sanctioned by the United States Constitution and the State of Texas**, attributing to a clergyman privileges which he does not enjoy in the eyes of American law. Pay attention: the Judge has not established that the canonical inspection ordered by the Holy See, by which Olson was appointed Pontifical Commissary, is in the competence of the Ecclesiastical Forum, something that no one has questioned. What the Judge has decided is that the Texas state court cannot judge the defamatory accusation spread by Olson against Mother Teresa Agnes and the arbitrary and illegitimate decision to seize her computer, iPad and mobile phone in order to inspect its confidential contents, as if a Prelate could violate American law simply because the victim is a nun and both of them are members of the Catholic Church.

4. The fourth element is **the absence of investigations and interrogations to verify the reliability of the accusations.** The Code of Canon Law provides that any facts presented in the form of a “confession” or “self-accusation” must be examined and proven, precisely to avoid having an extorted confession condemn an innocent person. On the other hand, it is difficult to think that the author of a slander has any interest in proving its groundlessness, which ought to have been obvious simply by indicating the place, date, time and possible witnesses of the disputed facts. Moreover, an investigation would have dismantled those defamatory accusations, putting an end to the torture to which Olson subjected Mother

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Teresa Agnes, while the objective of this unworthy Bishop was precisely to prostrate her psychologically, aggravate her state of health as a result, and exasperate her to the point of extorting some admission of the guilt of which he accused her in order to do away with this torture. Mother Teresa Agnes was also forced to postpone making an appointment to see a surgeon regarding a painful tumor in her spine (which turned out to be benign), which she had been hoping to schedule on the days following Olson’s incursion into Carmel.

5. Fifth anomaly: the **absolute silence about the alleged accomplice of the crime, Father X.** It does not appear to have been questioned, nor was there a report transmitted to the Prioress’s lawyer as required by the Code of Canon Law. And it does not seem that the accusation of his having violated his Vow of Chastity has led to the disbursement of any canonical sanction against him. Olson’s way of proceeding is completely misogynistic: he has shown himself ready to forgive the sin of a priest with a nun, but not that of a nun with a priest! And if on the one hand he did not even want to listen to the alleged accomplice of the crime, on the other he considered the “confession” extorted from Mother Teresa Agnes to be the queen proof, while significantly she was - in two different circumstances and with different people - just back from surgery and under the narcotic effect of powerful pain medications. Is it possible that Olson could not have found a day on which to question the Prioress when she was *compos sui*? Did he fear that she would not be impressed by his verbal aggression and vulgar threats? It should be remembered that, during those interrogations, Olson’s violent and intimidating attitude emerges in a disconcerting way to say the least.

6. Sixth irregularity: **the illegitimate use of an alleged (unrecorded) “confession” that the Mother Prioress allegedly made to the Vicar General Jonathan C. Wallis - a person who until then enjoyed the trust of the Mother Prioress** - who came to visit her in the days immediately preceding Christmas 2022. Mother Teresa Agnes was suffering extremely and under the influence of narcotics, having just been discharged from the hospital where she had undergone surgery with general anesthesia. Mother Teresa Agnes was in such a state of alteration that anything she said was unreliable. To understand the situation, it is enough to remember that the Mother Prioress, in the chaos induced by her treatments and a recent seizure, had already confided to her assistant, Sister Francis Therese, the torment, induced by hallucinations, that she had sinned against chastity - and perhaps had become pregnant - with Father X., who instead had only contacted Mother by text message. On that occasion the Mother Prioress, in very serious physical and mental condition, and under the influence of drugs with hallucinogenic effects, wrote something inappropriate. These hallucinations are belied by the fact that the priest in question never set foot in the Carmel of Arlington nor did he **ever** meet the Mother Prioress, who moreover always accompanied by the assistant. Besides, it is not known whether these “confidences”

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gathered by the Vicar General were then extorted from him by Olson or whether it was Wallis himself who revealed them to the Bishop, in an act of infamous complicity.

Allow me also to point out that I have received a copy of all of Mother Teresa Agnes’ medical records, the long list of drugs she has been given (including Fentanyl!), and I have also been made aware of the sequence of errors made in her treatments, with devastating consequences on the patient’s body.

7. Seventh violation: **Olson summoned the Nuns together and informed them all of the accusations made against their Prioress**, in violation of the serious duties of confidentiality and the protection of the accused. Also with them, the Bishop was aggressive, going so far as to threaten them with excommunication if they do not obey his orders. Olson ordered the Prioress to remain confined to the infirmary, with a ban on communicating with her sisters or using her cell phone. Furthermore, in a communication sent to all the diocesan clergy, Olson divulged the slanderous accusations against Mother Teresa Agnes and forbade any priest to celebrate Mass in Carmel or to visit or communicate in any way with the nuns.

8. The eighth violation consists of **manipulating the recording disclosed to the press during the court hearing**. It emerged that that recording was cut and adjusted by Olson, so that its contents would confirm his false allegations. It should also be remembered that such a recording, by the way in which it was obtained, violates the protections of the accused, because the bishop did not provide a copy of recorded transcript and did not give a copy to the accused. That recording is inadmissible as evidence both in ecclesiastical and civil proceedings, not only for a purely procedural matter, but because the witness was not able to testify, because she was physically and mentally altered and subjected to very strong pressure from the Bishop. Even Sister Francis Therese, the assistant nun of the Prioress, despite being able to understand and retaining her free will, was put under pressure by the Bishop and induced with verbal violence to confirm the “confession” that the Mother Prioress, in the delirium induced by drugs, had confided to her.

Everything that has been listed so far took place *before* Olson’s appointment as Papal Commissary. These are serious violations of canon law and crimes punishable by the State of Texas, such as defamation, dissemination of sensitive information, abuse of power, trespassing on private property, and seizure of electronic devices.

The Ordinary of Fort Worth has committed illegitimate and criminally relevant acts: interference in the jurisdiction of Carmel (prohibited by the *sui juris* state of the Monastery), interference in disciplinary matters of the Religious (prohibited by a recent amendment to the Code of Canon Law at the hands of Bergoglio), and defamation of a

Religious using defamatory accusations that Olson knew from the beginning were completely false.

9. The ninth anomaly is constituted by the appointment of Bishop Olson as Pontifical Commissary by the Dicastery for Religious, issued on May 31, 2023, with a decree bearing the now-usual anomalous protocol number (2566/2020), in which the critical issues explaining the cause for the Apostolic Visitation or the areas of investigation of the Commissary are not listed. With what effrontery did the duo Braz de Aviz & Carballo appoint Bishop Olson as Pontifical Commissary, even sanating the abuses he had committed before that appointment, given that **Olson himself is the author of very serious violations and crimes perpetrated against the Carmel of Arlington and the person of the Mother Prioress?**

10. A tenth anomaly is added to this list: For years **the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth have been asking the Apostolic Nuncio to intervene in Rome to have Bishop Olson formally accused of serious abuse and aberrant behavior.** In the list of accusations drawn up by the promoters of a popular subscription, we can find the same dynamics adopted in the case of Arlington, from intimidation to attacks, from contempt for women religious to the use of authoritarian systems to impose one’s will against the law and against Justice. With such a record of embezzlement and abuse, how is it possible not to see in Olson’s action the repetition of previous behaviors? And how can he be considered impartial and endowed with the virtues of fairness and wisdom in order to conscientiously carry out the role of Pontifical Commissary?

As I mentioned at the beginning of this statement, I was personally given **the letter that Dr. Robert E. McMichael addressed to the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, on July 17**, in which he informs him in detail of the clinical picture of the Mother Prioress that he has been treating as a neurologist since April 27, 2020. **The list of tests, interventions, treatments, drugs, secondary effects and relapses demonstrates how it was impossible for her to physically commit the crimes of which she is accused, and how her “confessions” under the influence of drugs are not to be considered reliable.** The text of the letter, as you can read, leaves no room for any misunderstandings:

“Bishop Michael Olson found Reverend Mother guilty of committing adultery with Father [name redacted], a priest in another State. He has stated that he based this conclusion on statements that she made. The relevant time period is the time between her seizure on November 15, 2022 and December 23, 2022.”

“Bishop Olson recorded his interview of Reverend Mother on April 24, 2023, and at least part of this interview was played at a court hearing in June and widely reported in the press. During the month of April 2023 she had been to a doctor or hospital at least five times before this interview. She had surgery under general anesthesia on April 21 and had been back to the hospital for complications of this surgery the morning of April 24. Bishop Olson interviewed her later on April 24. At this time she was ill. On April 25 she went to the hospital again and her feeding tube was replaced under general anesthesia.”

[. . .] *“In my opinion she was not mentally or physically capable of meeting with Father [redacted] to engage in adultery. In view of her medical condition and impairments during November and December, 2022 her statement that her “brain just got really messed up” is accurate.”*

“My opinions on this matter are medical in nature. In my opinion, Reverend Mother Teresa Agnes of Jesus Crucified, O.C.D. did not commit adultery. In my opinion, she was not in full possession of her mental faculties at least from November 15, 2022, until December 23, 2022. In my opinion the decision to find her guilty of adultery was mistaken given the physical and mental impairments that afflicted her, as well as her high level of dependence on her caregivers.”

Dr. McMichael’s letter clearly shows the persecutory intent of Bishop Olson, who maliciously took advantage of the psychophysical state of the Prioress to harass her and forcibly induce her to admit crimes she had never committed.

We do not know what was done by Nuncio Pierre to verify Olson’s work, nor if he ever informed his superiors in Rome. However, we know for certain that, from the beginning of this very painful story, Christoph Pierre has never shown any interest or support to the Carmelites of Arlington.

I conclude with a few considerations.

First: **the Apostolic Nuncio needs to let people know what measures he has taken** after receiving the letter from the Mother Prioress’s neurologist, Dr. McMichael.

Second: beyond the Commissary’s obvious objectionability, as a party to the case and in clear conflict of interest, **it is essential that Bishop Olson present his resignation**, since his behavior has shown his absolute incompatibility with the role it plays in the

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Diocese. A public petition by the faithful of Fort Worth has been underway for some time ([here](#)), and the time has come for them to make their voices heard both in calling for Olson’s removal, and in supporting the Arlington Carmel both spiritually and materially.

Third: given the multiple crimes committed by Olson and the very serious damage that has resulted from it, mainly to the Mother Prioress and secondarily to the whole of Carmel, **I make an appeal that a good lawyer can offer *pro bono* legal assistance to the Nuns**, in the civil case that they will eventually bring against Michael Olson, Bishop of Fort Worth.

Fourth, I cannot omit mentioning **the unspeakable attitude of some journalists from the Catholic world** who have supported Olson’s narration even in the presence of very serious pieces of evidence that demonstrate its total falsehood. I wonder how *Church Militant*, which in 2020 had expressed very strong criticisms of Bishop Olson ([here](#) and [here](#)), can give him credit today and refuse to recognize his infamous persecutory action against Mother Teresa Agnes!

Finally, I express my full admiration for Mother Teresa Agnes: for her fortitude, the meekness she has shown in these terrible situations, and the spirit of sacrifice with which she has lived through this infamous persecution. The accusations to which she has been subjected have not distracted her for an instant from her determination to follow her Crucified Spouse on the way to Calvary. In this time of apostasy, the *Passio Ecclesiae* is fulfilled in the members of the Mystical Body who undergo a persecution that is a prelude to the end times.

May the Mother Prioress together with her sisters of Carmel in Arlington be an example to many religious who feel alone and at the mercy of corrupt superiors. You have the Lord and your Holy Founders at your side! Stand strong in Faith! (1 Pet 5:9). May these women, consecrated to the Divine Spouse in the Carmelite Rule, be an example of those who confuse fearful servility with Christian prudence and obedience.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

28 August 2023

*S. Augustini Episcopi et Confessoris
et Ecclesiae Doctoris*