

## **Pope: 'I will not say a single word' on Vigano's allegations of cover-up**

Aboard the papal plane, Aug 26, 2018 / 04:30 pm (CNA) - Pope Francis said Sunday that he will not comment on claims by a former Vatican ambassador to the U.S. that the pope knew about allegations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and reinstated him in ministry. The pope said people should make up their own minds about the claims.

Asked whether it was true that Archbishop Carlo Viganò, the statement's author, had informed him in 2013 about McCarrick's alleged sexual misconduct with priests and seminarians, and if it was true Benedict XVI had previously imposed sanctions on the former cardinal, the pope said he was distracted by the previous question and would have preferred to talk about the trip.

"I read the statement this morning, and I must tell you sincerely that, I must say this, to you and all those who are interested: Read the statement carefully and make your own judgment," he answered. "I will not say a single word on this."

Speaking aboard the papal plane from Dublin to Rome Aug. 26, Francis said he believes in the "journalistic capacity to draw your own conclusions," calling it an "act of faith."

"When some time passes and you have drawn your conclusions, I may speak. But I would like your professional maturity to do the work for you. It will be good for you," he told members of the press.

Asked in a follow up question when he first learned about the abuse allegations against McCarrick, Pope Francis responded, "This is part of the statement. Study it and then I will say."

The pope was being asked about an 11-page statement published late Saturday, written by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, who served as apostolic nuncio in Washington D.C. from 2011 to 2016.

In his testimony, Viganò claimed that in the late 2000s, Benedict XVI had "imposed on Cardinal McCarrick sanctions similar to those now imposed on him by Pope Francis" and that Viganò personally told Pope Francis about those sanctions in 2013.

Viganò claimed that Pope Francis "continued to cover" for McCarrick, and not only did he repeal the sanctions imposed by Benedict, but also made McCarrick "his trusted counselor."

He claimed that McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, advised the pope to appoint a number of bishops in the United States, including Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, and Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego.

The former nuncio, who said his "conscience dictates" that the truth be known as "the corruption has reached the very top of the Church's hierarchy," called on Pope Francis and other Church officials accused of covering up abuse allegations to resign.