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[The living Spirit](#)

[Letters](#)

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The Tablet Blog

Errant Knights need to show some humility

Elena Curti

4 May 2012, 9:00

Precisely why has the British branch of the Knights of Malta had a huge falling out over the conviction on child pornography offences of a man who for many years acted as sacristan and served at their weekly Mass?

At least nine members, including Lord Guthrie, the former Chief of Defence Staff, have resigned from the Knights' governing council following the court case at the Old Bailey on 19 April that saw Vernon Quaintance, 68, plead guilty to possessing videos showing graphic footage of children being abused. Quaintance of Upper Norwood, South London, received a 40-week jail term suspended for two years.

Another three knights - one of them a member of the governing council - have been banned from the chapel at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth where the order has its annual Mass. It has been difficult thus far to get the full facts but it would appear that the nine who left the governing council felt there had been a failure to act on earlier suspicions about Quaintance's proclivities and the three banned from the chapel are those who should have acted.



The Tablet Blog

Errant Knights need to show some humility

Elena Curti

Nuncio is nudging the bishops

Christopher Lamb

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Professor Margaret Susan Thompson, guest contributor

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Abigail Frymann

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The disillusionment of the nine is easier to understand in the light of how the Latin Mass Society (LMS) dealt with Quaintance four years ago. He had been their regular photographer at old rite Masses and traditional processions until the committee's attention was drawn to websites he ran that contained graphic descriptions of male circumcision. In September 2008 Quaintance was told his services were no longer required and his photos were removed from the LMS website.

I understand that some knights became concerned about Quaintance's behaviour towards children and then alarmed when they searched online and found the circumcision websites. They shared these concerns with colleagues but Quaintance was allowed to remain as sacristan.

And so an august lay Catholic institution is split over an issue of child protection. There should be only one reaction to a failing of this kind. A good dose of humility and determination to be more vigilant in future. The LMS would be a good model to follow.

Elena Curti is deputy editor of *The Tablet*.

The coincidence between this story and George Quaintance is unbelievable!
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Quaintance

Jim McCrea, 6 May 2012 23:05 (2 of 2)

So Cardinal Sean Brady is dancing on pinheads to defend his indefensible behaviour covering up child rape . Meanwhile, the Knights of Malta are divided. So many Knights will be devastated by this news and most especially those who have helped save so many lives in the Order's Bethlehem maternity hospital. All respect to Lord Guthrie for making a stand. Ironic then, as the gangrenous cancer of the failure of the Church's leadership sinks wider and deeper, that Guthrie's courage is met with Rome's alternative priority namely the ageing women religious of America.

Francis Davis, 6 May 2012 17:54 (1 of 2)

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[^ Back to top](#)

misrepresents' his role

Admits he was part of 'an unhelpful culture of deference and silence'

Northern Irish Cardinal Seán Brady today issued a statement in response to claims about him made in the BBC This world programme entitled 'The shame of the Catholic ...

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Evangelisation is an important theme which is recognised by the whole Church, so we have major initiatives in the Holy See with the establishment of a new department of the Holy ...

Full unity the ultimate aim of ecumenism, says Longley

Christopher Lamb

The Archbishop of Birmingham has said he understands those frustrated with ecumenical dialogue but stressed the long term aim is "full visible unity". Archbishop Bernard Longley ...

Tiptoeing towards Scripture

Pope Benedict XVI has exhorted Catholics to become more familiar with their Bibles, in his round-up of the 2008 Synod on the Word of God. At the same time the Bible

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