



Vows of Silence

2007 1 x 59 min Color, B&W: DigiBeta English

A film by Jason Berry

**Based on the book by
Jason Berry and Gerald Renner**

Edited by Tim Watson

**Supported by:
Fund for Investigative Journalism
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**Official selection: Docs DF Festival,
POV, AFI Fest, Documenta Madrid
and New Orleans Human
Rights Film Festivals**

**Spanish Version now available -
El Legionario de Cristo**

www.VowsOfSilenceFilm.com

Based on the 2004 book by Jason Berry and the late Gerald Renner, **Vows of Silence** explores how the Vatican justice system deals with sex abuse charges against high church officials. The documentary follows the haunting saga of Father Marcial Maciel, who won the favor of Pope John Paul II despite a long trail of pedophilia accusations. Maciel, one of the church's greatest fundraisers, founded the Legion of Christ, a religious order with a \$650 million budget and a history of controversial recruitment tactics. In 1998 eight former Legionaries filed a canon law case Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's office, seeking Maciel's expulsion from the church. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Secretary of State, tried to abort the case. In late 2004, with Pope John Paul dying, Ratzinger finally ordered an investigation.

The film traces the journey of a Vatican investigator, Msgr. Charles Scicluna, as Irish, Mexican and American witnesses testify about Maciel's psychological tyranny, imposing secret vows never to criticize him or the Legion. With location shoots in Rome, Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Milwaukee and New Orleans, the film tracks Maciel's rise from war-torn Mexico, gaining support from the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, forging ties with Vatican officials despite a 1956 suspension from his duties for drug addiction. Maciel went on to build an international movement of schools and universities. A key figure in the film, former Vatican official Christopher Kunze breaks his silence with a long interview after leaving the priesthood, discussing the cult-like atmosphere within the Legion.

Pope Benedict XVI approved a 2006 decision allowing Maciel to leave public ministry for "a life of prayer and repentance." The film, which probes issues left unanswered, enters distribution as Benedict XVI prepares for his first papal visit to America on April 15. Boston, epicenter of the abuse scandal that rocked the church for several years, is not on the pope's itinerary.



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