



FRANCISCAN FRIARS  
*of the* RENEWAL

## **Statement from the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal on Findings from Investigations of Allegations Against the Institute**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 05, 2021**

**Contact: Fr. Angelus Montgomery**  
**Phone: 212-234-2203**  
**[cfrpress@franciscanfriars.com](mailto:cfrpress@franciscanfriars.com)**

**The following statement was issued on Friday, November 5, 2021 by Fr. Angelus Montgomery, a spokesman for the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. The statement is in response to investigations undertaken at the request of the Institute by internal auditors as required by the State of New York, the City of New York, and the United States Department of Justice.**

*We are committed as an Institute to working towards long-term transparency and communication with members of both the Church and the general public. To that end we have engaged Praesidium, a leading auditor, to identify and investigate situations and to share the findings with the public.*

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal wish to report the results of a preliminary investigation into the actions of a Brother in the Institute which commenced in August of 2020 and concluded in September of 2021. In July of 2020, it was brought to the attention of leadership of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal that a member of our Institute had conducted himself in a manner unworthy of the religious vows he was committed to. The alleged was accused of sexual misconduct with an adult female while under the vows of the Institute, a charge that was met with swift investigation and action by the leaders of our Community. The Brother is also currently under restrictions and is not in active ministry.

We as an Institute take responsibility for the actions of this Brother, as the actions of one Brother reflect upon the entirety of our Institute. We humbly take on the weight of these allegations, and these actions, as a whole Institute.

In the subsequent months, this Brother went on record to make numerous additional accusations against the Institute and its members, ranging from inappropriate sexual behavior to complaints about the atmosphere and operations of the Community. The allegations were of great concern to the leadership of our Community, and were treated in accordance to both Canon and Civil Law, as required by the State of New York, the City of New York, and the United States Department of Justice.

Upon receiving notice of the allegations, Community leadership opened an internal investigation in accordance with Canon Law. In tandem, the leadership of the Community then ordered two

(2) additional external investigations in order to combat any perceived conflicts of interest or oversight by the religious investigators. These objective external investigations, in addition to the internal investigation conducted, investigated all accused parties and found all counts of misconduct to be unfounded and without merit.

As part of a separate investigation, in June of 2021, the Institute was notified that Father Louis Leonelli, who is currently under restriction and not in public ministry, had been accused of conducting himself in a manner unworthy of his religious vows by participating in sexual activity with a married adult female. Institution leadership immediately opened an internal investigation in accordance with Canon Law, and those investigations are still ongoing. In the interim, Father Leonelli has been removed from public ministry awaiting the findings of the investigation.

It is the mission of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal to bear authentic witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to be servants of compassion and love to those in need. It is our intention to face the challenges before us with the utmost diligence, and to foster a spirit of transparency as we serve the flock which has been entrusted to us. We are deeply grieved by this situation and are especially committed to praying for our sisters in Christ and offer our sincerest and most humble apologies to them and to all those affected by the actions of these members of our Community.

We thank you and ask that you please reach out to our Institute with any questions, and to please pray for our Brothers as we strive, even in our weakness, to be faithful to our mission in the Church and the world.