



The Legion of Christ Catholic order has for the first time apologised to the victims of sexual abuse carried out by its founder, Father Marcial Maciel. In a statement, the order condemned the "reprehensible and objectively immoral behaviour" of the Mexico-born priest.

Father Maciel led the order from its foundation in 1941 until 2006, when Pope Benedict ordered him to retire.

He abused seminarians as young as 12, and died in 2008 aged 87 without ever being convicted of his crimes.

A Vatican investigation also found out that he had fathered several children by at least two women, and used drugs.

"We want to express our deep sorrow for the abuse of minor seminarians, the immoral acts with men and women who were adults, the arbitrary use of his authority and of material goods," said the Legion of Christ in a statement.

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