

Katolsk redaktør går efter pres fra Vatikanet

Under denne overskrift bringer Berlingske tidende 8-maj-05 en meddelelse fra Reuters om at Fader Thomas Reese har bekendtgjort sin uventede tilbagetræden fra det indflydelsesrige, jesuitiske, amerikanske magasin 'America'. Angiveligt sker hans fratræden efter pres fra Vatikanet, som har protesteret mod artikler i bladet om brug af kondomer for at forhindre AIDS, homoseksuelle præster og hemmelige disciplinære afstraffelser. "Selv om presset for at fjerne Reese helt klart kom fra Congregatio, vides det ikke i hvilken udstrækning Ratzinger personligt var involveret i beslutningen" skriver National Catholic Reporter.

Posted Friday May 6, 2005 at 4:15 p.m. CST

Editor of Jesuits' America magazine forced to resign under Vatican pressure

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Kansas City, Mo. and Rome

Jesuit Fr. Thomas J. Reese, editor for the past seven years of *America* magazine, a premier publication of Catholic thought and opinion, has resigned at the request of his order following years of pressure for his ouster from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The resignation caps five years of tensions and exchanges among the congregation, which was headed at the time by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, the Jesuits and Reese, according to sources close to the magazine who asked not to be identified.

A release from the magazine May 6, which did not mention the forced ouster, announced that the new editor is Jesuit Fr. Drew Christiansen, who has served as associate editor.

Ironically, Reese received the news that the Jesuits found the debate "unwinnable," according to one source, when he returned to the magazine's New York headquarters from Rome, where he had covered the conclave that elected Ratzinger as pope.

Contacted on background, a Vatican official said he could not discuss the case.

Over the course of a five-year exchange between the doctrinal congregation and the Jesuits, the Vatican congregation had raised objections to various editorial choices at *America* under Reese's leadership, including:

- An essay exploring moral arguments for the approval of condoms in the context of HIV/AIDS;
- Several critical analyses of the doctrinal congregation's September 2000 document *Dominus Iesus*, on religious pluralism;
- An editorial criticizing what *America* called a lack of due process in the congregation's procedures for the investigation of theologians;
- An essay about homosexual priests;
- A guest essay from U.S. Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, challenging suggestions that the church should refuse Communion to Catholic politicians who do not vote as a number of bishops believe they should vote.

In every instance, however, the pieces represented just a portion of coverage of the subject in *America*, which always published opposing points of view.

According to one source, the communication about Reese's fate was carried on between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the superior general of the Jesuits, Dutch Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, with the content then relayed to Reese's Jesuit superiors in the United States. Although critics of Reese both in the United States and Rome have occasionally accused him of an anti-hierarchical mentality, supporters noted in their responses to the congregation that over his seven years as editor, *America* routinely published weighty pieces by prominent members of the hierarchy, at one stage including Ratzinger himself.

In February 2002, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith proposed creating a three-member commission of censors for the magazine, though the idea was never implemented. According to sources, the congregation told the Jesuits that the action was in response to concern from bishops in the United States.

Sources said no bishops were identified by name and that Reese was never directly contacted. According to a source close to the magazine, Jesuit superiors said some bishops were upset that Reese often commented on church matters for general media and that such commentary should be solely the province of bishops.

Reese often made himself available to media during the bishops' meetings and other special church events to explain aspects of church life and the intricacies of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is the author of three highly respected studies of the Catholic hierarchy: *Archbishop, Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church*; *A Flock of Shepherds: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops*; and *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.

The entire matter of his disciplining was handled "by chain of command, and the Jesuits were able to hold off for five years, but in the end, saw it as unwinnable. It was either Reese goes or they would appoint a board of censors," said one source.

America, though clearly left-leaning in some of its editorial stances, was widely viewed as a moderate publication that gave vent to a wide spectrum of views. Among its contributors were top theologians, a number of bishops, and, in one instance, Ratzinger himself in an article published in dialogue with Cardinal Walter Kasper, another German cardinal. Over the years, the magazine has also published dozens of articles by noted conservative Cardinal Avery Dulles.

Though pressure for Reese's ouster clearly came from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to what degree Ratzinger was personally involved in the decision is not known.

In the May 6 release, Reese said, "I am proud of what my colleagues and I did with the magazine, and I am grateful to them, our readers and our benefactors for the support they gave me. I look forward to taking a sabbatical while my provincial and I determine the next phase of my Jesuit ministry."

Christiansen, an accomplished educator, writer and editor, previously was a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University. He was director of the Office of International Justice and Peace for the United States Catholic Conference from 1991 to 1998 and served as counselor for international affairs for the bishops until December 2004.

"I know I am speaking for all the editors in saying that we are sorry to see Tom go," said Christiansen in the May 6 release. "Fr. Reese greatly improved the magazine, adding news coverage, color and the Web edition. ... By inviting articles that covered different sides of disputed issues, Fr. Reese helped make *America* a forum for intelligent discussion of questions facing the church and the country today."

Fra National Catholic Reporter May 6th, 2005