

## He can celebrate mass again



Pope Francis has reinstated Father Miguel D'Escoto 29 years after he was suspended from priestly duties for his involvement in Nicaragua's revolutionary government in the 1970s, Catholic News Service reports.

The 81-year-old priest sent a request to the Vatican asking for permission to resume his priesthood, reportedly writing that he wanted the chance to celebrate Mass again "before dying." Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect for the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, signed the letter lifting D'Escoto's suspension.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, an American Catholic missionary organization of which D'Escoto was a member, released a press release and quoted the Vatican's letter as saying:

"The Holy Father has given his benevolent assent that Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann be absolved from the canonical censure inflicted upon him, and entrusts him to the superior general of the institute (Maryknoll) for the purpose of accompanying him in the process of reintegration into the ministerial priesthood."

D'Escoto had reached considerable stature in the church before becoming involved in Nicaraguan politics, which ran counter to the church ban on clergy holding government positions and led to his suspension by Pope John Paul II in 1985. After his ordination in 1961, D'Escoto went on to found Orbis Books, Maryknoll's theological publishing division, and became an official with the World Council of Churches.

D'Escoto served as the Republic of Nicaragua's Minister for Foreign Affairs for more than a decade

and currently acts as Senior Adviser on Foreign Affairs to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra. He is still a member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), a political movement rooted in Marxist philosophy and which once had ties to the Soviet Communist party.

In an interview with America Magazine in 1985, D'Escoto commented on the escalation of revolutionary attitudes in Nicaragua -- including, he said, among the church elders who typically stay out of such debates:

If you tell me that there is a revolution somewhere and the church is against it, I will say, "What else is new?" I mean, what would be newsworthy is to tell me that the church is for it. So in Nicaragua the new thing is, and the question is: How come so much of the church is in favor of it [the revolution]? How come so many of the priests, even of the bishops?

Pope Francis, then Jorge Bergoglio, also lived through a dictatorship in the 1970s in his native Argentina, but his role in the country's political arena was less defined than D'Escoto's was in Nicaragua. Instead of joining a political movement, the pope reportedly worked from behind the scenes to provide shelter for people at risk of persecution by the government.

The pope's decision to lift D'Escoto's suspension may have something to do with this shared experience of political turmoil, Father James Martin suggested to HuffPost.

"It is a sign not only of generosity and a desire for reconciliation," Martin said, "but also a recognition that many of those who were involved in such political efforts were trying their best to help God's poor."

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