

Ricci, Protestatio, 1775

Rome, 19 November 1775. Declaration of P. Lorenzo Ricci, ex-General of the Society of Jesus, made five days before his death, in the prison of Castel Sant'Angelo

The hour in which it might please God to call me is uncertain. It is certain however that that hour is near. These considerations, together with my advanced years and the many heavy travails, borne over a long time, which are beyond my weakness, lead me to fulfill my duty promptly, since my final illness might prevent me from doing so.

I consider myself at the moment of presenting myself at the tribunal of Infallible Truth and Justice, which is the only divine tribunal. After long and mature consideration, and after having humbly prayed my most merciful redeemer and terrible judge not to let me be led by passion, especially in one of the final actions of my life, neither by any bitterness of soul, nor by any other vicious sentiment or motive, but only because I judge it my duty to do justice to truth and innocence, [in this spirit] I make the following two declarations and protestations:

1. I declare and avow that the erstwhile Society of Jesus has given no motive whatsoever for its suppression. I declare and avow this with that moral certainty which can be had from a superior who is well informed about his own religious congregation.
2. I declare and avow that I have given no motive whatsoever, not even the slightest, for my imprisonment. This I declare and avow with that supreme certainty and clarity which each one has of his own actions. I make this second assertion only because it is necessary for the reputation of the extinct Society of Jesus of which I was superior general.

I do not intend however that arising from my protests any of those who have done damage to the Society of Jesus and to me may be judged guilty before God, since I abstain from any such judgment. Human thoughts and sentiments are known only

to God. He alone sees the errors of the human intellect and discerns if they are such as might excuse from guilt. He alone penetrates the motives which lead to action, and the spirit and sentiments which accompany the action; since the innocence and guilt of the external action depend on these, therefore I leave all judgment to Him, who *interrogabit opera et cogitationes scrutabitur*.

And in order to fulfill Christian duty, I assert that with divine help I have always sincerely forgiven those who have tormented and injured me. This they have done firstly through attacks made on the Society of Jesus, then through the Society's extinction and the circumstances attending it, and finally through my imprisonment and the hardships inflicted there, and the consequent damage to my reputation. These facts are public and notorious throughout the world.

I ask the Lord out of his mercy, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, to forgive my many sins; and then to forgive the agents and accomplices of the above-mentioned evils and harms. I intend to die with this sentiment and prayer in my heart.

Finally I beg and entreat whoever will view this my declaration and avowal to broadcast the contents to the whole world, to the extent possible. By all the claims of humanity, of justice and of Christian charity I beg and entreat that this my desire and wish may be fulfilled. Lorenzo Ricci