The false bishop and the angry priest

Manuel Armas is well known and liked in La Gomera. A committed Christian, who from an early age has been involved in church life, he has built up a wide range of friendships and contacts all over the island.

His credentials speak for themselves. The man has been no slouch when it comes to giving of his time and energy. Throughout his childhood, he assisted the priest at mass as altar boy. When he left for La Laguna University, he continued his church contact and charity work.

Returning to La Gomera as a qualified Maths teacher, Manuel began voluntary work after school as a catechism teacher. Generations of children preparing for their First Communion were coached by him. He taught at catechism classes, or taught as a qualified Maths teacher, charity work.

As altar boy, he was known and liked there. He had been chosen it because it was cheap. I wore it. To tell you the truth, I outed it because at carnival time Manuel bought a certain outfit in a local shop and then wore it. To tell you the truth, I outed it because at carnival time Manuel bought a certain outfit in a local shop and then wore it.

That is no longer the case, and all because at carnival time Manuel bought a certain outfit in a local shop and then wore it. "To tell you the truth, I chose it because it was cheap. I didn't think about it much, but it would never have occurred to me in a million years that anyone would be offended by it. It only cost €22 and looked comfortable. I wore it that night for the Entierro de la Sardina, (the mock funeral to mark the end of carnival). Everyone was in mourning and we all had a lovely time pretending to be sad and partying."

Manuel went as a bishop, wearing a long robe and headgear. Curled staff in one hand, missal tucked under an arm and false beard reaching his chest, he looked, "...rather splendid, though I say so myself".

“When I got a phone call from the parish priest recently, I imagined he wanted to go over the details of the programme we were rehearsing with the choir. Little did I know!” What the priest did tell Manuel was that he was no longer the choir’s director, due to his, “appearance in fancy dress as a bishop with a white beard!” He had, “been seen publicly sporting this disgraceful costume at carnival time”. The priest further advised Manuel to, “reflect on his folly at leisure, unencumbered by the duties of choir director.” Ouch.

The priest in question declined to comment when contacted by Island Connections. “This is an internal and private matter”, he insisted, before hanging up. It would be interesting to know exactly how many mock priests, nuns and bishops routinely appear in Canarian carnival celebrations. The main feature of the celebration to mark the end of carnival is anyway a mock funeral, with mock priests officiating. There were probably nearly a hundred ‘priests’ there and, according to Manuel, “more than a few fellow bishops”.

Can the Catholic Church, in the light of the many international accusations against priests for child abuse, its collaboration with dictators and despotism and very unchristian malpractice in general, afford to further reveal itself as being this petty and vindictive?

The choir has resigned to a man and protests from all over the island have gone to the diocese, but the priest stands firm, if alone. May he also have time to reflect, unencumbered as he is now by any of his congregation.

The ships took part in a simulated accident exercise.

Two new ships have entered into the lifeguard service around the Canarian coasts.

The Salvamar Al Nair and the Guardamar Talía were recently presented to the public in an organised event off Lanzarote in La Graciosa which included a simulated rescue of three fishermen using the lifeguard services, a boat from the Lanzarote emergency services and a diving unit from the Civil Guard. The last and versatile Salvamar Al Nair will be based in Arrecife substituting a previous and now dated ship and Guardamar Talía, whilst acting all over the islands, will be based in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Of the €1,023 million budget for the lifeguard services in Spain, over €900 million is spent in the Canaries.

The seven Canarian Cabildos and the regional government look set for an acrimonious legal battle after the island corporations refused to pay back €60 million the government says it is owed from last year.

The row developed a few months ago when Canarian finance minister José Manuel Soria informed the Cabildos that the calculation of local government funding carried out earlier this year was provisional and a final reckoning was due soon. The dispute centres on the share-out of revenue from the region’s Economic and Fiscal Regime, which is used largely to subsidise each island and their town halls.

News of the alleged debt led the presidents of all the Cabildos to boycott a scheduled meeting with Soria hours before it was due to take place. A spokesman for the corporations said the row can only now be settled in the courts and cooperation with the regional government was in danger of being suspended if Soria did not change his mind on the calculations.