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His Eminence William Cardinal Keeler
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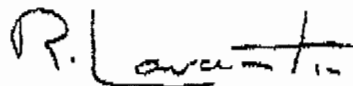
Dear Eminence:

I wrote a letter to you at the time Gianna Sullivan having been twice the object of a close investigation by your staff (before Gianna was entrusted to Fr. Jelly, O.P.), but never received a response. I am, therefore, now writing to you at your personal address so that you may get my message, because I know Gianna well. I have followed her, among others, and I have appreciated her fully dedicated faith, her human worth and the fruits of her initiatives, and her exemplary concern for always remaining in the order of and in perfect obedience to the Church.

I would like to take the liberty to share with you some essential conclusions of my protracted work about her, so that they may contribute to your discernment effort and to that of your committee, to which you will decide to communicate the following text, if it is appropriate. You may also request more detailed information from me, as I have reduced this paper to the essentials.

I also enclose my curriculum and mention my titles of former expert to the Council as well as member of several pontifical theology academies, in order for you to better evaluate me. I participate in the life of the Church in the United States by giving a course every year at the I.M.R.I. in Dayton, Ohio, where I was the colleague of Fr. Jelly who had negatively judged preceding apparitions, but had been able to appreciate and support Gianna.

Remaining respectfully united to you in our Lord Jesus Christ,



Abbé René Laurentin

Enclosure

NOTE BY PROFESSOR RENÉ LAURENTIN

Former expert to the Council, Member of the Pontifical Theology Academy and Roman Academies.

After ten years of study on Gianna Sullivan, founder of Mission of Mercy, who was born Talone of fervent Italian Catholic parents, I feel it is appropriate to now simply share the main conclusions of my study of her case, for I studied her closely at the beginning: she asked me for advice at various moments of her life.

Conclusions of my In-depth Work on Gianna

It was in September 1987 that Gianna had her first apparition of the Virgin Mary. To this day she has apparitions daily, except Fridays. She therefore surpassed the group of the ten seers or charismatics, awakened by the pastoral care of Father James Spaulding at the parish of St. Maria Goretti, Scottsdale, Arizona (R. Laurentin, *Our Lord and Our Lady in Scottsdale, Fruitful Charisms in a Traditional American Parish*, Milford, Faith Publishing Company, 1992). In 1989, Bill Reck, Director of this publishing company, sent me a manuscript of the messages received at Medjugorje, which he intended to publish. I answered him: "These are particular messages destined to a parish. There is no reason to conserve them; one publishes too many of these messages today, etc." Bill Reck did it anyway. The book was a great success. More than 500,000 copies were sold. It was his bestseller. It was then that he asked me to write a book on the apparitions in Scottsdale, which I did. I thus made two trips to Scottsdale, one in July 1991 for fact finding, and one the following year for a final review of the manuscript.

The diocese, after hearing the opinion of the Committee whose president, Fr. Ernest Larkin, OCD, was for a time Gianna's spiritual director, judged that it was not proved to be spiritual, although it was not excluding it. The conclusion was "Non constat supernaturalitas" (it is not proved) and not "constat non-supernaturalitas" (the supernatural is excluded). Concerned that all scientific verifications possible be performed, I had called Dr. Loron, a neurologist at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris specializing in cases where neurology meets the spiritual (ecstasy of the seers and reactions to exorcism). The electro-encephalogram he made showed a normal and non-pathological state, with a mixture of alpha and beta waves, Gianna being at the same time in contemplation (alpha) and active, dialoguing during the apparition. Gianna disconnected from the exterior world by the ecstasy, does not sleep or dream, and is not in an epileptic state. There is nothing pathological. (Among the tested seers, there are normal variations according to the diversified functions of the ecstasies.)

In short, I have neglected nothing to arrive at both a scientific and a spiritual discernment.

The Main Conclusion

As regards guiding principles, I have written a few papers towards a future dictionary of apparitions and I would like to mention the few guidelines I follow, which I have found sometimes disregarded in investigations.

As the apparitions are calling for a discernment of the spiritual authenticity and of the fruits thereof, and not for a dogmatic and massive judgment, it is important to remain on the mentioned grounds and to have in mind the limitations of an authenticity diagnosis when it comes to a spiritual or charismatic communication.

As no human being is perfect, the authenticity does not require perfection of the person, who can be subject to temptations, more gravely than others, a fact that one also has to discern. A weak point or even an error or momentary fault of a seer is not enough to exclude his or her authenticity.

Among numerous criteria I have described elsewhere, the fruits are the most important. It is also the only criterion that was given us by Christ Himself: "One judges a tree by its fruits," a norm which is stated six times in the four Gospels.

I therefore begin with the fruits. In Gianna's case, the fruits have always been positive, without anything negative. Around herself, she has awakened and supported the faith in a world where the faith is asphyxiated by secularization, laicization, and ambient materialism.

In her spiritual life which I followed at the beginning, sometimes moderating the initiative of her beautiful creativity, the apparitions have enhanced the quality of her prayer and of her exemplary life, in which she courageously solved her personal problems (no grave ones), which she has, as every human being. Her maturing was remarkable and testifies to a positive influence due to the apparitions, and even of an interior education coming from above.

There are good fruits in her family, in spite of very difficult conditions at the beginning. She had married a man who did not want children. The diocesan officials recognized this and declared the nullity of this first union, which had been a long trial for her. The marriage she then entered with Michael Sullivan, M.D. was decided in a deep spiritual agreement to lead a life of prayer totally dedicated to the service of the poor in the medical field, in which she and her husband are qualified by their competence, their practical sense, and their efficiency.

During the period in which the former pastor of Emmitsburg integrated the apparitions in the life of the parish, these manifestations, in which no one was bound to participate, have supported and stimulated the faith and fervor of the persons present through conversions and fruits. This pastor, if interrogated, could testify about this in a useful way within the limits set by the secret of confession.

The publishing of these messages seems to have generally had the same positive influence in stimulating faith and prayer. There were no criticisms or complaints.

What appears most impressive to me -- for it is an important criterion in the discernment of apparitions -- is that the charism of the contemplative order has flowered into charity through a charism of service, perfectly integrated and technically adapted, to provide full health care to many Americans deprived because of poverty. This is essential, in the line of the healings mentioned in the Gospels. Gianna and her husband have dedicated their lives to this task with a perfection above all praise. When one encounters the alliance of prayer with charity (nowadays preferably called humanitarian and social aid), this alliance is one of the best positive criteria that exist.

Postscriptum

I preferred to make a brief report. I could be more precise on one point or another, if this is deemed useful by the Committee appointed to judge this case. I am told the names of its members are not disclosed. I am therefore available, if it is deemed useful, given my experience and consultation by various committees.

I close by mentioning the following observations:

1. Whereas every committee includes a theologian, a psychologist or psychiatrist, Canon lawyers, etc., spiritual discernment, now unfortunately receding in the Church, invites to call in priority real experts of the spiritual, such as experienced and recognized confessors, confirmed directors of novices and heads of seminaries, exorcists, etc. They are usually in the best position to judge the essential: is there normal spiritual communication with God and the saints living in His orbit?

2. Too often committees focus on criticism and not values. Values are essential. Criticisms do not suffice to motivate a negative judgment, also at the doctrinal level, except major or grave error.

For no saint or doctor of the Church is free from ambiguous formulas. St. Thomas Aquinas, as also St. Catherine of Sienna, given the state of theology at their time, have not grasped the immaculate origin of the Virgin Mary. After this dogma was defined, one did not deprive them of their quality of saint and doctor of the Church. One sometimes condemns seers for lesser errors. One could quote many other examples of ambiguities in the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

In the Gospel itself, some verses remain the ordeal of exegetes and theologians. They are many, in particular, Christ's sayings: "The elect are few" seems to contradict the inspired saying of the apostle: "God wants that all men be saved." Such is also

Christ's saying: "The Father is greater than I." The enemies of the clergy denounce the contradictions in the Gospel, as they are unable to comprehend and place their values.

In many cases, committees set up to judge sincere, prayerful apparitions bearing indisputable fruits, issue the verdict "supernaturalitas non constat," and the press states: "It is not supernatural," or "It is an illusion," or "It is not authentic," or "It is condemned." It is a terrible defamation for excellent Christians, better than others, when the Church's apparent judgment seems to defame them. It happens frequently.