



A Commentary of the Decree on the Presumed Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Carmelite Convent in Lipa, Philippines (Prot. N. 226/1949)

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GENERAL POINTS

- It should be noted that never in the history of the Church has the Vatican reversed its definitive verdicts regarding apparitions. The Church is very careful in making definitive or final verdicts because making a mistake in this regard would lessen the Church's credibility.
- The decree points out the non-supernatural source of the alleged apparitions pointing out its natural source. But there seems to be

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a preternatural source as well since many persons experienced extraordinary phenomena connected with the alleged apparitions, which went beyond any natural explanation. Since the Vatican has made a definitive statement that the alleged apparitions in Lipa are not supernatural in nature and character, and that there were manifestations—as I mentioned—that were clearly not natural, the only other explanation would be that not only was there a natural cause behind the said apparitions but a preternatural one as well. The preternatural world is the world of the fallen angels; pure spirits without grace.

- It should be noted that the study of the alleged apparitions of Lipa (1948-1951) was not done on the level of the Diocesan Bishop or even on the level of the Conference of Bishops, but on the level of the Holy See with the support of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII. The confusion regarding the matter of whether the 1951 verdict on the alleged apparitions in Lipa was definitive or not revolves around this central reality which was not clear to most of those concerned.
- The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) chose not to reveal the reasons behind the decision of the Holy Office (now CDF) to Archbishop Ramón Argüelles when he was seeking information regarding the verdict made in 1951—as it states in its

decree—in order to avoid any scandal that may have arisen due to the sensitive nature of the parties involved. But it made itself clear that the new commission that was created by Archbishop Ramón Argüelles to restudy the alleged apparitions was to be disbanded since the 1951 decision of the Holy Office was definitive and therefore final. The CDF chose to divulge the real reasons behind its negative verdict when Archbishop Ramón Argüelles did not follow the Vatican's directive.

COMMENTARY ON THE DIFFERENT POINTS RAISED BY THE DECREE (please refer to the corresponding numbers on the decree)

- No. 1—Noted the special relationship between the Prioress, Mother Mary Cecilia of Jesus, OCD and Teresa which caused some conflict in the Carmelite community.
- No. 4—Noted the two-year evaluation by the Holy Office and the resulting definitive verdict that the events in Lipa were of a non-supernatural origin and character. It speaks about the unambiguously natural character and origin of the alleged apparitions and the decree seems to base this fact mainly due to the confessions of the Prioress on her role in the deceptions that occurred.

—But as was mentioned, there is proof that the events went beyond the natural since there were testimonies of events that defy natural explanations. If we say that the events were purely natural then how do we explain the showers of petals from nowhere which were witnessed by many and other supposed “miracles” that occurred. The only other explanation is that there were preternatural (diabolical) interventions aside from the natural.

—And if it was purely natural, then Teresa would either be mentally unstable having hallucinations and delusions or she was outright lying until the end of her days about her experiences which she continued to have and share. There were no real indicators that she was mentally unstable and reliable witnesses vouch for her sincerity and truthfulness; all this would therefore point to a preternatural intervention that deceived Teresa and the Prioress.

- No. 5—Noted the main reason for the negative verdict of the Holy Office: the confession of deception by the Prioress.
- No. 6—Noted the reason for the later confusion regarding the definitive verdict of the Holy Office; the manner that the Apostolic Nuncio chose to inform the Holy Office's verdict.
- No. 7—Noted that the Apostolic Nuncio convened a commission of six bishops (Archbishop Gabriel Reyes of Manila, Bishop Cesar Guerrero of San Fernando, Bishop Mariano Madriaga of Lingayen, Administrator of Lipa Bishop Rufino Santos, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila Bishop Vicente Reyes and Bishop Juan Sison, Auxiliary Bishop of Nueva Segovia) to disseminate the verdict: here is where the confusion arose since most would see this commission as the body where the verdict was made.
- No. 8—Noted the additional confusion made by the statement of Bishop Rufino Santos stating, "Until a final decision on the matter will come from the Holy See." It seems that for the six bishops, and mostly everyone else, they were the commission that made the negative verdict and that the Holy Office itself (the "Supreme Court" of the Church) was not the source of the verdict.
- No. 10—Noted the move by Archbishop Mariano Gaviola of allowing the veneration of the statue of the alleged apparitions in Lipa. This was not communicated to the CDF; it is therefore clear that the use of the statue of Our Lady of Lipa should still be banned. The image of the statue of Our Lady of Lipa is based on the visions of Teresa Castillo.
- No. 12—Noted that the verdict on the alleged apparitions in Lipa is not anymore open to discussion and review.
- No. 15—Noted that the 1951 negative verdict is the definitive response of the Church and therefore final. I would say that its level of finality is similar to that of the positive declarations of the Church with regard to the apparitions in Fátima and Lourdes. It also points out that the Prioress, the principal witness, is now deceased, hence any rescinding on her part is impossible. ■