

Marian Apparitions in Catholic Ecclesial Judgment

*Recognized events, pastorally authorized experiences,
and received traditions*

A doctrinal, historical, and comparative study

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1 The Question: What Has the Church Actually Judged?

A sentence such as “the Church approved this apparition” sounds precise and often is not. It can mean that a bishop judged an event supernatural; that a commission found witnesses credible; that visions were called worthy of belief; that public devotion was permitted; that a shrine or feast was established; that a Pope spoke favorably of a tradition; or, under the discipline effective since 19 May 2024, that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith approved a *nihil obstat* while expressly declining to certify supernatural origin. These acts are related, but they are not interchangeable.

The distinction matters because a Marian apparition is never an additional Gospel. The Church’s task is not to reward religious excitement. She must test what is claimed, protect persons, defend the integrity of faith and morals, recognize good fruit where it is present, and distinguish the Holy Spirit’s action from error, fraud, pathology, commercial exploitation, sectarian pressure, or an uncontrolled mixture of grace and human limitation. A favorable pastoral judgment can be real without being a declaration that Mary appeared. A favorable event judgment can be real without making every reported sentence authentic. A received shrine can be holy without possessing a modern decree about the originating event.

Governing thesis

Jesus Christ is the Father’s definitive Word, and every authentic Marian charism is radically subordinate to him. This study therefore does not rank apparitions by marvel or popularity. It identifies the competent authority, act, formula, object, documentary corpus, and present status of each included case; it then asks how the reported messages echo the one Gospel without forming a second deposit of faith. The recurring Marian grammar is maternal and ecclesial: listen to Christ, repent, pray, receive the sacraments, bear suffering in hope, serve the poor, seek reconciliation, and remain within the Church.

2 One Revelation, Tested Charisms, Maternal Mediation

2.1 Christ: the unsurpassable Word

The doctrinal order begins before any apparition. “In giving us his Son, his only Word,” St. John of the Cross writes in the passage quoted by the 2024 DDF norms, the Father has spoken the All; to crave another revelation as though Christ were insufficient is to turn one’s eyes away from him. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* therefore teaches that no new public revelation is to be expected before Christ’s glorious return (CCC 65–66). So-called private revelations do not complete or correct the deposit; at most they help the Church live it more fully in a particular historical situation (CCC 67).

This difference concerns not simply quantity but kind. Public Revelation gives the Church the mystery of the Triune God and the saving economy fulfilled in Christ, transmitted in Scripture and apostolic Tradition. A private revelation is a contingent help. Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, later Benedict XIV, supplies the classical formula quoted in the CDF’s 2000 commentary on Fátima: even an approved private revelation cannot demand the assent of Catholic faith. It may receive prudent human faith as probable and credible to piety. It is offered; no Christian is obliged to use it.

The test is correspondingly Christological. A message has value insofar as it leads into Christ’s definitive Revelation—toward faith, hope, charity, conversion, prayer, sacramental communion, justice, mercy, and obedience. If it becomes an allegedly better plan of salvation, a privileged code that outranks the Gospel, a means of fear or control, or an independent Marian system, it fails the criterion by becoming autonomous from the Lord whom Mary serves.

The hierarchy of authority

The Gospel judges the apparition; the apparition never judges the Gospel. The Church discerns the charism; the charism does not constitute a parallel magisterium. The sacred liturgy is the summit toward which the Church’s activity is directed and the font from which her power flows; popular piety should harmonize with it, derive from it, and lead to it, but cannot replace it (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10, 13; CCC 1324). Christ saves; Mary intercedes and forms disciples only within his unique mediation.

2.2 How visions can be true without being dictation

The Fátima commentary also gives an anthropological key. It distinguishes bodily perception, imaginative or interior perception, and intellectual vision. Apparitional perception is not ordinarily a public object located in space exactly as a tree is, since people standing together may not all see it. Nor is it merely an abstract thought. An interior vision can possess for the recipient the force of presence while being received through the person's faculties, images, memory, language, and historical world.

This makes interpretation indispensable even where an event is judged authentic. The recipient is not a stenographic machine. Image and word may compress a long history into one scene. Human limitations can enter expression without malice. The 1978 norms already required attention to the possibility that a recipient might add natural elements or error unconsciously; the 2024 norms repeat that criterion. This neither dissolves a charism into subjectivity nor permits doctrinal contradiction. It explains why ecclesiastical authority can recognize spiritual fruit, correct particular phrases, restrict publication, or approve a curated corpus.

Prophecy in this Christian sense is principally illumination of God's will for the present, not satisfaction of curiosity about the future. The third part of the Fátima secret is therefore read symbolically, not as a film whose frames predetermine dates and names. Its urgent truth is conversion in history. Prophetic warning assumes that response matters; fatalism is its counterfeit.

2.3 From the 1978 procedure to the 2024 discipline

The 1978 CDF norms distinguished several tasks: judge the alleged fact by positive and negative criteria; permit some public devotion provisionally without implying supernatural authentication; and, in some cases, reach a judgment about authenticity and supernatural character. The local ordinary held the first responsibility, while the Holy See could review the manner of proceeding or intervene.

Practice became slow and confusing. Some local judgments used absolute language even though belief remained optional; some cases spread worldwide before a conclusion; some contrary acts remained obscure. In the presentation to the 2024 norms the DDF reported that no more than six cases since 1950 had been officially resolved. It also pointed to the Amsterdam history: a negative Holy See judgment, later local devotional reception, a contrary local supernatural claim, and decades of confusion before the controlling result was disclosed.

The 2024 norms therefore normally replace a positive declaration of supernatural origin with six prudential outcomes:

Formula	Pastoral meaning	What it does not mean
<i>Nihil obstat</i>	Significant signs of the Holy Spirit are acknowledged in the midst of the experience; no especially grave risk is presently found; the bishop may appreciate and promote pastoral value.	No certainty that the alleged phenomenon itself is supernatural.
<i>Prae oculis habeatur</i>	Important positive signs coexist with confusion or risks requiring vigilance, dialogue, and perhaps doctrinal clarification.	Not approval for unrestricted public cult or dissemination.
<i>Curatur</i>	Real critical elements coexist with widespread devotion and verifiable fruit; reorientation is preferred to a disruptive ban.	Not encouragement of the phenomenon itself.
<i>Sub mandato</i>	The experience contains positive elements, but persons or groups are misusing it and require supervised governance.	Not vindication of exploitation or a parallel ministry.
<i>Prohibetur et obstruatur</i>	Serious risks require that adherence and spread be prohibited and obstructed.	Not a mere request for private caution.

Formula	Pastoral meaning	What it does not mean
<i>Declaratio de non supernaturalitate</i>	Objective evidence permits a declaration that the phenomenon is not supernatural.	Not a judgment that every devotee acted in bad faith.

The diocesan bishop investigates and proposes a determination in dialogue with the DDF; the Dicastery examines and confirms or declines it. The bishop then promulgates the result and its limits. The DDF reserves continuing oversight. As a rule neither bishop, episcopal conference, nor Dicastery makes a positive declaration of supernatural origin. The Pope may exceptionally authorize such a procedure, but the norms call it rare. Thus *nihil obstat* is the highest ordinary positive result and precisely for that reason must not be mistranslated into “the Vatican confirms the apparition.”

The new discipline does not erase earlier acts by silence. This study reports unreversed legacy judgments according to their own dates and formulas while applying current doctrinal and pastoral guardrails to their interpretation. It makes no general canonical ruling on the continued validity of unseen acts; it follows the public record and identifies uncertainty where the Holy See’s involvement or finality is not documented.

2.4 Mary within Christ’s sole mediation

The Marian doctrinal boundary is not a concession imposed from outside devotion. It is the mystery that makes devotion Marian. Mary is *Theotokos*, the Mother of the incarnate Word; the first and perfect disciple; the New Eve whose free, graced obedience participates in the Incarnation; the mother given to the beloved disciple; and the praying figure within the apostolic Church. Her cooperation is real because grace does not abolish created agency. It is wholly dependent because every gift in her is the fruit of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

The DDF’s 2025 note *Mater Populi Fidelis* brings this grammar directly to apparition literature. There is one Redeemer. The title “Co-redemptrix” is judged inappropriate because it risks obscuring Christ’s unique saving mediation. Marian mediation, when rightly understood, is maternal, participated, subordinate, ecclesial, and entirely derived from Christ. No creature universally dispenses or communicates sanctifying grace: God alone gives his own life through the humanity of Christ. Mary maternally intercedes, accompanies, and helps dispose persons to receive the gifts God alone bestows. She is not an obstacle between the believer and Jesus; she says, in the grammar of Cana, “Do whatever he tells you.”

This excludes a recurring distorted image: Mary as the compassionate alternative to a wrathful or insufficiently merciful Christ, a “lightning rod” holding back divine justice, or the independent dispenser of a grace that God would otherwise refuse. The DDF made the correction concrete in its Montichiari discernment. Christ’s justice and mercy are not rival dispositions, and Mary does not rescue humanity from her Son. Her maternal tenderness manifests the tenderness of the God who gave her to the Church.

Penance, sacrifice, and reparation require the same Christological reading. They are not payments that complete a deficient Cross. Christ’s Paschal sacrifice is sufficient and unsurpassable. The baptized can participate in his self-offering by grace: receiving mercy, rejecting sin, interceding, fasting, serving, bearing suffering in charity, and repairing relationships and ecclesial wounds. Where apparition language uses compressed imagery of punishment, appeasement, or restraint, it must be read within this economy or corrected.

2.5 The fruits and dangers of apparition culture

The 2024 positive criteria include credible and morally upright recipients, doctrinal orthodoxy, unpredictability, prayer, conversion, vocations, charity, sound devotion, and ecclesial communion. Negative criteria include manifest factual error, doctrinal error, sectarian division, profit or power seeking, grave immorality, psychological disturbance relevant to the claim, and the use of alleged mystical experience to control or abuse persons.

Fruit is indispensable but not mechanically probative. God can bring conversion amid a humanly confused event; this is why the norms speak of the Spirit acting “in the midst of” an experience rather than necessarily “through” a supernatural apparition. Conversely, extraordinary signs do not compensate for doctrinal corruption or manipulation.

The Church seeks neither credulity nor reflexive disbelief. Her governing Pauline rule is more demanding: do not quench the Spirit; test everything; hold fast what is good (1 Thess 5:19–21).

3 Legacy I: Reconciliation, Conversion, and the Immaculate Mother

3.1 Notre-Dame du Laus: fifty-four years ordered to reconciliation

Event or tradition: Reported encounters of Benoîte Rencurel from 1664 until her death in 1718, together with the sanctuary mission that arose from them.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Jean-Michel di Falco Léandri promulgated recognition of the supernatural character of the events on 4 May 2008 after historical, theological, and scientific commissions and the assent of the CDF.

Limit of that reception: *The earlier authorization of pilgrimage, church, and priests in 1665 was a real reception of cult but not yet a formal event judgment; the 2008 process supplied that distinction.*

Benoîte was a seventeen-year-old shepherd in the Alpine village of Saint-Étienne d’Avançon when, according to the diocesan history, a “beautiful lady” began to educate her in prayer and Christian conduct. On 29 August 1664 the lady identified herself as Lady Mary, Mother of her dear Son. She directed Benoîte to the neglected chapel at Laus and toward a church where sinners would be reconciled. The encounters continued, with interruptions and trials, across fifty-four years. Their duration makes Laus less a single oracle than a life formed into an ecclesial ministry.

The historical setting was Catholic renewal after the Council of Trent, when catechesis, confession, worthy worship, and reform of Christian life were urgent pastoral concerns. The Laus narrative takes the shape of that renewal. Its center is not an esoteric secret but the sacrament of Penance, the Eucharist, priestly ministry, the building of a chapel, and the conversion of pilgrims. Benoîte’s reported charism of reading hearts serves confession; it does not replace it. The sanctuary becomes intelligible as a school of mercy within the Church.

Theologically, Laus joins maternal correction to sacramental objectivity. Mary does not merely console Benoîte in private; she directs sinners to the means Christ entrusted to his Church. The long education of one poor woman also resists a cult of instantaneous enlightenment. Discernment is tested across decades by obedience, adversity, fruit, and perseverance. Grace develops a human instrument rather than rendering history unnecessary.

The delayed decree is itself instructive. Pilgrimage was permitted in the seventeenth century, yet the diocese openly states that the apparitions themselves had never received formal recognition until 2008. A holy place can mature under pastoral oversight before its originating event is judged. Conversely, later recognition does not transform every tradition accumulated at the place into part of the decree. The recognized center remains the providential sequence that made Laus a place of conversion and reconciliation.

3.2 Sant’Andrea delle Fratte: a silent apparition and Alphonse Ratisbonne

Event or tradition: The reported silent apparition of 20 January 1842 in Sant’Andrea delle Fratte, Rome, and Alphonse Ratisbonne’s immediate conversion.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: After a canonical process in the Vicariate of Rome, Cardinal Vicar Costantino Patrizi decreed the truth of the miracle on 3 June 1842; later Popes and the Diocese of Rome explicitly commemorate the apparition.

Limit of that reception: *There is no verbal message; the judgment concerns the reported event and conversion.*

Ratisbonne, an Alsatian Jew alienated from religious practice and hostile to Catholicism, entered the Roman church while accompanying the Catholic Théodore de Bussièrès. He had agreed to wear the Miraculous Medal and recite the *Memorare*, initially as a challenge. In the church he reported seeing the Virgin in light, in the posture represented on the medal, silently indicating that he should kneel. His enduring summary is the interpretive key: she said nothing, yet he understood. He was baptized on 31 January; the Roman process followed within months.

The absence of speech matters. The “message” is iconic and personal: the Immaculate Mother, open hands, light understood as grace, humility, and a decisive turn toward Christ. The event is closely related to Rue du Bac through the medal but possesses its own Roman judgment. It illustrates a recurrent pattern in Marian devotion: Mary does not occupy the center as a new doctrine; her presence points beyond herself, and the fruit is baptismal incorporation into Christ.

Silence also limits expansion. Later Marian systems cannot place their preferred program on the Virgin’s lips here. Ratisbonne’s conversion may be interpreted through grace, humility, and the maternal intercession of Mary, but not through an invented discourse. In a collection crowded with words, Sant’Andrea delle Fratte witnesses that the whole Marian vocation can be compressed into presence and direction toward Christ.

3.3 La Salette: tears, violated covenant, and the public message

Event or tradition: The apparition reported by Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat on 19 September 1846 and the public message entrusted “to all my people.”

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Philibert de Bruillard of Grenoble declared on 19 September 1851 that the apparition bore the characteristics of truth and that the faithful had well-founded reasons to accept it as certain; a renewed inquiry confirmed the decision in 1855.

Limit of that reception: *The decree concerns the public event and message. It does not authenticate every later version, publication, apocalyptic elaboration, or political use of the children’s secrets.*

Two shepherd children encountered a luminous “Beautiful Lady” seated and weeping in the high pastures above La Salette. A large crucifix, with hammer and pincers, dominated her breast. She spoke first in French and then in the local dialect, confronting habitual blasphemy, disregard of the Lord’s Day and Mass, failure of prayer, and a rural community’s response to failed crops. She ended by sending the message to all her people.

The symbolism is coherent before it is sensational. Tears do not make Mary more merciful than Christ; the crucifix is the source of the light that surrounds her. Hammer and pincers place human sin and repentance in relation to the Passion: sin wounds communion; grace draws the nails. Sabbath neglect is not an arbitrary offense against a touchy heaven but a refusal of the worship that orders creaturely life to God and gives rest, Eucharist, gratitude, and social belonging. Blasphemy deforms speech; conversion restores covenantal truth to lips and time.

The agricultural warnings must not be reduced either to primitive meteorology or to a simple equation of crop failure with individual guilt. Scripture itself can read creation covenantally while the Gospel rejects the assumption that every sufferer is personally more sinful. The public message addresses a people whose spiritual and material lives are intertwined. Its prophetic force lies in a summons to prayer, worship, repentance, and hope amid fragility. It does not authorize the reader to diagnose a particular disaster as punishment for a named victim’s sin.

La Salette also supplies the clearest warning about corpus control. Maximin and Mélanie each transmitted private material to ecclesiastical authority; later texts attributed to Mélanie became longer, more apocalyptic, and entangled in controversy. The 1851 recognition does not function as a blank endorsement of every such publication. The approved public center is compact and cruciform. When later claims become the dominant lens, the sign of tears can be converted from maternal grief into a machine for fear, faction, or prediction—precisely the distortion ecclesial discernment is meant to prevent.

3.4 Lourdes: penance, healing, and the Immaculate Conception

Event or tradition: Eighteen reported apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous at Massabielle between 11 February and 16 July 1858.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Bertrand-Sévère Laurence of Tarbes declared on 18 January 1862 that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, truly appeared to Bernadette eighteen times and that the apparition bore the characteristics of truth.

Limit of that reception: *The decree concerns Bernadette's encounters and their examined message. The healing ministry at Lourdes has its own rigorous medical and canonical discernment; not every claimed cure is a miracle.*

Bernadette came from a family marked by poverty and social marginality. At the grotto she reported a young lady who prayed with her, called for penance and prayer for sinners, directed her to drink and wash at a spring, and asked that a chapel be built and people come in procession. On 25 March the lady gave her name in local speech: "I am the Immaculate Conception." The declaration came four years after Pius IX had defined Mary's preservation from original sin in *Ineffabilis Deus*.

The relationship between apparition and dogma is exact only when its direction is kept straight. The dogma does not depend on Bernadette; it rests on the Church's reception of Revelation and was already defined. The reported title receives and popularizes what the Church had confessed. It joins Mary's person to grace: she is not an abstraction called "immaculateness," nor a goddess without need of redemption. She is the first redeemed, preserved by the merits of Christ in an anticipatory and singular manner. Her beauty is the victory of her Son's grace.

The spring and the sick made Lourdes a world center of pilgrimage, but the deeper pattern is baptismal and penitential. Water, confession, Eucharist, intercession, bodily vulnerability, and service of the sick converge. Healing is not magic dispensed by a rival mediator. Many pilgrims leave without bodily cure and are not thereby rejected. The Church's medical bureau distinguishes unexplained cure from proof of sanctity and submits alleged miracles to further judgment. The sick person is never raw material for apologetics.

Lourdes also clarifies the relation between lowliness and authority. Bernadette's poverty does not prove the apparition; it reveals the Gospel form of a message whose reception had to be tested. The bishop's mandate examined witness, consistency, doctrine, fruit, and objections before reaching its judgment. Popular fervor and episcopal discernment are not enemies. The sanctuary endures when the fervor is purified into sacrament, service, and prayer.

Across Laus, Ratisbonne, La Salette, and Lourdes one pattern emerges: Mary is Immaculate because of Christ, maternal because given by Christ, and prophetic because she sends sinners to Christ. Reconciliation, baptism, Eucharist, penance, and ecclesial worship are not later decorations placed upon private experience; they are the measure by which the experience becomes Catholic.

4 Legacy II: Catechesis, Prayer, Nation, and the Lamb

4.1 Champion: teach the children what they need for salvation

Event or tradition: Three reported encounters of Adele Brise in rural Wisconsin in October 1859 and the locution that assigned her a catechetical mission.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay declared on 8 December 2010, with moral certainty, that the events and locutions exhibited the substance of supernatural character and approved them as worthy of belief, though not obligatory.

Limit of that reception: *The decree concerns the events associated with Adele and the shrine. The later Peshtigo-fire tradition belongs to reception history, not to the apparition judgment itself.*

Adele was a Belgian immigrant in a frontier Catholic community short of clergy, schools, and stable catechetical institutions. She reported seeing a woman in white with a yellow sash and crown of stars. When Adele asked what was desired, the answer did not offer a secret chronology. She was to gather the children of the wilderness, teach them the catechism, show them how to make the sign of the Cross, and prepare them for the sacraments—to teach what they needed to know for salvation.

The message turns apparition into mission. A visionary who remains the permanent center of attention would contradict its movement. Adele traveled, taught, gathered women into a community of service, and helped create a durable work of education. The supernatural claim is thus ordered toward ordinary ecclesial means: doctrine, prayer, sacrament, and patient formation. Mary appears as mother and catechist by making Adele responsible for the Church's children.

The context gives the command concrete weight. Migrant families brought Catholic identity into linguistic, economic, and geographic dislocation. Faith could not survive as a treasured memory without transmission. Champion's emphasis therefore complements Lourdes and Laus. The latter draw pilgrims to confession and healing; Champion sends a woman outward to households. Marian reception is centrifugal as well as centripetal: come to the sanctuary, then carry the Gospel into the wilderness.

In 1871 the Peshtigo fire devastated the region while those gathered at the chapel survived. The story became inseparable from the shrine's memory. It may rightly be narrated as a received providential deliverance, but it must not be confused with the object of the 1859 apparition decree or turned into a moral contrast between protected devotees and the dead. The enduring miracle claimed by the mission is the formation of Christian persons.

4.2 Pontmain: prayer under the pressure of war

Event or tradition: One apparition on 17 January 1871, visible to Eugène and Joseph Barbedette, Françoise Richer, and Jeanne-Marie Lebossé, with a message written across the sky.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: After inquiry and canonical process, Bishop Casimir Wicart of Laval declared on 2 February 1872 that the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, truly appeared to the four children.

Limit of that reception: *The single event and visible text form the corpus; the conclusion of the war belongs to historical reception rather than an unlimited promise of national immunity.*

Prussian forces were advancing during the Franco-Prussian War, local conscripts were absent, winter was severe, and typhoid threatened. As the parish gathered in prayer, the children saw a woman in a star-covered blue garment. She spoke no audible word. A banner unfolded: "But pray, my children; God will hear you in a little while. My Son permits himself to be touched." The figure's expressions changed with the parish's prayer; a red crucifix appeared in her hands before the vision ended.

The message is short enough to expose every theological mistake. Prayer is commanded, so providence is not fatalism. God hears, so prayer is not autosuggestion. The Son "permits himself to be touched," so Marian intercession does not overcome divine indifference. The phrase evokes the Gospel in which Christ responds to faith, pity, persistence, and the touch of those in need. Mary gathers the people's prayer into the compassionate economy already willed by her Son.

The military threat receded and an armistice followed; the parish's thirty-eight conscripts returned alive. This temporal deliverance shaped Pontmain as Our Lady of Hope. Yet the message cannot be generalized into a technique by which prayer guarantees a preferred military result. Christian hope reaches beyond survival, and intercession remains subject to the wisdom of God. Pontmain authorizes urgency without magical control: in danger, the Church prays, contemplates Christ crucified, and entrusts history to mercy.

The written but silent message also mediates between Ratisbonne and Knock. Ratisbonne receives silent personal illumination; Knock offers a silent ecclesial icon; Pontmain presents words without a voice. In each, the absence of an extended discourse prevents Marian revelation from becoming a rival teaching office. The visible sign serves the Church's existing prayer.

4.3 Gietrzwałd: the Rosary in the language of a people

Event or tradition: Reported apparitions to Justyna Szafryńska and Barbara Samulowska from 27 June to 16 September 1877 in Warmia, then under Prussian rule.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: In decree 2100/77 of 11 September 1977, Bishop Józef Drzazga of Warmia approved the cult as not contrary to faith and Christian morals, based on credible facts whose supernatural and divine character "cannot be excluded."

Limit of that reception: *The investigated 1877 events and their received core are included; the double-negative formula is not rewritten as a positive supernatural-event declaration, and later national or political claims are not presumed part of the judgment.*

The girls reported that the Virgin identified herself as the Immaculate Conception, urged the daily Rosary, answered questions concerning the Church and priests, and encouraged sobriety and moral renewal. The conversations took place in Polish. During the Kulturkampf, when Germanizing pressure bore directly upon Catholic and Polish institutions, the language of the reported encounter became part of the event's historical power.

The use of Polish affirms that grace addresses persons and peoples in a mother tongue. The Rosary carries biblical mysteries in vernacular prayer, joining local suffering to the universal life of Christ. Gietrzwałd's historical national significance lies in its service to human dignity, worship, language, family, temperance, and ecclesial communion.

The repeated counsel to pray the Rosary places perseverance above novelty. The apparitions did not provide a new sacrament or doctrine. They intensified a received contemplative practice. Questions about priests also disclose an ecclesial wound and an ecclesial answer: pray for those entrusted with ministry, seek faithful clergy, and resist both clerical contempt and clerical idealization.

The approval formula deserves exact reading. It joins three statements: devotional cult is not contrary to faith and morals; the underlying facts are credible; and their supernatural and divine character "cannot be excluded." The last clause is a double negative, not the declaration that supernatural origin has been positively established. It is nevertheless more than undocumented popular enthusiasm: a named bishop authoritatively approved the cult after a century of reception. Gietrzwałd therefore belongs in this qualified legacy corpus without either the inflated phrase "the Vatican proved the apparitions" or the opposite claim that the Church has done nothing.

In March 2026 Pope Leo XIV authorized the decree recognizing the heroic virtues of Barbara Samulowska, later Sister Stanisława. That act concerns the Christian quality of her life and advances her cause; it does not enlarge the 1977 judgment on the alleged apparitions. The distinction itself is instructive: personal holiness and an event's supernatural origin are judged under different objects and procedures.

4.4 Knock: a silent icon of the Church at the altar

Event or tradition: A silent tableau reported on the evening of 21 August 1879 at the gable of the parish church: Mary, Joseph, John the Evangelist, an altar, the Lamb, a cross, and angels.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The 1879–1880 commission found the testimony as a whole trustworthy and satisfactory; a second 1935–1936 inquiry again judged the surviving witnesses upright and satisfactory. Archbishop John MacHale publicly received the event, but no formal public supernatural-origin decree has been located.

Limit of that reception: *Knock is classified by credible testimony and authoritative reception, not by an invented constat. There is no verbal message.*

Fifteen official witnesses described luminous figures remaining visible in heavy rain for roughly two hours. Mary stood in prayer, Joseph inclined toward her, John appeared to preach from an open book, and a Lamb stood upon an altar before a cross amid angels. The witnesses heard nothing. The parish church itself became the frame of the scene.

The historical landscape was western Ireland after the Great Famine and amid agrarian distress. Emigration, poverty, memory of death, and the Land War formed the human horizon. The shrine's own history records Archbishop MacHale's judgment that it was a blessing that the Mother of God had appeared among the poor in their misery. This context explains why a silent sign of heavenly communion could be heard as hope without words.

The tableau is profoundly liturgical. Joseph's guardianship, Mary's contemplation, John's apostolic witness, and the angels all converge upon the Lamb standing as slain, the altar, and the Cross. The image is not a replacement for Mass; it is an icon of the reality into which the Mass draws the Church. Mary is not enthroned over the Lamb. She prays within the communion gathered around him. Knock thus offers perhaps the collection's clearest visual answer to Marian excess: every saint and every ecclesial charism is ordered to Christ's Paschal sacrifice.

Silence permits contemplation but also attracts projection. Political programs, apocalyptic systems, and elaborate messages cannot be attributed to Knock merely because its symbols are rich. The disciplined analysis begins with

Scripture: the Lamb of Revelation, John's testimony, Joseph's service of the Incarnation, Mary at the Cross and in the praying Church, angels at divine worship. The sign's inexhaustibility comes from the public Revelation it depicts, not from hidden words waiting to be decoded.

Knock also demonstrates why status vocabulary must remain honest. Its two inquiries tested witness credibility; they did not leave behind a located decree identical to Lourdes or Pontmain. Later papal visits, canonical crowning, basilica status, and universal pilgrimage establish powerful ecclesial reception. They should be stated proudly as what they are, not made to impersonate another juridic form.

4.5 Fátima: conversion within history, not a timetable above it

Event or tradition: Six reported apparitions to Lúcia dos Santos and Francisco and Jacinta Marto from May to October 1917 at Cova da Iria, with the later authorized documentary corpus of the three-part secret.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop José Alves Correia da Silva of Leiria declared the visions worthy of belief and permitted the cult on 13 October 1930; subsequent Popes received the devotion, and the CDF published and interpreted the third part of the secret in 2000.

Limit of that reception: *The message is read through the competent documentary corpus and the CDF's symbolic, conditional, Christ-centered interpretation. It is not a license for new dates, partisan geopolitics, or perpetual claims that the Church failed to obey.*

Fátima arose amid the First World War, the anticlerical First Portuguese Republic, social upheaval, and the Russian revolutions. The children reported a call to prayer, penance, conversion, sacrifice for sinners, daily Rosary, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart. A vision of hell and the three-part secret gave the event an apocalyptic intensity that has made it spiritually fruitful and unusually vulnerable to speculation.

The six-event 1917 corpus and later Lúcia material must not be collapsed. The First-Saturday request associated with Pontevedra and the later request concerning Russia associated with Tuy belong to subsequent experiences in the wider Fátima spiritual family. Their strong ecclesial reception may be documented, but they are not silently retrojected into the exact object of the bishop's 1930 judgment on the 1917 visions.

The CDF's 2000 commentary supplies the controlling hermeneutic. Private revelation is a help to faith. Prophetic vision condenses events across time in symbolic images; it does not photograph the future. Its point is to awaken freedom in the present. Lúcia herself described the warning as conditional: if the requests are heeded, conversion and peace; if not, sin's historical consequences spread. She also rejected the crude claim that God arbitrarily punishes while human beings remain passive: people prepare punishment through sin, hatred, injustice, violation of human dignity, immorality, and violence, while God warns and calls them back without ceasing to respect created freedom.

The Immaculate Heart must be read within the biblical meaning of the heart and Mary's discipleship. It is the center of a creature fully receptive to grace, pondering the Word, suffering with Christ, and maternally caring for his members. Devotion to that heart does not establish a second saving covenant. It schools the Church in Mary's fiat and directs consecration into Christ's own self-offering to the Father. The 1984 act of entrustment was interpreted by Lúcia as fulfilling the request; the CDF stated that further controversy on that point lacked basis.

Penance and reparation likewise participate in Christ; they do not supplement an incomplete Redemption. Prayer for sinners expresses solidarity within the communion of saints. Voluntary sacrifice disciplines love. First Saturdays and the Rosary order time and memory toward Christ's mysteries. Even the vision of hell should generate evangelical urgency and mercy rather than curiosity about who is damned or fear-driven control of consciences.

Fátima's relation to world politics includes the real historical evils of Communist persecution and militant atheism. Within the message, "Russia" names a particular place in a universal moral summons: societies that organize themselves against God and human dignity produce violence, while conversion concerns every nation and every heart.

The third part's bishop in white, ruined city, martyrs, cross, and angels gathering blood should be contemplated as a theology of the twentieth-century Church under persecution. John Paul II saw his survival of the 1981 assassination attempt within that providential image. The CDF did not make this one application exhaust the symbol. The vision remains a Way of the Cross whose answer is not decipherment but repentance, fidelity, and hope in the mercy stronger than violence.

Champion, Pontmain, Gietrzwałd, Knock, and Fátima together reveal public and political dimensions of private revelation without creating political oracles. Catechesis forms a people; prayer sustains a people; language dignifies a people; the Lamb gathers a people; conversion judges every people. Mary serves the Church's mission by refusing to let nation, crisis, or ideology become ultimate.

5 Legacy III: The Poor, the Sorrowful Mother, and Reconciliation

5.1 Beauraing: the Golden Heart and a pilgrimage of conversion

Event or tradition: Thirty-three reported appearances to Fernande, Gilberte, and Albert Voisin and Andrée and Gilberte Degeimbre between 29 November 1932 and 3 January 1933.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop André-Marie Charue of Namur recognized the authenticity of the apparitions on 2 July 1949 with the assent of the Holy See.

Limit of that reception: *The judgment concerns the five children, the thirty-three appearances, and the examined messages; later individual devotional claims do not enter automatically.*

The children reported a beautiful luminous lady near the convent garden who identified herself as the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, and Queen of Heaven. Her brief requests concerned prayer, a chapel, pilgrimage, the conversion of sinners, and sacrifice. In the final phase she revealed a golden heart. Some personal words remained secret; the public message remained spare.

The setting was interwar Belgium at the beginning of the Great Depression, when ordinary families encountered economic and social insecurity and Europe still bore the memory of one war while moving unknowingly toward another. Beauraing does not answer that history with a program. It places a heart within it. The symbol is neither sentimentality nor a separate source of salvation. In biblical language the heart is the unified center of understanding, will, memory, and love. Mary's heart is golden because grace has made it receptive to God and maternally available to the Church.

The request for pilgrimage gives that interior symbol a body. Pilgrims leave routine, travel with need, enter the Church's worship, confess, receive the Eucharist, and return. "Pray always" does not require uninterrupted speech; it calls for a life held before God. Sacrifice, read within the Gospel, is not self-harm or payment for love. It is the offering of the person in union with Christ, made concrete in fidelity and charity.

Beauraing belongs beside Banneux not because two nearby Belgian events prove one another, but because their distinct messages illuminate one maternal pattern. The Golden Heart reveals love; the Virgin of the Poor directs that love toward the sick and nations. Each retains its own investigation and judgment.

5.2 Banneux: the Virgin of the Poor and the spring for all nations

Event or tradition: Exactly eight reported apparitions to Mariette Beco on 15, 18, 19, and 20 January; 11, 15, and 20 February; and 2 March 1933.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: In his pastoral letter of 22 August 1949 Bishop Louis-Joseph Kerkhofs of Liège recognized without reserve the reality of those eight apparitions; successors repeatedly confirmed the reception.

Limit of that reception: *The eight dates and their brief words are the bounded corpus. The judgment does not authorize free expansion through later sayings or miracle claims.*

Mariette was the eldest child of a poor family living in difficult conditions. The lady led her to a spring, identified herself as the Virgin of the Poor, said the spring was reserved for all nations and for relieving the sick, asked for a small chapel, promised prayer, called for much prayer, and finally identified herself as Mother of the Savior and Mother of God. The small vocabulary carries a complete theology of maternal service.

“Virgin of the Poor” is first a Christological title. Mary belongs among the lowly whom God raises in the Magnificat because she is the servant of the Lord and mother of the Savior who became poor for humanity. Her maternal identification does not romanticize deprivation. The spring is directed toward relief; the chapel creates a place where the suffering can be received; the phrase “all nations” refuses possession by one class or country.

Water at Banneux evokes creation, baptism, cleansing, refreshment, and the gratuitous gift of God. It is not a talisman. The sick remain persons whose dignity does not depend on cure. A sanctuary faithful to the message must therefore join prayer to hospitality, sacrament to care, and hope for healing to solidarity with those who continue to suffer. The universality of the spring is fulfilled more deeply by communion than by spectacle.

The final title, Mother of the Savior, prevents the devotion from closing around Mary. She is Mother of God because her Son is divine; she is Virgin of the Poor because his saving mercy reaches the lowly. Banneux’s ecclesial fruit is measured by whether the poor find welcome and whether pilgrims are led to her Son.

5.3 Akita: an ambiguous diocesan non-prohibition still awaiting Rome

Event or tradition: Phenomena associated with a wooden Marian statue in Akita from 1973 through 1981, including wounds, reported locutions to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa, and 101 reported lacrimations witnessed by many visitors.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop John Shōjirō Itō of Niigata used an ambiguous double-negative formula on 22 April 1984, found no contradiction of faith or morals, and did not prohibit veneration in his diocese while awaiting a final Holy See judgment. In 2026 Bishop Daisuke Narui stated that Rome has issued no judgment and that these provisions remain the official position.

Limit of that reception: *Akita must not be called Vatican-approved or assigned an unqualified positive supernatural judgment. The operative result is diocesan non-prohibition pending Rome; alleged private statements and oral reports of Roman approval cannot enlarge it.*

The statue was carved in 1963 after the image associated with Amsterdam’s Lady of All Nations. Beginning in 1973 members of the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist reported extraordinary phenomena. The message corpus discussed in Bishop Itō’s pastoral letter centers on prayer, penance, reparation, fidelity to the Eucharist, crisis within the Church, and severe warning; the working English transcription is not treated as a critical edition of every locution. The tears were witnessed over several years and samples received laboratory examination. Bishop Itō consulted the CDF and two Japanese commissions before issuing his pastoral letter.

The severe imagery has often dominated popular retelling: chastisement, fire, division among clergy, and Mary restraining punishment. Catholic interpretation begins elsewhere. Eucharistic worship, conversion, prayer for the Church, and penance are intelligible evangelical goods. Apocalyptic images must be received as calls to present fidelity, not as timetables or instruments for accusing bishops, frightening families, or declaring every ecclesial conflict a fulfillment.

The Marian doctrinal guardrail is decisive. Mary cannot be cast as the compassionate power protecting believers from a Son or Father whose mercy she must activate. Her intercession exists within the one merciful will of God and the unique mediation of Christ. Reparation participates in Christ’s sufficient sacrifice; it does not complete a failed Redemption. If popular Akita language suggests otherwise, it requires purification rather than literal escalation.

The status is equally important. In May 2026 the current Bishop of Niigata reproduced Itō’s conclusion and explained that the Japanese double negative can be read either as affirming supernatural character or as saying only that it cannot be ruled out. He then stated explicitly that the Holy See has never delivered the awaited judgment and declined to pronounce on supernatural origin under the 2024 norms. Claims that Cardinal Ratzinger privately “approved Akita” do not override this public statement by the competent ordinary.

Nor does the statue’s genealogy create a chain of status. Amsterdam is under a papally approved negative judgment; Akita remains under its own qualified local permission. An image can be received anew in another history, but neither judgment is transitive. This distinction protects both truth and devotion.

5.4 Betania: reconciliation with an unusually explicit scope clause

Event or tradition: Apparitions reported at Finca Betania, Venezuela, beginning 25 March 1976, with a major public event on 25 March 1984 and numerous witnesses.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Pío Bello Ricardo of Los Teques declared on 21 November 1987 that, in his judgment, the apparitions were authentic and supernatural, and approved the site for pilgrimage, prayer, liturgy, reconciliation, and Eucharist.

Limit of that reception: *The bishop expressly refused to authenticate every alleged sighting, rejected some cases as fantasy, and limited official sanction to what his Pastoral Instruction contained. That clause governs all use of later Betania material.*

Bishop Bello personally devoted hundreds of hours to the investigation, interviewed roughly two hundred participants, and examined hundreds of signed declarations. He assessed credibility, mental balance, possible suggestion, fruits, group conduct, doctrinal content, and accompanying phenomena. The large number of witnesses was not allowed to become a mere vote; testimony had to be discriminated.

The apparitions were described in varied Marian forms, which participants interpreted as a sign that the many titles refer to the one Mother. The episcopal English text renders the received title “Reconciler of Nations”; the Spanish “Reconciliadora de los Pueblos” can also carry the sense of peoples, but this study preserves the documentary title while explaining its wider human reach. The bishop’s own synthesis of reported communications is the safest message corpus: renewal and deepening of faith through Scripture, conversion from sin, apostolic commitment, prayer, and reconciliation. He understood the event as encouragement for evangelization amid a crisis of faith and division.

“Reconciler” requires strict Christological grammar. God reconciles the world to himself in Christ; Christ is our peace and breaks down hostility by the Cross. Mary does not perform a parallel atonement. She serves reconciliation as mother and evangelist: carrying Christ as at the Visitation, forming disciples, interceding, and calling divided peoples to receive the peace already won by her Son. The title is sound when it names maternal cooperation and false when it displaces the one Mediator.

The Venezuelan context of social difference and political tension gives the call public significance without making it partisan. Reconciliation is not the suppression of justice or a demand that victims deny truth. Christian reconciliation requires conversion, truthful memory, repair where possible, forgiveness, and a common good larger than faction. Apparition devotion that creates a personality cult or an enclave would contradict the title it proclaims.

Betania’s scope clause should serve as a norm for the entire field. The bishop wrote that he did not intend to affirm each and every reported appearance. He encountered some cases he considered fantasy and granted credibility to a substantial body of other testimony. In later correspondence he insisted that official sanction attaches to the 1987 Instruction, not automatically to everything a principal witness might later say. Theologically serious devotion honors that obedience by preferring the sanctioned center to an ever-growing archive of novelty.

5.5 Kibeho: Mother of the Word, sorrow, and the discipline of exact limits

Event or tradition: Marian apparitions reported at Kibeho from 28 November 1981, with the decisive public period in 1982–1983.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro issued a definitive local judgment on 29 June 2001: Mary appeared, and serious reasons favored belief.

Limit of that reception: *Only Alphonsine Mumureke, Nathalie Mukamazimpaka, and Marie-Claire Mukangango are recognized; only public apparitions are considered; the 1982–1983 core controls; alleged apparitions of Jesus and later seers are excluded.*

Mary was reported under the Kinyarwanda title *Nyina wa Jambo*, Mother of the Word, which the bishop explained as Mother of God. The received message calls for conversion, prayer, penance, compassion, reconciliation, meditation on Christ’s Passion, and the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows. The young women reported visions of terrifying violence. The

bishop's declaration nevertheless refuses sensational breadth: three recipients, public events, decisive years, and no automatic authentication of the proliferating later claims.

The title supplies the hermeneutic. Mary is Mother of the Word, not mother of an alternative word. Her sorrow is intelligible through Simeon's sword and her presence at the Cross. The Seven Sorrows do not trap prayer in grief; they contemplate how faith remains with Christ through danger, exile, loss, misunderstanding, Passion, and burial until Easter. Sorrow becomes compassion—the capacity to suffer with victims and resist the indifference from which violence grows.

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi transformed global reception of the visions. It is tempting to say simply that Kibeho “predicted the genocide.” That slogan is too strong. The approved declaration recognizes a pre-genocide message of conversion and disturbing visionary material, but the historical identification of every image with later events is interpretive. Prophecy is not validated retroactively by horror, and the genocide must never become an apologetic exhibit. Its victims demand truthful remembrance, justice, repentance for Christian complicity and failure, rejection of ethnic ideology, and reconciliation that does not erase crime.

The bishop explicitly states that apparition judgments are not infallible, rest on probability rather than apodictic proof, and create no article of faith. He also defines an authentic message as a reminder of ordinary Church teaching that had been neglected. Kibeho thus combines one of the corpus's strongest local positive judgments with one of its clearest lessons in humility.

The sanctuary's vocation follows: conversion, reparation for sin, compassion, fraternity without borders, reunion of the dispersed, and the Gospel of the Cross. If Kibeho is used to calculate future catastrophe or cultivate ethnic and ecclesial accusation, its sorrow is betrayed. If it forms people who recognize the Word in the wounded neighbor and labor against hatred, its maternal message bears its proper fruit.

5.6 San Nicolás: a scriptural school at Argentina's democratic threshold

Event or tradition: Marian experiences reported by Gladys Herminia Quiroga de Motta from 25 September 1983 onward, with more than eighteen hundred messages ecclesially disseminated through 11 February 1990 and later alleged messages retained in the diocesan archive.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Bishop Héctor Cardelli of San Nicolás de los Arroyos promulgated a decree on 22 May 2016 recognizing with moral certainty the supernatural character of the Marian events in the diocese.

Limit of that reception: *The diocesan event and the ecclesially disseminated message publication through 11 February 1990 form the working corpus. Bishop Hugo Santiago's 14 March 2017 act ended dissemination and placed later material in the archive; online compilations or later private claims are not presumed to share the decree's scope.*

The reported experiences began as Argentina emerged from military dictatorship and returned to democratic government. Gladys, a wife and mother, reported seeing the Virgin of the Rosary and was directed to a long-neglected image kept in the cathedral. The message led toward a sanctuary and developed as a sustained scriptural catechesis: conversion, prayer, the Rosary, consecration to Mary understood as belonging to Christ, fidelity to the Church, peace, Eucharistic life, and trust in divine mercy.

The recovered image is a fitting symbol. The event did not invent a new Mary; it recalled an existing ecclesial image to public veneration. Likewise the messages repeatedly direct the reader to biblical texts. At their best they function not as a substitute commentary from heaven but as a school of attention: read Scripture, hear the Gospel's demand now, and allow Marian discipleship to make the Word concrete.

The sheer quantity of messages creates an editorial danger. Repetition can make a private corpus functionally more prominent than Scripture or imply that the faithful need daily celestial commentary. The appropriate response is selection by the Church's own received synthesis, not indiscriminate reproduction. In 2017 the successor bishop ended public dissemination after 11 February 1990 while preserving later alleged messages in the diocesan archive. That was a publication and corpus boundary, not a claim that no later messages had been reported. Quantity does not confer greater authority.

The democratic context permits a public reading without partisan appropriation. A society leaving state terror needed truth, accountability, healing, and restored civic trust. Marian peace cannot mean forgetting the disappeared

or avoiding justice. Nor can political liberation replace conversion. The Christian common good requires institutions, memory, mercy, and transformed persons. The Rosary joins national wounds to the mysteries of Christ rather than placing a divine seal on one party.

Cardelli's decree invokes the Trinity and recognizes the events as a loving manifestation through Mary. Its expansive devotional language remains governed by the doctrine it also affirms: Christ is the summit of Revelation. San Nicolás belongs to the positive local supernatural tier. It does not thereby bind Catholics elsewhere to read eighteen hundred messages or make them a universal norm.

Beauraing, Banneux, Akita, Betania, Kibeho, and San Nicolás extend the Marian grammar into hearts, poverty, ecclesial crisis, divided peoples, mass violence, and national transition. Their authority differs. Their evangelical test does not: the poor must be loved, sorrow must become compassion, warning must become conversion, and every maternal title must carry the Word rather than compete with him.

6 Pastoral Reception Under the 2024 Norms

These six cases must be read with a deliberately different grammar from the legacy dossiers. In each, the DDF approved or confirmed a proposed *nihil obstat*; under the 2024 norms the competent diocesan or eparchial bishop then promulgated the operative local determination. The spiritual proposal may be promoted because serious doctrinal or pastoral obstacles are not present and notable fruits are found. In none did the DDF declare that Mary appeared. The distinction is not a diplomatic reservation appended after the “real” decision. It is the form of the decision itself.

6.1 Placanica: the rock, the sanctuary, and an ecclesial devotion

Event or tradition: A spiritual experience associated with Brother Cosimo Fragomeni at Placanica in Calabria and the devotion that developed at the site known as the Madonna dello Scoglio.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The DDF's letter of 5 July 2024 confirmed Bishop Francesco Oliva's proposal; he promulgated diocesan decree 659 on 16 July 2024. An earlier decree of 7 December 2008 had admitted the place to worship while reserving judgment on the facts to the Apostolic See.

Limit of that reception: *The result concerns the spiritual and pastoral fruits of the devotion. It neither certifies the supernatural origin of the experience nor grants advance approval to future messages, which require the ordinary's prior judgment.*

What began around a simple chapel gradually became an organized place of prayer. The Diocese erected the sanctuary on 11 February 2016. The DDF identified conversions, vocations, charity, healthy Marian devotion, and a return to prayer and sacramental life among the fruits associated with it. These do not prove an apparition as though grace were a laboratory result. They do show why the Church may cultivate an ecclesial setting in which the good can be protected and deepened. The DDF letter leaves the young believer unnamed, while Bishop Oliva's decree identifies Brother Cosimo Fragomeni; neither act supplies a complete event chronology or bounded verbal message collection. This dossier therefore analyzes the authorized spiritual proposal and fruits rather than pretending to recover words the competent acts do not supply.

The title “of the Rock” invites an interpretation that the DDF itself keeps Christological. In Scripture the saving rock is the Lord; Christ is the cornerstone and the spiritual rock from whom the people drink. Mary does not become a competing foundation. She stands within the communion founded on her Son and teaches the stability of hearing and doing his word. The geographical rock can thus become a devotional symbol and material reminder that faith rests on God; it is not thereby a sacramental, nor does it acquire sacramental efficacy or magical power.

The case shows how the new norms can resolve a long pastoral interim. A community need not be left indefinitely between uncontrolled enthusiasm and suppression. The Church can authorize worship, regulate a shrine, and recognize fruit while declining a statement about causation that the evidence or pastoral need does not warrant. The bishop's decree must define the limits of the devotion, and any future alleged messages remain subject to his examination. A *nihil obstat* is therefore not a blank check but a stable ecclesial home with doors and walls.

6.2 Montichiari: Rosa Mystica under Christological correction

Event or tradition: Reported experiences of Pierina Gilli at Montichiari and Fontanelle, Italy, beginning in 1947, preserved principally in her diaries and associated with the title Mary, Rosa Mystica, Mother of the Church.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Following the DDF's doctrinal letter of 5 July 2024, Bishop Pierantonio Tremolada promulgated the diocesan *nihil obstat* on 8 July 2024. The act permits prudent adhesion while requiring that publication of Pierina's writings include the DDF's clarifications.

Limit of that reception: *The authorized devotion is governed by those corrections. The result does not authenticate the reported apparitions or make every diary sentence a word of Mary.*

The most familiar symbols are three roses traditionally read as prayer, sacrifice, and penance. These can express a genuine ascetical pattern: prayer receives God's love, sacrifice offers the self with Christ, and penance turns freedom away from sin. Yet the DDF warns that the triad cannot be treated as a summary of the whole Gospel. Charity is the form of Christian life, and works of mercy, justice, joy, fraternity, and mission cannot be reduced to a spirituality of suffering.

The diaries also contain beautiful passages marked by Pierina's humility, confidence in Mary's goodness, love for Christ, prayer for priests, Eucharistic devotion, and ecclesial obedience. At the same time, some formulations require theological purification. Mary must never appear as a "lightning rod" placed between humanity and a Christ eager to punish. The Son who judges is the Son who gave himself for sinners; the Father and Son do not possess rival attitudes toward mercy. Marian intercession belongs within the one saving will of the Trinity.

Christ alone is Redeemer and accomplishes Redemption; the DDF therefore judges the title Co-redemptrix always inappropriate. Christ is also the one Mediator in the strict and constitutive sense. If Mary is called Mediatrix, the title can name only her maternal intercession and distant, subordinate participation in Christ's unique mediation. Sanctifying grace is God's own gift, not a substance generated by Mary. These are not technical cautions at the edge of the devotion. They identify its center: the mystical rose is beautiful because the grace of Christ has flowered in a creature.

Montichiari is therefore exemplary of doctrinally constructive discernment. The Church need not choose between accepting every alleged sentence and discarding every fruit. She can preserve a Marian school of prayer, sacrifice, penance, Eucharistic love, and care for the Church while refusing images that deform Christ. Devotion matures when correction is received as protection rather than opposition.

6.3 Chandavila: consolation at a wounded frontier

Event or tradition: Experiences reported by Marcelina Barroso Expósito and Afra Brígido Blanco beginning in May 1945 near La Codosera, Extremadura, at the sanctuary now associated with Our Lady of Sorrows of Chandavila.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The DDF consented on 22 August 2024; Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo of Mérida-Badajoz promulgated the diocesan *nihil obstat* on 24 August.

Limit of that reception: *The judgment concerns the devotion and its spiritual proposal, not the supernatural authenticity of each reported vision, sign, or remembered word.*

Chandavila arose in the austere borderlands between Spain and Portugal six years after the Spanish Civil War and while Europe was emerging from the Second World War. The reported experiences are notable less for an extensive message corpus than for a presence perceived as beautiful, sorrowful, and consoling. The fruits named by the Church include prayer, conversions, vocations, works of charity, and a simple confidence in the Mother of God.

The title Our Lady of Sorrows locates consolation inside the Paschal mystery. Mary does not explain suffering from above. She stands at the Cross, receives the dead Christ, and waits with the Church. Patristic tradition sees her faith enduring where sight can find no victory. The consolation associated with Chandavila is therefore not anesthesia or a promise that history will cease to wound. It is the companionship that keeps sorrow from closing into despair and turns the consoled toward the suffering neighbor.

The DDF dwells on one concrete scene. Marcelina reported being asked to cross dry chestnut husks, thorns, and sharp stones on her knees; the point was not pain sought for itself, but confidence in the assurance that she need not fear. A covering of reeds and grasses protected her knees. Read within the bounded spiritual proposal, the scene reverses abusive asceticism: trust is accompanied by protection, and tenderness prevents sacrifice from becoming injury. It cannot license adults to impose pain on children or devotees to manufacture ordeals.

This has a precise moral shape. The DDF highlights simplicity, humility, charity, and conversion rather than secret knowledge. Consolation that makes a privileged group feel superior is false to its source. Authentic Marian tenderness restores agency: the frightened can pray, the sinner can return, enemies can refuse inherited hatred, and ordinary Christians can serve. In a frontier region marked by war's memory, the sanctuary's most credible "message" is a communion that crosses boundaries.

The paucity of an elaborate verbal corpus is itself instructive. Apparition culture often assumes that more messages mean more revelation. Chandavila suggests the reverse discipline: a maternal presence can be pastorally fruitful because it leads to the Church's existing treasures. The *nihil obstat* receives that path without requiring the faithful to settle the phenomenological question.

6.4 Pellevoisin: mercy, healing, and the Heart of Christ

Event or tradition: Fifteen reported apparitions to Estelle Faguet at Pellevoisin in 1876 during and after a grave illness, associated with her healing and the scapular of the Sacred Heart.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The DDF letter and papal approval are dated 22 August 2024; Archbishop Jérôme Beau promulgated and published the diocesan *nihil obstat* on 30 August. Estelle's healing had already been declared miraculous by the Archbishop of Bourges on 8 September 1983 with Holy See consent.

Limit of that reception: *The miracle judgment and devotional reception do not equal a supernatural-origin judgment on the apparitions. The 2024 act permits the spiritual proposal without deciding that question.*

Estelle, a domestic worker supporting an impoverished family, became gravely ill. Her reported encounters move through petition, healing, amendment of life, and service to the Church. The Marian figure is firm without being theatrical. She directs attention to mercy, simplicity, trust, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus; she discourages curiosity and spiritual display. The social position of the recipient matters: Christian hope is addressed not first to influence but to a sick working woman whose responsibilities made her illness a family crisis.

The Church's differentiated judgments protect the history from collapse into one claim. A competent authority judged the healing miraculous in 1983. Leo XIII granted indulgences connected with the shrine in 1892 and recognized the scapular in 1900; Benedict XV praised the devotion in 1915; a votive Mass followed in 1922. These acts establish a serious reception, but none should be retroactively renamed an apparition decree. The 2024 *nihil obstat* then adds a present pastoral judgment while expressly leaving supernatural origin open.

The scapular's heart is Christ's, not an amulet of private protection. Devotional clothing signifies baptismal belonging and a rule of life: to put on Christ, to remain in his charity, and to serve those entrusted to us. Mary bears or presents the Heart because her maternity leads to the incarnate love of the Son. Any practice that turns the scapular into mechanical insurance contradicts both sacramental theology and Pellevoisin's call to conversion.

Healing also requires theological sobriety. Estelle's cure can be celebrated without implying that the unhealed possess less faith. Christ's miracles reveal the Kingdom and the restoration of the whole person; temporal cure remains a sign, not the final salvation. Pellevoisin's durable fruit is thus not one exceptional outcome but a school of merciful confidence for the sick, the poor, and those who care for them.

6.5 Medjugorje: abundant fruit without a finding of authenticity

Event or tradition: A vast spiritual phenomenon arising from alleged Marian apparitions reported in Medjugorje from June 1981 and continuing claims, together with pilgrimages, messages, communities, conversions, and controversies extending across decades.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The DDF's Note *The Queen of Peace*, approved by Pope Francis on 28 August and published on 19 September 2024, found the conditions met to proceed with a *nihil obstat*; Bishop Petar Palić of Mostar-Duvno promulgated the operative decree that same day.

Limit of that reception: *Neither act judges the alleged apparitions supernatural. They do not authenticate the visionaries, every message, continuing claims, or predictions; pilgrimage is not to center on meetings with alleged visionaries.*

Medjugorje began in a Herzegovinian parish within socialist Yugoslavia, a region carrying older confessional and ethnic wounds. It later passed through the Bosnian war, the breakup of the state, global pilgrimage, intense media circulation, and conflicts over local ecclesiastical authority. Its scale is unlike the bounded event at Pontmain or the eight dates at Banneux. Millions of pilgrims, innumerable testimonies, an immense message corpus, and ongoing claims make the object of discernment not merely an event but an entire spiritual ecosystem.

The DDF finds substantial fruit: conversion, renewed prayer, frequent confession, Eucharistic life, vocations, marriages healed, charity, mission, and rediscovery of faith. The recurring title Queen of Peace can be read from Christ, who is our peace, and from Mary's place in receiving and giving him to the world. In a land later devastated by war, peace cannot be sentimental. It joins reconciliation to truth, prayer to justice, and disarmament of the heart to the protection of victims.

Yet fruit does not authenticate every claimed cause. The Note distinguishes the positive center from problematic formulations. The alleged "Gospa" cannot issue commands as an autonomous authority, displace the bishop, or demand obedience to private communications. Threats, dates, punitive predictions, spiritual banalities, and assertions that God has uniquely or necessarily chosen one place require caution or rejection. A phrase may reflect a recipient's culture, memory, desire, or limitation even where a broader spiritual experience bears good fruit.

The core is consequently smaller than the archive: conversion to God, prayer, fasting properly understood, Scripture, Eucharist, confession, fraternity, and peace. Fasting is not leverage over God and penance is not contempt for the body. The Rosary does not replace the liturgy. The language of "messages" cannot become a daily parallel magisterium. The Queen of Peace is received correctly when she says, in effect, what she said at Cana: do whatever Christ tells you.

The pilgrimage norm makes the ecclesiology concrete. The destination is a place of prayer, not access to a visionary. Sacraments are not stage properties authenticating an apparition, and clerical participation cannot be advertised as a vote for supernatural origin. The *nihil obstat* gives pastors room to care for pilgrims and protect genuine fruit; it also removes any excuse for presenting the authenticity question as settled.

Medjugorje therefore tests mature Catholic freedom. The faithful may receive its positive spiritual proposal with ecclesial confidence. They remain free not to follow the phenomenon, and they must not bind others to disputed messages. The same act that welcomes devotion limits it.

6.6 Litmanová: Byzantine Catholic fruit and a curated corpus

Event or tradition: Alleged Marian appearances to three children on Mount Zvir near Litmanová, Slovakia, from 1990 to 1995, within the Byzantine Catholic Church.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The DDF's letter of 4 July 2025 approved Archbishop Jonáš Maxim's proposed *nihil obstat*; the Archeparchy of Prešov publicly proclaimed the eparchial determination during the Divine Liturgy on 3 August 2025.

Limit of that reception: *The result does not authenticate supernatural origin. The publishable corpus must exclude unacceptable claims about unforgivable persons, collective damnation, and illness as the universal consequence of personal sin.*

The events unfolded as Communist rule ended in Czechoslovakia and religious communities emerged from repression into political freedom, economic uncertainty, and rapid cultural change. Mount Zvir became a place of prayer, confession, return to faith, and Byzantine Catholic pilgrimage. Its ecclesial setting broadens the study: Marian devotion belongs not to one Latin style but to the Catholic communion's many liturgical traditions.

The positive center is direct and unusually well delimited by the DDF. Christ sets the person free; the believer discovers the dignity of being loved unconditionally; evangelical simplicity opens depth rather than superficiality; silence receives peace and joy; and gratitude becomes evangelizing witness. Love is not merely one theme among others but the mission and fullness of life: the person receives the Lord's initiative, learns from Christ's self-gift, forgives, and offers concrete good for others. In the Christian East, the Theotokos is contemplated within the mystery of the Incarnation and the Church's praise. Her maternal presence never operates apart from the Word she bore.

The required exclusions are equally theological. No private message may declare a living person beyond forgiveness, because the Church may not close the door that God holds open to repentance. Sweeping claims that nearly an entire region is damned usurp divine judgment and can become weapons of group contempt. The assertion that all illness results from the sick person's own sin contradicts Christ's correction of the disciples in the man born blind and burdens sufferers with false guilt.

Litmanová makes visible what is implicit throughout the new discipline: a message corpus is edited by doctrine. The Church does not merely attach a warning label while distributing everything indiscriminately. She can receive the evangelical call and remove material that harms faith or persons. This is not censorship of heaven; it is precisely the refusal to call human error heavenly.

6.7 What the six cases establish together

The post-2024 cases form no ladder toward eventual authentication. Their shared result is already a substantive pastoral act. Placanica shows regulated shrine life; Montichiari, doctrinal purification; Chandavila, consoling presence without message inflation; Pellevoisin, the distinction between a miracle, a devotion, and an apparition claim; Medjugorje, the governance of a global spiritual phenomenon; Litmanová, the curation of a mixed corpus.

Together they enact a Catholic principle older than the formulas: charisms are given for the common good and are tested within the Church. A community may gratefully receive conversion, prayer, sacramental return, charity, and vocation without pretending to know more about an event's supernatural origin than the competent authority says. The truth of the Gospel is strong enough to welcome fruit without annexing uncertainty.

7 Received Traditions: Authority Without a Modern Fact Decree

The Church often receives a Marian tradition through liturgy, papal teaching, a saint's life, an approved sacramental, a shrine, and generations of pastoral fruit rather than through one surviving decree declaring an apparition supernatural. These forms of reception are neither negligible nor interchangeable with an event judgment. The dossiers below begin with traditions older than the modern canonical process and ask what the Church has positively received while leaving an unlocated or historically unavailable fact judgment unnamed. Antiquity strengthens a tradition's place in Christian memory; it does not repair missing contemporary evidence by itself.

7.1 The Pillar at Zaragoza: apostolic consolation as ancient tradition

Event or tradition: An ancient local tradition places an appearance of Mary to the Apostle James at Caesaraugusta, modern Zaragoza, around AD 40, while Mary was still living in the Holy Land. She is said to have consoled his preaching and left a column as a sign.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: John Paul II explicitly recalled the account as a "very ancient local tradition," prayed at the shrine, and presented the Pillar as a symbol of fidelity in apostolic evangelization. No contemporary apostolic record or later fact decree is claimed.

Limit of that reception: *The papal reception establishes the tradition's legitimate ecclesial and spiritual place, not the historical certainty of each narrative detail or a doctrine of Marian bilocation.*

Our Lady of the Pillar is chronologically first only according to its own received chronology. That qualification matters. The New Testament places Mary with the apostles in persevering prayer before Pentecost, but it does not narrate this journey or appearance. John Paul II did not disguise the evidentiary category: he introduced the account with the words “according to a very ancient local tradition.” A Catholic study should inherit both halves of that sentence—the reverence and the attribution to tradition.

The event's unusual form belongs to its theological interest. Unlike post-Assumption apparition claims, the Pillar tradition concerns Mary during her earthly life and therefore imagines an extraordinary presence at a distance. Divine omnipotence makes such an occurrence possible; possibility is not historical proof. Neither the Immaculate Conception, Mary's divine motherhood, nor any other dogma requires a Catholic to affirm the particular mechanism or date.

The column supplies the tradition's durable biblical grammar. Christ is the cornerstone and the apostles are foundation stones only by participation in him; Mary does not become another foundation beside Christ. She appears instead as the praying Mother who strengthens apostolic witness, as at Cana she directs servants toward her Son and in Acts she waits upon the promised Spirit with the Church. The stone signifies steadfastness in received faith and missionary courage through Christ the cornerstone.

John Paul II called the Pillar a symbol of the firmness of Spanish faith and a sign of the road to Christ through apostolic preaching. In that national reception, the tradition summons a people to fidelity and bears fruit as consolation becomes renewed proclamation of Christ.

7.2 Our Lady of the Snows: foundation memory and the gratuity of grace

Event or tradition: The Roman tradition of the night before 5 August in the pontificate of Liberius (352–366) tells of concordant dreams granted to a Roman couple and the Pope, followed by midsummer snow marking a church site on the Esquiline.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major officially commemorates the foundation tradition, and the Roman liturgy celebrates the basilica's dedication. The surviving basilica is principally the fifth-century work associated with Sixtus III; no modern supernatural-origin decree is claimed.

Limit of that reception: *The dream and snowfall belong to an authoritatively maintained foundation memory. They are not direct evidence for every architectural stage, and the feast is the dedication of the basilica rather than a dogmatic authentication of the dream.*

The basilica's own history carefully preserves two strata. The tradition associates a Liberian church with the miraculous snow, while the fabric and mosaics that define Saint Mary Major belong above all to the fifth century and Sixtus III. The later basilica arose in the doctrinal world of Ephesus, where the Church confessed Mary as *Theotokos* because the one she bore is truly God. Historical devotion is strongest when it allows the foundation memory and the documented building history to stand together instead of forcing them into one datum.

The snow is a fitting but subordinate sign. Francis interpreted its annual liturgical recollection as an image of grace: beautiful, gratuitous, and beyond purchase or control. That interpretation does not require the reenacted petals to function as proof of the fourth-century event. It lets a received tradition serve public Revelation. The white sign points beyond itself to the woman full of grace and, more decisively, to the incarnate Son whom she carries.

This also limits magical readings. A miraculous foundation legend cannot make place, icon, or ritual an independent reservoir of power. Saint Mary Major remains a church of the Word, altar, sacraments, and ecclesial prayer. The remembered snow is fruitful when it awakens wonder at God's free initiative and builds a house in which Christ is worshiped.

7.3 Walsingham: the Holy House and England's interrupted memory

Event or tradition: The English tradition says that in 1061 Richeldis de Faverches was shown the house of the Annunciation in a dream or vision and asked to build its likeness at Walsingham.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Medieval pilgrimage, papally permitted religious foundations, Leo XIII's restoration-era reception, designation as England's Catholic national shrine, and the 2024 elevation of Our Lady of Walsingham to a feast establish strong ecclesial and liturgical reception.

Limit of that reception: *The present English liturgical dossier attributes 1061 to tradition and notes that construction a century later is historically more likely. No surviving medieval fact decree is converted into a modern apparition judgment.*

Walsingham is a particularly instructive test of Catholic historical memory. The earliest complete narrative is the later Pynson Ballad, not an eleventh-century investigation. The official English liturgical text therefore preserves both the traditional date and the historical difficulty. That candor does not evacuate the shrine. It shows that liturgical reception can gather a tradition's orthodox spiritual meaning without canonizing a precise chronology.

The Holy House is a school of the Incarnation. Its subject is not an autonomous Marian marvel but the room in which the Word became flesh through Mary's free and graced assent. A replica cannot reproduce Nazareth materially, still less contain God; it makes the Annunciation inhabitable in memory. Pilgrims enter a small house to learn the spacious obedience of "let it be to me according to your word." Domestic architecture thereby becomes a catechesis on hidden life, family, hospitality, and the sanctification of ordinary place.

The shrine's destruction in 1538 and Catholic restoration from 1897 make continuity and rupture equally important. Walsingham cannot be narrated as though the Reformation had not broken its institutions, dispersed its cult, and destroyed the Holy House. Nor did destruction erase the memory. Modern pilgrimage receives a wounded inheritance rather than manufacturing an unbroken artifact. That history gives the title "England's Nazareth" an ecumenical and penitential force: Christians pray for unity around the mystery that precedes their divisions.

The 2024 feast is a genuine act of liturgical reception with a bounded object. It honors Our Lady of Walsingham and the shrine's importance for the Church in England; it does not function as a retrospective evidentiary decree on Richeldis's experience. The distinction lets the feast do its proper work: form disciples after Mary's listening faith and renew evangelization.

7.4 Mount Carmel and Simon Stock: a received sacramental beyond a disputed origin story

Event or tradition: Carmelite tradition associates a 1251 appearance of Mary to the English Carmelite Simon Stock with the gift or promise of the Brown Scapular.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: The Church authoritatively receives the Scapular of Mount Carmel through an approved rite, Carmelite life, repeated papal commendation, and the universal discipline of sacramentals. Current official catechesis grounds it in baptismal clothing with Christ and Marian discipleship, not in a decree authenticating the 1251 event.

Limit of that reception: *The traditional apparition and its exact promise have a disputed documentary history. The approved devotion remains sound without treating the cloth as automatic protection from damnation or the traditional narrative as a defined historical fact.*

The historical distinction is unusually important here because the claimed event and the devotional object are often treated as inseparable. Carmelite sources themselves range from straightforward narration of the 1251 tradition to serious historical criticism; modern scholarship emphasizes how little is securely known about Simon and how late the developed vision evidence is. The Church's present rite does not depend upon settling that debate. It blesses and imposes the Scapular as a reduced form of the Carmelite habit and a sign of belonging to Christ with Mary.

That sacramental meaning is richer than a guarantee. In baptism the Christian puts on Christ; the Scapular recalls a life shaped by prayer, chastity according to one's state, charity, and perseverance. Mary is Mother and sister

in discipleship, not the dispenser of an escape clause from judgment. No cloth can preserve a person who freely rejects God, and no private promise can cancel the ordinary doctrine of grace, repentance, the sacraments, and final perseverance.

The historical uncertainty can therefore purify rather than weaken devotion. If an entire spirituality depends upon proving one medieval sentence, faith has been placed on the wrong foundation. If the Scapular embodies baptismal identity, participation in Carmelite prayer, trust in Mary's intercession, and conformity to Christ, it possesses the substance the Church actually blesses. The tradition about Simon may be reverently narrated as tradition; it may not be deployed as though documentary criticism were disobedience or as though the Church had defined its every detail.

7.5 Guadalupe: appearance, image, and a mestiza Church

Event or tradition: The Mexican tradition of Mary's appearances to the Indigenous Christian Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin in December 1531, the sign of roses, the image on his tilma, and the building of a shrine at Tepeyac.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Repeated papal reception, Juan Diego's canonization, and the extension of Guadalupe's feast throughout the American continent establish an exceptionally strong ecclesial reception. This audit does not claim a located modern decree adjudicating the original event.

Limit of that reception: *Papal and continental liturgical reception warrant theological treatment of the tradition; they do not settle every historical question about the dating and transmission of each narrative source or every proposed reading of the image.*

The received Nahuatl narrative places the encounter ten years after the fall of Tenochtitlan, amid military conquest, epidemic disease, disrupted communities, forced cultural translation, and an evangelization entangled with colonial power. In that narrative Juan Diego, a Nahua layman, hears Mary address him with familial tenderness and ask that a "little sacred house" be built where she may show her love and aid to all the inhabitants of the land. When the bishop asks for a sign, Castilian roses appear out of season and the image is disclosed on the tilma.

The extant printed Nahuatl narrative appears in Luis Laso de la Vega's 1649 *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*; authorship, possible earlier composition, and transmission remain debated in modern scholarship. A serious Catholic account need not solve that debate by decree. The ecclesially received meaning is nevertheless unusually rich. The woman is recognizably the Mother of the true God and bears visual language intelligible across worlds. Catholic reception does not reduce her either to a Christianized pre-Christian deity or to a merely imposed European image. The image has been received as an inculturated proclamation: the Gospel enters a people, purifies and fulfills what is good, judges conquest's violence, and gives rise to a genuinely local Catholic subject.

The word *mestiza*, used by modern Popes for the Guadalupan Virgin and for the Church she symbolizes, names more than mixed physical traits. At Pentecost the one Gospel does not erase languages; it creates communion through them. Guadalupe likewise resists both cultural domination and a syncretism that dissolves Christ. Mary is fruitful precisely because she is Jewish, Mother of the incarnate Word, and mother in the new people constituted by him. Her maternal face announces that Indigenous persons are not raw material for empire but hearers of God, agents of evangelization, and members of the Church.

The basilica's location and the bishop's role give the tradition an ecclesiology. Juan Diego's testimony must be heard; the pastor must discern; the sign is given for a house where a people may gather. Neither lay charism nor office is sufficient alone. The poor evangelize the hierarchy, and the hierarchy tests and receives the charism for the Church. John Paul II therefore called Guadalupe a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization and invoked her as "Mother and Evangelizer of America" and "Star of the first and new evangelization."

Guadalupe has also been invoked for human dignity, the unborn, migrants, peoples divided by race and class, and the unity of the Americas. These developments arise from the Incarnation and protect concrete persons. The Mother forms one people in Christ through charity and communion.

The tilma is a sign, not a second Scripture or a puzzle requiring endlessly novel "scientific" discoveries. Claims about microscopic figures, impossible pigments, temperature, heartbeat, or astronomical codes vary greatly in evidential quality and lie outside the received core unless carefully verified. The deepest iconography is public: a mother bears Christ toward a wounded world, the lowly are heard, and a house of communion is built.

7.6 Rue du Bac: the Miraculous Medal and grace without magic

Event or tradition: Reported encounters of St. Catherine Labouré with the Blessed Virgin at the Daughters of Charity chapel on Rue du Bac, Paris, in 1830, especially the vision that supplied the design of the medal later called “Miraculous.”

Ecclesial reception or judgment: Archbishop Hyacinthe-Louis de Quélen authorized production of the medal in 1832 after investigation; its diffusion, the 1842 Ratisbonne conversion, Catherine’s canonization, liturgical reception, papal use, and universal devotion constitute authoritative reception. No conventional positive apparition decree is claimed here.

Limit of that reception: *The Church receives the medal and its orthodox Marian symbolism. She does not guarantee every later legend, automatic promise, or physical claim attached to it.*

The experiences came in a France still marked by the Revolution, the restoration and fall of monarchies, industrial poverty, anticlerical conflict, and the July Revolution of 1830. Catherine was a novice in a community founded to serve the poor. The setting matters: the image was entrusted not to an esoteric circle but within a vocation that joined contemplation to hospitals, foundlings, the elderly, and the destitute.

The medal’s obverse shows Mary standing upon the globe and crushing the serpent, rays streaming from jeweled rings on her hands, surrounded by the prayer, “O MARY, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN, PRAY FOR US WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO THEE”. The reverse joins the letter M and a cross with the two Hearts and twelve stars. The whole is a compressed biblical catechesis: Genesis’s enmity with the serpent, the woman and the dragon of Revelation, the Cross, the pierced hearts, the apostolic people, and Mary’s intercession as a creature filled with grace.

The Immaculate Conception appears here twenty-four years before its solemn definition, but the medal did not create the doctrine. The Church had prayed, argued, and developed its understanding for centuries; the 1854 definition rests on public Revelation as received in Tradition. The devotion helped dispose the faithful to love the truth, while the dogma supplies the norm by which the devotion is interpreted. Private revelation serves doctrine; it does not promulgate it.

The rays signify graces obtained through Mary’s intercession, yet their source is the Triune God through Christ. Rings from which no rays fall have been popularly read as graces not asked for; that interpretation can encourage prayer, but it cannot imply divine stinginess or make Mary’s action independent. The reverse’s M does not place Mary on the same plane as the Cross. It shows maternal union and discipleship beneath the one redemptive sacrifice.

Rapid diffusion and reported favors gave the medal its popular name. Alphonse Ratisbonne was wearing one when his 1842 conversion followed the silent apparition at Sant’Andrea delle Fratte, linking two dossiers without merging their judgments. “Miraculous” describes providential fruit; it does not turn the object into a talisman. A blessed medal is a sacramental: through the Church’s prayer it disposes the faithful to receive grace and sanctify circumstances. Its use requires faith, conversion, prayer, and charity, never a mechanical transaction.

Rue du Bac’s enduring synthesis is therefore active and ecclesial. The Immaculate Mother points to the Cross; received grace becomes service; a small reproducible object carries Christian memory into ordinary life. The most faithful wearer becomes available to the poor as Catherine did.

7.7 Vailankanni: an Indian shrine of health and encounter

Event or tradition: Sixteenth-century traditions at Vailankanni in Tamil Nadu concerning Marian encounters with poor or sick boys, the carrying of milk, healing, and the growth of the shrine of Our Lady of Good Health; later tradition also associates Portuguese sailors’ deliverance with the site.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: In 2024 the DDF praised the “beautiful traditions,” abundant fruits, interreligious attraction, and Christ-centered understanding of healing at the sanctuary. Its letter did not employ a formal result formula or declare the originating events supernatural.

Limit of that reception: *The received shrine tradition may be narrated as tradition and interpreted from the DDF’s letter. Precise dates, conflated versions, and unverified miracle stories are not elevated into adjudicated facts.*

Vailankanni emerged on the Coromandel Coast in a world of Tamil villages, maritime exchange, Portuguese presence, illness, and unequal social encounters. The early narratives place humble children at the center. In one, a boy carrying milk meets a beautiful woman with a child; in another, a disabled boy receives healing and a commission. The sanctuary that developed became a major Catholic pilgrimage site attracting Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and people of other or no explicit faith.

The DDF's 2024 letter makes the Christological center explicit. The Virgin of Good Health carries Jesus; every blessing is received from him. Mary's maternity brings the sick to the divine physician, but she is not a parallel healer and the shrine is not a technology for obtaining cures. Health in Christian usage includes bodily care, reconciliation, freedom from sin, restored community, and final salvation. The uncured remain at the center of the Church's compassion.

Vailankanni's cultural form is not a defect to be stripped away. Barefoot pilgrimage, local music, flags, processions, offerings, and Tamil, Malayalam, Konkani, English, and other languages can embody a Catholic faith at home in India. Inculturation again requires two movements: the Gospel receives human signs and purifies whatever conflicts with worship of the Triune God. Practices must not foster caste exclusion, commercial exploitation, or ambiguity about the difference between veneration and adoration.

The interreligious presence is a pastoral gift and a theological responsibility. Hospitality must be real; no visitor should be reduced to a mission statistic. At the same time, Catholic identity is not concealed: Mary is honored because she is Mother of Jesus Christ, and the Eucharist is the sanctuary's summit. Shared human petitions for health can become a threshold of encounter without claiming that all religions make identical assertions.

The DDF's warm letter illustrates authoritative reception without juridic inflation. It recognizes the same Mother of Jesus beloved at other shrines and celebrates the Spirit's fruit among pilgrims. It does not provide missing archival certainty about the sixteenth century. Vailankanni can be fully honored when both truths are said.

7.8 Cuapa: prayer and peace amid revolution

Event or tradition: Experiences reported by Bernardo Martínez, a sacristan at Cuapa, Nicaragua, beginning in April 1980, with Marian encounters reported between May and October and a message centered on prayer, the Rosary, peace, and reconciliation.

Ecclesial reception or judgment: In his preface of 13 November 1982, Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega wrote that as local bishop he was obliged to assure the authenticity of the facts in order to discern the message; no separate formal supernatural-origin decree was located.

Limit of that reception: *Cuapa is therefore treated as an ambiguous but serious positive diocesan reception, not as a documented constat. Its message must not be recruited as a divine endorsement of a Nicaraguan faction.*

The events came one year after the Sandinista revolution overthrew the Somoza dictatorship and as hopes for liberation, ideological conflict, foreign intervention, and armed struggle were hardening into the Contra war. The Catholic community itself contained profound disagreement over revolution, class, authority, and the relation between faith and politics. In such a setting any claim from heaven becomes vulnerable to propaganda.

The reported Marian message asks for prayer, especially the Rosary, the practice of the five first Saturdays, peace, forgiveness, and the making of peace rather than merely requesting it. This last emphasis is morally demanding. Peace is not passivity before oppression, a pious substitute for justice, or victory for one's side. Catholic peace rests on truth, protects the vulnerable, seeks a just political order, rejects vengeance, and recognizes the enemy as a person capable of conversion.

The Rosary gives that work a Christological form. The mysteries remember a Savior born under empire, a kingdom announced to the poor, a Passion suffered without retaliatory hatred, and a Resurrection that defeats violence without denying its wounds. Repetition can disarm the imagination formed by slogans and fear. It does not supply policy details or exempt citizens from prudential judgment.

Martínez's ordinary ministry as sacristan and his reported reluctance fit a recurring pattern in the corpus, but narrative modesty is not proof. Bishop Vega's pastoral support deserves honest weight; the ambiguity of its juridic formula deserves equal honesty. Later summaries often convert the preface into a formal approval without showing the decree. This study declines that conversion.

Cuapa's most credible ecclesial appropriation is accordingly nonpartisan and exacting: Christians of opposed camps submit their consciences to Christ, repent of injustice committed by their own side, intercede for the dead and endangered, protect families, and labor for reconciliation joined to truth. If the apparition is used to baptize a geopolitical program, the call to peace has already been lost.

7.9 The theological value of differentiated reception

The Pillar, Our Lady of the Snows, Walsingham, Mount Carmel, Guadalupe, Rue du Bac, Vailankanni, and Cuapa cannot be placed under one juridic caption. The first four show ancient and medieval traditions received through shrine, liturgy, papal teaching, national pilgrimage, or sacramental discipline, each with a different documentary limit. Guadalupe has exceptionally strong papal and continental liturgical reception; Rue du Bac, an approved sacramental and universal devotional reception; Vailankanni, an unusually affirmative DDF appraisal of a shrine tradition; Cuapa, a positive but formally ambiguous diocesan text. Naming these differences does not drain them of grace. It prevents devotion from depending on an inaccurate historical claim.

The traditions also widen the geographical, temporal, and cultural field. An apostolic mission remembered in Roman Spain, a Roman foundation legend, an English noblewoman's Holy House, a medieval mendicant tradition, a Nahua neophyte, a French Daughter of Charity, Tamil village children, and a Nicaraguan sacristan stand in histories of evangelization, conquest, reform, destruction, poverty, colonial encounter, revolution, and war. Mary is not a free-floating archetype above those histories. Because she is Mother of the incarnate Word, authentic devotion enters cultures, lifts the lowly, and forms communion while remaining capable of judging every culture—including Catholic subcultures—by the Gospel.

8 One Gospel in Many Histories

Comparison must avoid two opposite errors. One assembles repeated motifs as if recurrence proved a single supernatural system. The other isolates every event so completely that no ecclesial pattern can be seen. The right comparison is theological rather than evidentiary: each dossier keeps its own judgment, while its received message is measured by the one public Revelation and related to the Church's sacramental, moral, and social life.

8.1 Mary's message is Mary before it is a sentence

The deepest Marian "message" is the person already given in the Gospel: the daughter of Israel who hears the angel, asks a discerning question, consents to God's initiative, bears the Word, hastens in charity, treasures what she does not yet understand, intercedes at Cana, stands at the Cross, and prays with the Church awaiting Pentecost. Her grammar is therefore receptive and active: grace calls forth free obedience, and obedience becomes embodied service.

St. Irenaeus describes Mary's obedience as loosening the knot of Eve's disobedience. The comparison is not a myth of two autonomous female powers. Christ alone is the New Adam who saves; Mary's fiat is the created, graced response through which his Incarnation enters history. St. Augustine likewise insists that Mary first conceived Christ in faith and that discipleship is more blessed than physical maternity considered alone. St. Ambrose's Marian ecclesiology, received by the Second Vatican Council, sees in her the type of the Church in faith, charity, and union with Christ.

These patristic coordinates explain why the recurring messages are unsurprising without being trivial. Prayer, conversion, chastity of heart, penance, compassion, sacramental life, and mission are what Marian presence should intensify because they are the shape of her own discipleship. A purported apparition becomes less credible, not more, when it makes novelty its center, flatters an elite, detaches Mary from Christ, or turns ecclesial obedience into betrayal.

8.2 A comparative map of received themes

Gospel theme	Especially clear dossiers	Ecclesial enactment
Conversion and penance	Laus, La Salette, Lourdes, Fátima, Kibeho, Medjugorje	Examination of conscience, confession, amendment, restitution, works of mercy; never self-harm or fear as an end.
Prayer and the Rosary	Gietrzwałd, Fátima, San Nicolás, Cuapa, Medjugorje	Participation in the liturgy, contemplative prayer, household prayer, intercession, Scripture; no parallel message-magisterium.
Christ and the sacraments	Laus, Lourdes, Champion, Fátima, Pellevoisin, Litmanová	Eucharist, confession, baptismal renewal, Sunday worship, catechesis, vocation; the shrine serves the parish and diocese.
The poor and sick	Laus, Banneux, Vailankanni, Pellevoisin, Guadalupe	Hospitality, health care, material aid, accompaniment, protection of dignity; cure is never a test of worth.
Consolation in public crisis	Pontmain, Chandavila, Knock, Kibeho, Cuapa	Hope, truthful memory, nonviolence, justice, solidarity, reconciliation; no party may annex Mary.
Maternal heart and sorrow	Beauraing, Akita, Kibeho, Rue du Bac, Montichiari	Compassion united to Christ's Cross, intercession, reparation as baptismal participation; no rivalry with divine mercy.
Evangelization and inculturation	Guadalupe, Champion, Gietrzwałd, Vailankanni	Gospel in living languages and cultures, catechesis, lay mission, communion across peoples; neither domination nor syncretism.
Peace and reconciliation	Pontmain, Betania, Fátima, Kibeho, Medjugorje, Cuapa	Forgiveness joined to truth, justice, repair, disarmament of hatred, prayer for enemies; never erasure of victims.
Church and pastoral authority	Lourdes, Fátima, Betania, Kibeho, San Nicolás, Placanica	Charism submitted to discernment, bounded publication, regulated cult, obedience without clericalism, protection of persons.
Warning and eschatological vigilance	La Salette, Fátima, Akita, Kibeho, Medjugorje	Present conversion, hope, sober watchfulness; no date-setting, panic, speculative maps, or claim that catastrophe proves an entire corpus.

The table does not mean that each row has one celestial source or equal authority. It shows how a received motif becomes Catholic only through ecclesial embodiment. “Prayer” that abandons Mass, “penance” that injures the body, “peace” that hides injustice, or “obedience” that protects abuse would be counter-signs even if defended with apparition language.

8.3 Conversion: freedom restored, not coerced

Nearly every verbal dossier calls for conversion. In Catholic doctrine grace precedes, accompanies, and brings to completion every saving movement, yet it heals rather than destroys created freedom. Marian appeals do not add leverage to an unwilling God. They awaken the sinner to the mercy already offered in Christ and call for a concrete response.

The symbolic forms differ. Laus centers a confessional ministry; La Salette exposes neglected worship and social sin; Lourdes joins penance to a spring and procession; Fátima links conversion with prayer for sinners; Medjugorje emphasizes return to confession and Eucharist; Kibeho joins repentance to resistance against hatred. Each can be reduced falsely to private moralism. Conversion includes personal sin, structures sustained by sinful choices, reconciliation with the Church, restitution toward neighbors, and a new social imagination.

Warnings intensify this call but do not cancel freedom. Christian prophecy is often conditional in its pastoral force: it discloses where a path leads so that the hearer may change. Jonah’s preaching to Nineveh is fulfilled precisely when the announced destruction does not occur because the city repents. A warning interpreted as fatalism has ceased to function as warning.

8.4 Prayer, liturgy, and the danger of a parallel church

The Rosary recurs because it is a school of the Gospel, not because repetition earns favors. Gietrzwałd’s prayer in Polish, Fátima’s daily Rosary, San Nicolás’s scriptural catechesis, and Cuapa’s peacemaking devotion show how household prayer can carry faith through oppression and instability. But popular devotion is rightly ordered only when it leads to liturgy and life.

The Eucharist is categorically greater than every apparition because it is Christ’s sacramental self-gift and the source and summit of Christian life (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10; CCC 1324). Apparition sites commonly become places of confession and Mass; those fruits are reasons for pastoral care, not proof that the alleged cause is supernatural. No stream of private messages may become a calendar, lectionary, or magisterium alongside the Church’s worship. Nor may devotees divide into a purer “Marian remnant” against the ordinary communion of parish, diocese, and Pope.

Silence can guard this order. Ratisbonne, Knock, and much of Chandavila do not depend on extensive words. Knock’s tableau is almost liturgical: altar, Lamb, Cross, saints, prayer. The absence of a verbal program makes the figures point beyond themselves. Where corpora are immense, as at San Nicolás and Medjugorje, the Church must work harder to keep repetition from eclipsing Scripture.

8.5 Penance, sacrifice, and reparation

La Salette, Fátima, Beauraing, Akita, Montichiari, and Kibeho use strong ascetical language. Catholic reading begins with Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. Nothing is lacking in its objective redemptive sufficiency. Yet by baptism believers are incorporated into Christ and may offer prayer, labor, fasting, suffering, and works of mercy in him for the good of his Body. St. Paul’s language about completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions concerns this ecclesial participation, not a defect in Calvary.

Reparation is therefore responsive love. Sin damages communion; grace moves the Christian to adore, intercede, repair injustice, and bear another’s burden. Voluntary penance trains desire and shares resources with the poor. Involuntary suffering may be offered, but it must never be romanticized or imposed. Abuse, preventable illness, poverty, and oppression demand protection and remedy, not a devotional command that victims remain silent.

Montichiari’s correction places charity at the center. The three roses—prayer, sacrifice, penance—are healthy only within the whole Christian life. Banneux’s spring and Vailankanni’s title of Good Health prevent sorrow from becoming a cult: the sick are to be relieved. Kibeho’s Seven Sorrows form compassion. Reparation without mercy becomes spiritual accounting; mercy without conversion becomes sentiment.

8.6 Mary, divine mercy, and the sole mediation of Christ

Several corpora use images of Mary’s heart, tears, intercession, or maternal restraint. Read carelessly, these can produce a practical mythology: an angry Father or Son intends destruction, while a kinder Mary blocks the blow. The DDF’s Montichiari analysis explicitly rejects this “lightning rod” model, and the 2025 doctrinal Note *Mater Populi Fidelis* provides the wider grammar.

The Trinity has one saving will. The Father sends the Son in love; the Son freely gives himself; the Spirit incorporates creatures into that gift. Christ is the one Mediator because his divine and human natures unite God and humanity in his person and because his Paschal sacrifice objectively reconciles. Mary’s intercession is real, personal, maternal, and powerful precisely as a created participation in Christ’s mediation. She neither originates grace nor persuades God to become merciful. No creature universally dispenses sanctifying grace: God alone communicates his own life through the humanity of Christ. Mary’s maternal help is intercession, accompaniment, and preparation to receive the divine gifts.

Thus the golden heart at Beauraing, the sorrow at Kibeho, the tears at Akita, and the two Hearts on the Miraculous Medal may all be read as manifestations of graced creaturely love. The precise positive grammar is that Mary intercedes maternally, accompanies the faithful, and leads them to the Savior; she is neither a co-principle of redemption nor a universal dispenser of sanctifying grace. The title Co-redemptrix is always inappropriate. Mediatrix, if used, names only Mary's maternal intercession and distant, subordinate participation in Christ's unique mediation. No alleged message can turn either title into an apparition-certified dogma or decide contested theological vocabulary.

8.7 History is addressed, not decoded

The dossiers arise at pressure points: post-conquest Mexico, revolutionary and industrial France, crop failure and famine, the Franco-Prussian War, linguistic suppression in partitioned Poland, the First World War and atheistic revolution, interwar Europe, decolonizing and conflict-ridden societies, genocide, and post-Communist transition. Marian devotion enters real history because the Incarnation does. It offers no escape from historical method or moral responsibility.

Three disciplines follow. First, context does not prove causation. A message fitted to a crisis may be prophetic, humanly perceptive, later edited, or received through a mixture; competent judgment decides only what its act says. Second, later catastrophe does not automatically function as validation. Kibeho's terrible visions must not turn genocide victims into evidence. Third, national and geopolitical settings remain particular contexts within a universal Marian vocation. Catholic reception of the devotions associated with Fátima, Guadalupe, Cuapa, and Medjugorje directs attention toward conversion, peace, communion, and justice while retaining their distinct authority tiers.

The better historical relation is analogical and moral. At Pontmain a word of hope strengthens a village under invasion; at Knock silent worship accompanies a famine-scarred people; at Gietrzwałd vernacular prayer dignifies a suppressed language; at Betania reconciliation confronts division. The message becomes credible in reception when it produces the virtues history needs: courage, truth, mercy, solidarity, fidelity, and peace.

8.8 Prophecy, secrets, and apocalyptic speech

Fátima, La Salette, Akita, Kibeho, and Medjugorje attract readers searching for concealed chronology. Catholic prophecy is not primarily advance journalism. It applies God's Word to a historical moment, unveils sin's trajectory, consoles the faithful, and calls forth response. Apocalyptic imagery is symbolic and ecclesial: cosmic signs disclose the gravity of moral reality and the sovereignty of God, not a codebook for private experts.

The CDF's 2000 commentary on Fátima remains decisive. A private revelation does not fill a gap in Christ's Revelation; its images are shaped by the recipient's capacities and cannot be read like security-camera footage of the future. The vision of the "bishop dressed in white" gathers persecution, martyrdom, penance, and hope; subsequent events can be seen within its horizon without exhausting it in one-to-one identifications.

Secrets require special restraint because secrecy creates asymmetry and power. A competent pastor may preserve a confidence, publish a bounded text, or judge that disclosure would harm persons or the Church. Devotees possess no right to every alleged word. Conversely, leaders must not use undisclosed heavenly authority to control decisions. La Salette's later secret controversies, Fátima's documentary history, Kibeho's strict limits, and Medjugorje's proliferating predictions all demonstrate that the message corpus is part of the discernment, not an afterthought.

8.9 The lowly as witnesses and the Church as discerner

Children, poor workers, rural families, women with little public status, an Indigenous layman, a religious sister with disabilities, and a village sacristan predominate. This resonates with the Magnificat: God looks upon lowliness and overturns the world's prestige. Their social position can reveal neglected realities and rebuke a Church tempted to hear only the powerful.

Lowliness is not an evidentiary shortcut. Children can err; adults can suggest; poor people can be exploited; holy persons can misunderstand. The Church honors recipients by taking testimony seriously enough to test it and by protecting them from celebrity, coercion, commerce, and endless demands for access. The bishop's office is not a rival

charism but a service of communion; the seer is not a rival magisterium but a baptized member whose possible gift belongs to the Body.

The relation is reciprocal. Bernadette carries an unwelcome request to the pastor; Juan Diego asks that his word be heard; Champion’s Adele receives a catechetical mission; Kibeho’s seers are bounded by an exact decree. Charism can summon pastors to attend to the poor. Pastoral authority determines public ecclesial use. Neither can be replaced by social-media popularity.

8.10 No super-message assembled from the corpus

The repeated themes can tempt an editor to combine all approved or received claims into one synthetic Marian revelation. The Church has done no such thing. Status does not transfer across cases; texts do not mutually authenticate; and apparent agreement may reflect Scripture, common devotional culture, editorial influence, or human expectation as well as grace.

There is, however, a legitimate synthesis because public Revelation already supplies it. Christ calls every person to repent and believe; teaches prayer; gives himself in the sacraments; identifies himself with the least; makes peace by his Cross; sends the Church to every people; and will come in glory. Mary is the preeminent created witness to that one economy. The apparitions add no article. Where they are authentically fruitful, they make neglected features of the Gospel urgent in a particular place and time.

9 Freedom and the Practice of Devotion

9.1 What assent is owed?

Public Revelation requires the faith by which the believer entrusts the whole self to God who reveals. Definitive dogmas and authoritative teachings possess their proper modes of assent within that faith. Private revelations, even when positively judged, stand on another plane. Their acceptance is a prudent human judgment aided by ecclesial discernment: a person may recognize that a message is credible and helpful without treating God as having proposed it to the universal Church for theological faith.

The faithful are never obliged to use a particular approved apparition devotion. They may build their spiritual life from Scripture, liturgy, sacraments, the Rosary, saints, and ordinary prayer without following Lourdes, Fátima, or any other private-revelation corpus. Freedom is not contempt. A Catholic should respect the Church’s permission, avoid rash accusations against persons, and not misrepresent a bounded spiritual proposal as condemned or intrinsically evil, while remaining free to criticize elements the judgment did not approve. An approved devotion may not be imposed as a test of orthodoxy.

Conversely, ecclesial approval does require truthfulness about the judgment and its limits in public representation. A devotee may not say “the Vatican authenticated Medjugorje” or “Rome approved Akita” when the competent acts deny those claims. One cannot accept the favorable half of a judgment and discard its limitations. The scope clause belongs to the approval.

9.2 A practical rule of reception

Before adopting a devotion	Questions to ask	Healthy response
Status	Who acted, on what date, under what formula, and concerning which event, message corpus, persons, and territory?	Read the actual decree or official summary; repeat its limitations whenever stating the result.

Before adopting a devotion	Questions to ask	Healthy response
Doctrine	Does the material preserve Christ as the Father’s definitive Word, sole Redeemer, and one Mediator? Does it accord with Scripture, Tradition, sacraments, and morals?	Let the Catechism and liturgy interpret the message; reject rival deities, Marian autonomy, despair, presumption, or an apparition-certified new dogma.
Fruit	Does devotion foster prayer, Eucharist, confession, charity, vocation, justice, peace, and stable ordinary duties?	Prefer durable ecclesial fruit to excitement; remember that fruit can be real even when supernatural causation is undecided.
Freedom	Are consent, conscience, family obligations, medical care, and the right not to participate protected?	Refuse coercion, fear-based fundraising, secret commands, invasive access to recipients, and claims that disbelief causes disaster.
Communion	Does the devotion remain within parish, diocese, and the universal Church?	Receive pastoral regulation; do not form a remnant identity against bishops or make criticism of a visionary equivalent to rejection of Mary.
Proportion	How much time is given to messages compared with Scripture, liturgy, work, family, and service of the poor?	Allow a devotion to simplify fidelity. Step back when it produces compulsive monitoring or neglect of vocation.

The simplest rule is Cana: “Do whatever he tells you.” A private message is well received when it returns the hearer to Christ’s public word and the next duty of charity. It is badly received when it produces ceaseless message consumption, contempt for ordinary pastors, obsession with dates, spiritual superiority, or paralysis before imagined catastrophe.

9.3 Visions, psychology, medicine, and safeguarding

The following applications combine the DDF’s criteria concerning mental condition, manipulation, abuse, gain, and grave risk with ordinary medical, safeguarding, evidentiary, and financial prudence. Where no ecclesial act prescribes a particular protocol, they are identified here as editorial best practices rather than as universal canon law.

Catholic discernment does not oppose grace and nature as rival explanations. A genuine religious experience is received through memory, language, imagination, temperament, and culture. Mental or neurological illness neither disproves holiness nor proves revelation. Professional evaluation can protect a recipient and help distinguish phenomena without claiming competence to judge grace itself.

Medical treatment should never be stopped because an alleged message promises cure. Parents and pastors must not subject children to interrogations, publicity, crowds, travel, or devotional performance that disregards their welfare. Adults also require privacy, informed consent, freedom from financial exploitation, and protection from demands to reproduce an experience. An investigator’s first obligation is not to obtain dramatic testimony but to safeguard persons and truth.

Claims of stigmata, tears, bleeding images, solar phenomena, incorrupt materials, or cures require competent protocols, preserved chain of custody, independent expertise, and careful distinction between what was observed and what caused it. Staring at the sun is dangerous and cannot be made an act of faith. Photos and videos now circulate faster than ecclesial evaluation; compression artifacts, reflections, editing, and collective expectation must be considered before attribution.

Economic transparency is likewise theological. A shrine requires funds, but sale of access, insider status, prophetic survival goods, or guaranteed blessings contradicts the gratuity of grace. The recipient and family should not be placed in relationships where livelihood depends on continuing messages. Works of mercy and accountable stewardship are better fruits than devotional commerce.

9.4 Publication and the digital afterlife of messages

An imprimatur ordinarily certifies that a publication contains nothing evidently contrary to faith and morals within the Church’s discipline of review (CIC canons 823–830); it does not certify every historical claim or the supernatural source of a text. Translation approval, a shrine bookstore, a cleric’s foreword, or a papal photograph are still less decisive. Digital compilations routinely detach messages from dates, manuscript witnesses, revisions, diocesan limits, and negative judgments.

A responsible edition should identify the earliest text, its language, the recorder, subsequent revision, the corpus reviewed by the Church, and the exact scope of permission. Private words should remain private when authority or charity requires it. Betania, Kibeho, Medjugorje, Litmanová, and San Nicolás illustrate different controls: non-authentication beyond a bounded object, limits on official sanction or dissemination, doctrinal clarification, or express exclusion. Editors must obey each act’s exact rule, must not present outside-scope material as authority-sanctioned, and must reserve a publication prohibition for cases in which authority actually imposed one.

The same discipline applies to this study. It summarizes rather than republishes large third-party corpora, cites the competent acts actually used, marks unresolved evidence, and gives current status an as-of date. A future decree may require revision. Historical honesty is not the enemy of Marian devotion; it is a form of obedience to the woman who asked how God’s word could be fulfilled and then kept that word faithfully.

9.5 Conclusion: the freedom of the children of God

The apparition tradition is healthiest when it makes ordinary Catholic life luminous. The Mother of God does not arrive to make Christ distant, the sacraments insufficient, providence decipherable only to insiders, or the Church disposable. She appears in the received narratives as mother, disciple, intercessor, and icon of the Church: recalling sinners to mercy, the afflicted to hope, the Church to prayer, and peoples to peace.

No dossier is needed to complete Christ. That is precisely why a private revelation can be received freely. The believer is not trapped between credulity and cynicism. One may welcome what the Church welcomes, within the limits she gives; decline optional devotions without guilt; reject what contradicts faith or a competent negative judgment; and test every fruit by charity. The final word of every authentic Marian message is not a secret. It is the Word she bore.

A Scope, Corpus, and Method

A.1 Reader, scope, and claim of completeness

This is a historical, doctrinal, and comparative study for a serious lay reader. It is comprehensive only within an explicit, authority-qualified search boundary. Its first tier treats fifteen source-audited legacy cases that have received a positive event judgment, a worthy-of-belief judgment, or an unusually strong qualified reception from competent Catholic authority. Its second treats every positive Marian determination located in the DDF document index under the 2024 norms through 13 July 2026. Its third treats seven ancient, medieval, or major received traditions whose papal, liturgical, sacramental, or devotional reception is stronger than a casual permission but for which this audit did not locate a modern positive fact decree; Cuapa is treated separately within that section because its surviving diocesan text is positive but juridically ambiguous. A boundary section names representative negative, precautionary, unresolved, and out-of-scope cases so that silence is not mistaken for assent. An appendix then indexes a broader, operationally defined set of moderately renowned claims without converting renown into approval.

There is no official universal registry against which a flat list can be checked. A 2020 Vatican News survey of fifteen cases supplied one historical lead, not the rule of truth: it included Amsterdam, whose controlling papally approved negative judgment had not yet been made public. Every retained legacy row was therefore rechecked against a competent act or the closest authoritative diocesan or shrine record located; Amsterdam was removed after the DDF’s 2024 disclosure, and San Nicolás was added on the independent strength of its 2016 decree. The resulting fifteen-case tier is a selected, high-confidence legacy reference corpus, not an independently exhaustive survey of every diocese in the world.

“All” does not mean every Christian legend, image, locution, dream, miracle, Marian shrine, or locally venerated narrative since antiquity. Such a promise would be both impossible and conceptually confused. The DDF itself observed in 2024 that most major shrines had never received an official declaration that their originating events were supernatural. The honest completeness claim is narrower: every case in the declared legacy and received-tradition corpus is documented, and the DDF index was searched for every positive Marian determination issued from the 2024 norms through the as-of date. The broader appendix defines “moderate renown” by public ecclesial reception, competent intervention, authoritative documentation, and recurrent status confusion; it is a bounded editorial index, not a census of all claims. The research record preserves its inclusion rule, candidate exclusions, and search limits.

A.2 The four questions asked of every dossier

Question	Why it matters	Editorial test
What happened?	The alleged event must be separated from later retelling, associated miracles, politics, and devotional accretion.	Dates, place, recipients, event type, and original or officially received narrative are named.
What was judged?	An act can concern testimony, an apparition, a message, a cult, a site, or spiritual fruit.	Authority, date, formula, object, and geographical reach are stated.
What is the corpus?	A positive judgment does not travel automatically to later messages, secrets, seers, translations, or interpretations.	The included texts and explicit exclusions are identified; uncertainty remains visible.
How is it read?	Even an approved private revelation must be interpreted by Scripture, doctrine, liturgy, charity, and ecclesial communion.	Christological center, doctrinal corrections, historical context, fruit, and limitations are held together.

The method is intentionally asymmetrical. A negative Holy See judgment controls a contrary local claim, as Amsterdam demonstrates. A local positive judgment is reported according to its own scope and does not become a universal dogmatic act. A *nihil obstat* is not downgraded into meaninglessness; it authorizes a real pastoral welcome. But it is not upgraded into the declaration that the 2024 norms normally refuse to make.

A.3 Messages, histories, and persons

The word “message” can conceal several layers: what a recipient remembers; what was first recorded; what a commission examined; what an authority quoted; what a shrine later popularized; and what publishers or devotees have compiled. This study uses “reported message” unless the context already specifies the ecclesiastically bounded corpus. It does not say that Mary “revealed” a statement merely because an internet transcription attributes it to her.

The same restraint governs historical interpretation. War, famine, persecution, cultural oppression, migration, poverty, secularization, and political violence form the real settings in which these events were received. Context can make a call to conversion intelligible; it cannot prove supernatural origin. Later events can deepen reception; they cannot retroactively enlarge a decree. The survival of Pontmain’s conscripts, the fall of Communist regimes, the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, or the Peshtigo fire may belong to a history of interpretation without becoming automatic authentication of every alleged prediction.

Finally, no status judgment licenses contempt for a recipient or devotee. A negative or unresolved act concerns a claimed phenomenon and its pastoral use, not the worth of persons. A positive act likewise does not canonize a recipient’s every opinion. Discernment is an act of ecclesial charity precisely because truth protects both faith and people.

A.4 Use boundary

This source-audited Catholic study instrument is not an act of the Magisterium, a new ecclesiastical judgment, or a direction that any private revelation must be believed. Its global corpus and date limits are those stated above; claim-local limits remain beside the claims they qualify.

B Status Map of the Included Corpus

The cases are arranged chronologically within their proper tier. Chronology shows development; tiering protects meaning. A reader should be able to leave this section knowing not merely which names appear but why they appear and what may truthfully be said of them.

B.1 Fifteen legacy cases

Case	Competent positive act or reception	Publication formula
Laus (1664–1718)	Bishop of Gap, 4 May 2008, after CDF assent	Supernatural character of the events officially recognized.
Ratisbonne, Rome (1842)	Cardinal Vicar Patrizi, 3 June 1842	Truth of the miracle after canonical inquiry; silent apparition received by the Roman Church.
La Salette (1846)	Bishop of Grenoble, 19 September 1851	Characteristics of truth; faithful grounded in accepting the apparition as certain.
Lourdes (1858)	Bishop of Tarbes, 18 January 1862	Mary truly appeared eighteen times; characteristics of truth.
Champion (1859)	Bishop of Green Bay, 8 December 2010	Moral certainty; substance of supernatural character; worthy of belief, not obligatory.
Pontmain (1871)	Bishop of Laval, 2 February 1872	The Immaculate Virgin truly appeared to four named children.
Gietrzwałd (1877)	Bishop of Warmia, decree 2100/77, 11 September 1977	Cult approved as consonant with faith and morals, based on credible facts whose supernatural and divine character “cannot be excluded.”
Knock (1879)	Two favorable commissions; archiepiscopal and later ecclesial reception	Trustworthy testimony and authoritative reception; no formal public <i>constat</i> located.
Fátima (1917)	Bishop of Leiria, 13 October 1930; later Holy See reception	Visions worthy of belief; cult permitted; message authoritatively interpreted.
Beauraing (1932–1933)	Bishop of Namur, 2 July 1949, with Holy See assent	Authenticity recognized.
Banneux (1933)	Bishop of Liège, 22 August 1949	Reality of eight apparitions recognized without reserve.
Akita (1973–1981)	Bishop of Niigata, 22 April 1984; current ordinary’s 2026 clarification	Ambiguous double-negative finding and diocesan non-prohibition pending Rome; no Holy See judgment.
Betania (from 1976)	Bishop of Los Teques, 21 November 1987	Apparitions authentic and supernatural, with explicit limits on which claims are credited.

Case	Competent positive act or reception	Publication formula
Kibeho (from 1981)	Bishop of Gikongoro, 29 June 2001	Mary appeared; only three seers and the public apparitions were recognized, with 1982–1983 as the decisive interpretive core.
San Nicolás (from 1983)	Bishop of San Nicolás, 22 May 2016; successor’s 14 March 2017 publication boundary	Supernatural character of the diocesan Marian events recognized; ecclesially disseminated messages end on 11 February 1990.

This tier is internally graduated. “Legacy” does not mean “equal.” Knock is included because competent commissions and the archbishop judged the testimony positively and the event has been received authoritatively, not because a modern decree using *constat de supernaturalitate* was located. Akita is included because the local ordinary used an ambiguous double-negative formula and did not prohibit diocesan veneration, but its current bishop expressly states that Rome has not judged it. Fátima’s formula is “worthy of belief,” not a demand of faith. These differences are part of the content.

B.2 Six post-2024 Marian *nihil obstat* cases

The located DDF-approved Marian cases are Placanica, Montichiari, Chandavila, Pellevoisin, Medjugorje, and Litmanová. Their common status authorizes pastoral reception. Their individual letters also purify the received material. Montichiari receives explicit Christological correction; Medjugorje receives extensive message-by-message clarifications and rules for pilgrimage; Litmanová requires the removal of unacceptable sayings from the publishable corpus. A *nihil obstat* can therefore be both positive and exacting.

No case in this tier is called a supernatural apparition in the study’s own voice. The phrasing is “the Marian devotion or spiritual experience arising amid alleged apparitions received a DDF-approved *nihil obstat*.” This is not pedantry. It is the judgment itself.

B.3 Received traditions

The Pillar at Zaragoza, Our Lady of the Snows, Walsingham, Mount Carmel, Guadalupe, Rue du Bac, and Vailankanni show why ecclesial reception cannot be reduced to one administrative form. The first four precede the modern investigation process: papal teaching receives the Pillar explicitly as ancient local tradition; a papal basilica and its dedication preserve the Roman snowfall memory; England’s national shrine and calendar receive Walsingham while acknowledging chronological uncertainty; and the approved Brown Scapular possesses a sound sacramental meaning even though the Simon Stock vision has disputed provenance. None is assigned a modern fact decree that the audit did not locate.

Guadalupe possesses profound papal and continental liturgical reception and is treated by modern Popes as an appearance whose evangelizing image joined Gospel and culture. Rue du Bac gave the Church the Miraculous Medal, received in liturgy, saintly life, papal prayer, and universal devotion, although the shrine itself explains that the medal’s fruit functioned as practical recognition rather than pointing to a conventional apparition decree. The DDF speaks warmly of Vailankanni’s sixteenth-century traditions and Christ-centered healing fruit without attaching one of the 2024 result formulas. Cuapa forms a final, juridically ambiguous case of positive local reception.

These are not “less Catholic” because their history took another juridic route. They are differently documented. The study gives them serious theological treatment while refusing to manufacture a decree.

B.4 Why Amsterdam is absent from the positive map

Amsterdam exposes the danger of reading only the latest local act. On 27 March 1974 the Holy Office unanimously judged *constat de non supernaturalitate* and unanimously declined further investigation; Paul VI approved these

decisions on 5 April. A later local bishop recognized the supernatural origin in 2002, but the DDF disclosed in 2024 that the earlier Holy See judgment controls. The case is therefore negative in this study.

The lesson extends beyond one controversy. Ecclesiastical status is not determined by popularity, repetition, or the most favorable quotation one can locate. Competence, hierarchy, chronology, object, and continuing authority matter. Nor can status pass through images: Akita’s statue was modeled on the Amsterdam image, but that artistic genealogy neither condemns Akita automatically nor rehabilitates Amsterdam. Judgments attach to their own objects.

B.5 What the status map does not measure

The map does not measure Mary’s love, the sanctity of pilgrims, the beauty of a devotion, the number of conversions, the canonical holiness of a seer, or the intensity of an experience. It measures the public ecclesial judgment that can be documented. The great mysteries of faith remain prior: the Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Eucharist, grace, the communion of saints, and the Mother of God herself are known from public Revelation and the Church’s faith, not from this catalog.

C Corpus Exclusions and Status Limits

An account claiming to document approved apparitions must also name representative exclusions. Otherwise a reader cannot tell whether a popular case was forgotten, judged negatively, received only pastorally, or simply lies outside the stated jurisdiction. The boundaries below are not a universal blacklist. They show the kinds of distinctions required and state the controlling result where this audit established one.

C.1 Negative and precautionary cases

Case	Controlling status as of 13 July 2026	Consequence
Amsterdam / Lady of All Nations	The Holy Office unanimously judged <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> on 27 March 1974; Paul VI approved the decision on 5 April. The DDF made that controlling act public in 2024.	The 2002 local claim cannot override the earlier papally approved Holy See judgment. The case is negative, not an approved apparition.
Trevignano Romano	Bishop Marco Salvi issued <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> on 6 March 2024; the DDF confirmed the decree’s juridic validity on 27 June.	Reported phenomena and messages are excluded from the positive corpus; popularity and claimed signs do not reverse the act.
Holy Mountain / Elenita de Jesús, Puerto Rico	The DDF, with papal approval, judged <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> on 1 August 2024 regarding claims that identified Elenita with Christ or Mary and associated non-authentic apparitions and blood.	The negative judgment controls those claims while leaving intact the positive historical appraisal of Elenita’s missionary and catechetical service.
Mount S. Onofrio, Agnone	The DDF approved <i>prae oculis habeatur</i> in 2025, a precautionary result requiring continued watchfulness and prohibiting public cult while allowing narrowly regulated private visits.	This is neither a <i>nihil obstat</i> nor an approval. Serious confusion or risk is enough to require restraint without a final supernatural-origin declaration.

Case	Controlling status as of 13 July 2026	Consequence
Dozulé	After the DDF’s papally approved authorization of 3 November 2025, Bishop Jacques Habert of Bayeux-Lisieux promulgated the definitive <i>declaratio de non supernaturalitate</i> on 5 December 2025.	This non-Marian phenomenon illustrates the new norms’ negative endpoint and lies outside the Marian corpus.

Amsterdam is especially instructive. The DDF’s disclosure corrected decades in which partial public information permitted a later local declaration to be treated as decisive. Hierarchy and chronology control: a diocesan bishop cannot reverse a judgment reserved to and approved by the Roman Pontiff. Devotion to Mary under orthodox titles remains possible in general, but it cannot be used to deny the judgment on this phenomenon.

A negative act does not declare devotees wicked or every prayer fruitless. God can give grace whenever a person turns sincerely to him. It does mean that the claimed supernatural origin may not be promoted against the Church’s judgment. “Good fruits” do not create a referendum over competent authority, and subsequent stories do not reopen a matter merely by multiplying.

C.2 Unresolved and out-of-scope cases

Garabandal was not included because a dated search of the DDF document index and the Diocese of Santander’s public site found no positive competent supernatural judgment. That non-discovery is not itself a negative ecclesiastical act; it is a reason not to place the case in a positive corpus. Pilgrimage, a priest’s private opinion, an individual bishop’s courtesy, or a saint’s alleged interest does not constitute approval. Lipa is not merely unresolved: the Holy Office’s 1951 decision, approved by Pius XII on 29 March 1951 and communicated by the Philippine commission on 11 April, found no supernatural character or origin. The CDF’s decree of 11 December 2015 declared Archbishop Ramón Argüelles’s contrary 15 September 2015 decree null and void and reaffirmed the earlier decision as definitive; in 2023 the DDF asked the Philippine bishops to dissuade activity tied to the alleged apparitions’ seventy-fifth anniversary. Devotion or later local enthusiasm cannot be used to reverse that controlling Roman judgment.

Zeitoun’s luminous phenomena are historically significant and received by Coptic Orthodox authority, but they do not belong to a catalog defined by competent Catholic acts. Respect for another Church includes naming its authority rather than silently converting it into a Roman Catholic decree. Ancient and medieval shrine legends are also outside the completeness claim unless a dossier’s authoritative reception placed it within the received-tradition tier.

These exclusions demonstrate why internet lists differ so dramatically. Some count every shrine, some every bishop’s favorable quotation, some only classical *constat* decrees, some canonized visionaries, and some cases approved merely for faith expression or pilgrimage. Without a taxonomy, “all approved apparitions” is not a factual category.

D Bounded Index of Moderately Renowned Claims

No worldwide ecclesiastical register defines “moderate renown.” This appendix therefore uses a reproducible editorial threshold rather than pretending to count every reported vision. A case enters when it meets at least two of four signals: sustained national or international shrine or devotional reception documented by a Church source; a public judgment or repeated intervention by competent authority; treatment in a Holy See, episcopal, or national-liturgical source; or recurring public confusion serious enough to elicit an authoritative correction. The threshold favors cases readers are likely to encounter and statuses they are likely to misstate. It excludes innumerable local claims that have no comparable public record and can be expanded only through a new source audit.

How to read the boldface

Bold type marks only a located positive Catholic judgment directed to the alleged event itself—for example, that the apparition was true, authentic, supernatural, or worthy of belief. It does not mark approval

of a title, prayer, medal, scapular, shrine, feast, pilgrimage, cult, cure, or pastoral fruit; nor does it mark a post-2024 *nihil obstat*, which expressly does not authenticate supernatural origin. Unbolded therefore does not mean condemned. The status column supplies the necessary category.

Name or title	Claimed date(s)	Place and recipient(s)	Located local / papal status as of 13 July 2026
Our Lady of the Pillar	ca. AD 40, by tradition	Zaragoza, Spain; Apostle James	John Paul II received it expressly as a very ancient local tradition and a symbol of apostolic faith. No contemporary record or modern event decree claimed.
Our Lady of the Snows	5 August, mid-fourth century, by tradition	Rome; a Roman couple and Pope Liberius	Foundation tradition officially commemorated at the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major and within its dedication observance. No supernatural-origin decree claimed; the present basilica is principally fifth-century.
Our Lady of Walsingham	1061, by tradition	Walsingham, England; Richeldis de Faverches	Catholic national shrine and, since 2024, feast in England. Official liturgical material notes that construction a century later is historically more likely; no event decree claimed.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel / Simon Stock	1251, by tradition	Traditionally Aylesford, England; Simon Stock	Brown Scapular authoritatively received as an approved sacramental and sign of Carmelite and baptismal life. Historical provenance of the vision is disputed; no event decree claimed.
Our Lady of Guadalupe	9–12 December 1531, by tradition	Tepeyac, Mexico; Juan Diego	Exceptionally strong papal, saintly, shrine, and continental liturgical reception. This audit located no modern fact decree adjudicating the originating event.
Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni	Sixteenth-century traditions	Vailankanni, India; village boys and later sailors	DDF letter of 1 August 2024 praised the traditions and Christ-centered fruit but used no result formula and made no supernatural-origin judgment.
Our Lady of Šiluva	1608, by tradition	Šiluva, Lithuania; shepherd children	Paul VI called the appearance a pious tradition; later Popes received the shrine as a national center of faith and pilgrimage. No event-origin decree located.
Our Lady of Coromoto	8 September 1652, by tradition	Guanare, Venezuela; Coromoto Indigenous people	National patronage, papal coronation, shrine, and repeated papal narration establish exceptional reception. No separate event-origin decree located.
Notre-Dame du Laus	1664–1718	Saint-Étienne-le-Laus, France; Benoîte Rencurel	Bishop of Gap, 4 May 2008, after CDF assent: supernatural character of the examined events officially recognized.
Our Lady of La Vang	1798, by popular tradition	La Vang, Vietnam; Catholics sheltering from persecution	John Paul II received the popular tradition and joined its 1997–1998 bicentenary. National shrine and papal reception do not constitute an event-origin decree.
Rue du Bac / Miraculous Medal	1830	Paris; Catherine Labouré	Archbishop authorized the medal in 1832; devotion, sacramental, saint, and liturgical reception are authoritative. No conventional apparition decree claimed.
Our Lady of the Miracle / Ratisbonne	20 January 1842	Sant’Andrea delle Fratte, Rome; Alphonse Ratisbonne	Cardinal Vicar Patrizi, 3 June 1842: truth of the miracle after canonical inquiry; silent apparition-conversion received by the Roman Church.
Our Lady of La Salette	19 September 1846	La Salette, France; Mélanie Calvat and Maximin Giraud	Bishop of Grenoble, 19 September 1851: apparition bears the characteristics of truth; bounded public event and message only.
Our Lady of Licheń	1850	Grąblin, Poland; Mikołaj Sikatka	The official shrine preserves the apparition tradition and the 1852 consistory’s transfer of the image; John Paul II blessed the shrine church in 1999. No event-origin decree located.
Our Lady of Lourdes	11 February–16 July 1858	Lourdes, France; Bernadette Soubirous	Bishop of Tarbes, 18 January 1862: Mary truly appeared eighteen times and the apparition bears the characteristics of truth.

Name or title	Claimed date(s)	Place and recipient(s)	Located local / papal status as of 13 July 2026
Our Lady of Champion	October 1859	Champion, Wisconsin; Adele Brise	Bishop of Green Bay, 8 December 2010: moral certainty, substance of supernatural character, and worthy of belief, while not obligatory.
Our Lady of Pontmain	17 January 1871	Pontmain, France; four named children	Bishop of Laval, 2 February 1872: the Immaculate Virgin truly appeared to the four children; one silent apparition with a visible written message.
Our Lady of Pellevoisin	1876	Pellevoisin, France; Estelle Faguet	Healing declared miraculous in 1983; DDF-approved <i>nilhil obstat</i> and diocesan promulgation in August 2024 for the devotion and spiritual proposal, not the apparitions' origin.
Our Lady of Gietrzwałd	27 June–16 September 1877	Gietrzwałd, Poland; Justyna Szafryńska and Barbara Samulowska	Bishop of Warmia, 11 September 1977: cult approved on credible facts whose supernatural and divine character “cannot be excluded.” Qualified non-exclusion, not a positive origin declaration.
Our Lady of Knock	21 August 1879	Knock, Ireland; fifteen official witnesses	Two commissions found testimony trustworthy or satisfactory; sustained archiepiscopal and papal reception. No formal public supernatural-origin decree located.
Holy Mountain / Elenita de Jesús claims	Claims attached to Elenita (d. 1909)	Puerto Rico; Elenita de Jesús and later collective memory	DDF, with papal approval, 1 August 2024: <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> for identifying Elenita with Christ or Mary and for associated non-authentic apparitions or blood; her missionary witness remains valued.
Our Lady of Fátima	13 May–13 October 1917	Cova da Iria, Portugal; Lúcia, Francisco, and Jacinta	Bishop of Leiria, 13 October 1930: visions worthy of belief and cult permitted; later Holy See reception and authoritative 2000 interpretation.
Our Lady of Beauraing	29 November 1932–3 January 1933	Beauraing, Belgium; five children	Bishop of Namur, 2 July 1949, with Holy See assent: authenticity of the examined apparitions recognized.
Virgin of the Poor, Banneux	15 January–2 March 1933	Banneux, Belgium; Mariette Beco	Bishop of Liège, 22 August 1949: reality of exactly eight apparitions recognized without reserve.
Lady of All Nations, Amsterdam	1945–1959	Amsterdam, Netherlands; Ida Peerdeman	Holy Office, 27 March 1974, with Paul VI's approval on 5 April: <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> . DDF disclosure in 2024 confirms that this judgment controls.
Our Lady of Sorrows, Chandavila	Summer 1945	La Codosera, Spain; Marcelina Barroso and Afra Brígido	DDF consent and diocesan <i>nilhil obstat</i> , 22–24 August 2024: positive pastoral reception without authentication of the alleged visions.
Marienfried	1946	Pfaffenhofen an der Roth, Germany; Bärbl Ruess	Bishop of Augsburg, 20 March 2000, after CDF review: supernatural character not established and serious doubts remain; prayer site continues under restrictions.
Virgin of Revelation, Tre Fontane	12 April 1947	Rome; Bruno Cornacchiola and three children	Diocesan shrine erected in 2025 after long Roman pastoral reception. The shrine decree narrates the claim but does not declare its supernatural origin.
Maria Rosa Mystica, Montichiari	From 1947	Montichiari and Fontanelle, Italy; Pierina Gilli	DDF doctrinal letter and diocesan <i>nilhil obstat</i> , 5–8 July 2024; devotion permitted under Christological corrections, without authenticating the apparitions.
Our Lady of Prayer, L'Île-Bouchard	8–14 December 1947	L'Île-Bouchard, France; four girls	Archbishop of Tours, 8 December 2001: pilgrimages and public cult authorized after study. The decree does not pronounce supernatural origin.
Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace, Lipa	1948	Lipa, Philippines; Teresita Castillo	Holy Office negative decision approved by Pius XII in 1951; CDF in 2015 declared a contrary local decree null and reaffirmed finality; DDF/CBCP restrictions reiterated in 2023.

Name or title	Claimed date(s)	Place and recipient(s)	Located local / papal status as of 13 July 2026
Heroldsbach	1949–1952	Heroldsbach, Germany; several children	Competent authorities judged the alleged apparitions non-supernatural. A Marian prayer site was permitted in 1998 only with public notice that the negative judgment remains.
Necedah	1949–1950 and later claims	Necedah, Wisconsin; Mary Ann Van Hoof	A current Diocese of La Crosse publication identifies Van Hoof as a false visionary and recalls the shrine community’s opposition to diocesan non-approval. This audit did not inspect the historical 1955 act.
Our Lady of America	1956–2000	Several US dioceses; Sr. Mildred Neuzil	Six pertinent ordinaries, 2020: experiences cannot be affirmed as objective supernatural occurrences; approved prayers and images may continue only as private devotion, not public Church devotion.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Garabandal	1961–1965	San Sebastián de Garabandal, Spain; four girls	No positive competent act located in the DDF index or Diocese of Santander public record through the as-of date. This is unresolved/non-discovery, not a negative decree.
Zeitoun	1968–1971	Zeitoun, Egypt; large public witness claims	Received and judged under Coptic Orthodox authority, not by the competent Catholic authority defined for this study; included to prevent false attribution of a Roman approval.
Madonna dello Scoglio, Placanica	11–14 May 1968	Santa Domenica di Placanica, Italy; Cosimo Fragomeni	DDF confirmation and diocesan <i>nihil obstat</i> , 5–16 July 2024: spiritual and pastoral proposal received; no judgment that the events were supernatural.
Our Lady of the Roses, Bayside	1970–1995	Queens, New York; Veronica Lueken	Bishop of Brooklyn’s 1986 rejection reaffirmed in 2014: supposed visions completely lack credibility; promotion and connected activity prohibited.
Our Lady of Akita	1973–1981	Akita, Japan; Sr. Agnes Sasagawa and statue phenomena	Bishop of Niigata’s 1984 ambiguous double negative and diocesan non-prohibition remain; current bishop stated in 2026 that the Holy See has issued no judgment.
Mary, Reconciler of Nations, Betania	From 25 March 1976	Finca Betania, Venezuela; María Esperanza and bounded witnesses	Bishop of Los Teques, 21 November 1987: apparitions authentic and supernatural, with express exclusion of pseudo-visionaries and unexamined claims.
Our Lady of Cuapa	April–October 1980	Cuapa, Nicaragua; Bernardo Martínez	Bishop’s 13 November 1982 preface positively receives and speaks of assuring authenticity; no separate formal origin decree located. Classified as ambiguous positive diocesan reception.
Queen of Peace, Medjugorje	From June 1981	Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina; six initial claimants and continuing claims	DDF Note and diocesan decree, 19 September 2024: <i>nihil obstat</i> for the spiritual proposal and pastoral care, expressly not an authenticity judgment.
Our Lady of Kibeho	From 28 November 1981; decisive core 1982–1983	Kibeho, Rwanda; Alphonsine, Nathalie, and Marie-Claire only	Bishop of Gikongoro, 29 June 2001: Mary appeared and serious reasons favor belief; only three recipients and public apparitions recognized.
Our Lady of the Rosary of San Nicolás	From 25 September 1983	San Nicolás, Argentina; Gladys Motta	Bishop of San Nicolás, 22 May 2016: supernatural character recognized with moral certainty; successor bounded public message dissemination through 11 February 1990.
Naju phenomena	From 30 June 1985	Naju, South Korea; Julia Youn and a statue	Archdiocese of Gwangju, from 1998 and repeatedly thereafter: <i>non constat de supernaturalitate</i> ; messages and unauthorized activity restricted, with CDF consultation noted.

Name or title	Claimed date(s)	Place and recipient(s)	Located local / papal status as of 13 July 2026
Holy Love Ministries	From the late twentieth century	Lorain County, Ohio; Maureen Sweeney-Kyle	Bishop of Cleveland, 11 November 2009, at Holy See request: alleged apparitions and locutions not supernatural; faithful directed not to assemble for claimed messages.
Emmitsburg claims	1990s–2000s	Emmitsburg, Maryland; Gianna Talone-Sullivan	Archdiocese of Baltimore found no basis in 2000; CDF in 2003 advised a <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> ; archdiocesan restrictions govern.
Our Lady of Litmanová	1990–1995	Mount Zvir, Slovakia; three children	DDF-approved eparchial <i>nihil obstat</i> , July–August 2025; pastoral reception with a curated corpus, not authentication of origin.
Trevignano Romano	From 2016	Trevignano Romano, Italy; Gisella Cardia	Bishop of Civita Castellana, 6 March 2024: <i>constat de non supernaturalitate</i> ; DDF confirmed juridical validity on 27 June 2024.
Mount S. Onofrio	Recent claims; dates not fixed in DDF letter	Agnone, Italy; unnamed visionary in the controlling act	DDF, 25 July 2025: <i>prae oculis habeatur</i> ; continued vigilance, no public cult, and only narrowly regulated private visits. Neither positive approval nor final negative declaration.

D.1 What the index can and cannot establish

The table answers a status question, not a sanctity or popularity contest. A bold row does not impose belief; an unbolded row may name a feast, shrine, or devotion deeply at home in Catholic life; and a negative row does not deny that God can grant grace to a person who prayed sincerely there. What changes is what may truthfully be attributed to the alleged phenomenon.

The table is also deliberately revision-sensitive. A new competent act can alter an unresolved or precautionary row, and new archival evidence can refine the provenance of an ancient tradition without changing its received devotional meaning. Expansion requires the same fields used here—event, place, recipient, competent authority, date, exact object, formula, later intervention, and scope—rather than the addition of an attractive name from a secondary list.

E References

E.1 Doctrine and discernment

1. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, especially 2–4, and *Lumen gentium*, especially 52–69: Revelation; Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church.
2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 65–67, 956, 963–975, 2115–2117, 2617–2619, and 2673–2679: Christ and private revelations; Mary and the Church; Mary in Christian prayer.
3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1978 procedural norms, published in 2012: official text.
4. Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), including the six possible determinations: official text.
5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima* (2000), especially Cardinal Ratzinger’s theological commentary on private revelation, vision, symbol, and prophecy: official text.
6. DDF, *Mater Populi Fidelis*: Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary’s Cooperation in the Work of Salvation (4 November 2025), especially 17–29, 45–55, and 62–70 on Christ’s sole mediation, sanctifying and actual grace, reparation, and Mary’s maternal intercession and preparation: official text.
7. DDF, “False Mysticism and Spiritual Abuse” (22 November 2024), on purported supernatural authority used for control or abuse: official text.
8. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.22.4, on the New Eve; St. Augustine, *On Holy Virginity* 3, on Mary’s faith and discipleship; St. Ambrose, *Exposition of Luke* II.7, as received in *Lumen gentium* 63, on Mary as type of the Church: working Irenaeus translation; working Augustine translation; conciliar reception. Patristic citations are theological witnesses, not evidence for the modern events.
9. Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10 and 13, and CCC 1324, on liturgy and Eucharist as summit and source and on popular devotions’ subordinate orientation to the liturgy; CIC canons 823–830, on ecclesiastical review of publications: liturgy and popular devotion; publication discipline.

E.2 Legacy dossiers

1. Diocese of Gap and Embrun, Notre-Dame du Laus history and the 4 May 2008 recognition: diocesan account.
2. Diocese of Rome, Sant’Andrea delle Fratte and the apparition-conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne; Benedict XVI’s 2008 Angelus on the event and Christian unity: diocesan account; papal address.
3. Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, historical dossier and bounded public message; the 1851 episcopal formula is also reproduced in the DDF’s 2024 norms: shrine account; public message; DDF historical citation.
4. Sanctuary of Lourdes, Bishop Laurence’s 18 January 1862 decree and official pages documenting the bounded message of penance, spring, chapel, procession, and the 25 March title: decree; penance; title and spring; chapel and procession.
5. Bishop David Ricken, 8 December 2010 decree concerning Adele Brise and the 1859 Champion events: decree PDF.
6. Sanctuary of Pontmain, event history and Bishop Wicart’s 2 February 1872 formula: official shrine account.
7. Bishop Józef Drzazga of Warmia, decree 2100/77 (11 September 1977), whose Polish operative clause approves cult on credible facts whose supernatural and divine character “cannot be excluded”; Polish Episcopal Conference record of the March 2026 decree recognizing Barbara Samulowska’s heroic virtues: primary decree scan; episcopal record. The heroic-virtues act concerns her life, not the event’s origin.
8. Knock Shrine, witness narrative and the findings of the 1879–1880 and 1935–1936 commissions: commission history; received chronology.
9. Sanctuary of Fátima, chronology of the seers and the 1930 worthy-of-belief judgment; CDF 2000 publication of the documentary and theological dossier: official chronology; Holy See dossier.
10. Sanctuary of Beauraing, narrative, message, authorized cult, and the 2 July 1949 recognition; Diocese of Namur confirmation of Holy See assent: shrine dossier; diocesan account.
11. Sanctuary of Banneux, Bishop Kerkhofs’s 22 August 1949 recognition and the official eight-date message chronology: recognition; message.
12. Diocese of Niigata, Bishop Narui’s 19 May 2026 statement reproducing Bishop Itō’s 1984 provisions, explaining the ambiguous double negative, and stating that the Holy See has issued no judgment: current diocesan statement, Japanese. A non-official English transcription of Itō’s pastoral letter was used only for a bounded message synopsis, never to upgrade status.
13. Bishop Pío Bello Ricardo, *Pastoral Instruction on the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in Finca Betania* (21 November 1987), and his later statement limiting official sanction to that Instruction: hosted English copy of episcopal act; hosted signed communication. The host is associated with the recipient’s cause, so the documents were used for the bishop’s text, not independent corroboration.
14. Bishop Augustin Misago, definitive declaration on Kibeho (29 June 2001), including the three recognized recipients, the public-apparition scope, and the decisive 1982–1983 period: Holy See Press Office publication.
15. AICA, report and text of Bishop Héctor Cardelli’s 22 May 2016 San Nicolás decree; AICA report on Bishop Hugo Santiago’s 14 March 2017 closure of public dissemination at 11 February 1990 and archival treatment of later alleged messages: decree report; corpus boundary.

E.3 Post-2024 positive pastoral determinations

1. DDF approval concerning the Madonna dello Scoglio at Placanica (5 July 2024), followed by Bishop Francesco Oliva’s decree 659 (16 July 2024): DDF text; diocesan decree.
2. DDF doctrinal letter concerning Maria Rosa Mystica at Montichiari (5 July 2024), followed by Bishop Pierantonio Tremolada’s diocesan decree (8 July 2024): DDF text; diocesan act.
3. DDF consent concerning Chandavila (22 August 2024), followed by Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo’s diocesan decree (24 August 2024): DDF text; diocesan promulgation.
4. DDF letter concerning Estelle Faguet and Pellevoisin (22 August 2024), followed by Archbishop Jérôme Beau’s diocesan decree/publication (30 August 2024): DDF text; diocesan publication.
5. DDF, *The Queen of Peace: Note About the Spiritual Experience Connected with Medjugorje* (19 September 2024), followed by Bishop Petar Palić’s operative diocesan decree of the same date: DDF text; diocesan decree, Croatian.
6. DDF approval concerning the spiritual experience of Mount Zvir at Litmanová (4 July 2025), with the Archeparchy of Prešov’s public proclamation on 3 August 2025: DDF text; eparchial record.

E.4 Received traditions

1. John Paul II, Zaragoza homily (6 November 1982) and Angelus (15 November 1987), which receives the Pillar account expressly as a “very ancient local tradition” and interprets it through apostolic preaching and steadfast faith: Zaragoza homily; Angelus.
2. Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major, official account distinguishing the Liberian dream-and-snow tradition from the fifth-century basilica and Sixtus III’s fabric; Francis, Vespers for the dedication (5 August 2024), on the traditional snowfall as a symbol of grace: basilica history; foundation tradition; papal homily.
3. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, Walsingham shrine history, 2024 elevation to a feast, and the official liturgical dossier that preserves the traditional 1061 date while identifying construction about a century later as historically more likely: episcopal shrine history; feast decree report; liturgical dossier.

4. Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* 205, on the Brown Scapular as Carmelite habit, baptismal sign, and school of prayer; Carmelite narration of the Simon Stock tradition; Richard Copsey, “Simon Stock and the Scapular Vision,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999): 652–683, for the disputed historical provenance: Holy See directory; Carmelite tradition; historical study.
5. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* 11, on Guadalupe as “Mother and Evangelizer of America,” “Star of the first and new evangelization,” and model of inculturation; the decree extending her feast throughout the American continent: papal text; continental liturgical decree. For the extant 1649 Nahuatl narrative and disputed authorship/transmission, see peer-reviewed historical study.
6. Diocese of Paris, life of St. Catherine Labouré and the Rue du Bac events; Chapel of the Miraculous Medal, medal history and Archbishop de Quélen’s authorization: diocesan account; official chapel account. The medal prayer’s exact historical English is checked at the frontispiece of Benziger Brothers, *The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (1915), facsimile PDF p. 8; its permission leaf (PDF p. 10) records Remigius Lafort’s *Nihil obstat* and Cardinal Farley’s *Imprimatur*, dated 10 June 1915: facsimile.
7. Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2001), especially 206 on the Miraculous Medal and 203–207 on Marian sacramentals: Holy See text.
8. DDF, “The Love of Mary at Vailankanni” (1 August 2024): official text.
9. Bernardo Martínez, *Relation of the Events at Cuapa*, including Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega’s 13 November 1982 preface: digitized Spanish edition. Used for the bishop’s actual wording and the reported narrative; because it is not a diocesan archive, no stronger juridic formula is inferred.

E.5 Appendix-only status sources

1. Paul VI, letter to Bishop Vincentas Brizgys (4 September 1966), describing the Šiluva appearance “according to a pious tradition”; John Paul II, *Sescentesima Anniversaria* (5 June 1987), on the national shrine’s reception: Paul VI; John Paul II.
2. Pius XII, radiomessage for the coronation of Our Lady of Coromoto (12 September 1952); John Paul II, *Regina caeli* (31 May 1992) and homily at the national shrine (10 February 1996): coronation; apparition tradition; shrine reception.
3. John Paul II, Angelus on La Vang’s popular tradition (19 June 1988) and letter for the bicentenary of the reported apparitions (16 December 1997): popular tradition; bicentenary.
4. Licheñ Shrine, official account of the 1850 reports, 1852 parish record, and consistory transfer of the image; John Paul II, blessing of the shrine church (7 June 1999): shrine history; papal reception.
5. Diocese of Augsburg, Bishop Viktor Josef Dammertz’s 20 March 2000 decree concerning Marienfried, after CDF review: diocesan text.
6. Diocese of Rome, 2025 decree erecting the Shrine of the Virgin of Revelation at Tre Fontane and current diocesan narration of the reported event: shrine decree; diocesan account. Shrine status is not converted into an origin judgment.
7. Diocese of Tours, episcopal account of Archbishop André Vingt-Trois’s 8 December 2001 decree authorizing pilgrimages and public cult at L’Île-Bouchard: diocesan account.
8. Archbishop Karl Braun’s 1998 notice at the Heroldsbach prayer site, in a public municipal transcription, together with the Archdiocese of Bamberg’s current prayer-site record: displayed episcopal notice; archdiocesan record. The first host supplies the displayed text, not competent authority of its own.
9. Diocese of La Crosse, current retrospective identifying Mary Ann Van Hoof of Necedah as a false visionary: diocesan publication. The index does not quote an unlocated scan of the 1955 act.
10. Joint statement of the six pertinent United States ordinaries concerning Our Lady of America (7 May 2020): hosted episcopal statement.
11. Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Pope Cyril VI’s 1968 statement concerning Zeitoun, published by the official church at the site: Coptic papal statement. It establishes a Coptic Orthodox judgment, not a Roman Catholic act.
12. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, 2014 reaffirmation of the Diocese of Brooklyn’s 1986 judgment concerning Bayside and Veronica Lueken: diocesan newspaper publication.
13. Archdiocese of Gwangju, summary and notifications concerning Naju, including the *non constat de supernaturalitate* status and restrictions: archdiocesan publication.
14. Diocese of Cleveland, Bishop Richard Lennon’s 11 November 2009 letter and decree concerning Holy Love Ministries: diocesan dossier.
15. Archdiocese of Baltimore, 2000 action concerning Gianna Talone-Sullivan’s Emmitsburg claims and the CDF’s 15 February 2003 letter advising a *constat de non supernaturalitate*: archdiocesan statement; CDF letter.

E.6 Negative and precautionary boundary acts

1. DDF, press release disclosing the 1974 papally approved *constat de non supernaturalitate* concerning Amsterdam (11 July 2024): official text.
2. Bishop Marco Salvi’s 6 March 2024 *constat de non supernaturalitate* concerning Trevignano Romano, and the DDF’s confirmation of its juridic validity: diocesan decree publication; DDF communication.

3. DDF, papally approved letter concerning Holy Mountain and Elenita de Jesús (1 August 2024), with *constat de non supernaturalitate* for identifications with Christ or Mary and associated apparitions or blood while preserving the value of her missionary witness: official text.
4. DDF, letter assigning *prae oculis habeatur* to the Mount S. Onofrio phenomenon (25 July 2025): official text.
5. DDF, “The Only Cross of Salvation,” authorizing a definitive *declaratio de non supernaturalitate* concerning Dozulé (3 November 2025), followed by Bishop Jacques Habert’s diocesan decree of 5 December 2025: DDF text; diocesan communiqué and decree.
6. Holy Office/CDF/DDF acts concerning Lipa, reproduced by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines: the 1951 negative decision approved by Pius XII, the CDF’s 11 December 2015 decree declaring the contrary local act null and void and reaffirming finality, and the 2023 instruction against anniversary activity: *CBCP Monitor*, vol. 26, no. 3, A3 and B5.
7. Garabandal negative-search boundary, rechecked 13 July 2026 against the complete DDF document index and the Diocese of Santander’s public site: no positive competent act was located. Non-discovery is used only to withhold a positive label, never as a negative ecclesiastical judgment.

E.7 Historical context

These historical works support context and reception, never supernatural origin or juridic status: Louis Châtellier, *The Religion of the Poor* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), on early-modern Catholic renewal; Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland* (Oxford University Press, 2010), on Polish Catholic identity; Eugene Hynes, *Knock* (Cork University Press, 2008); Jeffrey S. Bennett, *When the Sun Danced* (University of Virginia Press, 2012), on Fátima and modern Portugal; Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (University of Arizona Press, 1995); Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Rock, *Argentina, 1516–1987* (University of California Press, 1987); John M. Kirk, *Politics and the Catholic Church in Nicaragua* (University Press of Florida, 1992); and Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York University Press, 1994). The repository source audit maps each work to the exact contextual use and preserves the distinction between history and ecclesial judgment.

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