

THE DECREE

Rosa Mistica: Vatican nihil obstat explained

ECCLESIA

09_07_2024



**Ermes
Dovico**



Almost five years after the constitution of the diocesan Shrine of Mary, Mystical Rose and Mother of the Church, the story of the apparitions of Our Lady of Montichiari (province of Brescia), until today officially presumed, has reached a new historical turning point, summarised by the Latin expression *nihil obstat*.

Nothing now stands in the way of promoting the "spiritual proposal" linked to

the messages spread by the visionary Pierina Gilli (1911-1991). This was established by Bishop Pierantonio Tremolada in a decree published yesterday, 8 July 2024, in agreement with the Holy See and on the basis of the new Norms for proceeding in the discernment of alleged supernatural phenomena, issued last May by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. A *nihil obstat* is the highest degree of recognition obtainable in the ordinary way for alleged apparitions, given that the new Norms envisage a possible declaration of supernaturalness as an entirely exceptional possibility, which requires the prior authorisation of the Pope.

Hence one can understand the specific weight of the words written by Monsignor Tremolada, quoting passages from the same Norms: "DECREE that *Nihil obstat* to "appreciate the pastoral value and [...] also promote the diffusion of this spiritual proposal, also by means of possible pilgrimages" (Norms, n. 17); that, with reference to the cult to the Mystical Rose of Montichiari, the faithful "are authorised to give their adherence to it in a prudent manner" (Norms, art. 22, §1: cf. Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, n. 14), although this does not imply a declaration of the supernatural character of the phenomenon in question (cf. Norms, art. 22, §2), and recalling that the faithful are not obliged to believe in it".

The decree - presented yesterday in a press conference, in the presence of Msgr. Tremolada and Fr Marco Alba, rector of the Fontanelle Sanctuary - it is made explicit that the devotion to Mary, Mystical Rose is aimed at leading the faithful "towards the knowledge and love of her Son Jesus" and has rapidly spread to the five continents.

The text then gives an account of the abundance of spiritual fruits, such as: the emphasis on the "baptismal aspect of Christian life", enhanced by the "presence of the water and the pool" at the Shrine; the numerous confessions; "the constant prayer of intercession for priests and consecrated persons, for vocations to the priestly and religious life, for the difficult or fatiguing situations that such souls often find themselves in", which represents the special feature of this devotion, summarised by the three roses on Mary's breast - the white rose (symbolising prayer), the red rose (sacrifice), the yellow-gold rose (penance) - that repair the three categories of sins (the three swords) specific to consecrated souls.

The decree also mentions the direct testimonies of "conversions to the faith after a long absence from spiritual paths, the rediscovery of sacramental practice, the request of adults to begin catechumenate paths, spiritual and physical healings, deliverances from situations linked to esotericism, spiritualism, or various forms of addiction, or even the receipt of the unexpected gift of motherhood and the birth of vocations to the

consecrated life and the priesthood". Testimonies from "every part of the world", attested among other things by the ex-voto plaques in thanksgiving to the intercession of Mary Mystical Rose.

Confirming the ongoing dialogue with the Holy See, Mgr Tremolada's decree follows up on the letter of 5 July 2024 addressed to him by the Prefect of the DDF, Victor Manuel Fernández, explicitly mentioning the "clarifications" that the Argentinean Cardinal made with respect to certain messages transmitted by Pierina Gilli and that should henceforth be reported, as the Bishop of Brescia writes, in the dissemination of Pierina's writings "especially when the published texts refer to the themes explicitly mentioned therein".

However, the letter from Card. Fernández - while limiting himself to "a doctrinal-pastoral evaluation" that does not imply a declaration of supernaturalness - expresses a more than positive judgement of the facts related to Mystical Rose. "The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has found no elements in the messages circulated by Pierina Gilli that directly contradict the teaching of the Catholic Church on faith and morals. Neither can negative moral aspects or other critical aspects be found in the facts related to this spiritual experience. Rather, one can find several positive aspects that stand out in the messages as a whole and others that, on the other hand, deserve clarification in order to avoid misunderstandings'.

Among the positive aspects, the DDF notes that "Pierina's writings express a humble and complete trust in the maternal action of Mary and it is for this reason that we do not find in her attitudes of vainglory, self-sufficiency or vanity, but rather the awareness of having been gratuitously blessed by the nearness of the beautiful Lady, the Mystical Rose. Thus we find in the Diaries several texts extolling Mary, the Rose, emphasising her beauty, linked to goodness, and at the same time the effects experienced by those who encounter her'.

It is significant that the letter of Card. Fernandez reports long, and truly beautiful, passages from Gilli's Diaries, including some sentences received, according to the visionary, from Jesus and Mary. According to the prefect, "Pierina clearly recognises that everything that Mary does in us always directs us towards Jesus Christ". It cites an apparition of Jesus Himself, in all His majesty, who is said to have told Pierina: "Always keep your gaze fixed on Me in order to scrutinise and guess what I want from you, that is, I wish to take total possession of your faculties, so that you may always perform actions inspired by My Love" (27 February 1952). The DDF also appreciates the messages "that express a strong sense of ecclesial communion", and a couple are cited

in the Second Vatican Council in general and the new liturgy in particular.

On the other hand, with regard to the "texts that require clarification", the DDF prefect cites some messages in which Mary presents herself as Mediatrix between mankind and her divine Son and spares "chastisements" for humanity, guilty of continually offending God. According to Fernández, although "the messages as a whole make it clear that the intention is certainly not to convey an image of God or Christ that is distant or lacking in mercy", "this image of Mary as mediatrix 'lightning rod', often used in other times and also inherited by Pierina, must be avoided".

Again, the cardinal notes that "certain expressions appear" in the Diaries, which Pierina does not explain: thus we have "Mary Redemption", "Mary of Grace", "Mary Mediatrix" and the like". In short, referring to future in-depth studies on the issue, it seems from the letter that Fernández judges problematic the same widespread title of Mediatrix, which even the Council itself, in n. 62 of *Lumen Gentium*, accepts and specifies, obviously in a subordinate function to Christ, the only Mediator.

With regard to the three roses symbolising prayer, penance and sacrifice, the prefect acknowledges on the one hand that "these are three actions of great value" and "aspects of the Gospel" lived intensely by Pierina, but on the other he considers it reductive to interpret this "as a proposal valid for all the faithful": hence, also the invitation to "avoid presenting it as if it were the nucleus, the centre or the synthesis of the Gospel, which can only be charity". Yet, in Pierina's writings we read that Our Lady refers to the roses themselves and to those who practise this devotion as a "symbol of charity", one with prayer, penance and sacrifice that are an expression of love of God and neighbour.

Nonetheless, net of these clarifications, Fernández concludes that "the spiritual proposal that flows from the experiences narrated by Pierina Gilli in relation to Maria Rosa Mistica contains no theological or moral elements contrary to the doctrine of the Church".

A very precious acknowledgement, that comes in the week that will culminate on Saturday 13th July in the feast day proper of Rosa Mistica. This is no mere coincidence, because it is the DDF itself that strongly wanted the diocesan decree to arrive before this feast, as Don Marco Alba explains in an interview by Stefano Chiappalone for the *Daily Compass*.

The historical fact remains: Montichiari is the first case to be judged positively since the new Norms were issued and shows that an initial negative judgement by the

local prelates - as had happened with Msgr. Giacinto Tredici and his successors, until the change of course, in 2001, from Msgr. Giulio Sanguineti onwards - can be overturned. A fact that may open new scenarios also for Ghiaie di Bonate, where "the reality of my presence is denied", according to the message that Our Lady is said to have delivered to Pierina on 16 November 1947.