

INTERVIEW

## Vatican approves Maria Rosa Mistica apparitions, "historic turning point"

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"A historic turning point" for the diocese of Brescia, "which in reality brings to completion a journey that began more than twenty years ago": this is how Monsignor Marco Alba, rector of the sanctuary of Maria Rosa Mistica-Mother of the Church in

Fontanelle di Montichiari, comments to the *Daily Compass* Bishop Mgr. Pierantonio Tremolada's decree made public yesterday following the Letter from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), signed by Cardinal Prefect Fernández and countersigned by the Pope.

**Archbishop Tremolada decrees:** nihil obstat, nothing to the contrary. That is, the highest possible recognition according to the criteria of the new Norms on apparitions and supernatural phenomena. Recognition that no longer simply concerns the place as a Marian shrine (it has been since 2019) where the Virgin is venerated with the historic title of Mystical Rose. But even without expressing an opinion on supernaturalness (an eventuality now exceptionally reserved for the Pope alone), the positive nature of the messages that the Virgin is said to have communicated to Pierina Gilli (1911-1991), mainly in two cycles of apparitions in the 1940s and 1960s, is highlighted. Our Lady appeared to Pierina as the "Mystical Rose" and wore three roses symbolising prayer, sacrifice and penance, particularly for consecrated souls. The first cycle culminated with the apparition of 8 December 1947 in the cathedral of Montichiari; the second with the promise of healings and graces attached to an existing spring in the locality of Fontanelle, which Rosa Mistica blessed on the Sunday in albis of 1966. The *Daily Compass* interviewed Mgr Alba to understand the significance of this turning point which, moreover, takes place only days before the annual feast of the sanctuary on 13 July.

**Let us start from the central element highlighted by the decree: "an authentic Marian devotion".**

It is an authentic Marian devotion that can be linked, now in a more solid way, to Pierina Gilli's spiritual experience, recognised - according to the new norms on supernatural phenomena - as a path almost analogous to a charisma. We can thus be certain that there the Holy Spirit can act and lead us to better know and experience Christ and His love. Of course, this type of experience does not oblige anyone to believe in it and give the assent of intellect and faith, but those who wish to follow that path are reassured that it presents no dangers because it is doctrinally certain and the spiritual fruits that arise from it are certainly positive.

**Is this the highest recognition possible under the new norms?**

Exactly, according to the degrees of recognition that the Holy See currently provides, it is the maximum that can be achieved.

**Is there also a turning point as far as the figure of Pierina is concerned, even though there is no reference to supernaturalness?**

It is a historic turning point for our diocese, which actually brings to completion a path that began more than twenty years ago, in 2001, when the then Bishop Sanguinetti began to approve the cult, then his successor Msgr. Monari also gave impetus to the studies on Pierina, on the diocesan canonical process. The various steps regarding her human, spiritual, moral profile, her message, always carried out in agreement with the Congregation (later Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for Divine Worship, have led in these 23 years to shed much more light and clarity on Pierina and also to 'do her justice'.

**The enormous diffusion of the cult abroad must also have contributed....**

The diffusion in the five continents, the spiritual fruits, the fruits of conversion, prayer in particular for consecrated men and women, priests, the birth of new vocations and the guardianship of vocations, are now identified by the Dicastery itself as positive fruits and aspects of the devotion to Rosa Mistica.

**Regarding the fruits, the decree does not limit itself to a generic passage, but mentions vocations, numerous ex-votos and even the 'unexpected gift of motherhood'. Can you give some examples?**

The DDF had asked us to describe in as much detail as possible the fruits witnessed in these years, and so we have tried to coalesce around those points that have been highlighted there the most extraordinary facts that are reported to us. Two Sundays ago there was a mother there with twins in her arms and we blessed them under the statue of Our Lady because she felt they were her gift. Above all, this of motherhood is one of the fruits we encounter very often in the shrine. Or paths of liberation from difficult situations related to esoteric practices or spiritualism.

**What changes now in the life of the sanctuary?**

With this nihil obstat that the bishop gives in agreement with the DDF, it is now said with certainty that this is a place of Marian worship where pilgrims can find a certain path on which to proceed and deepen their faith, in their own dimension as children of God reborn in baptism.

Furthermore, it is confirmed to us that those peculiar aspects of this devotion - the symbolic image of the three roses, prayer, sacrifice, penance, prayer for consecrated life, for priests, for vocations, the request for physical and spiritual healings - can be anchored with tranquillity in Pierina Gilli's experience; and that she lived a true experience of faith on which the faithful can with greater certainty and serenity find a path of faith for their own personal journey.

**Is it by chance that all this comes just a few days before the feast of the shrine, which will fall on 13 July?**

We have been very surprised at how things have gone over the past month. There are some typical feast days, such as 13 July or 8 December, linked to the Hour of Grace, or Sunday in albis, centred on the bath as a source of grace: these aspects too can be enhanced, as they fundamentally encourage the faithful to rely more and more on the gift of the Eucharist, confession, and the rediscovery of baptism.

It is certainly providential that everything matured in such a short time and right now. Within a year, the study was completed with the Dicastery and the Prefect himself wanted to close it quickly - this is one of the purposes of the new norms, wanting to be more prompt, given also the worldwide diffusion of the cult - so we were 'pressed' a lot: Some elements were missing, they asked us for a little integration, especially on the devotional fruits, but Cardinal Fernandez told the bishop that they wanted to be able to close in this week precisely because they knew that the feast of Rosa Mistica falls on 13 July, so that this act would have its solemn, liturgical completion on 13 July.