

The Orthodoxy of Luisa Piccarreta’s Writings: A Response to Certain Doctrinal Objections

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The Orthodoxy of Luisa Piccarreta’s Writings: A Response to Certain Doctrinal Objections

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Introduction

One of the most controversial Catholic mystics of modern times has been the Third Order Dominican, the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta (1865-1947). She was born in Corato, in the province of Bari, Italy, on April 23, 1865, received only a first grade education, and was called to serve Our Lord as a victim soul at the age of 16. On February 28, 1899, she was given the obedience by her spiritual director to begin a diary of her spiritual experiences, which she continued until 1938: 36 notebooks which detail her intimate rapport with heaven.

According to the revelations contained in Luisa’s diary, the Holy Trinity wishes to complete their work of creation, redemption, and sanctification through a “Third Fiat,” an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Through this Third Fiat, the Holy Spirit will restore the original holiness of Adam and Eve to the earth and achieve the fulfillment of the Lord’s Prayer petition: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

The years since the opening of Luisa’s cause of beatification in 1994 have witnessed an explosion of interest in these ideas and in Luisa’s writings. In a forward to a recent English translation of Luisa’s diary, Archbishop Giuseppe Carata, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Trani-Nazareth, observed that souls “from all five continents” have testified to the transforming power of Luisa’s writings. “It is awesome,” he wrote, “that such abundant fruit, maturing in nations around the world, should have come forth from such a small tree planted by God here in Corato.”¹

Along with the growing interest in Luisa’s writings, objections regarding their orthodoxy have also proliferated. This should come as no surprise. On their own terms, the writings are revolutionary. They describe an unexpected initiative of the Holy Trinity on the same level of importance as the creation and redemption of the universe. It would be troubling if such a claim did *not* evoke some caution, some questions, in the hearts and minds of

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¹ Archbishop Giuseppe Carata, Archbishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of Trani-Nazareth, “Presentation of the English Edition of Luisa’s Writings,” June 8, 1995 (Jacksonville: Center for the Divine Will, 1995).

Christians. This certainly was the case the last time God moved in such a way, in the Redemption.

God's Second Fiat² came even to good and faithful Jews in a way that was unexpected, and even scandalous.³ Some Jews, like Mary, received it immediately. Others, like Paul, received it only after opposing it passionately. Some never did receive it. But in light of what they knew of God, his laws, and his past dealings with them, all of them had to test the "orthodoxy" of the staggering, wholly redimensioning claims made by "this Jesus." (Acts 2:36)

We must now do the same with the enormous proposal that Luisa makes to us in her writings. God wants us to test her claims, to see if they agree with the teachings of the Church. Over the past two thousand years of the Christian Revelation, God has wanted us to keep our hearts open to gifts consistent with it, while screening out "gifts" that are not: "Do not despise prophecies. Test everything; retain what is good." (I Thes. 5:20-21)

Archbishop Carmelo Cassati, ordinary of the Archdiocese of Trani-Nazareth where Luisa's cause is being advanced, underscores the importance of this task. In his letter of January 22, 1998, to the authorized promoters of the Kingdom of the Divine Will, he stated that "it is the task of those who explain her doctrine to others...to reconcile it with the teaching of the Church."

His statement describes two closely related but distinguishable endeavors, the latter of which rests upon the former: first, the task of reconciling Luisa's doctrine with Church teaching, second, the task of explaining it. The scope of this paper is limited to the first task. Certainly the work of reconciling her doctrine will, of necessity, involve some measure of explanation. But it will not require a comprehensive, systematic account of her doctrine. It is important to note why.

The Question at Issue: Faith and Morals

Consider how the Jews evaluated God's revelation of himself in the Incarnation and Redemption. It was incumbent upon them to compare his words and ways in the Old Testament with what Jesus said and did. They knew that if Jesus spoke and acted consistently with God's ways of old, he was, at least, not *unorthodox*. This evaluation would not definitively answer for them whether he (or John the Baptist or anyone else for

² In this paper I will use as a shorthand Luisa's terminology with respect to the three "fiats" of God: 1) Creation, 2) Redemption, and 3) Sanctification.

³ The fact that the Third Fiat might evoke similar responses certainly does not prove its validity. But neither does it disprove it. In fact, if we can hope for the possibility of another intervention of God in human history of such cosmic significance, we can expect that his mode of operation will be similar. For example, we can expect a radical consistency with the revelation that has preceded it, coupled with a radical deepening and redimensioning of it in surprising ways. We might also expect it to be introduced in hiddenness, through a human vessel.

that matter) was God's new revelation of himself, but they would at least know that Jesus was not *against* God's former revelation. This was the first and foundational question.

But answering this one question positively did not resolve all of their difficulties. For example, the first converts needed to determine that Jesus' description of himself as both "Son of God" and "Son of Man" was not *against* the faith they had been given by God. But merely making that determination did not give them a complete understanding of the hypostatic union. For two thousand years, the Church has been continuously and more deeply developing, explaining, and comprehending that doctrine.

I must immediately clarify that the public revelation of the Incarnation and Redemption and the private revelation to Luisa, even if it is legitimate, belong to entirely different orders of authority. Acceptance of and adherence to public revelation are required for salvation and growth in holiness. Acceptance of and adherence to Luisa's revelation, by the very terms of public revelation, are not.⁴

Nevertheless, in our evaluation of Luisa's private revelation concerning God's potential Third Fiat of Sanctification we can learn something from the first Christians' response to public revelation, the Second Fiat. First, we learn that, before we can open our hearts and minds to this new revelation, we must make sure that it does not contradict any truth revealed by God. If it does, we must reject it immediately. Even if we conclude that it does not, we do not necessarily accept it.⁵ But we *may*. And if we do, we then proceed to understand it more deeply.

Appreciating the distinction between reconciliation and explanation will be especially important, for example, when examining what Luisa has to say about "living in the divine will," that is, allowing the divine will to become the primary agent of one's acts while participating in all of the activity of God insofar as that is possible for a creature. It remains incumbent upon Luisa's promoters to *reconcile* this notion with the Church's doctrine on mystical union. But how could this concept ever be fully *explained*? Who, even among those who have actually experienced mystical union, could ever do this? "When theologians try to...they are obliged to relinquish the attempt, and to declare that this grace is so much above all human conceptions that it must be regarded as a mystery."⁶

⁴ Even though some people rightly claim that they were raised to a much higher level of sanctity or even saved through a private revelation, public revelation is still the lone source of their salvation and sanctity. Private revelation serves only as a lens to help the individual to see more clearly and to draw saving power more abundantly from the source, which is Christ's definitive (public) Revelation.

⁵ Since Luisa's writings are private revelation, we remain free to reject them (unlike public revelation) even if we (or the Church, for that matter) conclude that they contain nothing against faith and morals. But before rejecting them at that point, we should make sure that we are not limiting the openness to private revelation that God has asked of us, and especially that we are not limiting our capacity to receive his limitless love.

⁶ A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (Westminster, VT: Celtic Cross Books, 1978), p. 287. (Originally published in 1901).

Luisa wrote that the new and divine mystical union that Jesus offered to her (and, through her, to everyone else) is higher than the forms that have preceded it. Distilling and refining what she has written so as to explain *how* this can be will be important in the propagation of her spirituality. But it will not be necessary in answering the foundational question, namely, whether there is anything in her writings against faith and morals. In this regard, it will only be necessary to show that the form of mystical union she speaks of is not *against* the Church's teachings on mystical union. And, as I will show later, the broad terms of that teaching do not deny the possibility of higher and lower forms of mystical union.

The Critics and Their Criticisms

Of the several critics of the writings of Luisa Piccarreta I am only aware of two who have published any original theological reflection: Fr. Terrence Staples and Fr. William Most. The rest seem to do little more than quote and embellish the work of these two priests. If there are others who have anything original to add to the discussion, I do not know of them, and so in this paper I will limit my response to the writings of Fathers Staples and Most.

The following is a summary of Fr. Staples' and Fr. Most's objections to Luisa's writings which will also serve as the outline of this paper:

1. Luisa's writings constitute new public revelation. This is the principal objection. We know as a matter of faith that the entire deposit of Christian doctrine has been handed on from the apostles and that "no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord." Luisa's openly novel Third Fiat is seen as an attempt to add to the deposit of faith.
2. Luisa claims to describe a new type of holiness. This is closely connected to the first objection. "What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith." To suggest that two thousand years later God would introduce a new form of holiness that would far surpass the holiness of the saints of old is taken not only as a violation of this doctrine but as a theological impossibility.
3. Luisa advocates Monotheletism. Luisa describes this new form of holiness, "living in the divine will," as the ultimate union of the human will with the divine will. To her critics, the language she uses appears to reintroduce an early Christian heresy which held that Christ in effect had only a divine will and not a human will.
4. Miscellaneous Objections. a) Luisa places herself on par with Mary: Luisa writes that Jesus chose her to serve the unique role of ushering in the Third Fiat. This is taken as an affront to Mary's unique role and to her unparalleled holiness. b) Mary had no human love for St. Joseph. c) It is improper to speak of acting "divinely": Luisa's new form of

“divine holiness” is accused of denying the necessary involvement of human action. d) Luisa advocates Quietism: Some critics interpret Luisa’s form of mystical union as Quietism, a heresy condemned for its emphasis on extinguishing all human desire and activity. e) The Old Testament Jews merited the Redemption.

Objection #1: Luisa's Writings Constitute New Public Revelation

Fr. Staples⁷ begins this objection with a summary of Church teaching on public and private revelation (with emphasis from his original):

“1. ‘The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away; and **no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ** (cf. I Tim 6:14, I Tit 2:13).’ (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), para. 4.)

“2. ‘**Everything we need for holiness and increase in faith has been handed on from the Apostles once and for all** (cf. Jude 3). **What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith.** In this way the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, **all that she believes.**’ (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), para. 8.)

“3. ‘And **Tradition transmits in its entirety** the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit.’ (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), para. 9.)

“4. ‘Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. **It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation**, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church’

‘**Christian faith cannot accept “revelations” that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment**, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such “revelations”’ (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #67)”

After this summary of Church teaching, Fr. Staples proceeds to quote various passages from Luisa’s writings and then shows how, in his view, each one violates Church teaching. He numbers each of these selections, and for the sake of easy reference I will generally follow his sequence of passages. For each I will begin with the selection from Luisa along with his arguments, and then proceed with my analysis. I duplicate his bold-facing. My own emphasis is in italics.

⁷ Reference here is made to his paper of October 16, 1997 entitled, “Is Luisa Piccarreta’s ‘Kingdom of the Divine Will’ Catholic?” He offers no additional arguments in his article “Divine Will Hunting” in the May/June 1998 *Envoy Magazine*.



Fr. Staples' passage #1:

Jesus says to Luisa: "Having sent forth from the bosom of my Creative Power the first two FIATs, I wish to emit the third FIAT, since I cannot contain my Love any longer. **This will complete the work that poured forth from Me. Otherwise, the work of Creation as well as Redemption would remain incomplete.**"⁸

Fr. Staples takes this passage to mean that "Luisa is claiming that via her 'private revelation' God is revealing to the entire Church the full meaning of creation and redemption. Furthermore, **she is claiming that without her the redemption would remain incomplete!**" What she is saying either "adds to" or "surpasses" Christ's definitive Revelation.

My response: As Fr. Staples' aforementioned passages from the Catechism and *Dei Verbum* make clear, public revelation is, in one sense, "complete." Nothing more of substance may be added to the deposit of faith. But in quite another sense Christ's definitive Revelation is "incomplete" in that it is not yet fully explicated:

Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.⁹

Furthermore, we recognize that we do not yet have the "plenitude of divine truth." We await the "fulfillment" of the words of God in the Church:

The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on... Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her.¹⁰

Therefore, it is not *necessarily* a violation of Church teaching for a private revelation to claim that God's work in Redemption (or Creation) is "incomplete." We would have to examine the context: Is the intent to suggest that something was substantively *missing* in

⁸ This, and each of Fr. Staples' selections, is from *When the Divine Will Reigns in Souls, Book of Heaven: A Selection of Passages* (The Luisa Piccarreta Center for the Divine Will, Jacksonville, FL. 1995). This particular selection is from p. 115. Fr. Staples abbreviates this as "BH 115" which I will also use. I will also try to provide the date and volume of each selection. This passage, for example, would be cited as "January 24, 1921, (12), BH 115." Note also that some of my BH selections will be worded differently as they are taken from English translations of the Italian. BH is a translation into English of a Spanish translation from the Italian.

⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #66. Hereinafter I will cite the Catechism of the Catholic Church as "CCC."

¹⁰ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), para. 8.

God's work of Redemption, and that the private revelation is now "filling in a hole"? Or is it to suggest that his work is not yet fully explicated or fulfilled, and that the private revelation is moving us in that direction? If intended in this latter sense, it would be entirely acceptable for a private revelation to claim that God is revealing a fuller meaning to, and a more complete accomplishment of, his works of Creation and Redemption.

If the selection above, standing alone, does not clarify that Luisa means the latter and not the former, consider it in the context of these other passages in which Luisa reports what Jesus told her about his "completion" of the First and Second Fiats:

Jesus: "...(T)o make (these teachings about the Third Fiat) known is merely to fulfill the things I had to do while I was in this world, as a fulfillment of my Coming. Do you not wish, therefore, that I fulfill the purpose for my Coming into the world?"¹¹

Jesus describes himself as "a perfect Being Who is incapable of performing incomplete acts, perfect and complete acts are necessary in order to give Him honour and pleasure."¹²

Jesus: "My daughter, all my works are complete. Thus the glory that the creature should give Me will be complete, and the last day will not come if all creation does not give Me the honor and glory desired and established by Me."¹³ Comment: The works of God are always complete, but what has been returned to God by man remains, for the time being, incomplete.

Jesus: "My daughter, my crucifixion was complete...My Will does not know how to do little or incomplete things."¹⁴

Jesus: "It is only because my Humanity lived in the center of the Divine Will that I was able to encompass all in a single act. *I was thus able to complete the work of Redemption in a manner befitting Myself.* Had it been otherwise, the work of redemption would have been incomplete and unworthy of Myself."¹⁵

Jesus: "My daughter, if my Supreme Will would not have given entrance to my Human Will in the Divine Will, my Humanity, however holy and pure, would not have been able to form the *complete Redemption.*"¹⁶

Jesus: "The plan of Redemption and that of the 'Fiat Voluntas Tua,' as in Heaven so on earth, would not have been worthy of Me if I had not rehabilitated man, in

¹¹ June 2, 1921, (13).

¹² October 29, 1914, (11), BH 59.

¹³ May 22, 1919, (12), BH 102.

¹⁴ May 15, 1920, (12).

¹⁵ October 19, 1922, (14).

¹⁶ August 5, 1923, (16).

everything, as he was created. He would have been a work done in half measure—incomplete—and your Jesus does not know how to do incomplete work.”¹⁷

Jesus: “And I, coming upon the earth, had to do as a God; *I had to complete in everything the work of man*; I had to raise him to the first point of his origin, by giving him the possession of my Will. And, although many make use of my Coming as remedy for their salvation, and therefore take my Will as medicine, as strength, as antidote in order to not go to Hell, I still wait so that souls rise who will take It as Life; and, in making It known, they take possession of It. *In this way I will complete the work of my Coming* upon the earth and will have the fruit of the Divine Graft formed anew with the creature, and my tears will be changed into Celestial and Divine smiles for Me and for them.”¹⁸ Comment: This passage includes both nuances: Jesus’ work was both complete and incomplete.

In summary, we know as a matter of faith that, in a sense, God’s work in Creation and in Redemption is not yet completed. But, as a matter of faith, we know very little about *how* he will complete it. We only know two things: 1) that he will do it, and 2) that he will do it in a way that does not contradict Church teaching on faith and morals. Could he possibly do it by way of the Third Fiat described by Luisa? Yes, as long as what is presented in the writings does not contradict Church teaching. And since we know that simply claiming that the First and Second Fiats are “incomplete” presents no such contradiction, completion through the Third Fiat is a possibility.

Could God choose to introduce his work of “completion” through, and even contingent upon, the free consent of an otherwise obscure human virgin? He certainly introduced the Fiat of Redemption in this fashion. No article of faith forbids this possibility. Nowhere does Luisa claim, as Fr. Staples asserts, that “without *her* the redemption would remain incomplete.” It is God who does the completing; Luisa merely consents to let him act through her. Jesus’ language in the passage at issue makes that clear enough: “*I wish to emit the third FIAT...*”

While Luisa’s writings indicate that her consent is the “first link” in God’s final work of sanctification, they also state that the ultimate end of this “completing” Third Fiat would take place after her death through the cooperation of other Christians who will also accept God’s invitation to “live in his divine will.”¹⁹ Neither Luisa’s writings nor the achievements of her life “complete” the work of Creation and Redemption. They are merely the setting into motion of that completion. Such a method of “completing” the works of Creation and Redemption is certainly neither constrained nor explicitly prophesied by Christ’s definitive Revelation. But neither is it forbidden by those terms, and that is the critical question here.

¹⁷ November 10, 1923, (16).

¹⁸ December 20, 1925, (18).

¹⁹ See, for example, July 10, 1922, (14), Jesus: “This will be the *beginning* of the coming of my Reign upon the earth and of the ultimate fulfillment of my Will.”



In the following passage (#2) Fr. Staples claims that, “Luisa is saying that the ministers of the Church must receive from her the message of the Divine Will in order to fulfill God’s plan. One cannot be obligated through necessity to follow a private revelation”:

Jesus to Luisa: “Now, daughter, you also [i.e. along with Mary] are unique in my Mind; and you will be unique in history. There will not be - either before you or after you - any other creature for whom **I will obligate through necessity** the assistance of my Ministers... How much attention is required from you and them. **You, in receiving from Me**, as a second mother, The Great Gift Of My Will and to know all Its qualities, and **my ministers in receiving It from you** to Fulfill In My Church The ‘*Fiat Voluntas Tua*’ in Heaven as It is on earth.”²⁰

My response: The issue is whether this passage implies that priests were obligated to assist Luisa, or whether Luisa was obligated to receive their assistance. Though the sentence itself is somewhat ambiguous,²¹ its meaning becomes clearer in the context of this journal entry taken as a whole, of other related passages,²² and of the circumstances of her life. Luisa begins this entry lamenting the fact that she alone has to bother the priests:

This martyrdom of having to bother others is only for me. It is troublesome to be a burden to the ministers, not being able to do anything but bother them with the events taking place between Jesus and me. Others, on the other hand are free. They enter a state of suffering and are able to free themselves.²³

For most of her life, every evening, Luisa would fall into a mystical state of total physical paralysis. Only by the presence and command of a priest would she be able to come out of this state the following morning. When she first began to have these mystical experiences, she would sometimes be left in this state for days on end until finally, and often reluctantly, a priest would come. This caused her not only great physical pain, but considerable embarrassment. She did not wish to need this “assistance” but it was imposed upon her by Jesus.²⁴ Additionally, Jesus insisted that she follow his requests, especially that she suffer as a victim soul, only if she received her confessor’s permission.

²⁰ July 11, 1923, (15), BH 12.

²¹ The original is no less ambiguous: “Ora, figlia mia, anche tu sei unica nella mia Mente, e sarai anche unica nella storia; e non ci sara’, ne’ prima di te, ne’ dopo, un’ altra creatura a cui faro’ avere, come costretto da necessita’, l’assistenza dei miei Ministri.”

²² See, for example, the opening line of the entry for September 18, 1924 (17): “I was meditating about what is written concerning living in the Divine Will. I prayed to Jesus that He would give me more light to better explain and clarify this blessed living in the Divine Will to those *to whom I am obligated.*”

²³ July 11, 1923, (15), BH 11.

²⁴ See Volume 1, p. 66, undated passage, under title, “A new, very heavy cross for Luisa: The subjection, as victim, to the power of priests. The very severe suffering she had to bear from them.” See also, from later in her life, August 12, 1918 (12), Luisa: “Continuing in my usual state, I was thinking to myself that if the Lord wanted anything from me, He should give me a sign; and it is that of *freeing me from the coming of the Priest*” (emphasis added).

Luisa's submission to the direction of priests extended to the project of her writings. From the opening line of Volume 1, the writings repeatedly indicate that whatever and whenever Luisa wrote, she wrote only under obedience to her confessors. She was to record for them whatever she experienced and received from Jesus.

In the passage cited above, Jesus seems to be saying that no other seer in history has been placed under such a strict obligation to submit her revelations and her experiences to the direction, and often to the whims, of priests. Thus, even though no-one in the Church would ultimately be obligated to believe and to follow this private revelation, Jesus still insisted that it be delivered in strict submission to the ministers of the Church.

Furthermore, even taken the other way - that priests were obligated to assist Luisa - this passage still does not support Fr. Staples' conclusion that they were obligated to follow her private revelation. The bishop, once aware of Luisa's condition, did instruct priests to assist her. But he merely directed them to assist a suffering soul. As instructed, she related to them the revelations she had received, and, as instructed, they received them from her. But this does not imply that these priests (or anyone else) were obligated to believe and follow her revelations.



Fr. Staples believes that in the following section (#3) Luisa claims supremacy over the Church and that she "is claiming to have received a new 'deposit' of faith which parallels the revelation given to the Apostles." Jesus to Luisa:

Since my Mother was entrusted to Me and, being a Priest to Her, I entrusted to Her as a sanctuary **all the laws, precepts and doctrines that the Church needed to possess**. And, faithful as She was and zealous for even one of my words so they would not be lost, She deposited them in my faithful disciple, John. And **for that reason my Mother has supremacy over all the Church. In the same way I have done this with you**. Being necessary to serve the *Fiat Voluntas Tua* to all the Church, I have entrusted you to one of my ministers so that you might deposit in him everything I reveal to you about my Will: The Goods that it contains and how the creature should enter into it and how **the paternal kindness wants to open another era** of grace, putting the goods he possesses in heaven in common with the creature and restoring to man his lost happiness.²⁵

My response: It is helpful to begin by clarifying what Jesus means when he says "in the same way I have done this with you." Fr. Staples presumes that he refers to the clause that immediately precedes this statement, i.e., that Jesus is giving Luisa supremacy over the Church in an identical manner and measure as he did with his mother. But the sense of the paragraph as a whole does not support this interpretation. Jesus is more likely saying

²⁵ July 11, 1923, (11), BH 14.

that in delivering these truths to Luisa he is acting with her in the same general manner that he acted with his mother: As he entrusted to Mary one deposit of truth (i.e., *the* deposit of faith) to give to the Church, so he is now giving another “deposit of truth” (i.e., a development of the deposit of faith) to Luisa to give to the Church. Both are “needed” by the Church, but in entirely different orders of need.

Jesus gave to his Mother all the “laws, precepts and doctrines that the Church needed to possess” to know and follow the *binding* truths of the Second Fiat of Redemption. He gave to Luisa all of the “laws, precepts and doctrines that the Church needed to possess” to know and follow the *non-binding* truths of the Third Fiat of Sanctification. It is evident throughout the writings of Luisa that one may freely (though unfortunately) reject the gift of this “new and divine holiness” without any fear of losing either his salvation or the measure of holiness he has attained. This is quite unlike the gift of the Redemption. If one rejects it, he rejects both salvation and any measure of holiness.

This contrast between the binding and non-binding natures of the “deposits” entrusted to Mary and Luisa respectively, also informs our understanding of the measure of “supremacy over all the Church” which each enjoys. Mary’s is absolute: applicable to the entire, essential “deposit of faith” which she gave to the Church. Luisa’s is relative: applicable only to that particular, non-essential (that is, not essential to any particular person’s salvation and holiness) deposit which she gave to the Church. At the very worst Luisa is claiming, “Jesus has given me primacy within the Church with respect to these truths which, tremendous though they may be, anyone is free to reject.” This does not contradict any article of Catholic faith.



Luisa speaks many times in her writings about a new way of union with God, a new way of praying. Fr. Staples cites this representative passage (#4) from Our Lord’s revelations to Luisa:

It is certain that I have called you first over other souls. Because **to no other souls**, however much I have loved them, **have I shown How to live in my Will**, The effects, the marvels, the riches that the creature receives who acts in my supreme will. **Search the lives of the Saints as much as you wish or in books of doctrine and you will not find the wonders of My Will working in the creature and the creature acting in my will. The most you will find will be resignation, abandonment, the union of wills, but the divine will working in the creature and the creature in my will, you will not find this in anyone.** This signifies that the time had not arrived in which my kindness would call the creature to live in such a sublime state. Moreover, **even the way I ask you to pray is not found in any other...**²⁶

²⁶ October 6, 1922, (14), BH xix.

Fr. Staples' comment begins: "Notice here that Luisa does not claim that her teachings are in any way connected with the Tradition received." He then explains why all developments of doctrine and legitimate private revelations must be organically connected to Sacred Tradition.

My response: The problem with his analysis is that it is built upon an erroneous premise: Luisa is not claiming what he says she is claiming. She (actually Jesus) only claims that what he is disclosing to her now has never been disclosed before in the lives of the saints or in any books of doctrine. This alone does not amount to a disconnection or disassociation from Sacred Tradition. Novelty is not the equivalent of discontinuity. To prove that what Luisa wrote is against the faith, it is not enough just to show its novelty vis a vis the lives of the saints and books of doctrine. It must also be shown that the actual substance of the novelty is theologically disconnected from Sacred Tradition.

Imagine a young apple tree that has sprouted from the seed and just emerged from the earth. If we were to search the tree thoroughly, nowhere on it or in it would we find an apple. Later, the young tree sends out a multitude of branches and leaves. But there is still no apple. Finally, one season, "fruiting buds" emerge. If we were to examine one of these, even under the microscope, we would still not find an apple. Next, the bud matures and then blossoms. But search the blossom and we will still not find an apple. At last, the blossom is pollenized, and its petals fall to the earth. What remains now, where the blossom had been, is an apple in its tiniest form. For the first time in the life of the apple tree, it has brought forth something that is both entirely continuous with the life of the tree, and yet never before seen in or on the tree. Furthermore, for the first time the tree becomes charged with a previously unseen and unimagined potency to create new life.²⁷

In this passage Jesus is not separating the new wonder of his will working in the creature and the creature acting in his will from Sacred Tradition. He is showing that it is not merely a repeat of anything that has preceded it.



Fr. Staples' failure to distinguish novelty from discontinuity also leads him to misjudge what Luisa has to say here about the "Our Father":

Jesus to Luisa: "It is true that ever since I came to the earth the Church prays the 'Our Father' which asks that my Kingdom come so that my Will be done on earth as It is in Heaven. But who thinks of what they are asking for? It can be said that all the importance of this request remained in my Will and that creatures pray it only to pray it, without really comprehending, nor having real interest in obtaining what they are asking for."²⁸

²⁷ See November 28, 1922 (15).

²⁸ September 13, 1926, (17), BH 19.

Fr. Staples interprets this passage as follows (I have taken the liberty of splitting a part of his sentence into two clauses): “Luisa clearly states that the interpretation she is giving to the Our Father (1) is without precedent and (2) is not rooted in Tradition.” Even if conclusion #1 has been shown, and it is not clear that it has been, conclusion #2 has not. It neither follows as a necessary, logical consequence of conclusion #1 nor has it been shown by separate analysis to be true. For Fr. Staples to prove that what Luisa says is against the faith, he must show not merely that it has not been seen before in Tradition, but that it contradicts some aspect of Tradition. This he has not done.



Luisa’s writings do in fact show that the newness of her private revelation has its roots in Christ’s definitive Revelation. In several passages Jesus says that his present work in accomplishing the Third Fiat is intimately connected with his prior work in accomplishing the Second Fiat. More precisely, *all* of his work with respect to *both* Fiats was accomplished at the time of the Redemption. It is just that he has waited until now to open up or bring to fruition what he himself had hidden within the fabric of his definitive Revelation. The following passages point to this phenomenon of “the new hidden within the old”:

Jesus: “*Now I have already transformed the first plane of human acts into divine acts in my Volition. I left these acts as if suspended and the creature did not know anything about this, except my dear and inseparable Mother. And this was necessary. And if man did not know the way, the door, and the rooms of my Humanity, how could he have entered to do what I did. But now the time has come for the creature to enter into this plane and do his acts in mine.*”²⁹

Comment: This passage indicates that the work of the Third Fiat, i.e. the re-establishment of a plane of human acts in the divine acts, was done by Jesus at the time of the Incarnation. Only now is the knowledge of it being revealed and the door into it being opened up to man. It is therefore not new in the sense of being a mutation or an alien “splice” into the faith, but new in the sense of being a glorious opening up of what had actually been imbedded there all along.

Jesus: “Oh, how much easier it was for Me to impetrate man’s salvation than to reorder his interior in my Supreme Volition! But *if it would not have been done, the Redemption would not have been complete*; nor would it have been a work worthy of a God; nor would I have adjusted or placed all the parts of man in order; nor would I have restored the sanctity lost by his having withdrawn from the Divine Will and broken his relationship with It. *The plane is already made.* But to make it known, it was first necessary that man know that by my Life and Passion, he obtained pardon and safety; and it was also necessary to dispose him to know that it was for him that I impetrated the greatest and most important thing:

²⁹ October 6, 1922, (14). This passage in the original immediately precedes the excerpt identified in footnote #26 above.

the resurrection of his volition in Mine in order to return to him his nobility and his original state—the relationship of my Will with his.”³⁰

Jesus: “(My) Human Will...(l)iving together with the Divine...enlarged Its boundaries in the Eternal One and prepared the Redemption *and* the ‘Fiat Voluntas Tua,’ as in Heaven so on earth.”³¹

Jesus: “When I came upon the earth, man was so engulfed in evil and so full of the human will that living in my Volition did not find its place; and I, in my Redemption, impetrated for him: first, the grace of resignation to my Will, because in the manner in which he found himself, he was incapable of receiving the greatest gift of living in my Volition; and second, I impetrated for him the greatest grace as crown and fulfillment of all graces—the living in my Volition—so that Our pure joys of creation and Our innocent amusements would again retake their course upon the face of the earth.”³²

Jesus: “And if I came upon the earth, the first act was essentially to make known the Will of my Father, to reestablish it with creatures. The suffering, the humiliations, my hidden life and all the immensity of the pains of my Passion were remedies, medicine, assistance, light to make known my Will because with this I would not only have made man safe, but holy. With my pains I put him in safety; *with my Will I restored to him the sanctity lost in the terrestrial Eden. If I had not done this, my love and my work would not have been complete* as it was in Creation, because it is my Will alone that has the power to make our work for man complete as well as man's work for Us.”³³

Luisa: “Jesus, my Love, if You love so much for your Will to operate in the creature as in the act in which You created it, as if there had not been any rupture between your Will and that of the creature *when You came upon the earth to redeem us, why did You not give this great good then*, so that your Will, triumphing over all, would have placed us in the order of the Creation as we went forth from the hands of our Celestial Father?”

And Jesus, going out from my interior, squeezed me tightly to his Heart and, with unspeakable tenderness, said to me: “My daughter, *the primary purpose of my coming upon the earth was really that man would return into the bosom of my Volition as he went forth when he was created.* To do that, though, my Volition had to form, by means of my Humanity, the roots, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the blossoms from which must come forth the Celestial fruits of my Volition.”³⁴

³⁰ August 13, 1923, (16).

³¹ November 20, 1923, (16).

³² February 22, 1924, (16).

³³ June 3, 1925, (17).

³⁴ January 28, 1926, (18). See also March 28, 1926, (19), and June 6, 1926 (19), for similar exchanges between Luisa and Jesus.

Jesus: “My daughter, from the instant in which my Humanity was conceived, I began to create the new Kingdom of my Will upon the earth, extending its dominion over every act that my Humanity conceived.”³⁵



For the sake of maintaining categories, I am skipping over Fr. Staples’ selections #5, #6 and #8 for the moment, but will return to them in my response to Objection #2. This following passage (#7), however, elaborates upon the charges of novelty and discontinuity that lie at the heart of this first objection:

With the three FIATs I will complete the work of sanctification in man...The generations will not cease until my Will reigns on earth. My Redemptive FIAT will interpose itself between the Creative FIAT and the Sanctifying FIAT. They will entwine, all three together, and **bring to fulfillment the sanctification of man.** The Third FIAT (i.e. Luisa’s) will give creatures such grace that they will return almost to their original state. Only when I have seen man as he emerged from Me, will my work be complete. Then will I enjoy perpetual repose in this, my last FIAT. Only the Life of my Will shall return man to his original state. Therefore, be attentive and together with Me, help Me accomplish the sanctification of creatures.³⁶

My response: Again, Fr. Staples is troubled that Luisa speaks, in any sense, of God’s work being “incomplete.” I have already shown that there is a paradox involved here: we not only can but must understand that God’s work, e.g., in Redemption, is both complete and yet not completed. With respect to Luisa’s statement that the completing of his work will come through a Third Fiat of Sanctification, Fr. Staples claims that, “This is not only absent from the deposit of faith, it contradicts it!” Again, while it is true that no explicit mention of a Third Fiat is found in the deposit of faith, that fact alone does not prove that it contradicts the faith. One must go on to show that the *substance* of the Third Fiat contradicts the faith.

Fr. Staples offers this test of the orthodoxy of private revelation: “the teaching given in any private revelation must be demonstrable from Scripture and Tradition apart from any reference to the private revelation itself.” The teaching of Luisa’s private revelation here is essentially this: God wishes to bring to fulfillment the work of sanctification that he has begun in man. This does not contradict the deposit of faith. It conforms to it and affirms it. Scripture and Tradition have continuously taught that God will do this in us. How he will do it we do not know. What we will be like after he does it we do not know. We only know that he will do it. The question of orthodoxy is not answered by whether

³⁵ December 29, 1926, (20).

³⁶ February 22, 1921, (12), BH 125.

Scripture and Tradition indicate that a Third Fiat would *necessarily* be the means. The question is whether they *allow* for it as a possible means.



Father Staples groups the following four passages together (#9, #10, #11, #12) and then provides one general commentary for all of them.

Jesus to Luisa: "...in my All-Seeingness I see that **these writings will be for my church as a new sun that will rise in her midst.** And men, attracted by its radiant light, will strive to transform themselves into this light to become spiritualized and divinized, thereby, renewing the Church, they shall transform the face of the earth."³⁷

Jesus to Luisa: **These revelations** regarding my Volition will be as a balm to heal the wounds produced by the human will. Whoever has the benefit of **this knowledge** will feel the flow of a new life of light, of grace and of strength to fulfill my Will in everything...My daughter, the Kingdom of my Will is invincible. **In these writings I have placed superabundant light, grace and attraction to make my kingdom victorious. To the extent that these writings become known,** they will wage a sweet battle against the human will and will win."³⁸

Jesus to Luisa: "By living in this Divine Volition, the soul is clothed in a light similar to the light of the One in Whom she lives. And **even in Heaven she will shine more brightly than the others** and will be for the very Saints the cause of Greater glory."³⁹

"I [Luisa], upon hearing this, said to myself: 'Soon He will say that his Will is more than Sacramental Communion Itself.' Then He immediately added: 'Right! Right! Because Sacramental Communion lasts a few minutes. It is temporary. My Will, on the other hand, is perennial Communion...That is why **I want so badly for my creatures to take my Will. This is what matters most to Me, what interests Me most.** And **nothing else interests Me so much,** not even the most holy things. Only when I obtain that the soul live on my Will do I feel triumphant, because **in this is contained the greatest good there can be in Heaven and on earth.**"⁴⁰

³⁷ February 10, 1924, (16), BH 3,4.

³⁸ August 14, 1926, (19), BH 16.

³⁹ February 12, 1906, (7), BH 23.

⁴⁰ March 23, 1910, (9), BH 36-7.

Fr. Staples begins his commentary with a summary of these passages: “Here, Luisa claims Jesus told her that God’s greatest desire is that we adhere to this private revelation and so enter into the Divine Will.”

My response: This is not what Luisa claims. Fr. Staples confuses the means with the end. Jesus indeed says in #12 that God’s greatest desire for man is that he enter into his divine will. He is enthusiastic about these writings because of their efficacy as a means of attaining that end.

The purpose or object of any private revelation is “to help man live more fully by Christ’s definitive Revelation.” Consonant with that purpose, the writings of Luisa are to help man to achieve the ultimate purpose of Christ’s definitive Revelation. The writings themselves do not propose to complete that Revelation. Nor do they impose adherence upon anyone. They simply state that God, working in souls as described by Luisa, will ultimately complete the work that he has begun in man. That is his greatest desire for us, however it is accomplished.

Distinguishing between means and end is also key to understanding what Jesus says in #12 (and #13 below) about the Eucharist. The Eucharist is indeed the most efficacious source of our spiritual growth, but it is given to us as a means to accomplishing an end, “the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God.”⁴¹ Man continuously living in the divine will “surpasses” the Eucharist not as one means surpasses another, but as the end surpasses the means.

“(I)n order that the liturgy (and the Eucharist) may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions...”⁴² Anything that helps to dispose and attune the will of the faithful to the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist should be encouraged. The following passages may help to clarify that Jesus and Luisa, far from depreciating the value of the Eucharist, are intending to help it accomplish its full effect in man. The divine will is “superior” to the Eucharist because it is the source and the perfection of the Eucharist. There was a time when the Eucharist was not needed (before the fall) and there will be a time when it will not be needed again (in heaven). But the divine will is the timeless foundation of everything. It always has been and it always will be.

In the following passage, Luisa responds to questions that had been raised by her Confessor precisely on this topic of the superiority or centrality of the divine will over the Eucharist:

Luisa: “I had told the Confessor that Jesus had told me that God's Will is the soul's center, and that this center resides within the core of the soul, and that - like the sun - It expands Its rays to give light to the mind, holiness to actions, strength to steps, life to the heart, and power to words and to everything else; and not only

⁴¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, para. 10.

⁴² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, para. 11.

that, but this center of God's Will - while it is within us in order to keep us from escaping and from remaining in our own continual disposition, and not leaving us alone or separating Itself from us, not even for a minute - is also in front of us, to the right of us, to the left of us, and behind us. It is everywhere, even in Heaven where our center will be. But the Confessor said that our center, instead, is the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Now, upon arriving, Blessed Jesus said to me:

“My daughter, I had to go about it in such a way, whereby, Sanctity would be easy and accessible to all, for not everyone desires Sanctity on every condition, in every circumstance, and in all places. It is true that the Most Blessed Sacrament is the center, but Who instituted It? Who subdued my Humanity and enclosed it within the small circumference of a Host? Was it not my Will? Therefore, my Will always excels above all else. Moreover, if everything is said to reside in the Eucharist, then the Priests who call Me down from Heaven into their hands and who are - more than anybody else - in contact with my Sacramental Flesh, ought to be the holiest, the best; but instead, so many of them are evil. How afflicted I am over how they treat Me in the Most Blessed Sacrament! Furthermore, the many souls who receive Me - perhaps every day - ought to be many saints, if this Eucharist - being at the center - sufficed. But instead, the situation is such that one ought to cry, since these souls are always at the same point: conceited, quick-tempered, stubborn, etc.... How afflicted is this Eucharist in Its center; how It is dishonored!

“On the other hand, the mother of a family who does my Will, and who, due to her conditions, is not able to receive Me every day - not that she does not want to - appears as being patient, charitable, bearing within herself the perfume of my Eucharistic virtues. Ah! Is it perhaps to the Sacrament, or to my Will, that she submits herself, which keeps her subdued and which thereby takes the place of the Most Blessed Sacrament? Rather, I shall further explain, the Sacraments themselves produce fruits, according to measure in which souls are submitted to my Will - according to the measure in which they are connected with my Will, whereby, producing the effects. And if there is no connection with my Will, they will receive Communion but remain starving; they will go to Confession but always remain filthy; they will come to my Sacramental Presence, but if our wills do not confront each other, I will be to them as one who is dead, because only my Will in the soul - which subdues her - produces all goods and gives life to the Sacraments themselves. If there are those who cannot comprehend this, it means that they are yet babies in Religion.”⁴³

Later, Luisa repeats this question, not just with respect to the Eucharist but with respect to all the Sacraments:

⁴³ September 25, 1913, (11), BH 48.

Luisa: “I was thinking to myself: ‘How can it be that to do the Will of God surpasses the very Sacraments?’ Then Jesus, moving in my interior, said to me:

‘My daughter, and why are the Sacraments called Sacraments? Because they are Sacred! They have the value and power to bestow Grace and Holiness. Nevertheless, these Sacraments work according to the dispositions of creatures, so much so that many times they remain even totally fruitless, without the power to bestow the goods that they contain.

‘Now my Will is Sacred and Holy, and contains all the virtue of all the Sacraments together. Not only this, but It does not have to work to dispose the soul to receive the goods that my Will contains. Rather the soul, as soon as she disposes herself to do my Will, has already disposed herself. Then my Will, finding everything prepared and disposed - even at the cost of any sacrifice - communicates Itself without delay to the soul, pours into her the goods It contains, and forms the heroes and martyrs of the Divine Volition and the most unheard-of prodigies.

‘Furthermore, what are the Sacraments doing, if not uniting the soul with God? Moreover, what is living in my Will? Isn't it perhaps uniting the will of the creature with her Creator and losing herself in the Eternal Volition? The nothing ascending to the All, and the All descending into the nothing? It is the most noble, most Divine, most pure, most beautiful and most heroic act that the creature can do.’”⁴⁴

It is apparent in Luisa’s writings that Jesus wishes souls receiving the gift of living in the divine will to continue receiving the Sacraments, only now amplifying their efficacy into eternity, blessing all men in all ages:

Luisa: “Later, I was receiving absolution from my confessor and was saying to myself: ‘My Jesus, I wish to receive absolution in your Will’, when, before I could utter another word, Jesus said: ‘... I absolve you in my Will; and as I absolve you, my Will places the words of absolution in action to absolve whoever wishes to be absolved and to pardon whoever wishes to be pardoned. My Will encompasses not one, but all creatures. Yet he who is more favorably disposed receives more than the others.’”⁴⁵

Jesus: “My sacramental life waits patiently for man to take the bread of our Supreme Will so as to give him all the blessings of my sacramental life. So, the sacrament of the Eucharist and all the sacraments left to my Church and instituted by Me will bear all the fruit they contain and will be brought to maturity only when our Bread, the Will of God, will be done ‘on earth as It is in Heaven.’”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ December 26, 1919, (12) BH 105.

⁴⁵ November 16, 1922, (14).

⁴⁶ May 2, 1923, (15).

Jesus: “How beautiful it is when I descend into a creature's heart as he receives Me in the Blessed Sacrament and I find him in My Will! I find everything in that creature: I find My Queen Mother and I feel glory given to Me again as though I came in the flesh anew; I find all My works, which surround Me, honor Me and love Me. And since My Will circulates like blood and beats in all created things, they are united to Me like limbs that go out from Me and remain in Me. Therefore, from among everything I did on earth and from among all created things, there are those who act as My arms, My feet, My heart, My mouth, and they love and glorify Me in an infinite way.”⁴⁷



According to Fr. Staples, Luisa’s writings claim to be new public revelation. He asserts: “Luisa’s writings claim to complete and surpass the revelation we have received from the Apostles. She also claims that apart from her revelations, the Sacraments and Tradition of the Church are inept to bring the faithful to the highest degree of sanctification which God strongly wills for all His children...Luisa explicitly denies that her doctrine has developed from the Tradition, rather, she insists that it is a new revelation to be given to the whole Church.”

My response: Luisa’s writings do not claim to complete or surpass Christ’s definitive Revelation. Rather, they suggest that it is “not yet completely explicit,” and that the Church is still “advancing toward the plenitude of divine truth.” Her writings correspond to the purpose of all private revelation: “to help man live more fully by Christ’s definitive Revelation.” Implicit in our Catholic belief that private revelation can help us to live Christ’s definitive Revelation “more fully,” (for example, in our sacramental life), is the suggestion that we have been living it “less fully” before receiving it. Never does Luisa claim that apart from her revelation the Sacraments and Tradition are “inept.” Rather, she recounts Jesus’ desire that through his revelations to her the Sacraments and Tradition may “more fully” accomplish their purpose in those who apply what they learn from her writings.

Jesus does tell her that he wants her new revelation to be given to the whole Church, but this does not make it “new public revelation” because never does he say that her revelation is to be adhered to with religious faith. Furthermore, though her revelation is new it is nevertheless repeatedly shown to be continuous with Christ’s definitive Revelation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ August 12, 1938, (36).

⁴⁸ *Supra*, notes. 29-35.

Objection #2: Luisa Claims to Describe a New Type of Holiness

Closely connected to the first objection regarding new public revelation, is the objection that Luisa is introducing a new form of holiness to the Church that is neither called for by Tradition nor consistent with it. In this first passage (Fr. Staples' #5), Jesus tells Luisa of the new holiness that he wishes to accomplish in souls through his divine will reigning in them, and, therefore, of the importance of her writings:

Then the Divine Will will breathe through their soul. It will give the soul the life, the effects, and the value of Life in my Will. But **if it is not known, how will they be able to love and to want such a holy life.** It is the greatest glory that the creature can give me.

The sanctity of the other virtues is quite known throughout the Church and whoever wants can imitate it. For that reason I am in no hurry to disseminate its knowledge. **But the sanctity of living in My Will, its effects, the worth that it contains, the final touch that my creative hand will give the creature to make him similar to me is not yet known.** This is why it is urgent that all I have said to you be known. And if you do not do this, you would, so to speak, restrict my Will and repress in Me the flames that consume Me and cause Me to delay the complete glory that creation owes Me.⁴⁹

Fr. Staples comments: “Clearly, Luisa is claiming that only through the revelations she has received can someone attain the knowledge necessary to reach the highest degree of sanctity. Without her writings, this knowledge is simply unknown to the Church. The Church teaches otherwise: ‘Everything we need for holiness and increase in faith has been handed on from the Apostles ‘once and for all’ (cf. Jude 3): What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith.’ (DV 8)”

My response: For the past two thousand years we have believed that the power of Christ now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we can ask for or even imagine (Eph 3:20). To paraphrase, at the time of the Redemption God placed within the Church a power that exceeded, and will always exceed, her understanding of it. This power indeed includes “everything we need for holiness and increase in faith.” But the extent of holiness and increase of faith that that power can accomplish in us has always immeasurably surpassed what we could ask for or imagine.

It is not, therefore, a violation of the Catholic faith *per se* for Luisa or anyone else to come along at any point in the history of the Church with a private revelation that says in effect, “There has been something in the power of Christ at work in the Church to make men holy that she has not yet seen nor even imagined. It has actually been there all along as an

⁴⁹ July 16, 1922, (14), BH 2.

unknown, that is, an unrealized potency. What I wish to do is to help the Church to see and reach a new high measure of holiness, drawing from that same immeasurable power of Christ that has been at work in her for twenty centuries, making her holy.”

Of course, it would also be necessary to reconcile the terms of that holiness with the terms of the Tradition we have received. But the point is that the mere claim of a completely new holiness does not violate the Tradition. In fact, the terms of the Tradition itself tell us that we are not capable of asking for or even imagining the heights of holiness to which Christ has wanted to lift us all along. Furthermore, the very purpose of private revelation is to help us “more fully” reach those heights.



In this passage (#6) Jesus contrasts the “new” holiness of living in the divine will with the holiness that has preceded it:

Jesus to Luisa: “My daughter, my Will is the Sanctity of Sanctities. Therefore, the soul that does my Will **according to the perfection that I teach you**, that is, on earth as It is in Heaven, no matter how little, unknown, or ignorant she may be, **she will surpass all the other Saints** despite their prodigies, striking conversions and miracles. Moreover, the souls who do my Will, **as in my Third ‘Fiat,’** are the queens; and all the others are as if they were at their service. The souls that do my Will **in this manner** appear as though they do nothing, yet they do everything. Because by remaining in my Will they act divinely, secretly and in a surpassing way. Such souls are the lights that illuminate, winds that purify, fire that burns, miracles that make miracles occur because it is in these souls that the power to perform them resides. Whereas those doing the miracles are only channels.”⁵⁰

Fr. Staples comments that Luisa is saying here that without her revelation, “the teachings and Sacraments of the Church as they have come to us through Scripture and Tradition are inept to bring us to the level of sanctification God desires us to have.”

My response: This is not what Luisa claims. She only claims to provide a new, extremely effective means of “more fully” doing the will of God, which includes “more fully” drawing from the teachings and Sacraments of the Church and allowing them to “more fully” transform us into him. This is the purpose of private revelation according to Catholic teaching.

Following this line of reasoning, it is apparent that private revelation can and should help us, as individuals and as a Church, to become “more fully”⁵¹ holy, that is, to reach a “higher” measure of sanctity than we had before. If Luisa goes beyond “higher” and claims to help us to reach the “highest” level of sanctity, this is still consistent with the

⁵⁰ March 15, 1912 (11), BH 38.

⁵¹ As in CCC #67.

purpose of private revelation. “Highest” is, after all, only a subcategory of “higher.” Catholic teaching allows that private revelation can help us reach both “higher” and “highest” holiness, even so as to surpass the sanctity of the saints of the past.

“Must” We Adhere to Luisa’s Private Revelation?

But is it accurate and permissible to say that to reach the highest level of sanctity that God desires for us we “must adhere” to Luisa’s private revelation? This may be answered from three analytical perspectives: historical, subjective, and objective.

Historical analysis of “must adhere.” Proving that adherence to Luisa’s private revelation is not necessary to achieve (or surpass) the level of sanctity she describes can be accomplished by showing that at least one other person did so without any awareness of her writings. That proof is easily shown in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her level of sanctity did and will certainly forever far exceed the level of sanctity of any other creature. Luisa repeatedly describes Mary’s sanctity as both the means and the model *par excellence* of living in the divine will. And Mary did not have to adhere to Luisa’s private revelation to achieve it.

Regarding creatures such as herself who were born with original sin, Luisa indicates that achieving this sanctity is possible without knowledge of her writings:

Luisa: “Then, while He said this, it seemed that He traveled around everywhere to see if there were souls who would live in his Will in order to consecrate them. How beautiful it was to see my amiable Jesus traveling as in haste to perform the office of Priest, and to hear Him repeat the words of Consecration over those souls who were doing and living in his Volition! Oh, those blessed souls who undergo the Consecration of Jesus by living in his Volition!”⁵²

Our Lord clearly indicates elsewhere in Luisa’s diary⁵³ that he has given her the unique mission of explaining and spreading this sanctity throughout the world by means of her writings. But this passage seems to indicate that Jesus did not make knowledge of Luisa’s writings an absolute pre-condition for the reception of this “sanctity of sanctities.” Though Luisa preceded them in initially receiving this gift, two other women, from the early part of this century, may have been among these “blessed souls.” Both wrote accounts of mystical union which include descriptions substantially similar to Luisa’s, though less thoroughly explained.

The first is the Servant of God Conchita Cabrera de Armida. During the final years of the nineteenth century this Mexican woman began to identify deeply with the little-known interior sufferings of Jesus and Mary and passed through many trials. On January 23, 1894, she received the grace of spiritual betrothal, and on February 9, 1897, the spiritual

⁵² June 20, 1918 (12).

⁵³ Notably, on February 10, 1924 (16) and June 20, 1938 (36).

marriage. On March 25, 1906, she received from Jesus what he called “the grace of the mystical incarnation.” He told her:

[It is] the grace of incarnating Me, of living and growing in your soul, never to leave it, to possess you and to be possessed by you as one and the same substance, without obviously you giving Me life: rather it is I who communicate to your soul in a compenetration which cannot be comprehended: It is the grace of graces.⁵⁴

Jesus described this mystical incarnation to Conchita as his “real presence.”⁵⁵ When Conchita asked him if this corresponded to the “mystical marriage,” he answered:

Much more than that. Marriage is a form of external union; the grace of incarnating Me . . . is the greatest and most sublime, the greatest that can ever be. It is a union of the same nature as that of the union of Heaven, except that in paradise the veil which conceals the Divinity disappears, but since Divinity never separates itself from Me, the union, the intimate encounter of nothingness with All is the same thing.⁵⁶

Jesus told Conchita that this grace of the mystical incarnation was a special work of the Holy Spirit. He explained:

To speak of the mystical incarnation is then to consider the soul as entering into a phase of graces of transformation which will bring it, if it corresponds, to the identification of its will with Mine and to simplify itself in order that its union with God come to the most perfect likeness possible.⁵⁷

Having raised Conchita to this “identification of wills” with him through the Holy Spirit, Jesus asked her to spearhead a crusade of prayer in the Church for a Second Pentecost. He told her:

The time has come to exalt the Holy Spirit in the world. He is the soul of this Beloved Church. This divine Person diffuses Himself prodigally in every act of the Church. I desire that this last epoch be consecrated in a very special way to this Holy Spirit who ever operates out of love. He guided the Church from her very humble beginnings, by the three humble acts of humble love in Peter. I desire that in these latter days this holy love inflame all hearts but most of all the hearts of the Pope and My priests. It is His turn, it is His epoch, it is the triumph of love in My Church, in the whole universe.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Philippon, Marie Michel, O.P., *Conchita: A Mother's Spiritual Diary* (New York: Alba House, 1978), p. 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 195-196.

During the last 12 years of Conchita's life, from 1925 until 1937, the fruits of the mystical incarnation also became more evident in the lives of those who embraced her spirituality. Conchita's director during this period, Cardinal Luis Maria Martinez, appears to have received the grace of the mystical incarnation himself on September 21, 1927. After a painful illness accompanied by many interior trials, Conchita died a holy death on March 3, 1937. On September 19, 1959, her cause of beatification was introduced in Rome. There is no indication in her writings or in published accounts of her life that she was influenced by or even aware of the writings of Luisa Piccarreta.

The second example is the Canadian, Blessed Dina Belanger, whose religious name was Sister Marie Saint Cecile of Rome. As a religious, Blessed Dina received private revelations from Jesus in which he gave her a profound understanding of his interior sufferings. He told her that he wanted to become the primary agent of all of her thoughts, feelings, words, and actions:

My Heart is continually thinking of souls, and the majority of souls have no thought of Me. I seek a soul to represent the whole of humanity, a soul to whom I can grant the grace of thinking continually of God. *I have substituted Myself for you*, my little ownself, I have chosen you for this soul. I want to make My eternal thought of God pass into your nothingness.⁵⁹

Just as Jesus taught Luisa to perform all of her actions with him in the divine will, in the name of all creatures past, present, and future, so he taught Blessed Dina to pray in the same, novel way. In her autobiography she wrote:

It was my desire to utilize the merits of Jesus and the infinite means He places at our disposal, He who is our God, our Redeemer, and our Father. I wished to use them for all creatures, past, present, and future, in the measure that they are capable of profiting by them.⁶⁰

Blessed Dina died on September 4, 1929. Again, there is no indication from the accounts of her life or from her autobiography that she was influenced by or even aware of the writings of Luisa Piccarreta.

So, there is some historical evidence that to attain the degree of sanctity and participation in the divine activity described by Luisa it is not necessary to adhere to her writings or even to be aware of them. Jesus is free to make this new and profound grace directly known to whomever he wishes and however he wishes. However, for most of us the way he lets us know is his normal way of communicating with us: by way of other human beings, either orally or in writing. Through Luisa's writings and through those of Conchita, Blessed Dina, and perhaps others, we become aware of and then ask for the gift he is offering us. The writings then, are not the source of the gift, only the means by which we learn of it.

⁵⁹ Leger, Irene, R.J.M., *The Courage to Love* (Ipswich, England: East Anglian Magazine, 1986), p. 96.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Subjective analysis of “must adhere.” And so, as long as we understand “must adhere” in an appropriate sense, it is accurate to say that we must adhere to Luisa’s writings (as well as Conchita’s and Blessed Dina’s) in order to attain the graces described in them, and Catholic teaching allows this. It is not the “must adhere” of religious faith, that is, of the will giving the private revelation the same assent that it would give to an article of the Catholic faith. Rather, it is the “must adhere” of human faith. This operation can be illustrated on the level of the individual acting human subject.

Let us suppose that a person is already at the highest level of holiness as the saints have historically described it. As a matter of Catholic belief, that person “must adhere” to these two truths about his holiness: 1) that, regardless of the measure of his holiness, he becomes holy at all only through believing and living by Christ’s definitive Revelation that has been received from the apostles, and 2) that private revelation can help him to live by this definitive Revelation “more fully in a certain period of history,” that is, it can help him draw from it more deeply and thereby become even holier than he had become before that period of history.

But how will he know if any particular private revelation can help him in this manner? “Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern (i.e., see with the intellect) and welcome (i.e., assent to with the will) in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call (i.e., truth) of Christ or his saints to the Church.”⁶¹ In other words, he knows with religious faith that truths known with merely human faith can still help him to live more fully (and even most fully) the truths which he knows with religious faith.

Now let us suppose that this holy person comes across a private revelation in which a new and higher level of holiness is described that he has never found in the writings of the saints. He knows as a matter of religious faith that this revelation does not belong to the deposit of faith, and so he knows as a matter of religious faith that whatever assent of the will he might give to it, it will not be that of religious faith. But he also knows as a matter of faith that, though the private revelation itself is not within the deposit of faith, it can help him to live that deposit of faith more fully, and even most fully. If his intellect discerns that the private revelation can help him in this regard, then his will, with human faith, “must adhere” to it, that is, if he wants to obtain the higher holiness described in it.

This analysis can be used to show how the faithful treat Blessed Faustina’s private revelations about Divine Mercy. Did Blessed Faustina ever say that to receive the new outpouring of Jesus’ mercy, in the manner she describes, we “must adhere” to her private revelation, especially as it relates to praying the Divine Mercy chaplet and novena? In a manner, yes. His mercy was certainly available to us before the private revelation came along, but with it Jesus opened up both a new insight and a new depth into his mercy. It is the same essential mercy of his definitive Revelation, only now appreciated and received in

⁶¹ CCC #67.

far greater measure, but only through the adherence of human faith that we give to this private revelation.

We believe that as the Church as a whole progresses through the centuries she is “always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her.”⁶² She is always moving toward an ever more intimate union with Christ. As this happens, we can expect God to choose some special people, like Luisa and Blessed Faustina, to lead us along the way:

Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ...God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.⁶³

We cannot receive (and thereby adhere to) the gratuitous gift of the more intimate measure of union with Christ that he manifests to us through Luisa (and Blessed Faustina) if we do not ask for it, and we cannot ask for it if we do not know about it. Luisa does indeed claim that the most intimate union of man with Christ will only be attained when man again fully lives and reigns in the Kingdom of the Divine Will, doing the will of the Father on earth as it is done in heaven. But it is not against Catholic teaching to make such a claim. Furthermore, nowhere does Luisa claim that her private revelation is the *source* of this highest sanctity, only a means of knowing about it so as to ask for it and then adhere to it:

Jesus to Luisa: “(T)here will certainly be the fruits of my Volition; but, to desire the fruits, one must know how precious they are, the goods that they bring, the riches they produce. Here is the reason for the many manifestations of my Volition that I have made to you, because the knowledge of It will bring the desire of eating It.”⁶⁴

Objective analysis of “must adhere.” Our adherence to the content of a private revelation may also be prompted by and even demanded by our reason as it conducts an objective analysis of that content. If the private revelation articulates a profoundly new, logically sound insight into holiness that in fact elevates our understanding of the possible heights of holiness, without contradicting what we know by faith to be true about the essence of holiness, then our reason would oblige us to adhere to it, that is, if we wished to reach those heights. It would have prescriptive authority over us because of its descriptive accuracy. An analogy from the realm of physical science may help.

Since God issued his First Fiat of Creation, the material universe has been continuously ordered by a complex system of unchanging physical laws. The work of physical science over the millennia of man’s existence has been to better understand and describe those

⁶² *Dei Verbum*, para 8.

⁶³ CCC #2014.

⁶⁴ January 28, 1926, (18).

laws so as to more perfectly draw from the riches of the universe. In other words, it has never been physical science's role to "improve or complete" those physical laws of the First Fiat, only to help us to live ever "more fully" by them.

For thousands of years physical science has done this job well and we have reaped a growing abundance of fruits. But in the early part of this century, Albert Einstein discovered and described his profoundly new theory of relativity and thereby revealed to the world previously unimaginable forces of energy that could be found in the most minute particles of matter. By the integrity of its own internal logic, proven by the forces of energy it actually released when employed, his theory established the newest and highest measure of physical science. Indeed, by way of his revelation mankind entered into an entirely new era: the nuclear age.

Nevertheless his theory of relativity added nothing to the essential physical laws of the material universe. That is, the reality of what his intelligence was only then disclosing to him (and, by way of him, to all mankind) had actually lain hidden for eons within those physical laws. Even though those unimaginable forces of energy had been around us all along, only when they were finally described to us could we know about them, and only when we knew about them could we finally desire and obtain them.

Now do we conclude from all of this that to obtain from the material universe the new and highest measures of energy we "must adhere" to the "private revelation" of Einstein? Yes, but not because (or despite the fact that) the newest and highest energy came from Einstein; rather because it both 1) articulates a knowledge of that new energy that we must first possess before we can even want to obtain it, and 2) tells us how to obtain it. Thus, to obtain the highest (currently) possible forces of energy from the material universe we "must adhere" to what he has written. We can certainly choose not to avail ourselves of it, but then we are left to reap (and even to reap exceedingly well, as, for example, the Amish do) the fruits of the First Fiat of Creation using tools from a lower order of physical science.

An objective analyst of Luisa's private revelation must get past the initial shock of her claim to set the new, highest standard of sanctity. An analyst must determine whether, by the precision of Luisa's terms, she actually does so. In reporting what Jesus tells her, Luisa purports to be the first person to articulate, and thereby make known and available, a previously unrealized wealth of unimaginable holiness that, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has lain hidden for two thousand years, before our very eyes, within the very body of the Second Fiat, Christ's definitive Revelation.

If Luisa actually does accomplish this articulation which no-one before her has done, she would thereby set the new highest standard of sanctity, and she would do so without contradicting or adding anything to the essential body of the Catholic faith. Once we are aware of it, if we wish to attain and draw forth fruits from that new, highest level of sanctity we, in effect, "must adhere" to it. The issue of our adherence to it is ultimately

not determined by whether it comes to us by way of private revelation, but by whether it is true.

Luisa never claims that the new sanctity she describes is worthy of religious adherence, that is, the adherence of Catholic faith. For her critics to prove that it is not worthy of even human adherence they must go beyond merely showing that she claims it to be the highest of all sanctities. Because we know with the certainty of faith that “spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ,” we do not immediately reject a description of a new and higher form of holiness, even if it claims to far surpass the sanctity of the saints, and even if it comes by way of a private revelation. Her critics must also prove that the terms of that new sanctity contradict what we know by faith to be true of the essence of holiness. By itself, their objection does not meet that standard of proof.

Was the Sanctity of the Saints a “Poor and Lowly Union”?

Fr. Staples and Fr. Most interpret this selection (Fr. Staples’ #8) as Luisa speaking pejoratively of the sanctity of the saints:

Jesus to Luisa: “This is the Supreme Unity. There also exists the poor and lowly union in which the soul is resigned to my Will. Yes, but such a soul does not see my dispositions as her own, as her life. Neither is she happy in my Will; nor does she lose her will in Mine. I see that one, yes; but she does not manage to enamor Me. Nor does she cause Me to become enchanted with love for her, as happens with the one who lives in the Supreme Unity.”⁶⁵

Fr. Staples and Fr. Most take Luisa to mean here that all the saints before her could only achieve the “poor and lowly union” referred to in the passage.

My response: It is noteworthy first of all that this passage makes no reference to the saints. It only contrasts the high end of union with God, the “Supreme Unity,”⁶⁶ with the low end, mere resignation to it. This is not inconsistent with a Catholic understanding of the varying degrees of Christian perfection.

Secondly, is Luisa here relegating the sanctity of the saints to that lowest category, wherein a soul is “neither happy in my Will, nor does she lose her will in Mine” and where she “does not manage to enamor Me”? Just a few passages, which do explicitly refer to the saints, may help to show that she is not:

⁶⁵ November 1, 1910, (9), BH 38.

⁶⁶ At the beginning of this diary entry, Jesus describes “the Supreme Unity”: “(I)t is when the soul arrives at such an intimate union with my Will as to consume any shadow of her volition, such that it cannot be discerned which is my Volition and which is her own. Then my Volition is the life of this soul, such that whatever I dispose, whether concerning her or concerning others, in all she is content.”

Jesus to Luisa: “The behavior of *living solely for God was practiced by the Saints*. I also enforced it upon Myself and upon my Apostles, by instructing them on the proper dispositions, by having them confront situations, wherein they knew not where to spend the night, nor what to eat. Therefore, one can see, that imposing this behavior (of living solely for God) upon nature, harms neither love nor true sanctity, but rather, it is a sign that one regards Me as her sole love.”⁶⁷

Luisa asks Jesus why he is choosing her for this sanctity when he has “souls so dear to You who I do not deserve to be beneath their feet?” Jesus replies: “Moreover it is also certain that I have *souls very dear to Me*. However, this does not exclude my electing one rather than another to a high office-and not only to that office, but to such a height of Sanctity necessary for living in my Volition. The graces that were not necessary for the others, whom I did not call to live in this immensity of Sanctity of my Will, is necessary for you, whom I elected even from Eternity.”⁶⁸

Jesus to Luisa: “The Saints, who have lived in the mirror of my Humanity and as in the shadow of my Will, will be the stars. Those who will form their sanctity in my Volition, although coming later, will be the Suns”⁶⁹

Jesus to Luisa: “It is true that there have been saints who always did my Will, but they have taken of my Will only to the extent that they understood it. They knew that to do my Will was the greatest of acts, the one which gave Me the greatest honor and which brought them their sanctification. They acted with this intention and so this is all that they received. It is true that there is no holiness without my Will; and no good, no sanctity, either great or small, can exist without It. Know also that my Will, as It was, is and shall be, has not changed at all. But It can reveal the variety of the colors, effects, and worth which It contains differently, according to the way in which It manifests Itself.”⁷⁰

Thirdly, even if Luisa *did* intend the term “poor and lowly union” to include the sanctity of the saints (and I maintain that the context does not support such an interpretation), this would still not be inconsistent with Catholic teaching. As long as Luisa continues to hold that they lived as well as they could, and in a heroic and exemplary manner, the sanctity that God called them to, she would neither insult them nor violate Catholic teaching to speak of a new form of holiness that is higher, and perhaps even much higher, than what they lived. A “poor and lowly union” is, after all, still a union. Luisa is not disputing or dismissing the sanctity of those who live merely resigned to God’s Will; she is putting it into perspective.

⁶⁷ February 28, 1912, (11).

⁶⁸ February 9, 1919, (12).

⁶⁹ April 15, 1919, (12).

⁷⁰ November 6, 1922, (14).

Fourthly, the saints themselves recognized God's freedom to reserve for others a higher sanctity than what they knew and lived. In his classic work, *Uniformity With God's Will*, St. Alphonsus de Ligouri incorporates a quotation from St. John of Avila regarding the attitude of the saints toward their own holiness and of their acceptance, if not their desire, that God might call others to a still higher holiness:

I believe every saint has had the desire to be higher in grace than he actually was. However, despite this, their serenity of soul always remained unruffled. Their desire for a greater degree of grace sprang not from a consideration of their own good, but of God's. They were content with the degree of grace God had meted out for them, though actually God had given them less. They considered it a greater sign of true love of God to be content with what God had given them, than to desire to have received more.⁷¹

To believe that "spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ" is to allow the possibility that earlier forms of union with Christ, even those enjoyed by the saints, were less intimate than later forms. (And if we can allow for the possibility that they were less intimate, we can allow for the possibility that they were far less intimate, i.e., *relatively* "poor and lowly.")

Finally, it is unlikely that any saint would object to the union of wills he enjoyed on earth being described as "poor and lowly" when it is contrasted with the union of wills that he now enjoys in heaven. Similarly, it would not violate Catholic teaching to claim that doing the will of the Father on earth as it is done in heaven makes other forms of earthly union with his will "poor and lowly" in comparison.

Is There a Higher Sanctity than the Mystical Marriage of the Saints?

Poulain writes in his description of the spiritual marriage experienced by the saints that "(n)o union of a more intimate kind can be imagined."⁷² Fr. Most takes this a step further and equates intellectual unimagibility with theological impossibility, that is, that we may not, and in fact we cannot, talk of a higher form of mystical union than the mystical marriage experienced by the saints.

My response: Theological impossibility does not necessarily follow from intellectual unimagibility. The power of Christ at work in us can accomplish in and through us immeasurably more than we can ask for or even imagine (Eph 3:20). Our imagination does not set limits upon the heights of intimacy with Christ to which he can lift us. Within the already unimagible, ineffable realm of mystical union with Christ, is there not the

⁷¹ Another good summary of a saint's attitude toward his own holiness is found in the concluding prayer of "The Litany of Humility," a meditation written by Cardinal Merry del Val, Secretary of State to Pope St. Pius X: "That others become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it."

⁷² Poulain, *Supra* note 6, at p. 287.

possibility of higher and lower levels of experience?⁷³ Catholic teaching does not forbid us to imagine that God could draw a creature into an even more intimate union with him in this life than that experienced by the saints in the mystical marriage.

For example, consider the nature of mystical union experienced in this life by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Can we say that *it* was higher than the mystical marriage experienced by the saints? This is an important question because Luisa never claims that living in the divine will is a higher form of mystical union than Mary's.⁷⁴ I think we can easily say (indeed we must say) that Mary's union was higher than the mystical marriage of the saints, but then we have to determine whether it was higher in essence (i.e., not even rightly described as "mystical marriage" anymore, but *something else* much higher) or only in degree (i.e., still essentially "mystical marriage," but a manifestation of it so elevated beyond the saints' as to be virtually unrecognizable as such). If it was only higher in degree, then Fr. Most's concerns are vanquished because Luisa's new form of union would likewise be, after all, still within the boundaries of mystical marriage, only to a new and higher degree, that is, above the highest saint's but still below Mary's.

Now if Mary's union was higher not only in degree but also in essence, we must then determine whether this was so only because of her uniquely immaculate conception and participation in the hypostatic union. In other words, does Catholic teaching prohibit us from supposing that God, at his good pleasure and in his good time, could extend not just to Mary but also to other creatures, in this life, a form of mystical union with him that is not only higher in degree than the mystical marriage of the saints, but also different *in essence* from the mystical marriage of the saints? Would our Catholic faith forbid that we who in every other regard look upon Mary as "our pattern of holiness"⁷⁵ should not do so in this one as well?

Let us apply these questions to Luisa's new and divine mystical union with a couple of examples. Many saints have attempted to describe experiences of mystical union with Christ in which they intimately participated in and even re-lived Christ's human sufferings. But to what relative degrees did they experience these things? Might some have been "higher" than others? Does Catholic teaching put a cap on the height? Would Catholic teaching, for example, prohibit us from supposing, as Luisa suggests, that by Christ's free gift he could have lifted Mary, and now other souls, to such an intimacy with his sufferings

⁷³ This would be the case even if we could not determine *theologically* which experiences are higher and lower because no such experience can even be adequately described theologically.

⁷⁴ See Fr. H.M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P., *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit, The Marian Teachings of Father Kolbe* (Kenosha, WI: Prow Books/ Franciscan Marytown Press, 1977), pp. 40-45, "The Union of the Divine and the Human in Mary." Fr. Manteau-Bonamy quotes (Saint) Father Kolbe: "Jesus Christ has two natures, divine and human, which are united in one single divine Person; such is the exact and precise formulation of the dogma. The Immaculata is united to the Holy Spirit so closely that we really cannot grasp this union. But we can at least say that the Holy Spirit and Mary are two persons who live in such intimate union that they have but one sole life." Whatever Luisa suggests about living in the divine will, she never suggests that it would be a more intimate union than this, that is, two ontologically distinct beings, one divine and one human, living together one sole life.

⁷⁵ From the Eucharistic Prayer in the Order of the Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

that they would share in them at his own deepest interior level, that is, where his humanity did not just suffer in obedience to his divinity but actually suffered *divinely*,⁷⁶ thereby amplifying the efficacy of his sufferings transtemporally and universally?⁷⁷ Would it violate Catholic teaching to suggest that no saint had ever experienced this before? Would it violate Catholic teaching to call this an *essentially* higher form of mystical union than what they experienced and not just a higher degree of it?

Luisa also suggests that, by God's free offer and the creature's free consent, he wishes, for the first time since Mary, to lift creatures, while they are still in this life, into an intimate union of prayer within his own eternal act. In this union they are asked to pray on behalf of all creatures who have ever lived or ever will live, making reparation for and mystically, divinely re-doing all of the acts which we creatures have owed to the Father since our fall but which we have not done. Does Catholic teaching forbid us from imagining the possibility of such an experience, however impossible it would be to describe with theological precision the new mechanisms of union between the soul's will and the divine will that would take place within that experience?

To be sure, comparing and contrasting Luisa's accounts of living in the divine will with accounts of the mystical marriage presents a fascinating theological project. But for the limited purpose of reconciling Luisa's writings with the teachings of the Church such an endeavor is unnecessary. All that matters in this regard is to determine whether the new union that Luisa describes, *whatever it is*,⁷⁸ is consistent with essential Catholic doctrine regarding mystical union with Christ.

I summarize this doctrine as follows: 1. The mystical union must have its essential source and perfection in Christ's definitive Revelation. 2. However intimate the union is, it must not suggest that the human creature ever becomes anything ontologically other than a human creature. 3. However intimate the union is, it must not compromise (but actually perfect) the free co-operation and assent of the human will. Applying these to Luisa's writings:

1. Though Christ is only now opening up this new and divine holiness to man, Luisa still connects it essentially to Christ's definitive Revelation. This concern is addressed above in Objection #1 on new public revelation.

2. References to humans as "creatures" and God alone as the Creator appear throughout the volumes. Passages which might initially appear to suggest otherwise, that is, that upon entering the divine will the creature's ontological identity is actually, metaphysically destroyed and the divine essence assumed, are addressed below in my reply to Objection #3 on Monothelism.

⁷⁶ That is, in virtue of the unity of person (since the divinity as such does not suffer).

⁷⁷ On the contrary, "Christ enables us to live in him *all* that he himself lived, and he lives it in us." CCC #521 (Emphasis added.)

⁷⁸ To repeat from my introduction, the purpose of this paper is foundational. It is not an attempt to systematically explain the nuances of Luisa's spirituality.

3. Luisa never suggests that the free assent and co-operation of the human will are either unnecessary or ontologically destroyed while a soul is living in the divine will.⁷⁹ Passages which have been taken to suggest otherwise are also addressed below in Objection #3 on Monothelitism.

Within these three broad, essential parameters, the teachings of the Church place no other limits upon the mystical union that humans may experience with Christ in this life.

The New and Divine Sanctity as “Easy” to Receive and Live

Criticisms have been leveled by both Frs. Staples and Most against passages such as the following from Luisa’s writings which suggest to them that this new and divine holiness is too easily obtained, with souls having only to desire it to vault past the sanctity of the saints of old:

Jesus: “...there are no special paths, no doors, nor keys to my Will. A soul has but to desire it and all is done. My Will assumes all the work, gives the soul what she lacks, and makes her expand into all the limitless boundaries of my Will. With virtues it is just the opposite. How many efforts are needed, how many battles, how many long paths...”⁸⁰

My response: To truly “desire” to live in the divine will one must first have some understanding of that state. Luisa says that for a soul to enter into and remain in the divine will it must make a firm commitment never, even for an instant, to live by the dictates of its own will operating independently of God’s will. What great work must have already taken place within any soul before it could even begin to say, and continue to say, in truth, that it “desires” such a state?⁸¹ But once the soul had reached that point, could we not say that all it would need then would be to desire this union, that then it would be simple enough for God to lift the soul into it?

After all, the saints themselves have described their experiences of entering into mystical union with Jesus, as being, essentially, effortless. They certainly had to first dispose their

⁷⁹ The contrary is clear. Jesus: “While it is true that I do everything in the soul so that without Me she would do nothing, it is also true that I always leave a thread of free will in the soul.” (October 30 1903, (5)) See also November 11, 1922, (14). This same freedom would have applied to Adam and Eve before the fall as well. Despite the extraordinary intimacy they enjoyed then with the divine will, their free will to depart from it remained intact.

⁸⁰ February 16, 1921, (12), BH 123.

⁸¹ A misunderstanding of the demands of living in the divine will is apparently shared by some of Luisa’s promoters as well as her critics. It seems that at least a part of the criticisms have been formed not so much against the writings themselves as against the ill-formed opinions of some promoters. Theological work needs to be done not just to establish a foundation of orthodoxy (as this paper attempts to do) but also to distill and organize the spirituality into a structure that is both understandable and faithful to the writings.

wills to be in union with his, but as they did this it was God who lifted them into the mystical union. As for wanting to avoid, if it be God's will, all the "efforts," "battles" and "long paths" endured by some to reach the entry point of mystical union, even the saints themselves have desired this. As St. Therese of Lisieux put it:

I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new. We are living now in an age of inventions, and we no longer have to take the trouble of climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, an elevator has replaced these very successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection.⁸²

Jean-Pierre de Caussade, in his eighteenth century classic *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, also describes the ideal way of holiness as not being arduous:

If the business of becoming holy seems to present insufferable difficulties, it is merely because we have a wrong idea about it. In reality, holiness consists of one thing only: complete loyalty to God's will...If only kings and their ministers, princes of the Church and of the world, priests, soldiers and ordinary people knew how easy it would be for them to become very holy! All they need to do is fulfill faithfully the simple duties of Christianity and those called for by their state of life, accept cheerfully all the troubles they meet and submit to God's will in all that they have to do or suffer...⁸³

Of course, we also understand that however "easy" in one sense it might be to become holy, it is certainly quite difficult and painful in another sense. Our human wills do not easily give themselves over to the dominion of the divine. We must daily crucify our inclinations toward autonomy and rebellion. It might be attractive and even easy to desire in the abstract to be martyred for Christ. But to hand oneself over to a murderous mob actually beating on one's door would surely be no easy matter.

If this has been true for all other forms of sanctity, it is all the more true for the sanctity of "living in the divine will." If some passages from Luisa's writings suggest that it might be the easiest of all sanctities to enter into and live, many others suggest that it is the most difficult. Furthermore, the necessity of the virtues is never removed as they are deepened, perfected and finally absorbed into the divine will.

Jesus to Luisa: "I will not recognize, as mine, works that do not have the stamp of both your mortification and mine on them."⁸⁴

⁸² St. Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1976), p. 207.

⁸³ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, trans. John Beevers (New York: Image Books, 1975), p. 24, 26 (I-3).

⁸⁴ Volume 1, p.16, undated passage.

Luisa: “The soul must first die completely to her own ego, mortifying her will constantly, in attempting anything.”⁸⁵

This is the attitude that Luisa began with in Volume 1 and which she never “graduated from” as she progressed in the divine will. It was both the necessary precondition and the permanent foundation for her progress. In the divine will we do not escape our duty to perfect ourselves in virtue. Achieving and maintaining complete detachment is also presupposed:

Jesus to Luisa: “My child, I desire from you absolute severance from everything that is not mine. I want you to consider everything that you know is earthly to be dung and filth - disgusting to look at. My Heart freezes when you look with pleasure upon earthly things that are not necessities. They cloud celestial things and impede the Mystical Marriage I promised you from taking place.”⁸⁶

Again, even after Luisa received the mystical marriage, nowhere in the succeeding volumes does Jesus ever rescind the need for detachment as Luisa progresses in her life in the divine will. Furthermore, it is a matter of increasing measure, not a one-time decision:

Jesus: “Souls are so pleasing to Me who are detached from all; not only in affection, but also in effect. In the measure in which they know how to strip themselves, thus does My light invest them and they become just like windowpanes, and the light of the sun does not find impediment to pass therein, as it finds in buildings and in other material things.”⁸⁷

Jesus: “My daughter, *the main thing [required] for Me to enter into a soul* and to make My dwelling there *is the total detachment from everything*. Without this, not only am I unable to live in there, but no virtue can take root in the soul. Then, after the soul has emptied itself of everything, I will enter in, and *in union with the soul’s will*, we will build a house.”⁸⁸

Willing and joyful acceptance of humiliation and mortification are also of essential importance to living in the divine will:

Jesus: “Humiliation and mortification seem harmful to the human nature (as the bitter food), and they seem to bring evil rather than good. But no. The more the iron is beaten over the anvil, the more it sparkles fire and becomes purged. So too the soul. The more she is humiliated and beaten over the anvil of mortification, the more she sparkles sparks of celestial fire, and is purged-if she truly wants to walk the way of good. And then, if she is false, just the contrary happens.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Volume 1, p.17, undated passage.

⁸⁶ Volume 1, p. 89, undated passage.

⁸⁷ April 26, 1899, (2).

⁸⁸ October 29, 1899 (2).

⁸⁹ December 30, 1899, (3).

Jesus connects the importance of continuously living in and growing in the virtues to what he did in his own humanity:

Furthermore My Humanity was like a ladder that ascended to Heaven; if man does not travel up this ladder through the exercise of his own virtues, in vain are his efforts to ascend and he renders My operations for him useless.⁹⁰

Far from being done away with, the virtues are “consummated” as one lives them in the divine will. Indeed, unity with God is the perfection of the virtues:

Jesus: “Dear daughter, a lot is said about virtue and perfection, but it all ends in this: the consummation of the human will in the Divine. The more total is the consummation, the greater the perfection, because virtues and good deeds are keys that open divine treasures, they obtain for us closer friendship and intimacy and rapport with God.”⁹¹

In the following passage Luisa wonders herself whether in the intensity of her desire for Jesus and Jesus alone she has forgotten about perfecting the virtues. Jesus assures her that in entering into him and “relinquishing” all of the virtues, the virtues are in fact perfected:

Luisa: “Having read the book that was dealing with virtues, and looking at myself, I could not see in me any virtue at all except my desire to love Him. I want Him, I love Him, and I want to be loved by blessed Jesus. Having entered my usual state, my adorable Jesus said to me, ‘My daughter, the closer the soul gets to the end, when it is about to approach the fount of all goodness, which is the true and perfect love of God where everything will remain submerged and only the love of God will remain floating above in order to be the moving force of everything, then the soul will relinquish all the virtues it has practiced during its voyage by enclosing them all in love, and then [it will] rest and let go of everything out of love alone. Don’t all the Blessed in Heaven surrender everything out of love? So, too, *the soul - the more it continues on, the less it is aware of the intense activity of the virtues* because love, investing all of them, transforms them into love by keeping them at rest in its bosom, like many noble princesses. Love alone will do the work by giving life to each one. And while the soul is not aware of these virtues, it finds them all residing in love; however, it finds them more beautiful, more perfect, more pure, more ennobled. If the soul becomes aware of this, it is a sign that they are divided by love.”⁹²

Though intensity of desire for Jesus is a prerequisite for living in the divine will, one need not have absolutely perfected the virtues beforehand. Upon entering and living in the divine will, however, the virtues will - indeed they must - be perfected:

⁹⁰ February 22, 1903, (4).

⁹¹ June 7, 1904 (6).

⁹² October 16, 1905 (6).

Jesus: “The soul who has the sole thought of wanting to live in this ambiance (of the Divine Will) already feels changed. A Divine atmosphere surrounds her; she then feels herself lose her humanity, and she feels divinized. If she is impatient, she will become patient. If she is proud, she will become humble, docile, charitable, and obedient. In summary, the poor will become rich, and *all the virtues will develop to become a crown for that wall so high it has no boundaries*. Therefore, the soul becomes lost in God, losing her own boundaries and acquiring those of the Divine Will.”⁹³

If anyone can speak to us with spiritual authority about the high degree of virtue necessary for entering and living in the divine will it should be Blessed Father Hannibal Di Francia, Luisa’s extraordinary confessor and an advocate of the new sanctity she described. He wrote:

With this new Science, in order to form Saints who surpass the ones of the past, it is important that the new Saints possess all the virtues to a heroic degree, just as did the Saints of old...⁹⁴

Lest anyone be tempted to pride or spiritual laziness because this new sanctity surpasses the sanctity of the saints, consider that the former only surpasses the latter because the new presupposes attainment of the old:

Jesus: “Now, to live in my Volition is not only salvation, but also the Holiness that must be exalted over all other forms of holiness, which must bear the imprint of the Holiness of its Creator. So, *one must first practice the lesser forms of holiness*, which are like a retinue, forerunners, messengers, and preparations for this Holiness that is completely Divine.”⁹⁵

A number of other passages support the fact that constant heroic virtue is presupposed for living the divine will:

Jesus: “...my daughter, in order to become the echo of my heartbeat, how much denuding is required! The soul must live more a life in Heaven than a life on earth; she must be more Divine than human! But a mere shade, just a tiny thing, suffices in order to sap from the soul strength, harmonies, and the sanctity of my heartbeat, whereby, obstructing her from becoming the echo of my heartbeat, from harmonizing together with Me...”⁹⁶

⁹³ February 12, 1906, (7), BH 23.

⁹⁴ *Collection of Letters Sent by Blessed Father Annibale de Francia to The Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta* (Jacksonville, FL: The Center for the Divine Will, 1997) p. 9.

⁹⁵ December 3, 1921, (13).

⁹⁶ April 1, 1916, (11), BH 66.

Jesus: “To whoever lives in my Will *I do not tolerate even one step of distance between Me and her*, nor division of pains or joys.”⁹⁷

Jesus: “The unselfishness of these terrestrial angels, all for the good of others without a shadow of self-interest, will open in hearts the road to receive my Grace.”⁹⁸

Jesus: “...indeed, in my Will the virtues are able to be more heroic and divine.”⁹⁹

Jesus: “Before the wire of your human will can be interwoven with my Will so intimately that they cannot be distinguished from one another, it must be converted into the purest gold. *This can only be accomplished through sacrifices and sufferings* which consume the wire of your human will and convert it into wire of divine gold.”¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the difficulty of conquering one’s will so as to live in the divine will is not accomplished once and for all but is a daily, ever deepening and life-long decision. In fact, the soul must be on continuous guard lest she “backslide” into letting her will have dominion again:

Jesus: “And do you believe that it would be easy for a soul to voluntarily lose its rights? Oh, how difficult it is! Moreover, there are souls which, when they reach the point of losing all their rights over their will, they regress and content themselves with leading a life of compromise, because the loss of their own rights is the greatest sacrifice that the creature can make.”¹⁰¹

Jesus: “My good daughter, My jealousy for those who live in My Will is so strong that I do not tolerate any thought, weakness or anything else that has life in it. Now, you ought to know that to proceed to live in My Will a decision must be made by God and a firm decision on the part of the creature to live in It.”¹⁰²

And yet, despite her repeated references to the intensity of the demands that Jesus places upon the soul who wishes to live in the divine will, Luisa nevertheless wrote in a letter:

To live in the Divine Volition is not hard, as you and others believe. Neither does sweet Jesus want impossible things, nor does He teach anything difficult. Rather, such is his Love in what He teaches, that not only are his teachings easy, but, to facilitate what He wants, He puts Himself at our disposition—doing together with us that which He wants and teaches. My child, all is in a strong decision, firm and

⁹⁷ July 4, 1917, (12), BH 76.

⁹⁸ November 27, 1917, (12), BH 82.

⁹⁹ September 28, 1921, (13).

¹⁰⁰ August 12, 1922, (13).

¹⁰¹ September 22, 1924, (17).

¹⁰² January 2, 1938, (35).

constant, to consign our will to the hands of Jesus, to make all our acts be His Acts.¹⁰³

Thus, Luisa re-iterates the paradox of sanctity itself: The same Jesus who demands that his would-be follower “renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me” (Lk 9:23) also says to him, “my yoke is easy and my burden light” (Mt 11:30).

St. Thomas Aquinas and the Possibility of a State of New and Divine Holiness in Man

Luisa writes that God wishes to pour out his grace and love upon mankind in such new and profound ways as to usher in a new era of sanctity. Fr. Staples cites the following passage from St. Thomas Aquinas to prove that there is no “possibility of the coming of a ‘new era’ before the Second Coming”:

...there is a threefold state of mankind; the first was under the Old Law; the second is that of the New Law; the third will take place not in this life, but in heaven...(W)e are not to look forward to a state wherein man is to possess the grace of the Holy Ghost more perfectly than he has possessed it hitherto, especially the apostles who ‘received the first fruits of the Spirit, i.e. sooner and more abundantly than others...’

My response: Fr. Staples first of all has not shown that this theological commentary of St. Thomas has been adopted as a rule of faith by the Catholic Church. No parts of I-II, q. 106, for example, were included in the Catechism. Until it can be proved that what St. Thomas has written here must be believed by the faithful *de fide* then at best it has only the persuasive authority of its own theological correctness, not the absolute authority of doctrine. And if it does not have the absolute authority of doctrine then it is not a measure of the orthodoxy of Luisa’s writings.

Secondly, it has not been shown how the new state of holiness that Luisa has written about violates the understanding of “state” that St. Thomas refers to in the second sentence above. It is the “state” of the New Law which “is chiefly the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is given to those who believe in Christ.”¹⁰⁴ The thesis of I-II, q. 106, a. 4, from which Fr. Staples excises this quote is, “Whether the New Law will last till the end of the world?” In other words, St. Thomas is questioning whether the New Law of the indwelling grace of the Holy Ghost will be done away with and be replaced by another “state” before the end of time. Everything that follows this question, including what has been excerpted by Fr. Staples above, is ordered toward responding to this fundamental question.

In his answer, St. Thomas says simply that “the state of those who believe in Christ will last until the consummation of the world.” He then elaborates. “The state of the world

¹⁰³ Unpublished letter of Luisa Piccarreta to Mrs. Antonietta Savorani.

¹⁰⁴ I-II, q. 106, a. 1, *sed contra*.

may change in two ways. In one way, according to the law..." This was the case when "the state of the New Law succeeded the state of the Old Law..." But this will not happen again since "no state of the present life can be more perfect than the state of the New Law..."

But then he shows the second sense of "state" in which we can believe in the possibility of change. I will quote this paragraph in full, including, in bold-face, the part excerpted by Fr. Staples:

In another way the state of mankind may change according as man stands in relation to one and the same law more or less perfectly. And thus the state of the Old Law underwent frequent changes, since at times the laws were very well kept, and at other times were altogether unheeded. Thus, too, the state of the New Law is subject to change with regard to various places, times, and persons, according as the grace of the Holy Ghost dwells in man more or less perfectly. Nevertheless **we are not to look forward to a state¹⁰⁵ wherein man is to possess the grace of the Holy Ghost more perfectly than he has possessed it hitherto, especially the apostles who 'received the firstfruits of the Spirit, i.e. sooner and more abundantly than others,'** as a gloss expounds on Rm. 8:23.

We can thus accept the possibility, indeed the certainty, in this life of new "states" *within* the one continuous state of the New Law even if we cannot accept the possibility of a new state *other than* the state of the New Law.¹⁰⁶ The critical question, then, is whether the new and divine state of holiness which Luisa describes is a new state within the state of the New Law or whether it is something other than, that is, outside of or beyond, the New Law.

Fr. Staples has shown no passage where Luisa claims that this new and divine holiness "does away with" the New Law (of the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit founded upon faith) or "succeeds" it as a more perfect state. There is none. Rather, she claims that in

¹⁰⁵ Fr. Staples apparently understands Thomas to be using "state" here in the second sense, as he does in the preceding sentence. But this interpretation renders the two sentences senseless in relation to one another. The two sentences would then say in effect: (1) Man's state under the state of the New Law is subject to change. (2) Nevertheless, man's state under the state of the New Law will not change again. A better interpretation, which seems to capture what Thomas was trying to say, is as follows: (1) Man's state under the state of the New Law is subject to change. (2) Nevertheless, man will not live under another state of Law (in this life) other than the New Law. This interpretation is shared by Fr. John Arintero, O.P., in his spiritual classic, *The Mystical Evolution*: "In spite of the fact that the present economy must endure forever, it is the opinion of St. Thomas that the status of the new law will vary according to place, time, and persons as the grace of the Holy Ghost is possessed more perfectly. He then states the principle that a thing is more perfect as it is closer to its ultimate end...From this it is deduced that, as the body of the Church approaches its ultimate end...so much the more perfect will it be in all things, though under the same law of grace." *The Mystical Evolution (Volume 2)*, trans. Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P. (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), p. 503, n. 78.

¹⁰⁶ In the Our Father we pray that one day, in this life, the will of the Father will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. This will be the full realization of his kingdom. As surely new and grand a state as this will be, it will nevertheless still be within the state of the New Law.

new and profound ways God is bringing forth fruits that for twenty centuries have been held unseen¹⁰⁷ within the state of the New Law. As was demonstrated above,¹⁰⁸ Jesus tells Luisa that his work in the Third Fiat is essentially the unveiling of graces he had already obtained for us in the Second Fiat.

Is it against Catholic teaching to speak of an era of a “new and divine” holiness which God desires for all mankind? On the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Rogationist Fathers by Blessed Fr. Hannibal Di Francia, spiritual father to Luisa as well as promoter of her writings and spirituality, Pope John Paul II not only accepted this new state of holiness in man as possible, but he said that it was indeed what the Holy Spirit wished for all Christians as they enter into the third millennium:

The modern means that human sciences and contemporary technology make available and that you rightly try to use in your apostolic work will only be effective if they are sustained and guided by the original charismatic inspiration of the blessed founder, who saw in the “Rogate” the means God Himself had provided to bring about that “new and divine” holiness with which the Holy Spirit wishes to enrich Christians at the dawn of the third millennium, in order to “make Christ the heart of the world.”¹⁰⁹

Frs. Staples and Most have not shown how this “new and divine” state of man’s holiness, first written about by Luisa, then ratified and promoted by Blessed Hannibal, and recently referred to approvingly by Pope John Paul II, violates either the teachings of the Church or the theological opinions of St. Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁰⁷ Except, of course, as they were manifested in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

¹⁰⁸ *Supra*, notes. 29-35.

¹⁰⁹ Pope John Paul II, “Message of the Holy Father to the Rogationists on the Occasion of the Centenary of their Foundation,” *L’Osservatore Romano (English Version)*, N. 28-9, July 9, 1997.

Objection #3: Luisa Advocates Monothelism

Fr. Staples believes that the union of the divine will and the human will spoken of by Luisa is essentially a reiteration of the early heresy of Monothelism condemned by the Third Council of Constantinople in 681. Fr. Staples begins with this summary of the issue:

To understand the proper relationship between the human and the divine will we must understand how the human and divine wills operated within Christ Himself. If anyone operated “in the divine will” as understood in Luisa’s writings it would have to be the man, Jesus Christ. In fact, Luisa claims that the whole purpose of the new revelations she has received is to enable human persons to act as Christ Himself acted on the earth.

Fr. Staples then quotes all of DS 556-59, Ecumenical VI (against the Monothelites) - Definition of the Two Wills of Christ, and then begins to show how these teachings are contradicted by Luisa’s writings. The following are some excerpts from these sections of DS in summary of Church teaching on the matter:

...the only begotten Lord God in two natures recognized unfusedly, unchangeably, inseparably, indivisibly, never the differences of these natures destroyed on account of union, but rather the property of each nature saved and in one person and in one substance concurring, not into two persons portioned or divided but one and the same only begotten Son of God...

And so we proclaim two natural wills in Him, and two natural operations indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, unfusedly...and two natural wills not contrary...but the human will following and not resisting or hesitating, but rather even submitting to His divine and omnipotent will...

...His human will deified has not been destroyed, but on the contrary it has been saved...

For each form does what is proper to itself with the mutual participation of the other, that is, the Word doing what is of the Word and the flesh accomplishing what is of the flesh...For at no time shall we grant one natural operation to God and to the creature, so that neither what was created, we raise into divine essence, nor what is especially of divine nature, we cast down to a place begetting creatures.

...each nature indivisibly and without confusion willed and performed its own works...

Before delving into the passages cited as problematic by Fr. Staples, it will be helpful for a moment to jump to his conclusion in which he draws an important distinction between mystical language and theological argument:

In conclusion it should be pointed out that often the saints will use hyperbole to express their desire to be totally at the service of God. They may speak in ‘mystical language.’ For example, St. Paul says, ‘I no longer live, but Christ lives in me’; or someone might say, ‘the Lord consumed my soul’ or ‘Lord, may my will die in you’ etc...However, Luisa is presenting a theological argument for a totally new way of acting. She is not saying ‘may God’s will be done in me’ in the traditional sense of the expression, i.e. ‘May I, by grace, faithfully obey God’s will.’ On the contrary, she is saying quite literally ‘God’s will performs good works in me apart from any intervention or cooperation from my human will.’ As was clearly shown above, this cannot be said of Jesus Himself.

My response: The question to keep in mind when analyzing Luisa’s passages is indeed whether her words frame a strictly theological argument, or whether they are to be taken in a mystical sense. Unfortunately, Fr. Staples’ brief analysis of the citation from St. Paul is not a helpful example. Is St. Paul really only speaking mystically here? Is he not also “presenting a theological argument for a totally new way of acting”? In fact, isn’t this principally what he is doing? And yet this still does not mean that we take what he is saying ontologically literally, especially when we consider the context of the entire verse: “...the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. *I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith...*”

We must try to understand what Luisa is saying in the same fashion. Though she does describe a new way of holiness, we are not to take her terms ontologically literally unless the context clearly tells us that we should. But it never does. All of her descriptions of this state of union arise from her own mystical experience of it; they are not posited as a “theological argument.” In fact, her experience of mystical union, like that of other mystics, is beyond any adequate theological description. “When theologians try to make the word *participation* (in God’s nature) still clearer, they are obliged to relinquish the attempt, and to declare that this grace is so much above all human conceptions that it must be regarded as a mystery.”¹¹⁰



In this first passage (Fr. Staples’ #13), Jesus tells Luisa that the joining of their wills is sacramental in nature:

Ah, I repeat and confirm to you that **my Will is Sacrament and surpasses all the sacraments together** in a way that is much more admirable since it needs no one’s intervention nor anything material. The Sacrament of my will is formed between my Will and the will of a soul. **When both wills melt into each other they form the Sacrament.** My will is Life, and the soul who is disposed to receive Life is

¹¹⁰ A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (Westminster, VT: Celtic Cross Books, 1978), p. 287. (Originally published in 1901).

holy and receives Holiness, is strong and receives Fortitude, and likewise everything else.¹¹¹

Fr. Staples comments: “This statement describing the nature of the union between the human and the divine will cannot be said even of Christ Himself. To say His human will was melted into, or was fused with, his divine will, is heretical.”

My response: The word “melt” is indeed essentially equivalent to “fuse,” and it is indeed necessary to believe both that the two wills of Christ operated “unfusedly” and that our wills in union with the divine also operate unfusedly. The melting, though, is not into an ontologically single will, but into an apparent and functionally single will. Perhaps the liturgy offers the best illustration of what takes place: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” If we mix water into wine, in a sense, the two do, in a non-literal, mystical sense, “melt” into one another as they also become indivisible and inseparable. Drinking one now means drinking both. They have “melted” into one fluid, even though the water is still water and the wine is still wine. Jesus uses an identical analogy elsewhere to describe the intimacy of living in his will:

Jesus to Luisa: “I keep (my souls) so immersed in Me, becoming one very substance [with Me], so much so that one can no longer discern between one and the other. It is like when two substances are mixed together: one blends with the other, and then, wanting to separate them, it is impossible even to think of it. So it is impossible for My souls to be separated from Me.”¹¹²

So, what is the sense of Luisa’s use of the word “melt” in the aforementioned passage? Do we take it literally, that is, strictly philosophically, or do we take it mystically? Two paragraphs later, we get some additional insight. Jesus says, “That is why, when I speak of my Will united to the will of the creature, I engage in a never-ending festival. My joy is complete, and no bitterness can come between Me and the soul.”¹¹³ If the two have actually metaphysically (i.e., heretically), and not mystically and poetically, “melted” into one, then with whom is Jesus engaging in a festival? Himself?



Fr. Staples claims that in the following passage (#14) Jesus’ use of the word “suspended” to describe the human will’s relationship to the divine will is the functional equivalent of saying that the divine will “took the place of” the human will and not simply that the

¹¹¹ December 26, 1919, (12), BH 106.

¹¹² Volume 2, p. 59, undated. See also January 31, 1918, (12): “Suppose that you pour a glass of water into a large container of water. Would you know how to discern, afterwards, which is the water from the glass and which is from the container? Certainly not. Therefore, to your greatest gain and for my greatest contentment, often repeat to Me in what you do: ‘Jesus, I pour this in You to be able to do not my will but Yours.’ Then I immediately pour my acts in you.”

¹¹³ December 26, 1919, (12), BH 107.

human will submits to the divine will. According to Fr. Staples, this violates our belief that the two wills of Christ are “inconvertible.”

Jesus: “When a soul acts in my Will **her humanity is, as it were, suspended.** Then **the Divine Life of my Love takes its place and acts;** and as in a creature, love finds itself unburdened of its desire for expression.”¹¹⁴

My response: First, the phrase “as it were” should help us to understand that we are not to take the word that follows it literally. Second, the verbs “suspended” and “takes its place and acts” in the context of this sentence do not suggest that the human will utterly vacates the scene. It is still the soul who continuously does the acting, that is, willing that the divine will act in and through her. Third, the context of the passage is again a mystical revelation of Jesus speaking to Luisa. Her terms must be taken primarily in a mystical and not in a technical sense.

The exchange between Luisa and Jesus is substantially similar to this one which took place between Blessed Dina Belanger and Jesus while she was preparing for her perpetual vows on August 15, 1928. (Keep in mind that this private revelation has been approved by the Church):

Jesus to Dina: “I wish to absorb you, my little spouse, to such a degree that *I shall exist in your place*, with all the attributes and perfections of my Divinity.”¹¹⁵

Later, as she completed her retreat in preparation for her solemn profession, she again described her spiritual state:

This state of life is one which I am entirely unable to describe as it really is. I can only try to give an idea of it in these few words. *God has completely absorbed my being.* Annihilated in Christ Jesus, I live by Him, in the adorable Trinity, the life of eternity. *Christ Jesus lives in my place on earth.*¹¹⁶



Fr. Staples finds that the following passage (#15) goes impermissibly beyond a description of the human will merely submitting to the divine:

Jesus: “...to live in My Will is to reign in It and with It, while to do My Will is to be at My orders... To live in My Will is to live with a single Will - God’s Will - A

¹¹⁴ March 26, 1918, (12), BH 86.

¹¹⁵ Leger, Irene, R.J.M., *The Courage to Love* (Ipswich, England: East Anglian Magazine, 1986), p. 122.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Will all Holy, all Pure, all Peace. And since one Will alone reigns, there are no conflicts; all is peace.”¹¹⁷

Fr. Staples comments: “Here Luisa clearly differentiates between acting in submission to God’s will, and her new way of acting which entails God’s will itself reigning and acting in the person. The Church teaches that the human will acts in submission to the divine.”

My response: A few sentences later in the original, Jesus expounds: “So the first step to live in the Divine Volition, which seeks to give to a creature the Divine Order, is *in the depth of the soul where Grace moves it to empty itself* of all that is human—tendencies, passions, inclinations, as well as other things.” In other words, it is still the soul that willingly submits itself to live in the divine will. They form “a single will” only because the soul continuously empties itself into the divine. This is not Monothelism.



Fr. Staples’ passage #16 will be grouped with #18, #19, #20 & #21. This following passage (#17) includes the notion of “destroying one’s own essence”:

Jesus to Luisa: “Although sorrow for one’s faults is good and praiseworthy, it does not destroy one’s own essence. On the other hand, **abandoning oneself completely in my Will destroys one’s own essence and causes one to reacquire the Divine Essence...** And in reacquiring God, she reacquires all the benefits that God Himself possesses. It is only when the soul is completely in the Will of God that she reacquires God. And if she leaves my Will, she reacquires her own essence, together with all the evils of her corrupt nature.”¹¹⁸

My response: Again the operative question arises, is Luisa speaking theologically and philosophically here, or mystically and poetically? Again, the answer flows from the fact that she is recounting what Jesus told her in a mystical revelation, so we must understand her words in that light. Furthermore, the meaning of this passage becomes even clearer in light of the preceding sentence: “My daughter, the most beautiful act that most pleases Me is abandonment in my Will, abandonment to the extent that one does not remember that his own essence exists, but only the Divine Volition.” Thus, Luisa equates the extreme abandonment of a soul who forgets that her own essence even exists with the destruction of her own essence.

Additionally, if Luisa is suggesting that upon entering the divine will the human essence is not just poetically or mystically absorbed into the divine essence, i.e., “destroyed,” but *metaphysically* absorbed and destroyed, then how would the soul still be able to leave the divine will as the last line in the passage warns that she can?

¹¹⁷ September 18, 1924, (17), also found in *The Kingdom of the Divine Will: An Introduction to the Fulfillment of the Lord’s Prayer*, The Luisa Piccarreta Center for the Divine Will, p. 22.

¹¹⁸ June 23, 1907, (8), BH 29.

Similar language appears in the private revelation of Jesus to Blessed Faustina Kowalska. (Again, keep in mind that this private revelation has been approved by the Church):

*(Y)ou will cancel out your will absolutely in this retreat and instead, My complete will shall be accomplished in you. Know that it will cost you much, so write these words on a clean sheet of paper: “From today on, my own will does not exist.” and then cross out the page. And on the other side write these words: “From today on, I do the will of God everywhere, always, and in everything.”*¹¹⁹

In this passage, as in Luisa’s, its obvious context of mystical union tells us that the words are to be taken poetically. They are not to be taken as the words of a theologian making a novel theological proposition.



Fr. Staples goes on to cite the following passages (#16, #18, #19, #20, and #21) as contradictions of the Third Council of Constantinople:

Jesus to Luisa: “Thus the soul, until she is buried in my Will and dies completely in It, by **disintegrating her volition in Mine**, cannot come forth again to a new Divine Life with the resurgence of all the virtues of Christ which contain the true Sanctity.”¹²⁰

Jesus to Luisa: “The only thing that should matter to you is that you **dissolve your Will completely in Mine**, because for him who lives in my Will, it is intimate union, not just for a quarter of an hour but always, always. Since my Will is in continuous Communion with the soul, not only once a day, but every hour, every moment, it is always Communion for him who lives in my Will.”¹²¹

Jesus to Luisa: “They will **no longer act on the human plane**, but will penetrate into my Will; and **their acts, now all divine**, will be multiplied for all creatures.”¹²²

Jesus to Luisa: “My daughter, I recommend that you never go out of my Will, because my Will contains such power that It is a new baptism for the soul. It is, moreover, more than Baptism itself. For in the sacraments my grace is received in a limited way, whereas in my Will, all the fullness of grace is received. In Baptism, Original Sin is taken away, but the passions, the weakness remain. On the other hand, in my Will, by **destroying its own will, the soul destroys her passions, her**

¹¹⁹ *Diary of Blessed Sister M. Faustina Kowalska* (Stockbridge, MA: Marians of the Immaculate Conception, 1998), p. 167, #372.

¹²⁰ January 20, 1907, (7), BH 28.

¹²¹ April 8, 1908, (8), BH 34.

¹²² January 29, 1919, (12), BH 94.

weakness, and all there is that is human, and lives on the Divine virtues, strength, and all the Divine qualities.”¹²³

Jesus to Luisa: “To enter [into the Divine Will], creatures need but remove the pebble of their own will. Although it lies within my Will, their will does not participate nor enjoy Its effects. It is alien to my Will because that pebble, a soul’s own will, hinders the flow of my Will, just as the rocks on a beach keep the ocean water from flowing everywhere. But if a soul removes the rock of her own will, in that very same instant she flows in Me and I in her; and she finds all My goods at her disposal: power, light, assistance and everything she desires. That is why there are no special paths, no doors, nor keys to my Will. A soul has but to desire it and all is done. My Will assumes all the work, gives the soul what she lacks, and makes her expand into all the limitless boundaries of my Will. With virtues it is just the opposite. How many efforts are needed, how many battles, how many long paths...”¹²⁴

My response: The following passages are offered to show that even when she spoke in mystical language as she does above Luisa still recognized the integrity of the human will as it operates in union with the divine will, both in Christ and in herself:

Luisa: “Jesus let me hear that He was praying to His Father for me saying, ‘Holy Father, I pray to You for this soul. Grant that she perfectly accomplishes in everything Our most Holy Will. Grant, oh adorable Father, that *her actions be so in harmony with Mine, that one cannot be discerned from the other* [and] thus may I be able to accomplish in her what I have planned.”¹²⁵ Comment: Note that Luisa still has actions attributed to the operation of her will, even though they are so in harmony with God’s as to be indistinguishable.

Jesus: “My daughter, as you withdraw from My Will, you begin to live on your own, whereas were you to remain fixed in My Will, you would always live for Me alone, dying entirely to yourself.”¹²⁶ Comment: The implication is that once you have entered into divine will, i.e. “destroying your will”, you have it nonetheless in the sense that you can still use it to withdraw from the divine will.

Jesus: “While it’s true that I do everything in the soul so that without Me she would do nothing, it’s also true that *I always leave a thread of free will in the soul.*”¹²⁷ Comment: Again, even after entering into the divine will the soul can still “will” to leave it.

¹²³ March 23, 1910, (9), BH 36 The entire selection by Fr. Staples was not repeated here because it was already cited in his selection #12, at note 40.

¹²⁴ February 16, 1921, (12), BH 123.

¹²⁵ Volume 2, p. 53, undated.

¹²⁶ March 30, 1901, (4).

¹²⁷ October 30 1903, (5).

Jesus: “My daughter, in the union of Our Wills, all will be enclosed. *Your will will operate alongside of Mine* in beseeching graces for the salvation of souls.”¹²⁸

Jesus: “I will carry out the renewal by manifesting what my Divinity did in my Humanity: How my Divine Volition worked with my Human Volition.”¹²⁹

Comment: Jesus indicates that he had two wills, and that the two worked “with” one another.

Jesus: “Behold, therefore, the Redemption: I wanted to expiate the sins of man through many sufferings, and by never doing my own Will but always the Divine Will, even in the most trivial things such as breathing, looking about, speaking, etc. My Humanity neither moved nor had life unless it was animated by the Will of my Father.”¹³⁰

Jesus: “Is it not wonderful that the flowing of a human will can be in constant relationship with a Divine Will and that one can have its outlet in the other?”¹³¹

Jesus: “When the human will unites with the Divine Will, the two wills embrace and repose together.”¹³²

Jesus: “Now my Humanity had two wills, the human and the Divine. And I deposited all that I did in the Divine...”¹³³

Jesus: “...while you are free to do or not do your will, before Mine your will feels incapable of operating; it feels itself annulled. Knowing the great good of my Will, you abhor your own. And without anyone forcing you, you love to do Mine in view of the great good that comes to you. And the many truths that I have expressed about my Will are divine bonds, eternal chains that surround you, possessions of celestial goods. And to flee from these eternal chains, to break these divine bonds, to lose these heavenly possessions, even in life, your will, although free, does not find the way to leave.”¹³⁴

Jesus: “God and the creature become two beings so charmed with one another, so inseparable, so transfused and identified, as to scarcely distinguish that in them are two lives which palpitate together.”¹³⁵

¹²⁸ August 12, 1915, (11).

¹²⁹ January 29, 1919, (12), BH 1, 91.

¹³⁰ November 26, 1921, (13).

¹³¹ March 16, 1922, (14).

¹³² March 18, 1922, (14).

¹³³ March 8, 1925, (17).

¹³⁴ May 30, 1925, (17).

¹³⁵ January 25, 1927, (20).

It is apparent that in the similar, extreme terms that both Blessed Dina Belanger and Blessed Faustina Kowalska used to describe their experiences of mystical union neither the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints nor the Holy Father found anything against faith or morals. They did not find it necessary or appropriate to take the private revelations of these holy women and hold them up against the findings of the Third Council of Constantinople. Why should we do so with Luisa's?

Fr. Staples argues that Luisa errs because she is not speaking in mystical language but "presenting a theological argument for a totally new way of acting." He provides no evidence to support this assertion, though, either from the facts of her life or from her writings. On the contrary, every indication is that Luisa was attempting to describe a new experience of mystical union with Jesus so as to extend awareness of it to others.

Furthermore, Fr. Staples' argument about the intent of Luisa's writings actually intimates that Blessed Dina's and Blessed Faustina's experiences were to be limited just to them, that is, that they were not, like Luisa, presenting us with a "totally new way of acting."¹³⁶ The magisterium suggests otherwise. Every extraordinary experience of mystical union is always given primarily for the sake of everyone else's ordinary experience of it:

God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.¹³⁷

So what are we, the faithful, to do with the extreme language of mystical union we find in Luisa's private revelation? "Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church."¹³⁸ The magisterium has provided us with just such guidance in its treatment of the similar private revelations of Blessed Dina Belanger and Blessed Faustina Kowalska.

¹³⁶ It is noteworthy that Luisa, Blessed Dina, and Blessed Faustina each wrote accounts of their mystical experiences only at the direction of their superiors. This is one indication that the mystical union they described was not intended solely for their benefit.

¹³⁷ CCC #2014.

¹³⁸ CCC #67.

#4 Miscellaneous Objections

A. Luisa places herself on par with Mary

Only under obedience and with considerable personable embarrassment, Luisa wrote that, just as God had chosen Mary for the unique role of ushering in the Second Fiat of Redemption, so he chose her for the unique role of ushering in the Third Fiat of Sanctification. Some critics find this to be inconsistent with Catholic belief in Mary's unique role in the plan of salvation and in her unparalleled holiness.

My response: The following is a limited review of a few passages from Luisa which demonstrate that, despite her exalted role and sanctity, Luisa does not place herself on a par with Mary. According to Luisa, only Mary attained the pinnacle of creaturely sanctity:

Jesus: "...My Mother also loved Me more than any other creature, and no one will ever equal her..."¹³⁹ "...the Celestial and Most Holy of all creatures",¹⁴⁰ "...this makes Her the greatest of all."¹⁴¹

Jesus: "(I)f I have given the distinction of miracles to other Saints, and I have adorned others with my Wounds, to my Mamma nothing, nothing - and yet She was portent of portents, the miracle of miracles, the true and perfect crucified. There is not another like Her."¹⁴²

In this following passage Jesus affirms that Mary's role was unique and unrepeatable and that her love forever surpasses the love of all creatures combined. Luisa is also given a unique role in God's relationship with mankind, and a surpassing love, but neither surpasses Mary's:

Jesus: "My daughter, my Mother, with her love, with her prayers, and with her self-effacement, called Me from Heaven to earth to become incarnate within her womb. With your love and by losing yourself always in my Will, you will call my Will to earth to live within you; and then you will give Me life in all other creatures. Since by calling me from Heaven to earth within her womb, my Mother did a unique act, one that will not be repeated, I enriched Her with all graces and endowed Her with such Love that *She exceeds in love all creatures together*. I made her first in privileges, in glory, in everything...such that all creatures remain far below Her. When you call my Will into you, you also do a unique act. Out of respect for my Will which inhabits you, I must pour enough graces and Love into you to make *you surpass all other creatures*."¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Volume 2, p. 87, undated passage.

¹⁴⁰ August 13, 1923, (16).

¹⁴¹ November 10, 1923, (16).

¹⁴² January 17, 1921, (12) BH 117.

¹⁴³ March 8, 1921, (12), BH 128.

One might conclude that only lunacy, or pride, would bring a soul to say that Jesus had given her a role so special that she would become a (distant) second only to Mary. But it would not be against Catholic teaching, and that is the only question that concerns us now.



In the following passage (#22) Fr. Staples finds what he considers to be a similarly outlandish notion:

Jesus said to me [Luisa]: “My dear one, look at how for the one who lives in my Volition **there is no grace that goes forth from my Will toward all the creatures in Heaven or on earth in which he (i.e. the one who lives in the Divine Will) is not the first to take part.** This is natural because he who lives in the house of his father abounds in his possessions. And if those on the outside receive anything, it is **in virtue of him** who lives inside.”¹⁴⁴

He comments: “Evidently, to live in the Divine Will is to join Our Lady as mediatrix of all graces!”

My response: Luisa does suggest here that in the divine will creatures can be so united with Christ as to participate in sending forth all graces with him universally and transtemporally, as Mary did. But, however novel and shocking such a proposition might be, what Catholic teaching prohibits us from thinking it is possible? Mary’s unique role remains protected because we could still only enter into and participate in God’s eternal act through her.

In another and probably no less shocking passage, Jesus says that a soul praying the Hours of the Passion in his divine will becomes a coredemptrix:

And whereby, raising herself up between Heaven and earth, she performs my own office, and as coredemptrix, says together with Me: ‘Ecce ego, mitte me’ [Here I am, Lord; send me out]. I want to make reparation to You for everyone, to respond to You for everyone, and to intercede for the good of everyone.¹⁴⁵

But nothing in Catholic teaching actually prohibits us from thinking that Christ could call creatures other than Mary to share in all of his redemptive sufferings, provided that we do not think we could ever usurp her unique mission and office as *the* Co-Redemptrix *par excellence*:

Jesus: “Besides Me there is my Celestial Mother who had the *unique* mission of being the Mother of the Son of God and office of Co-Redemptrix of the human

¹⁴⁴ July 17, 1906, (7), BH 25.

¹⁴⁵ November 6, 1914, (6).

race. She was enriched with so many graces for the mission of her Divine Maternity that *all the earthly and heavenly creatures combined could never equal Her.*¹⁴⁶

B. Mary had no human love for St. Joseph.

In one passage in Luisa's writings, Mary describes her thoughts as she discovered that God wished her to marry St. Joseph. Fr. Most interprets Mary's words as meaning that she had no human feelings of love for St. Joseph. I excerpt a larger selection of this entry, putting into bold-face the part quoted by Fr. Most:

Mary: "(I)t seemed, apparently, that God wanted to put Me to the test. **I had never loved anyone in the world; and since the Divine Will had Its extension in all my being, my human will never had one act of life. Therefore, in Me the seed of human love was lacking. How could I love a man, for however great a saint he might be, in the human order?** It is true that I loved everyone; and the love towards everyone was so much that my love of Mother had them written one by one in my heart with indelible characters of fire; but that was all in the divine order. Therefore, human love, compared to divine, can be called shadow, tint, atoms of love. Yet, dear child, what seemed to be a danger and something strange to the sanctity of my life, God made admirable use of to fulfill his designs and to concede Me the grace I longed for so much, that is, that the Word would descend upon the earth. God gave me the safeguard, the defense, the help so that no one could speak on my account about my integrity."¹⁴⁷

Fr. Most quotes from *Haurietis aquas* in which Pius XII teaches that "Jesus had a triple love: 1) that which is part of the divine nature; 2) willing good to us in His human will; 3) a love of feeling, for He had a true humanity." Fr. Most thereby questions the orthodoxy of Mary's statement that in her "the seed of human love was lacking."

My response: The preceding sentence helps us to understand this phrase. In the context of all of Luisa's writings, when Our Lady says "my human will never had one act of life," she means that it never acted independently of God's will.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, when she says that "the seed of human love was lacking" in her, she means the seed of human love operating independently of God. In other words, none of her human passions ever even began to become disordered. Though her human love was tiny in contrast to the divine love she lived in, this did not diminish her human love, but actually elevated and perfected it.

¹⁴⁶ May 1, 1925, (17).

¹⁴⁷ Luisa Piccarreta, *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will* (Jacksonville, FL: The Center for the Divine Will, 1996), pp. 70-1.

¹⁴⁸ See Section D below on Quietism.

Because her passions were never disordered, Our Lady's virginal consecration to the Lord remained continuously untainted by even the seed of a lingering, disordered desire for a husband. And so, in the face of this call to betrothal, Mary saw "a danger and something strange to the sanctity of (her) life," not in having to humanly love St. Joseph, but in having to love him in a way that would contradict her perpetual, virginal consecration. This explains the final sentence quoted above, in which she recounts how God used this new situation actually to safeguard her virginal "integrity."

So, did Mary have a human, wifely love for St. Joseph? Within the purity of her perpetual consecration, of course she did. Listen to her recount her interaction with St. Joseph after their betrothal, upon their arrival at Nazareth:

You must know that St. Joseph and I looked at one another with reserve and we felt our hearts swollen; each of us wanted to make known to the other that we were bound to God by vow of perpetual virginity. Finally, the silence was broken and we made known to one another the vow we each had made. Oh, how happy we felt; and, thanking the Lord, we professed to live together as brother and sister! I was most attentive in serving him. We looked at one another with veneration, and the aurora of peace reigned in our midst.¹⁴⁹

How could this not be an expression of love grounded in truly human feeling?

C. It is improper to speak of acting "divinely."

Fr. Staples expresses concern about the absence of a necessary human act in the following passage from Luisa's writings(#23):

Luisa: "I complained to Jesus that I couldn't even hear Holy Mass, and Jesus said: 'My daughter, aren't I the sacrifice? When I am sacrificed, the soul that lives with Me in my Will is sacrificed together with Me, not only in one Mass, **but in all Masses from the first to the last.** Since she lives in my Will **the soul is consecrated in all the Hosts.** Never leave my Will and I will take you wherever you want. Furthermore, such an electric current of communication will pass between us that you will not do one act without Me. **Nor will I do any act without you.** Therefore, when you have need of something, such as to hear Mass, enter into my Will and you will immediately find what you seek: as many Masses as you wish, as many Communion as you wish, as much love as you wish. Nothing is lacking in my Will. Not only will you find all things, but you will find them in a divine and infinite manner."¹⁵⁰

Fr. Staples comments:

¹⁴⁹ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, *ibid.*, p.74.

¹⁵⁰ March 27, 1918, (12), BH 86-87.

To participate fruitfully in the Mass we must be conscious of what we are doing, a human act is involved at some level. We cannot be unconsciously offering ourselves and consecrating ourselves in every Mass all over the world and certainly not in all the Masses which were ever offered before we were born!

My response: The soul's conscious decisions to enter into and to remain continuously in the divine will are human acts, even though they are so charged with divine animation that they can also, and perhaps even more accurately, be called "divine." St. John of the Cross teaches us that all the operations of a soul moving in mystical union with God are in fact divine:

...all the operations of the memory and other faculties in this state are divine. God now possesses the faculties as their complete lord, because of their transformation in Him. And consequently it is He Who divinely moves and commands them according to His spirit and will. As a result the operations are not different from those of God; but those the soul performs are of God and are divine operations. Since he who is united with God is one spirit with Him, as St. Paul says [I Cor. 6:17], the operations of the soul united with God are of the divine Spirit and are divine.¹⁵¹

This renovation (God making the soul die to all that He is not) is: an illumination of the human intellect with supernatural light so that it becomes divine, united with the divine; an informing of the will with love of God so that it is no longer less than divine and loves in no other way than divinely, united and made one with the divine will and love; and also a divine conversion and change of the memory, the affections, and the appetites according to God. And thus this soul will be a soul of heaven, heavenly and more divine than human.¹⁵²

Once the soul makes the conscious human act of disposing itself to God's initiative in such a manner, God can then at his good will and pleasure take and do with, through, and in it as he pleases, even in ways that the soul did not, and actually could not, ask for or even imagine. In such a state, and actually in any state of prayer, the soul does not have to be conscious of all the acts that God is doing through and in it for them to be truly happening or for them to be efficacious. If I consciously offer my sufferings to the Lord, asking him to do with them as he pleases, I do not have to know what he actually does with them for my prayer to be answered. If this were not so, then the prayers and sufferings which Christians have offered up for the past two thousand years have been largely wasted.

¹⁵¹ St. John of the Cross, The Ascent of Mount Carmel, III-ii-8, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979), pp. 216-7.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, *The Dark Night*, ch. 13, n. 11, pp. 360-1.

To cite another example, we also perform a human act when we consecrate ourselves in union with every Mass throughout the world in our Morning Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you all my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation my sins, for the intentions of all our associates, and particular for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Once I make this act I do not have to participate consciously in each of these Masses throughout the world to actually make my offering through and in union with them, and to know in faith that my act of offering has been accepted and set into motion by Jesus through Mary.

Now, can such an operation also take place transtemporally, that is, in Masses which were offered even before I was born? Looked at strictly from our temporal perspective, such a notion might seem absurd. But from God's eternal perspective, it is not. In the following passage Jesus contrasts for Luisa the great difference between living united to him and living in his volition, including the unique transtemporal possibilities of the latter:

Luisa: "Returning to the point of living in the Divine Volition, it was said to me that it was like living in the state of union with God. Then my always amiable Jesus, upon coming, said to me: 'My daughter, there is a great difference between living united with Me and living in my Will.'"

"And while He said that, He pulled me by the arms and said to me: 'Come into my Will even one single instant, and you will see the great difference.'

"I found myself in Jesus. My little atom swam in the Eternal Will. Moreover, since this Eternal Volition is a single Act that contains together all the acts-past, present, and future-I, being in the Eternal Volition, took part in that single Act which contains all acts, *inasmuch as it is possible for a creature*. I even took part in the acts which do not yet exist, and which must exist, unto the end of centuries, and as long as God will be God. And also for this did I love Him, thank Him, bless Him, etc.

"There was no act that escaped me; and I now took the Love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and made It mine - as Their Volition was mine and I gave It to Them as mine. How content I was to be able to give Them their own Love as mine! And how They found complete contentment and full venting of their Bosom in receiving from me their Love as mine. But who can say all? I lack the words.

"Then, Blessed Jesus said to me: 'Have you seen what living in my Will is? It is to disappear. It is to enter into the ambiance of Eternity. It is to penetrate into the Omnipotence of the Eternal, into the Uncreated Mind, and *to take part in everything and in each Divine Act inasmuch as it is possible for a creature*. It is

to enjoy, while remaining on earth, all the Divine qualities. It is to hate evil in a Divine way. It is that expanding oneself to all without exhausting oneself, because the Will that animates this creature is Divine. It is the Sanctity not yet known, and which I will make known, which will set in place the last ornament, the most beautiful and most brilliant among all the other sanctities, and will be the crown and completion of all the other sanctities.’

“‘Now, living united with Me is not to disappear. Two beings are seen together; and he who does not disappear cannot enter into the ambiance of Eternity so as to take part in all.’”¹⁵³

The question is whether God is capable, and desirous, of lifting creatures into such a participation in his own single, eternal, divine act. For those who deny that this is possible for God, keep in mind that Luisa qualifies what she says about such transtemporal activity: It takes place only “inasmuch as it is possible for a creature.” Such a statement is not inconsistent with Catholic teaching.

D. Luisa advocates Quietism

Luisa writes that the highest objective of Christian perfection is to unite one’s will so intimately and continuously with God’s that one lives utterly absorbed in him. As long as this is accomplished, nothing else matters. Fr. Most understands her spirituality as a modern form of Quietism, a 17th century heresy condemned for its emphasis on extinguishing all human desire and activity in order to reach a state of utter passivity before God. He cites several sections from DS which contain some of the condemned propositions of Quietism. I presume that he believes Luisa’s writings promote each of these in some way:

2201: “A man should annihilate his powers, and this is the interior way.”

2202: “To will to work actively is to offend God who wills to be the sole agent and so it is necessary to abandon oneself entirely and wholly and afterwards to remain like a lifeless body.”

2207: “The soul should not think of reward or punishment or of paradise or of hell or of death or eternity.”

2212: “He who has given his free will to God, should not be concerned about anything, neither about hell nor about paradise, nor should it have a desire for its own perfection or for virtues, or for its own holiness, or for its own salvation, the hope for which it should wipe out.”

¹⁵³ April 8, 1918, (12).

Fr. Most uses the following three passages from Luisa's writings to demonstrate her support for these condemned propositions. I quote these passages in their context, putting into bold-face the sections he has excerpted:

Mary to Luisa: "My daughter, **perhaps to you it does not seem that my sacrifice was great, that of living without my will.** I say to you that there is no sacrifice similar to mine; rather, **all the other sacrifices of all the history of the world can be called shadows compared to mine. To sacrifice one's self for a day, now yes and now no, is easy; but to sacrifice one's self in each instant, in each act, in the very good that one wishes to do for all one's life, without ever giving life to one's own will, is the sacrifice of sacrifices. It is the greatest proof one can offer and the purest love, drawn from the Divine Will Itself, that can be offered** to our Creator."¹⁵⁴

Mary to Luisa: "Indeed, God asked of Me a test that He did not ask of anyone; and this He did with justice and with greatest wisdom because, the Eternal Word having to descend into Me, not only was it proper that He not find in Me the stain of Original Sin but **it was not even fitting that He find in Me a human will operating. It would have been too unbecoming for God to descend into a creature in which the human will reigned.** Therefore, this is why He wanted as proof from Me, and for my entire life, my will, to place in safety in my soul the Kingdom of the Divine Will. Assured of this in Me, God could do what He wished with Me; He could give Me everything; and I can say that He could deny Me nothing."¹⁵⁵

Luisa to Mary: "My sovereign Mother, I am here again to follow your steps. Your love binds me and as a powerful magnet keeps me fixed and all intent to hear the beautiful lessons of my Mother. But that is not enough for me; if You love me as daughter, enclose me within the Kingdom of the Divine Will where You lived and do live, **and shut the door in such a way that, even if I wanted, I could no longer go out of it.** Thus Mother and child will live life in common and we will both be happy."¹⁵⁶

My response: Note that none of these passages suggests any lack of concern about heaven or hell on Luisa's part. There are no such passages. Throughout her writings, Luisa expressed a deep desire for heaven. As to whether she had a lack of concern about perfection, holiness and the virtues, I refer the reader to an earlier section in this paper entitled, "The New and Divine Sanctity as 'Easy' to Receive and Live" in which I discussed the central role of the virtues in Luisa's writings.

¹⁵⁴ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Ibid., pp. 22-3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 25-6.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

Now let us look at the following phrases from the above passages: “living without my will,” “it was not even fitting that He find in me a human will operating, even if I wanted,” and “even if I wanted, I could no longer go out of it.” Are we to take these statements literally, that is, as representative theological “propositions”? The context argues against it. Each of the statements was delivered in the context of a mystical vision that attempted to describe the indescribable experience of mystical union. In such descriptions, exaggerations are not just permissible, they are to be expected. Therefore, Luisa’s expressions should be classified as mystical or hyperbolic, not theological, language.

The members of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints are sensitive to this critical distinction, especially when they evaluate accounts of the human will’s passivity before the divine will. In the final report of the special commission in the matter of the Servant of God (now Blessed) Dina Belanger, one of the members of the Congregation made the following statement about Blessed Dina’s use of the term “substitution” (as in, “Jesus substituted Himself for me”):

(It) is to be understood as a mystical term which the whole context requires. It is not a question of a **physical annihilation** of the person, but of a state of **mystic passivity** and **perfect docility** to the action of the Spirit in the soul. For this reason the phrases, “to no longer exist”, “to be no more”, are taken in a metaphorical sense to express a perfect union and conformity with Christ through a mystical transformation. In this way also, the expression “to let Christ have His way in everything” does not in any way involve **quietism**, but implies passivity to the divine action, that is to act in complete docility to grace” (emphasis in the original).¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, the context of each of the aforementioned passages from Luisa’s writings suggests that while the human will was passive before God, it was also *actively engaged* in being passive! In the first passage, Mary says that to live without her will she had to sacrifice it, that is, she had to make an act of her will to live without it. Moreover, she had to make this act continuously throughout her life. It follows that “living without my will” means “living without my will operating independently of God’s will.” Similarly, in the second passage, the context shows that Mary would not have been a fitting recipient of the Incarnate Word if God had found her will “reigning,” that is, operating autonomously, independently of the divine will. In the third passage, Luisa simply expresses her desire never to part from God. If this is heresy, then so is St. Ignatius’ prayer: “Take, Lord, all my liberty....,” and St. Louis de Montfort’s exhortation to holy “slavery to Jesus through Mary.”



¹⁵⁷ Incorporating the theological report of Fr. Antonio Blasucci in “Report and Votes of the Special Commission held on October 25, 1988,” *Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum*, Quebecen. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Mariae A S. Caecilia Romana (in saec. Dinae Belanger), Sororis Professae e Congregatione Religiosarum Iesu et Mariae (1897-1929), Roma, 1990, p. 114.

The following passages give some indication of just how high Luisa's spirituality soars above the propositions of Quietism. This heresy promoted the extinction of desire, in utter passivity before God. But Luisa very much desired to love Jesus more deeply and begged him to let her share in his sufferings :

It was because of this that I felt motivated by love toward my beloved Jesus and pleaded with Him to often—very often—renew my crucifixions so that I could, at least partly, relieve his pain. Jesus used to say: “My beloved, the Cross, properly followed and ardently desired, distinguishes between the predestined and the reprobate who is stubbornly opposed to any suffering. Know that on the Universal Day of Judgment, the faithful and persevering will feel the caress of the Cross and will be ecstatic when they see it appear, whereas the reprobate will be seized and assailed by a horrible fear.”¹⁵⁸

Quietism showed no charity toward the poor, emphasizing instead the importance of non-activity. In the following passage, Luisa underscores the importance of love of neighbor, albeit subordinated to love for God:

Jesus: “The love of neighbor also enters into My Heart but it must be so connected to the love of Me that it must form one alone without My being able to discern one from the other. On the contrary, that other love of neighbor that is not transformed into love of Me, I do not even look at it as something that pertains to Me.”¹⁵⁹

Quietism also promoted utter passivity before God without concern for the acquisition of virtue. In her writings, on the other hand, Luisa exalted the virtues:

Jesus: “The more the soul humiliates and knows herself, *the more she draws near to the Truth*. And finding herself in the Truth, *she seeks to push herself onto the path of the virtues*, from which she sees herself very far. And if she sees that she finds herself on the path of the virtues, she immediately perceives how far she has to go yet, because the virtues are without end. They are infinite... as I am.”¹⁶⁰

It is interesting that the terms “working for” and “with” Christ in the following passage imply that the soul retains her metaphysically distinct creaturely identity, even though she loses the (merely) human character of her work. It remains her decision to work, to suffer and to pray. Her free will operates throughout, in submission to God's will, and in the process her work acquires the divine quality:

Jesus: “My dearest daughter, working for Christ makes the human work disappear, and Christ makes arise the divine work. For this reason, always work together with Me—as if we were together doing the same thing. If you suffer, do it as if

¹⁵⁸ Volume 1, page 60, undated passage.

¹⁵⁹ Volume 2, page 19, undated passage.

¹⁶⁰ January 1, 1900 (3).

you were suffering with Me; if you pray, if you work, make everything run in Me and together with Me. Thus you will lose the human works in everything, only to find them again as Divine. Oh, how immense is the wealth that creatures could acquire working this way, but it does not interest them!”¹⁶¹

If Luisa thought Jesus encouraged “quietistic” non-activity, her exchange with him here quickly cleared up that misconception:

Jesus: “My daughter, in order to know if a soul is indifferent to all, it is enough to see if stirring up desires in her—holy or indifferent—she is ready to sacrifice them with holy peace to the Divine Will. However, if she becomes disturbed, if she becomes worried, it means that she retains at least something for herself.”

Then I, listening to Him speak of desires, said to Him:

“My Supreme Good, my wish is not to write anymore. Oh, how hard it is! Moreover, if it were not for the fear of losing your Will, and of displeasing You, I would no longer write.”

Then Jesus, cutting off what I said, added:

“You do not want to make this sacrifice but I, Myself, want it. Thus, if you want to obey, write...”

“After hearing that I became confused and humiliated, feeling repugnance to write... However, obedience has absolutely imposed it upon me, and I write this only to obey.”¹⁶²

E. The Old Testament Jews merited the Redemption.

In the following passage (Fr. Staples #24), Luisa writes that if Jesus had not found the prayers and pleadings of the people of the Old Testament he never would have consented to come as the Redeemer. Fr. Staples takes this to mean that we received the Redemption through the merits of the Jews of the Old Testament, which is not Catholic belief:

Fr. Staples: “After Jesus tells Luisa how her sufferings and prayers were instrumental in the establishment of the new ‘Kingdom of the Supreme Fiat,’ He adds:” “The same thing occurred in the Redemption. If our Justice had not found the prayers, the sighs, the tears, the penances of the Patriarchs, Prophets and all the good people of the Old Testament and, moreover, a Virgin Queen who possessed our Will integrally and who took everything upon Herself with so many unceasing prayers, taking upon Herself the work of making satisfaction for all the human race, our Justice never would have conceded to the descent of the desired

¹⁶¹ September 23, 1906, (7).

¹⁶² October 13, 1906, (7).

Redeemer among creatures. Our Justice would have been inexorable and would have given a resounding NO to my coming to earth.”¹⁶³

Fr. Staples comments:

Luisa is claiming that God had to first satisfy His justice by looking to the merits of human beings before He could send his Son. This is totally false. The Incarnation and Redemption was completely unmerited. If the Patriarchs, Prophets, Mary, etc..., did anything meritorious it was by the foreseen merits and grace of Christ!

My response: Nowhere does this passage suggest that God’s “justice was looking to the merits of human beings.” Rather, he was looking to their heartfelt desire for salvation. Mary’s “work of making satisfaction for all the human race,” in the context of this passage, certainly means making up for the prayers and pleadings which others should have offered but did not. She represented our entire human family both when she prayed for the Messiah and when she received him as our wholly unmerited gift.

God’s justice is such that he will not - indeed, he cannot - deliver his mercy either into the world or into a human soul unless it is freely asked for and freely received. This truth is imbedded in the Rite of Baptism itself: “What do you ask of God’s Church?” We can never merit the grace of salvation, but, to receive it, we must still ask for it and seek it. This necessity stems from God’s perpetual, uncompromised respect for the free will he gave us.

¹⁶³ September 13, 1926, (19), BH 18.

Conclusion: Recalling the Proper Place of Private Revelation and Theology

The content of Luisa Piccarreta's private revelation is staggering. It either announces a new gift from God beyond all previous measure, or it contains the ramblings of an extremely pious, world-class lunatic. It is virtually impossible for devout Catholics not to form strong opinions about her writings. But before we hasten either to proclaim her writings from the housetops or to burn them at the city dump, we must do the careful work of comparing what she has written with the teachings of the Church. As we do so, it is important to recall both the place of private revelation in the life of the Church and the proper role of a theologian in evaluating it.

Those who believe that her writings are of God, and contain nothing against faith and morals, should remember that even if the Church were to give the writings her highest approval by canonizing Luisa, she would never attach to them the "should adhere" of religious faith. As private revelation, Luisa's writings add nothing essential to the deposit of faith. This implies that the task of theologically "defending" the orthodoxy of Luisa's writings to a Catholic critic is not of the same order of importance as defending a doctrine of the faith to a non-believer. Likewise, the task of telling the whole world about her writings will never be of the same order of importance as the task of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations. Luisa's writings may draw forth stupendous and surprising gifts from Christ's definitive Revelation, but, in their essence, they cannot compare with that Revelation in value.

Others may question the authenticity of Luisa's private revelation, and they are certainly allowed to do so provided that they go about it with charity, thoroughness and academic integrity, and with an attitude of service, respect and obedience to the magisterium. But it is just as important for Luisa's theological critics as for her theological supporters to refrain from presuming to "speak for the Church" on the ultimate matter of the orthodoxy of her writings. Specifically, there is a subtle but critical difference between a theologian's defense of an established *teaching* of the Church, and his use of Church teaching to support a theological *opinion* about a matter that the Church has left open for discussion. For example, critics should acknowledge that Luisa's defenders do not claim that Monothelism is not heretical (which would be a non-Catholic position since the Church has not left this matter open for discussion), but that her writings in particular do not promote Monothelism (which is a Catholic claim because that matter is still open for discussion).

Critics should also acknowledge that if ecclesial pronouncements about Luisa's writings were weighed against one another, the scales would tip in Luisa's favor:

-A man whom Pope John Paul II declared Blessed, Hannibal Di Francia, knew Luisa personally, read her writings as they were being written, and gave them the *Nihil Obstat*. (No beatified or canonized person has contradicted Blessed Hannibal's judgement.)

-The seventy-year old *Imprimatur* of His Excellency Monsignor Joseph Maria Leo, Archbishop of Trani-Barletta-Bisceglie, remains attached to her writings.

-The Holy See, which has not only been aware of her writings but has had since 1938 physical custody in its archives of thirty-four of her original thirty-six volumes, issued a declaration on February 25, 1994 that it had no objections (*Non Obstare*) to her cause being initiated by the archdiocese. If there were doubts about any lingering curial disapprobation stemming from the fact that some of her writings were at one time on the now abolished Index of Forbidden Books they were vanquished by this declaration.

-The current, local archbishop promotes her cause, having been fully informed of all the circumstances surrounding her life and writings.

-The two Censor Theologians he appointed to evaluate her published writings read them in the original language and found nothing against faith or morals.

-Finally, Pope John Paul II obliquely nodded at them in his recent, favorable allusion to the “new and divine holiness.”

Catholics, at the very minimum, are not out of line with the Catholic Faith if they place their trust and confidence in these pronouncements.

This is not, then, a case of the champions of orthodoxy (the critics) versus the heretics (the defenders). In light of the aforementioned facts, it is actually the critics who have chosen to go against the mainstream of ecclesial guidance. They are allowed to do this, but only as long as they continuously act within the narrowly-defined limits of the theologian, that is, to assist the magisterium with humility and deference. But if they try to ascend beyond those limits, for example, by declaring that Catholics are morally constrained not to associate themselves with Luisa’s writings, they actually descend to the ranks of the “parallel magisterium”: those theologians who presume to advise the faithful that they are not only free but obliged to reject the legitimate spiritual guidance of the Church.

There are other pitfalls to be avoided. For the defenders, there is academic naivete - the tendency, once convinced of Luisa’s authenticity, to deny all possibility of error in her writings, and to presume ill will in anyone who raises questions about their orthodoxy. For the critics, there is academic hooliganism - the thrill of going forth into the night looking for trouble, and finding it every time. Convinced that Luisa is a fraud, some critics find heresy on every page.

Finally, each of us must avoid the pitfall of entrenching ourselves in positions after a cursory review of the facts, then defending those positions unto martyrdom. The safeguard of docility and true service to the Church is a humble willingness to receive and to be persuaded by the promptings of grace and right reason. We must keep a faithful pursuit of the divine truth from becoming entangled in a relentless justification of human

opinion. In the end, either the critics or the defenders will be proven wrong, because one day Rome will tell us with finality whether Luisa's writings can be reconciled with Church teaching. In preparation for that day, the safest attitude for all of us is rigorous detachment, most especially from that homage which our human wills so tenaciously pay to our own brilliance.

Certification

I certify that I have read all of the published writings of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, which include all of Volumes 1-19, parts of Volume 20, all of Volumes 35 and 36, *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, and *The Hours of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. I further certify that I have found nothing contrary to Catholic faith or morals in these writings.

Stephen R. Patton
February 11, 1999