

Archdiocese rejects visions in Emmitsburg

Responding to an apocalyptic posting to a Web site by Dr. Gianna Talone-Sullivan claiming that the Blessed Virgin Mary told her of an impending worldwide disaster, the Archdiocese of Baltimore released an Aug. 29 statement reaffirming its position that Dr. Sullivan's alleged visions "are not supernatural in origin."

Dr. Sullivan, a pharmacologist, claimed to have received messages from Mary during Thursday evening prayer services at St. Joseph in Emmitsburg from 1993 until 2000 when the archdiocese banned them.

Dr. Sullivan claimed that Mary remained "publicly silent" for two years following the end of the prayer services, but continued to appear and speak with her privately. Dr. Sullivan began disseminating monthly "public messages to the world," allegedly from Mary, via the Internet on Aug. 5, 2002.

The archdiocese investigated the Emmitsburg visions and in 2003 an "extensive study by a commission comprised of experts in the field of theology and canon law" examined approximately 600 pages of testimony and interviewed Dr. Sullivan and others, according to the most recent archdiocesan statement (see page 5).

Following the commission study, Cardinal William H. Keeler issued a decree stating that the alleged visions were not supernatural. That decree was approved by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, now Pope Benedict XVI.

"The commission's finding was based, in part, on the fact that many of the messages were apocalyptic in nature, placed undue emphasis on future destruction and called for great and miraculous signs - all of which are incompatible with tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church," according to the most recent archdiocesan statement.

In a June posting to her Web site, Dr. Sullivan claimed that "Our Lady of Emmitsburg" told her that "even your governments and the church authorities

already have knowledge of the stars aligning and its implications upon you.” She claimed the coming disaster will result in “approximately 60-70 percent of the world’s population” ceasing.

On the Emmitsburg town Web site, Michael Hillman, Emmitsburg’s historian, raised concerns about the nature of Ms. Sullivan’s alleged visions.

The archdiocesan statement called it “regrettable that any confusion remains for Catholics in the archdiocese, who need only read the decree to understand the church’s position on this matter.”

Father Vincent O’Malley, C.M., pastor of St. Joseph, applauded the archdiocesan statement.

“This principle of operation provides prudent direction for all Catholics,” the pastor said. “It is hoped that all Catholics would yield to the wisdom and authority of Baltimore and Rome in their statement: ‘nothing supernatural is occurring’ in the alleged apparitions.”