

Statement concerning Archdiocesan action regarding alleged apparitions to Gianna Talone-Sullivan in Emmitsburg, Maryland

Update: See the June 7, 2003 Decree – Adobe Acrobat Format

On Friday, September 8, 2000, Archdiocesan officials met in Baltimore with Mrs. Gianna Talone-Sullivan to inform her that the Church found it impossible to permit, in a Catholic church, the continuation of prayer services centered around apparitions she alleges to experience with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mrs. Sullivan claims to receive messages from the Blessed Mother six days a week and one of these allegedly occurs at a public prayer service each Thursday at St. Joseph's parish in Emmitsburg. At each of these prayer services, Mrs. Sullivan claims to receive a message from the Blessed Mother that is then read to those present.

The following official statement was provided to Mrs. Sullivan last Friday and was also read to St. Joseph's parishioners at Mass during the weekend of September 9 and 10.

1. Following a careful examination of recently available information relative to the alleged apparitions, the Archdiocese of Baltimore finds no basis for them.
2. The Archdiocese of Baltimore has directed that the Thursday night prayer group meetings held at St. Joseph Church in Emmitsburg, Maryland be discontinued at this time.
3. The Archdiocese of Baltimore is unable to support the message of the video "Unbridled Mercy" and has asked that sales of the video be discontinued immediately.

Mrs. Sullivan is on record as having allegedly experienced apparitions of the Blessed Mother while living in the Diocese of Phoenix. Since her relocation to the

Emmitsburg area approximately seven years ago, these alleged apparitions have continued. The Archdiocese of Baltimore, as the Diocese of Phoenix before, has until recently taken a neutral view on the authenticity of Mrs. Sullivan's alleged apparitions. St. Joseph's parish in Emmitsburg has hosted her Thursday prayer services over the past several years and attendance has grown to several hundred attendees each week.

Prayer services and prayer groups (there are over 30) are encouraged and common around the archdiocese, where parishes make dedicated efforts to provide for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and adoration of the Lord (two parishes provide Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and many others offer Eucharistic Adoration on a regular basis), the opportunity to seek the Blessed Mother's intercession through prayer, and often the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. The Thursday prayer services at St. Joseph's had combined these elements. More importantly, however, they had primarily become a platform for promoting Mrs. Sullivan's alleged apparitions in a setting which suggests Church approval of both their authenticity and theological content.

This action by the Archdiocese comes after a review of several months by Archdiocesan officials and theologians. Although the Archdiocese does not intend to detail a point-by-point theological analysis of the content of any of the messages Mrs. Sullivan claims to have received, it finds elements in them that cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the Church, including material that deals with predictions for the future and visions of an apocalyptic nature. Additional information presented in a video by and about Mrs. Sullivan entitled "Unbridled Mercy" played a significant role in this review and its result.

For those who may be disappointed by this action, the archdiocese encourages continued prayer. The Archdiocese calls on the faithful to strengthen their resolve to follow Jesus through reception of the sacraments, personal prayer, study of our Catholic faith, devotion to the Blessed Mother, and participation in the life of their parishes.

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