

dedication to the devotion. While at the same time, some went overboard in their reaction to it, or simply misunderstood the messages, given that the Archbishop said there were poor translations being disseminated. But this is not the only case of division. Here is another one:

"My family has been very heavily involved in the Divine Will movement for some eight years. I was 17 when they began and even at that time, I doubted the validity and accuracy of what was being taught. I've seen this tear my family apart. It's at the point now that if you're not involved in the movement (or are openly opposed to it like my husband and I), you're somewhat out of the family loop. I'll have to write to you at some point and give you some in-depth details about the chaos and harm I've seen this movement cause. The point of this e-mail, though, is to encourage you to keep fighting this thing. Just being able to read the articles and discussions have refueled me and my husband to keep opposing it head on."

This is an example – many can be found like it – and it should give us pause. At the same time, however, we could jump to hasty conclusions. For example, I caused division in my family when I became a Catholic, and even more so when I decided to go off to France to enter a monastery rather than become engaged for marriage. It depends on the nature of the division, whether or not it is *ad Deum* or not. Suffice it to say, however, that if deep family rifts, or rifts within the convent or monastery are the result of this devotion, then this is a sure indication that *something* is wrong. Especially when the divisions are not healed. (The ones in my family were).

Another thing to consider is whether the writings or communication of the visionary are submitted to the Church and received official approbation. Luisa Piccarreta's writings (summarized in the Book

of Heaven) have received the *Imprimatur* from Archbishop Joseph Leo after receiving the *Nihil Obstat* from St. di Francia, the priest originally appointed by the Church to be the official diocesan censor for her writings. St. di Francia, after careful study over a substantial number of years, found nothing contrary in them to faith or morals. Being canonized, however, is not synonymous with infallibility. The blessed can get all kinds of things wrong. But St. Hannibal's writings were examined in the process of being declared a Servant of God, and again when declared Venerable, and then Blessed, and then Saint. If there were errors in his writings on Luisa's writings, chances are these would have been found. Or at least one would think so.

Also, her writings have received the written endorsement (which goes further than an *Imprimatur*) of the retired archbishop of her diocese, Giuseppa Carata. He is the co-founder of the Association Luisa Piccarreta. Luisa's writings have also been endorsed by the current bishop of her diocese, Archbishop Caramel Cassati, in a pastoral letter of January 23, 1997. Archbishop Cassati is the head of the diocesan tribunal for the cause of beatification of Luisa Piccarreta. As part of her beatification process, Archbishop Cassati's Tribunal appointed two additional theologians who have studied her writings and they have also found nothing contrary to faith and morals. Her beatification cause proceeds, and will be submitted to Rome when it is ready. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when headed by Card. Ratzinger had no objection to Luisa's cause for beatification after examining three of her edited works that had been placed on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. (This index is now abolished. And it must be noted that this same thing happened to the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska). But more on this must be said...

On the Divine Will Devotions, I

Luisa Piccarreta, also known as the "Little Daughter of the Divine Will," has been declared a Servant of God, and there are many who work to see her canonized eventually. She was born in Corato, Bari, Italy, and had a canonized saint for a spiritual director, St. Annibale Maria di Francia. It has been testified that she survived on nothing but Holy Communion for sixty-five years. Her cause (whenever someone is put on a track for canonization it is called a cause) was opened by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Holy See on March 7, 2006.

The Archdiocese of Trani, Italy, is in charge of all publishing and dissemination of her writings, and the Archbishop there approved the formation of groups to study her writings. But he also said that he desired a "typical and critical edition of her writings," since there are "poor or exaggerated explanations of her writings." He affirms that both he and the Church have found her writings free of doctrinal error. There are 36 volumes of writing, believed by St. di Francia and Luisa's followers to have been dictated by our Lord. They have been collected into a book called the Book of Heaven. The purpose of this brief series of inserts is two-fold: to give the reasons as to whether or not I will promote this devotion – since it is fairly popular with some parishioners – and to examine the current state of the process of canonization.

At the outset, please know that I am very, very skeptical of visions on the whole. The mother lode of Sacred Scripture (public revelation) and its commentary by the Fathers and Doctors often gathers dust on the shelf, whereas the nuggets contained in visions and locutions (private revelation) take on more importance in the lives of devotees than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This can happen, at least practically speaking, when a

Catholic spends a lopsided amount of time on a private revelation, but very little on the Mass. "Test everything," wrote St. Paul. I'm going to try to do just that.

At the same time, I am reminded of something St. Teresa of Avila related in her writings. She was told that having a painting of the Samaritan Woman (St. Photini) in her cell was not very mortified. Yet it helped her greatly to grow in charity to our Lord. Growth in the virtue of charity being the end of all mortification anyway, she resolved to keep the painting and she never regretted it. As your pastor I must keep in mind that not all will take the same approach to growth in the virtue of charity...there are many mansions in the Father's house. Now to the Divine Will devotion of Luisa Piccarreta.

One of the things that we must consider is whether or not a devotion inspires or fosters unity. Unity is one of the hallmarks of sanctity. I have come across quite a few stories of disunity regarding the devotion to the Divine Will. One of them concerns the Poor Clares in Hanceville, AL. The Mother Vicar by all accounts was a good woman, conscientious in her duties. She became quite devoted to the Divine Will (Mother Angelica also liked the apparitions and was very sympathetic to visionaries). This was a difficult time for the monastery, especially since a number of Divine Will disciples moved to the area and sought to promote it heavily. It caused more than a bit of division. Ultimately the community split, and those who supported the devotion started a new convent in Italy.

Now this in itself does not invalidate the visions or any private revelation for that matter. It is quite possible that some went overboard, shall we say, in their