Vatican
Vatican News
Women walk at the Marian shrine of Fatima in central Portugal March 30, ahead of Holy Week

Women walk at the Marian shrine of Fatima in central Portugal March 30, ahead of Holy Week celebrations. (OSV News/Reuters/Pedro Nunes)

Carol Glatz

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Rome — April 18, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Pontifical International Marian Academy has created a commission to study and monitor cases of alleged Marian apparitions and other mystical phenomena.

The new "observatory" or monitoring body was officially inaugurated at the academy in Rome April 15 and will study cases that have not yet received an official church pronouncement regarding their authenticity.

Its purpose is "to provide concrete support to the study, authentication and correct disclosure of such events, always in harmony with church teaching, relevant authorities and applicable norms of the Holy See," Franciscan Fr. Stefano Cecchin, president of the Marian academy, said April 13. It will specialize in cases such as alleged Marian apparitions, "weeping" statues of Mary, private revelations and stigmata.

"It is important to provide clarity because often presumed messages generate confusion, spread anxiety-inducing apocalyptic scenarios or even accusations against the pope and the church," he said in a written press release.

"How could Mary, mother of the church, undermine (the church's) integrity or sow fear and conflict, she who is mother of mercy and queen of peace?" he asked.

"At the same time, it is important to provide formative support because facing certain cases requires adequate preparation," Cecchin added.

Advertisement

The observatory will be made up of experts from different fields, including a lawyer specializing in safeguarding people who are susceptible to criminal manipulation, fraud or deceit.

Cecchin said the body will set up commissions on the national and international level to "evaluate and study apparitions and mystical phenomena reported in various parts of the world" and to promote opportunities for keeping people updated and educated about the events and their "spiritual and cultural significance." The local commissions will also serve the local church and its bishops by acting as consultants and providing accurate information.

The new monitoring body was inaugurated just as an alleged visionary in a town 30 miles from Rome faced increased scrutiny by law enforcement and the local bishop.

Gisella Cardia, who claims she receives messages from Mary on the third day of every month, is currently under investigation by the district attorney's office of Civitavecchia for "abuse of public credulity" or trust. A commission set up by the local bishop is also conducting its own investigation.

Cardia also claimed a statue of Mary that she bought in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, cried tears of blood. However, a private investigator recently provided evidence to law enforcement alleging that the blood came from a pig.

Cardia had been found guilty and convicted of bankruptcy fraud in a business she used to run before moving to Trevignano Romano and claiming to receive messages from Mary. Hundreds of people flock to the site the third of each month to hear the alleged messages.