Vatican

Vatican News




Archbishop Jan Pawlowski, an official at the Vatican Secretariat of State and papal delegate, celebrates Mass at the Divine Mercy Shrine in Plock, Poland, Feb. 22, 2021. The Mass marked the 90th anniversary of the first apparition of Jesus to St. Faustina Kowalska. (CNS/Katarzyna Artymiak)

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Vatican City — May 7, 2024
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The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith will publish its new norms for the discernment of apparitions and other supernatural phenomena May 17, the Vatican press office said.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the dicastery, and Msgr. Armando Matteo, secretary of the doctrinal section of the dicastery, will present the document at a news conference, the press office announced May 7.

The last time the Vatican's doctrinal office issued norms for evaluating alleged apparitions and reports of supernatural events was in February 1978.

At the time, the prefect, Cardinal Franjo Seper, said the norms were necessary given how news of alleged apparitions spreads rapidly thanks to the mass media. "Moreover, the ease of going from one place to another fosters frequent pilgrimages, so that Ecclesiastical Authority should discern quickly about the merits of such matters," he wrote.

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In a written interview with OSV News in February, Fernández said that given increasing reports of spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse tied to "false mysticism," it would "certainly be necessary to include some considerations related to the special gravity of these risks" in the document on evaluating presumed apparitions and other supernatural occurrences.

The Vatican's 1978 rules entrust to the local bishop the initial evaluation of alleged apparitions of Mary or weeping statues or supposed messages from God, Mary or the saints.

The first things to look for, it said, are "true theological and spiritual doctrine" free of error and that the person reporting the phenomenon is psychologically balanced,

honest, leads a morally upstanding life and is obedient to church authority.