

In Akita, the visionary, Sr. Agnes Sasagawa, is a Buddhist convert who joined the Institute of the Handmaids of the Eucharist. In 1973, she started having mystical experiences. She saw light streaming out of the tabernacle, and later, the statue of the Madonna in the convent chapel began weeping and sweating.

The wounds of the stigmata appeared both on her left hand and on the right hand of the statue. Sr. Agnes also began receiving messages from the Blessed Mother and her guardian angel. On January 4, 1975, the statue started to shed tears, and in a period of six years and eight months, it wept 101 times.

These events were witnessed by hundreds of people, including the local Bishop, John Shojiro Ito, Ordinary of the diocese of Niigata, to which Akita belongs. Bishop Ito was present on four occasions to watch the weeping Madonna, and he had these phenomena closely examined. After consultation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he approved the supernatural character of these events and authorized the veneration of the Holy Mother of Akita.

The Church teaches that Public Revelation must be accepted by every Christian, but the Christian faithful are free to accept or reject private revelations. The Church, however, considers authentic private revelations as a gift of God, and sees in them a valuable aid to spiritual growth. The Church, admits the possibility of private revelations, and does not want to suffocate anything that bears good fruit. The Holy Spirit works freely.

In considering the matter of private revelation, therefore, extremes must be avoided. That is to say, one should shun the attitude of both naïve credulity as well as automatic incredulity. The safest way of discernment is to follow the decision by the Magisterium of the Church.

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Akita  
Japan



Betania  
Venezuela

## ***“Apparitions and the Catholic Church”***



Fatima, Portugal



Manila Philippines



Beauraing, Belgium



Banneux, Belgium



Syracuse, Italy



Zeitun, Egypt  
(pictures are from some of the Apparitions mentioned in this pamphlet)

## **“Apparitions and the Catholic Church”**

by Father John Wang

God created the human race out of love, and He has constantly maintained communication with humanity from the very beginning. He talked to Adam and Eve. He spoke with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Ultimately, He revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word (Hebrews 1:1-2).

God manifested His will and His plan of salvation for the human race through revelation which the Church calls public. Public Revelation, as recorded in Holy Scripture in both the Old and the New Testaments, and handed down by sacred tradition, is perfect and complete. It cannot be further perfected and completed.

However, Public Revelation has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith to gradually grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition, No. 66).

### **All Through The Ages**

Although there cannot be any new Public Revelation, all through the ages there have been so-called private revelations. God has not interrupted His communications with the human race.

These private revelations, given through private individuals, are not essential to our salvation, since we have everything we need from Public Revelation. They do, however, furnish assistance in prayer and in Christian life and help people live the biblical teachings more fully in a certain period of history. Through them, God’s people are urgently reminded of the importance of love, repentance, prayer, sacrifices, and obeying God’s commandments.

The invisible God communicates with humans in different ways. Apparitions, visions, and locutions (speakings) are some of them. The Church does not deny the possibility of private revelations. The Church does view them with extreme caution, and approaches them with a certain amount of healthy skepticism. When being studied, all available scientific means and tools are used to ascertain credibility and authenticity of these private revelations.

### **Hidden Presence of God**

Already in 1563, the Ecumenical Council of Trent required the establishment of a diocesan commission to study apparition claims. The commission was to verify whether or not the alleged apparitions manifest a hidden presence of God, renew community life, convert hearts, reawaken and stimulate faith, and renew hope and dynamism in the Church.

The final evaluation was to fall into one of three categories:

1. ***Constant supernaturalitas***, that is to say, the apparition is recognized, approved and declared “worthy of belief” by the Church.

2. ***Nonconstat supernaturalitas***, which means the supernatural character of the apparition in question is not evident. The Church takes a neutral stance in this case. The apparition is not condemned because there is nothing contrary to the faith.

3. ***Constat non-supernaturalitas***, which would mean the claimed apparition is false, and hence not worthy of belief.

### **Norms In Judging Apparitions**

On Feb. 25, 1978, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith issued norms for proceeding in judging alleged apparitions and revelations along similar lines. This document asks the diocesan commission to probe the moral certainty of the miraculous and exceptional occurrence beyond human explanation, the honesty, sincerity, mental soundness, and moral conduct of the seers, the content of the messages received by the visionaries, and the fruit generated by the claimed apparition.

### **Cases Submitted**

From 1900 to 1996, 386 cases of apparitions were submitted to the Holy See for decision. To date, 86 decisions have been handed down: eight, approved; 11, neutral; 68, negative; 299, no decision made. The eight approved apparitions include Fatima, in Portugal; Beauraing and Banneux, in Belgium; Akita, in Japan; Syracuse, in Italy; Zeitun, in Egypt; Manila, in the Philipines (according to some sources); and Betania, in Venezuela.