

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark

Statement on the Community of Divine Innocence

The full text from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is given after the statement by Archbishop Kevin McDonald.

Statement by the Most Reverend Kevin McDonald, Archbishop of Southwark, on the Community of Divine Innocence

The Community of Divine Innocence is a group founded by Mrs Patricia de Menezes, who lives in the diocese of Southwark. The group's spirituality and beliefs are based on divine revelations that Mrs de Menezes claims to have received. A distinctive feature of the Divine Innocence - and something that Mrs de Menezes claims was revealed to her - is that all children who are aborted should be proclaimed by the Church as martyrs and be seen as companion martyrs of the first Holy Innocents.

There has been widespread interest in the Divine Innocence and people have written to me asking whether the Church recognised it. In 2001 the following statement was made on behalf of the Archdiocese of Southwark:

"The authenticity of the alleged apparitions concerning Divine Innocence has not been accepted by the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Archdiocese has not given its authority to publicly promote it."

When inquiries were made about the status of the Divine Innocence the answer given was that individuals have no authority to meet publicly as a group known as Divine Innocence because this would indicate public acceptance by the competent authorities of the alleged apparitions and that has not been given. The Archdiocese also made it clear that while it is laudable that individuals should come together for the Mass, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the rosary they should not meet as a group known as Divine Innocence.

The Community of the Divine Innocence meanwhile prepared statutes for their community and submitted these and other documentation to the Holy See for approval.

I received a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated 16th July 2007 in which the Congregation said that, at the request of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, they had conducted an in-depth study of the Divine Innocence. The conclusion of this study was that the Congregation was not convinced by the substantial content of the messages allegedly communicated to Mrs de Menezes. They note four particular areas of concern, namely:

1. The exaggerated claims made for the Community of Divine Innocence.
2. The inappropriate words and phrases attributed to Jesus.

3. The questionable demand made concerning the status of aborted children.
4. The intemperate language used in the "Inspirations" when attacking Church authority.

The concluding sentence of the Observations of Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reads

"Given the supposed revelations which ground the spirituality of the Community of Divine Innocence are highly questionable, it follows that the community's spirituality is flawed at its root. Because this spirituality thoroughly animates the community's proposed constitution, it cannot be approved."

In view of the very serious concerns raised by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, it must be clearly stated that the Divine Innocence has no recognition or approval whatsoever either from the diocese of Southwark or the Holy See and that there is no ecclesiastical approbation for Catholics to meet as the group known as Divine Innocence. Finally, I am aware that many devout people, deeply committed to the pro-life movement, have become involved with the Divine Innocence. I wish to encourage them in their work and prayer but in view of the Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, this must no longer be in the context of the organisation or spirituality of the Divine Innocence.

Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the writings of Mrs Patricia De Menezes and the Community of the Divine Innocence

There are four main areas of concern in the writings of Mrs Patricia De Menezes:

1. The exaggerated claims made for the Community of Divine Innocence.
2. The inappropriate words and phrases attributed to Jesus.
3. The questionable demand made concerning the status of aborted children.
4. The intemperate language used in the "Inspirations" when attacking Church authority.

Exaggerated Claims

- De Menezes makes extravagant claims for the Community of Divine Innocence: *"regarding all the different spiritualities and charisms within the Church, Our Lord showed me that they were like facets of a diamond, but the Way of Divine Innocence is the whole diamond"* (31.1.01). What is more she clearly believes that she has supernatural sanction for this conviction:

"**Jesus:** The founders of these great Orders and Communities waited for this hour, and how they wish it was already blazing - blazing for all to see" (12.4.98). At points an almost hysterical note enters the dialogue which is not compatible with a communication from the Word Incarnate: "**Jesus:** You are the beginnings of the New People of God"

(11.1.94); This spirituality is the Perfect Original Spirituality of the Church Herself (12.4.98); This Order, the perfect Order of My Divine Innocence is the First and last Order! The Alpha and the Omega, I AM. This Order is MY ORDER! This Order is Perfection! The Order of MY Divine Innocence precedes all orders, and supersedes all orders, it is the original perfect Christian Universal Order of God!" (12.4.88)

Inappropriate Words and Phrases Attributed to Jesus

- The words and phrases attributed by De Menezes to Jesus in her 'showings' are at times strange and bizarre. They are not consonant with the sane and wise Gospel tradition. The 'voice of Jesus' which we hear in these revelations indulges again and again in a kind of colloquial chit-chat: "**Jesus**: So you don't believe me? **De Menezes**: Sorry Lord it was just curiosity. **Jesus**: Curiosity killed the cat: let's get back to St John. (4.12.93) **Jesus**: Tell them this university offers a Master's Degree, your Lord and Master's Degree, and I expect every student to attain First Class Honours with a P grade. P for perfection. (29.11.95). **Menezes**: Lord, the Way of Divine Innocence does not seem to be what the young want. **Jesus**: What do the young want? **Menezes**: Excitement. **Jesus**: I can give them enough excitement to give them a heart attack!" (11.1.01).

The Questionable Demand Made Concerning the Status of Aborted Children

- The central message that De Menezes claims to have received since 1984, namely that the Church proclaim the martyrdom of all the innocent children deliberately killed before birth and acknowledge these unborn children as companion martyrs of the first Holy Innocents, is doctrinally problematic. A martyr is someone who bears witness to Christ. If the victims of abortion were to qualify for martyrdom it would then seem that all victims of any moral evil should be likewise deemed martyrs. De Menezes' notion of a 'Baptism of Love' is not, as claimed, a development of doctrine. Rather it is an innovation which is difficult to harmonize with the teaching of the Church.

Violent Language Used in the "Inspirations" when Attacking Church Authority

De Menezes' supposed revelations and writings demonstrate a litigious and dissident spirit. The Church stands accused of impeding Jesus' efforts to save the souls of millions of aborted children and, therefore, 'Jesus' ranks the hierarchy of the Church, who are unwilling to 'claim' the aborted, alongside abortionists and abortion-sponsoring legislators. As such, the 'Jesus' of De Menezes' supposed revelations displays ignorance of the Church's uncompromised stance against the evil of abortion and its compassionate hope for the salvation of children who have died without baptism. It is as if Jesus were

inordinately bound by his own Church: Jesus refrains from working any good for the children, it seems, until the desired 'claiming' is declared.

- The unusually violent and threatening language used in the 'inspirations' to attack the authorities of the Church seems incompatible with any genuinely divine revelation: *"Jesus: Those who subject the children to trial by neglect, I will subject to trial by fire ... Wicked short-sighted shepherds.. Vengeance is mine! Let those who know of this grace not be complacent! Cardinals, bishops, theologians and people, your duty is clear! Millions of human lives and immortal souls are at stake!"* (11.9.97) or again *"Inform the Archbishop that his hard-heartedness is like that of Pharaoh and it will bring down disaster on the people" (19.8.95).*

The Statutes of the Community of Divine Innocence

- The Statutes cannot be judged or assessed on their own merits, but must be read in the light of the questionable 'inspirations' of Patricia De Menezes according to which the members are expected not only to pursue *"ongoing study of the faith"* but also to undertake a *"study of the character and spirituality of the Family of Divine Innocence, which is contained in the inspirational writings of our foundress, Patricia De Menezes"* (p.6). The members are *"obliged to abide by the teaching and guidance of the Mother Foundress during her lifetime"* (p.7). Thereafter the superiors elected *"must abide by the founding inspiration"* (p.7).
- Given that the supposed revelations which ground the spirituality of the Community of Divine Innocence are highly questionable, it follows that the community's spirituality is flawed at its root. Because this spirituality thoroughly animates the community's proposed constitution, it cannot be approved.