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Dear Bishop James Golka,

In recent weeks thousands of the Christian Faithful have taken to social media, requesting clarification and guidance in response to the public letter you published on July 3, 2024, which appears to have caused them no small disturbance. For in your letter there is a perplexing assertion that appears to be at variance with the Magisterium, in particular, with its position on the Cause of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta and the doctrines contained in her writings, several of which bear the Magisterium’s official seals of approval, the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat,* which remain in full force today.

As you know the Magisterium extends from the Roman Pontiff to the bishops in communion with him,[[1]](#footnote-1) who consult with her “qualified theologians”[[2]](#footnote-2) – all of whom are bound by the “sensus fidei” of the Church.[[3]](#footnote-3) All of these have their respective functions: the bishops

“protect divine revelation” and the theologians “investigate and explain the doctrine of the Faith.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

My addressing the matter is a duty the Church requests of her ‘qualified theologians’ and is contained in the CDF’s Instruction, *Donum Veritatis, On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian,* arts. 20 and 30. As noted below, I am contacting you directly as, not only have I been asked to do so by a prelate of the dicastery in Rome, but because this is my duty also. To the extent that the theologian’s vocation and duty require him “to investigate and explain the doctrine of the Faith” and “to preserve the sacred deposit of revelation, to examine it more deeply, to explain, teach, and defend it for the service of the People of God and for the whole world’s salvation,”[[5]](#footnote-5) I provide the below response.

In 2012 I successfully demonstrated in my doctoral dissertation of the Pontifical University of Rome, which is authorized by the Holy See, that the doctrines contained in Luisa Piccarreta’s writings contain nothing contrary to faith and morals. The same conclusion was arrived at on December 18, 1997 in the theological evaluation submitted to the Diocesan Tribunal by Fr. Cosimo Reho, Professor of Dogmatic Theology, and Fr. Antonio Resta, Rector of the Pontifical Theological Institute of Southern Italy, who submitted his report to the same Tribunal on June 2, 1997. To date neither the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith nor that for the Causes of Saints has asserted that the Luisa’s doctrines have errors, but rather that on account of her limited education and dialect, her writings may present difficulties, as some expressions may be ambiguous or anachronistic and therefore open to misinterpretation.

**Luisa’s “Cause of Beatification” is not Stopped and the “Doctrines” Contained in her Writings are Free of Error**

In your July 3, 2024 letter you publicly cite from an alleged and “confidential” letter of April 18, 2022, ostensibly penned in French by Monseigneur Benoit Bertrand, that never attributes ‘doctrinal errors’ to Luisa’s Piccarreta’s writings, but rather states that in her writings there are some “difficulties.” In citing this confidential letter openly you make a bold and perplexing assertion that is nowhere to be found in the history of the Catholic Church’s documents, i.e., that there are *“serious doctrinal errors in her writings.”* As a Church-qualified theologian, I have the duty to charitably inform you that this statement appears to constitute a radical departure from the official present-day position of the Catholic Church’s Magisterium. As noted below, the Vatican dicasteries and the Italian Archdiocese entrusted with Luisa’s cause have stated on several occasions that the difficulties in her writings do not constitute doctrinal errors.

On March 4, 2020 Archbishop Leonardo D’Ascenzo of the Archdiocese in Italy to whom the Holy See has entrusted Luisa’s Cause of Beatification made the following statement:

*“The continuation of the Cause for the beatification of the Servant of God to verify her exemplary conduct of life and her heroic exercise of the virtues cannot fail to take into account the fact that her writings present some ambiguities and equivocal elements. Though* ***not to be considered doctrinal errors in themselves,*** *these elements require great attention…”*

Earlier this month I was asked to travel from northern Italy, where I am presently assisting the church, to Rome in order to obtain documentation. Before returning to my pastoral obligations, I had a meeting with prelates at the Vatican dicastery where I spoke of Luisa Piccarreta’s Cause and her doctrines, as well as of the letter you issued on July 3, 2024. In my meeting, the prelate of the dicastery asked me to express directly to you in writing the concerns that thousands of the Christian Faithful have shared with me and that I herein express in this letter. Shortly after my visit to Rome, on August 10, 2024 a communication was issued by Msgr. Paolo Rizzi, Postulator for the Cause of Luisa’s Beatification. In it he states:

*“The Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta* ***has never been closed****, but has always been pending at the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, which had temporarily suspended its canonical process. In fact, the spirituality, thought, and writings of the Servant of God had been submitted to the study of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which in 2019 pointed out that the writings presented some ambiguities of a theological, Christological, and anthropological nature; ambiguities that, while* ***not doctrinal errors in themselves****, required further evaluation. Through the support of a theologian expert in mysticism, the Postulation's clarifying responses to the aforementioned findings enabled the* ***Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith to conclude that in the writings and thought of the Servant of God there are no statements that are blatantly in contrast with the doctrine of the Church****. Thus* ***in June 2024 the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the nihil obstat for the resumption of the Cause****, which was formally notified by the Dicastery for the Causes of*

*Saints to this Postulation on July 8, 2024…*

*Reading Luisa's Writings, everyone should ‘feel encouraged to pay more attention to the author’s intention, in greater faithfulness to the teaching of the Church and above all in the awareness that the Divine Will is the Heavenly Father’s merciful appeal addressed to the free will of the men and women of our times, and never a threat to be hurled against the world corrupted by sin’ (Msgr. Leonardo D'Ascenzo, Archbishop of Trani-Barletta Bisceglie, Communication No. 4 regarding the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, March 4, 2020).*

*While objectively recognizing that so many Divine Will Groups have implemented in this direction a decisive and evident path of ecclesiality, it is indispensable and incumbent on those who have not yet done so to strive ‘to anchor the reading of these writings in the doctrine of the Church and in a dignified conduct of life, making a balanced and respectful missionary proclamation spring from the doctrine of the Divine Will, a proclamation which has been harmoniously inserted into the pastoral activity of the local Churches’ (Msgr. Leonardo D'Ascenzo, ibid.).*

*With this in mind,* ***it seems most appropriate for bishops to recognize and admit into their ecclesiastical circumscriptions only those Divine Will Groups*** *that meet the aforementioned requirements.”*

 I think it is fair to affirm that no one would presume to assert that the many learned and holy Catholic bishops and commissioned priests of Luisa’s lifetime and that are cited in the footnote below6 were somehow all blindly misled in their careful and positive assessment of the doctrines contained in her writings. As for the “difficulties” – not ‘doctrinal errors’ – in Luisa’s text of which the Church speaks, these may be resolved with theological contributions and clarifications. Consider, for example, the ‘difficulties’ identified by the Vatican offices in the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska and Blessed Antonio Rosmini, all of which were later, through theological contributions, clarified, resolved and approved. While one might generously argue on your behalf, as I did in my letter to the faithful of July 22, 2024, that in your July 3, 2024 letter you, Bishop J. Golka, may have intended to express that if doctrinal errors exist in Luisa’s text, they are not in her original text that enjoys multiple seals of Magisterial approval that remain in full effect today, but are rather in those present-day and unofficial translations.

**The Prohibition of Divine Will Prayer Groups**

 Another concern of the Christian faithful is the assertion in your July 3, 2024 letter in which you *“direct that her writings are not to be disseminated in the diocese and that any groups meeting to study and promote her writings are no longer to do so.”* I ask you to consider the aforementioned Aug. 10, 2024 statement of the Postulator of Luisa’s Cause of Beatification in Rome who stated, *“It seems most appropriate for bishops to recognize and admit into their ecclesiastical circumscriptions only those Divine Will Groups that meet the aforementioned requirements.”* As expressed in my letter to the Christian Faithful of July 22, 2024 and in the

6 Archbishop Thomas de Stefano, 1898-1906 (Luisa’s bishop when she began to write her Diary); Archbishop

Giulio Vaccaro, 1906 (Administrator); Archbishop Francis P. Carraro, 1906-1915; Archbishop John Regime, 19151918; Archbishop Eugene Tosi, 1918-1920 (Administrator); Archbishop Joseph M. Leo, 1920-1939 (granted the

*Imprimatur* to Luisa’s first 19 volumes); St. Hannibal di Francia (Luisa’s censor librorum and confessor appointed by Archbishop Joseph Leo: granted the *Nihil Obstat* to Luisa’s first 19 volumes); the Episcopal Curia of Montepulciano (granted the *Imprimatur* to Luisa’s text on *The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine*

*WIll*); Joseph Blandamura, Delegate of the Archbishop of Taranto: granted the *Nihil Obstat* to the same text on *The*

*Blessed Virgin Mary*); Msgr. Francis M. della Cueva S. M., Delegate of the Archbishop of Taranto (granted the *Nihil Obstat* to Luisa’s text on *The Blessed Virgin Mary*); Francesco Sorrentino of Naples (censor: granted the *Imprimatur* to Luisa’s text on *Hours of the Passion*); Antonio Laviano (Vicar General: granted the *Imprimatur* to Luisa’s text on

*The Hours of the Passion*); D. Prestifillipo, SJ of Messina(censor: granted the *Nihil Obstat* to Luisa’s text on *The*

*Hours of the Passion*); Delegate to the Archbishop Joseph Blandamura of Taranto (granted the *Nihil Obstat* to Luisa’s text on *The Hours of the Passion*); Archbishop Francis Petronelli; Msgr. Michael Samarelli (Vicar General of Bari); Msgr. Ernest Balducci (Vicar General of Salerno); Msgr. Lewis D’Oria (Spiritual Director of the regional Seminary of Molfetta and Vicar General of Trani); Frs. Loiodice, Michael De Benedictis (Luisa’s official confessor appointed by Bishop Joseph. Dottula); Gennaro di Gennaro, Francis De Benedictis, Felix Torelli, Benedict Calvi, Ciccio Bevilacqua and other priests).

March 4, 2020 letter of Archbishops D’Ascenzo, the ‘aforementioned requirements’ entail that each of the Christian faithful who partake of Divine Will prayer groups do the following:

1. pay more attention to Luisa’s intention. This is achievable with the aid of the Church’s qualified theologians and pastors who implement the Roman Pontiff’s encyclical, in which he exhorts them to “better understand what the inspired author wishes to express”[[6]](#footnote-6) (intention) and consider their “setting in life” (context) before pronouncing judgment on them. Such individuals who fail to do so limit the interpretation of the prophetic text to the pure letter, thereby divesting it of intentionality and context.
2. be more faithful to the teachings of the Church and above all in the awareness that the Divine Will is the Heavenly Father’s merciful appeal addressed to the free will of the men and women of our times, and never a threat to be hurled against the world corrupted by sin.
3. anchor the reading of Luisa’s writings in the doctrine of the Church (Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and Magisterial teaching) and in a dignified conduct of life, making a balanced and respectful missionary proclamation emerge from the doctrine of the Divine Will – a proclamation which has been harmoniously inserted into the pastoral activity of the local churches.
4. look to the Church’s qualified theologians for the proper interpretation (that does not deviate from Christian doctrine) of those ambiguous and difficult expressions that are found in many of the unofficial translations of Luisa’s writings in circulation today. As a doctoral alumnus in Luisa’s doctrines, I am presently offering lessons to the Christian faithful on the radio and via live social media so as to ensure they remain united in the one Public Revelation of Christ (*fidei depositum*) that is explicated over the course of the centuries.[[7]](#footnote-7)

I wish to emphasize that canon 215 of the Church’s Code of Canon law states: *“The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.”*

This canon relates that one cannot prohibit the Christian faithful from holding meetings or gathering to pray, read spiritual literature, share, etc., so long as these meetings adhere to those teachings and devotions that are in conformity with Magisterial teaching. Furthermore, insofar as several of Luisa’s published works enjoy the seals of approval (*Imprimaturs* and *Nihil Obstats*) of the same Magisterium that remain in full effect today, e.g., The Hours of the Passion, The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will, etc., one cannot prohibit the Christian faithful from forming or attending meetings that, while adhering to Magisterial teaching, devote themselves to reading, meditating and sharing the doctrine contained in the writings of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta. However, if what is being taught or observed in these gatherings contradicts Magisterial teaching, a bishop or a cleric delegated by him may with charity intervene for the spiritual welfare of the faithful; he may do so to ensure that canon 223 §2 is not neglected, e.g., he may provide, as is incumbent upon him, proper theological guidance or, if those attending said gatherings refuse such guidance or compliance with the Magisterium, he may request that such gatherings desist.

I wish to emphasize the Magisterial teaching that the theologian Fr. Jordan Aumann and Raymond Cardinal Burke have in recent years reiterated, i.e., *it is “reprehensible” for one to oppose publicly a work that bears the Church’s official seals of approval*.[[8]](#footnote-8) In a work bearing the Imprimatur, Cardinal Raymond Burke relates, *“While the freedom remains for a member of the Church to reject a private revelation which has received official ecclesiastical approval, it would be at the same time reprehensible to speak publicly against it.”*

In light of the foregoing, I, along with the tens of thousands of the Christian faithful who pray to Luisa and are obedient to the Magisterium, kindly ask you to retract the inaccurate statement of July 3, 2024 that asserts that Luisa’s doctrines ‘contain serious errors.’ For the more this inaccurate statement remains in circulation on social media, the more harm and confusion it causes the Christian faithful with whose spiritual welfare both you and I are entrusted.

 I hope this information has been helpful.

+ Rev. J.L. Iannuzzi, STL, S.Th.D.

 August 12, 2024

 Rome, Italy

1. *“The bishops, when they are teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to the divine and catholic truth... The religious assent of the will and intellect is to be given in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Pontiff even when he is not speaking ex cathedra”* (Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vatican Council I, vol. II, Washington DC [1990], *De perpetuitate primatus beati Petri in Romanis pontificibus*, cap. II-IV, p. 869). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *International Theological Commission, the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology,* Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., n. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., and *Donum Veritatis, On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Op. cit.,* *International Theological Commission.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, op. cit., 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. CCC, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jordan Aumann, Spiritual Theology, Christian Classics, 1980, p. 492; Mariology, A Guide for Priests, Deacons,

Seminarians and Consecrated Persons, bearing the Imprimatur of the Most Rev. Raymond L. Burke, and the Nihil

Obstat of Fr. Peter Felner, F.I., 2007, Queenship Pub. CA, p. 830 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)