

## *Is the Divine Will approved by the Church?*

### <The Process of Beatification<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>>

- February 25, 1994: The Vatican gave “*Non Obstare* (“Don’t get in the way” = There are no objections or no impediments to the candidate’s cause proceeding)” to Mons. Carmelo Cassati, Archbishop of Trani-Barletta-Bisceglie to start the cause of beatification and Luisa Piccarreta automatically became a Servant of God.

(Before a bishop can begin an investigation of any person’s cause of beatification, he must first obtain permission from the Vatican, otherwise known as the Holy See. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints grants this permission on behalf of the Holy See only after consulting all the other appropriate Curial offices of the Vatican to determine whether there are any objections to the candidate’s cause proceeding. Following this requirement the Most Reverend Carmelo Cassati, Archbishop of Trani-Barletta-Bisceglia, the archdiocese in which Luisa died, sought permission from the Vatican to proceed with her cause. By way of an official letter dated February 24, 1994, the Congregation for the Cause of Beatification of Saints declared, “on the part of the Holy See the *Non Obstare* for the opening of the cause of beatification of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta.” )

- November 20, 1994: The cause of beatification was opened officially on the Feast of Christ the King.
- From January 29 to February 2, 1996: Cardinal Ratzinger (later known as Pope Benedict XVI) released 34 volumes of the “*Book of Heaven*” to Archbishop Cassati as part of the protocol for the process of Luisa’s cause of beatification. Copies were approved and made. Up until then, Luisa’s original volumes had been strictly reserved in the Vatican Archives for almost 60 years.
- March 1997: On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luisa’s death, it was announced publicly that the tribunal responsible for Luisa’s cause had determined unanimously that her life was one of heroic virtue and that her mystical experiences were authentic.
- June 2 and December 18, 1997: Two independent Church appointed highly qualified theologians – Rev. Antonio Resta, President of the Pontifical Theological Seminary in Italy and Rev. Cosimo Reho, dogmatic theologian – reviewed Luisa’s writings and gave their positive judgments to the Diocesan tribunal, affirming that there are no teachings in Luisa’s writings contrary to Catholic Faith and Morals.
- October 29, 2005: The cause of beatification was officially concluded at the diocesan phase.
- November 7, 2005: All the official documents were transferred to the Vatican.
- March 7, 2006: The Congregation for the Causes of Saints opened the box of the documents and this officially started the Cause.
- In 2008: The Congregation for the Causes of Saints appointed two theological censors to review Luisa’s writings.
- At the end of 2009: One of two theological censors gave his positive judgment.
- July 19, 2010: The other theological censor gave his positive judgment. Again, they both asserted that nothing in Luisa’s writings is opposed to Catholic Faith and Morals. It also means that the Church recognizes the legitimacy and authenticity of her writings.
- September, 2014: Luisa’s official biography, “*The Sun of My Will*,” written by Maria Rosaria Del Genio, was published by the Vatican publishing company. It can be purchased online.

### <Who is St. Annibale Maria Di Francia? <sup>4,5</sup>>

- St. Annibale Di Francia (1851-1927) founded two religious Congregations: the Daughters of Divine Zeal in 1887 and the Rogationists ten years later. On May 16, 2004, Saint Pope John Paul II canonized him and declared him to be the Saint for our time to pray to for Vocations. On July 7, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI blessed a marble statue of the saint. The statue is positioned in an external niche of the Vatican Basilica near the Arch of the Bells.
- Besides being her extraordinary confessor, he was commissioned directly by the Archbishop Mons. Giuseppe M. Leo as the ecclesiastical censor for the publications of the three dioceses – Trani, Barletta and Bisceglie. This responsibility kept him real busy, almost continuously to detach him from his commitments as founder. He gave the *Nihil Obstat* ("Nothing stands in the way" = Nothing hinders [it from being printed], free of doctrinal or moral error) to the first 19 volumes of the "Book of Heaven" after examining them intently in their original Italian language over a period of 17 years, prior to his death.
- He knew Luisa personally and interpreted what she wrote only in the context of both her cultural background and her life as a whole. He read every word of her spiritual diary (until his death in 1927) in the Italian original texts.
- Not only did he find nothing contrary to Catholic faith or morals in her writings, he, a priest widely renowned for spiritual discernment, also found them to be of immense spiritual value. His published letters to her indicate his deep appreciation for her spiritual doctrine, and his dedication to promoting it.
- Here are the words from Holy Father (Pope Benedict XVI) when the statue of Saint Annibale Maria Di Francia was erected on St. Peter's basilica in Rome:

"A monument to the apostle of prayer for priestly vocations and apostle of the Kingdom of the Divine Will, has been placed in the center of Catholicism: the Saint Peter Basilica at the Vatican. ... The monument is truly a great gift and a tribute of the Church to the charismatic figure of Saint Annibale, known throughout the world as a worthy apostle of prayer for vocations as well as **great apostle of the Kingdom of the Divine Will**. Six years after his canonization, his impressive image is located in the heart of Christianity. Father Annibale has always nurtured and expressed feelings of deep love and obedience to the Vicar of Christ, which he has passed on to his spiritual children as a sign of unconditional loyalty. He constantly pointed at the "Rogate", as the infallible and vital remedy for the life of the Church. ... Let us pray on this special occasion to Saint Annibale Maria Di Francia that he:

Who reviewed and gave *Nihil Obstat* to the Writings of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, inspires and guides those who now read her writings.

Who published and disseminated "*The Hours of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*" and all her other writings helps in this sacred task all those whom God inspires the timely publication of them.

**Who overflowed with the divine light of the doctrine of the Divine Will intercedes for us so that we, by constantly dying to our will, can continually live in the Divine Will.**

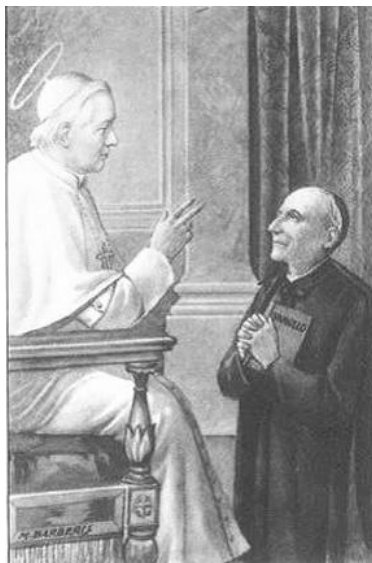
We entrust ourselves to Saint Annibale Maria Di Francia to obtain for us the spiritual graces needed **to know, understand and fully live in the Kingdom of the Divine Will.**

- **St. Annibale's letter to Luisa Piccarreta – Messina. February 14, 1927:**  
"I want you to know that since I have totally dedicated myself to the great work of the Divine Will, I practically don't concern myself at all with my institutes. I talk about it with spiritual people, I keep to this point with those who are able to listen and I promote it as much as I can, even in my institutes..."
- He had a great esteem for Luisa. In the Preface to "*The Hours of the Passion*," he calls "sublime" the revelations which, "always excepting the judgments of the Holy Church, we piously believe to have been given by Our Lord Jesus Christ to a soul, a dearest daughter and disciple of His, a privileged woman, at a mystical level, who wants to live solitary, hidden and unknown."

## Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will

**A most pure virgin, wholly of God, the littlest one that He found on earth with no education, endowed with an extraordinary familiarity with Jesus, the right person for a mission so sublime that no other can be compared to it - that is, the triumph of the Divine Will upon the whole earth, in conformity with what is said in the 'Our Father': Fiat Voluntas Tua sicut in Coelo et in terra. She is the spouse of Jesus Crucified, who spends the night in painful ecstasies and in sufferings of every kind, during the day, sitting on her bed doing her needlework - nothing appears. On the contrary, she appears as a healthy person, happy and jovial. She speaks, converses, laughs when appropriate, but receives few friends. She listens kindly and comforts, but never advances to make prophecies, never a word which might hint at revelations. The great comfort which she presents is always one, always the same: the Divine Will. Although she possesses no human knowledge, she is abundantly endowed with a Wisdom all celestial - with the Science of the Saints. Her words illuminate and console. In short she is the Firstborn Daughter of the Divine Will.**

- Luisa's trust in St. Annibale was blind. She referred to him whether or not to print her manuscripts: "If you see that they are nonsense and that nothing good can do for souls, please tear up and burn them". She wrote that in reference to the delicate nature of the content, "Things concerning many punishments, priests, so it is a strong suffering for me to disclose them to others. I wrote them only for obedience and nothing else".
- He took a manuscript copy of "*The Hours of the Passion*" with him to Rome to an audience with St. Pope Pius X. During the audience, as he read one of the hours aloud to the Pope, the Holy Father interrupted him, saying, "Not this way, Father, but kneeling one must read. **It is Jesus Christ that is speaking.**"



### <Significance of *Imprimatur*>

- Ecclesiastical permission, expressed only with the word *Imprimatur* ("It may be printed" = Bishop's official permission/approval to print or publish any work or writing), means that the work is free from errors regarding Catholic faith and morals.
- Approval granted by competent authority shows that the text is accepted by the Church or that the work is in accordance with the authentic doctrine of the Church.
- As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger explained when he was head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith: "Ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation has three elements: the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to make it public; and the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence."

## Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will

- Although the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat* may be given by the local bishop for his diocese, one ought not to lose sight of the fact that these official seals, though given locally and within one diocesan jurisdiction, customarily transcend juridical boundaries by virtue of episcopal collegiality and their acceptance by other bishops the world over.
- The Archbishop Mons. Giuseppe M. Leo of Trani-Barletta-Bisclie, gave his handwritten *Imprimatur* directly on the original manuscripts of Luisa.

### <What is Church's stance on Luisa Piccarreta? <sup>5</sup>>

- The Vatican's current, official position on Luisa's sanctity and her writings is neutral. The Catholic Church is still proceeding with the beatification of Luisa. In 2020, the Church has put her cause of beatification on hold until some ambiguities are clarified. Although the Church has proclaimed that the Divine Will writings have nothing against Church teaching, the Church feels that once she is beatified, the Divine Will movement will grow so quickly around the world that these ambiguities must be clarified before her beatification. Our Lord told Luisa that there will be nothing wrong in the writings. If anyone finds fault, it's because of their lack of understanding.
- The Archbishop promoting Luisa's cause is doing so in strict accord with Canon Law and in complete harmony with Rome. This includes a careful and comprehensive review of Luisa's writings by competent, independent experts in theology.
- In summary, the record is entirely clear concerning the writings of Luisa. Anyone can read them with a clear conscience and be completely at peace.
- There were three editions that were condemned and placed on the Index in 1938 but they had nothing to do with Luisa's volumes. The condemnation was limited only to the three editions associated with Luisa's name that were edited, changed and published by her last confessor, Don Benedetto Calvi. The three editions were: "The Hours of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ with a treatise on the Divine Will," "The Queen of Heaven in the Kingdom of the Divine Will," and a compilation of passages from Luisa's first four volumes with the title, "In the Kingdom of the Divine Will." Two of three editions were published with full ecclesiastic approval, even as late as 1997. The third edition was never reprinted. None of the condemned editions are in print, not even in the Italian original. Every book of Luisa's writings that is currently in print has been translated only from versions fully approved by the Church.
- Even when the three above-mentioned editions were placed on the Index and her writings were consigned to the archives of the Holy Office in darkness, Luisa stated that she would condemn whatever the Church condemned and approve whatever the Church approved, accepting everything in perfect obedience to the Church.
- In the late 1993, Cardinal Ratzinger's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith investigated the condemnation of the three editions associated with Luisa's name, as well as the history of her writings, and found nothing to impede the process for Luisa's cause of beatification from going forward. Luisa's name was cleared of any stigma attached to the 1938 condemnation, and all the appropriate Sacred Congregations of the Vatican concurred that there was no objection to preceding her cause of beatification. If there had been any question of danger to Catholic Faith or Morals, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith would never have consented to the opening of Luisa's cause for beatification.
- The Church has no more Index. The Vatican itself abolished the Index of Forbidden Books in 1966 according to the decision of the Second Vatican Council. This means that it no longer has any binding effect on Catholics. The Church trusts in the mature conscience of the faithful. In a word, you are allowed to read anything that is in accord with the teachings of the Church.
- Any private revelation approved by the Church should not be condemned or criticized. By doing so, one shows disobedience to Holy Mother Church. It is not necessary to believe private revelations but once shown approval by the Church, it should never be criticized. The Church, in canonizing St. Annibale Maria Di Francia and proclaiming Luisa Piccarreta as a Servant of God, has shown Its approval.

**<From the letter of Mons. Giovanni Battista Pichierri,  
the Archbishop of Trani-Barletta-Bisceglie on November 1, 2012>**

- “In the prayerful anticipation of the outcome of this examination, I wish to address all those who claim that these writings contain doctrinal errors. This, to date, has never been endorsed by any pronouncement by the Holy See, nor personally by myself. I would like to note that in this way, in addition to anticipate the legitimate judgment of the Church, these persons cause scandal to the faithful who are spiritually nourished by said writings, originating also suspicion of those of us who are zealous in the pursuit of the Cause. In the anticipation of the judgment by competent Authority, I invite you to make more serious and in-depth meditations and reflections in your personal reading on these writings in light of Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church.”
- “Necessary prudence cannot lessen the ardor of those who feel compelled to spread the knowledge of the sanctity of life of the Servant of God, or of those who recommend the reading of her writings, or of those who encourage the faithful prayer for her beatification. All this not only is not prohibited, rather very much desirable. I also invite you to "reinforce the unity and communion among the dioceses in which individuals, groups and associations inspired by the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, and who know her writings, are to be found" (Final Communication of October 28, 2005).”

### References

1. Maria Rosaria Del Genio (2014). *The Sun of My Will*. Vatican publishing company. P. 238.
2. Daniel O'Connor (2019). *The Crown of Sanctity*. P. 73.
3. Fr. Carlos Antonio Massieu Avila (September 6, 2010). Lecture notes from the retreat for the priests about the Divine Will Spirituality in Korea
4. Fr. Bernardino Giuseppe Buci, O.F.M.. *The 17 years – Saint Annibale Di Francia and Luisa Piccarreta*
5. Stephen Patton, M.A., J.D. (July 10, 2000). *What the Catholic Church says about Luisa Piccarreta?*