

***In Defense of the Orthodoxy of
The Marian Movement of Priests,
Our Lady's Messages and Fr. Gobbi***

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March 3, 2001

It has come to my attention that certain untruths and misinformation about the Marian Movement of Priests and Fr. Gobbi have been circulating, and this has led to a serious distortion of the facts. I suspect that many who condemn the MMP have not read the book, “To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons,” or its extensive introduction. Do they, then, have a sound understanding of the subject matter in order to make an informed and sound critique? This calls to mind something which Archbishop Sheen once said: *“Many people hate the Catholic Church and her teachings, but I do not believe I could find five people who really hate her and her teachings for what they really are. They hate what they think are the Church and her teachings.”* We must ask ourselves – do those who condemn Fr. Gobbi’s locutions really know what they are condemning, or are they swayed by rumors and misinformation?

I have selected some of the most common questions which have arisen and follow these with factual explanations. I pray and trust that these points of clarification will help to eliminate the confusion and doubt that may exist in the hearts and minds of some of our members.

Q. Have Our Lady’s messages to Fr. Gobbi been approved by the Church?

To date, the Church has **neither approved nor condemned** the authenticity of the messages received by Fr. Gobbi.

Q. Are we allowed to accept the messages if they haven’t been approved?

Absolutely. Unless they have received an official decision of “*constat de non supernaturalitate*” (i.e. a declaration by the proper Church authorities that they are **not** supernatural), then the faithful are free to accept them; hence, one who reads the messages given to Fr. Gobbi and participates in the cenacles is **in no way** disobedient to the Church.

Q. Does the Church support the Marian Movement of Priests?

The Imprimatur

The book, “To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons,” enjoys the Imprimatur of three Cardinals: the late Cardinal Echeverria of Ecuador, Cardinal Vidal of the Philippines and Cardinal Mikai of Thailand. It also has the Imprimatur of many archbishops and bishops

worldwide. Although the Imprimatur is not a declaration of authenticity, it does assure the reader that the book is free from doctrinal error – i.e. it does not contain anything which is contrary to Catholic faith or morals.

The Pope

Fr. Gobbi annually concelebrates Mass with the Holy Father in his private chapel, at which time he also gives him a report on the Movement and his cenacle tours. If Fr. Gobbi were teaching a false doctrine which is contrary to the Scriptures and the teachings of the Magisterium, would the Holy Father not reprimand him and tell him to cease his activities? On the contrary, Pope John Paul II has blessed the Marian Movement of Priests on numerous occasions and has encouraged Fr. Gobbi for the very positive work that he is doing. The book continues to be published in almost all the languages, and Fr. Gobbi and other priests travel worldwide to conduct cenacles.

The Hierarchy

Cardinals and bishops also continue to support Fr. Gobbi and to promote the Marian Movement of Priests and the cenacles. In an interview which he gave in Rubbio, Italy in August, 1999, Fr. Gobbi said, *“The Church continues to support us. In the regional cenacles alone [in Italy], the Cardinal of Florence, the Archbishop of Pescara, the Archbishop of Bari, the Archbishop of the Sanctuary of Pompei, the Archbishop of Loreto and the Cardinal of Turin came to preside at the concelebrations.”* [not to mention the twenty or so archbishops and bishops who annually attend the International Retreats with Fr. Gobbi].

Q. When can we expect an official declaration from the Church? How long can it take?

The Church is always deliberate in its approach, and we cannot expect an immediate pronouncement. Following are three examples of well-known instances which prove that the Church has always been cautious in its examination of mystical phenomena prior to rendering a definitive judgment.

Apparitions at Fatima, Portugal

Mary appeared six times between May 13th and Oct. 13th, 1917, to three children (Lucia dos Santos, Francisco Marto and Jacinto Marto) in the Cova da Iria. During the last apparition on Oct. 13, 1917, an estimated 70,000 people witnessed the Miracle of the Sun. **Thirteen years later** in October, 1930, the apparitions were declared worthy of belief **after a seven-year canonical investigation.**

Saint Faustina

Sister Faustina Kowalska was a Polish nun who received a series of revelations from Jesus beginning in 1931. It was on the 22nd of February, 1931 that she had a vision of the Merciful Christ and He revealed that, through her, He desired to make known the merciful love of God towards humanity. Sr. Faustina wrote a diary of some 600 pages recording the revelations she was receiving about Jesus' mercy. In 1935, Sr. Faustina wrote for her spiritual director:

"The time will come when this work, which God so commends, [will be] as though in complete ruin, and suddenly the action of God will come upon the scene with great power which will bear witness to the truth. It will be as a new splendor for the Church, though it has been dormant in it from long ago."

This indeed came to pass. Sister Faustina died on October 5, 1938, at a convent in Krakow, and on the 6th of March, 1959, the Holy See, acting on information that was inaccurately presented, prohibited *"the spreading of images and writings advocating devotion to the Divine Mercy in the form proposed by Sister Faustina."* **As a result, there followed almost twenty years of total silence.** Then, on the 15th of April, 1978, the Holy See, after a thorough examination of original documents previously unavailable to it, completely reversed its decision and again permitted the devotion. She was beatified on April 18, 1993 and canonized on April 30, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Blessed Padre Pio

The first priest in the history of the Church to bear the stigmata, Padre Pio was blessed by God with many supernatural gifts including discernment of spirits, prophecy and healing. He never asked for the "gifts" he received, but bore them willingly along with the harsh criticisms from non-believers, who ranged from fellow priests to religious authorities.

Following serious accusations of heresy and imposture, he was ordered not to celebrate Mass or practice his ministry in public. He remained in seclusion for ten years, until Pope Pius XII lifted the censure. He died on September 23, 1968, and his public funeral attracted almost 100,000. Increasing numbers flock to his tomb from all parts of the world and many testify to spiritual and temporal graces received. On February 16, 1973, the Archbishop of Manfredonia, His Excellency Valentino Vailati, consigned the documentation to the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints so as to obtain the "nihil obstat" for the beginning of the process of his beatification. On May 2, 1999, Pope John Paul II beatified the now Blessed Padre Pio.

Q. Rumors have been circulating about a letter which Fr. Gobbi received from a secretary at the CDF? Can you explain?

There is the question of correspondence sent to Fr. Gobbi from a secretary from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) who, in his *personal and unofficial* letter to Fr. Gobbi *requested and advised* that Fr. Gobbi should not claim in the book's introduction that the messages are from the Blessed Mother, but rather that they are the product of his own personal meditation. *This letter in no way constituted an official decree.* Nevertheless, in a spirit of submission and obedience and armed with the knowledge that Our Lady would take care of her Movement, Fr. Gobbi accepted to do what the Secretary requested. Going against his conscience no doubt caused him an intense interior suffering, but he did not want to risk being accused of being disobedient to the Church. Was Our Lady testing the obedience of her beloved son? Was she asking this of him as a means of purification? (Padre Pio and Sr. Faustina knew that what they were experiencing was authentic, but they too were obedient to the Church's request.)

To this day, Fr. Gobbi still unequivocally affirms and continues to maintain, as does his Spiritual Director, that he receives this message from the Mother of God. Is it realistic to expect Fr. Gobbi to deny what he knows in his heart to be authentic, based on a letter which contains only a *personal advice* that has no basis in the findings of any official Church investigation?

In a statement dated October 7, 1998, we quote the following from a canon lawyer whom we had consulted about these matters:

“...let us consider the canonical implications of the personal letter which Fr. Gobbi received from the Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, asking him to state in the preface of the book that the messages are personal meditations and not interior locutions from the Blessed Mother. No personal correspondence from any individual who works for the Holy See has the force of law or the force of a decree or directive. Only official documents that are issued by those with legislative or executive authority (whether ordinary or delegated) can have the force of a law or a general or individual decree. (Canons 29 –34) In the matter we are considering here, Fr. Gobbi is required to follow only the directives of official documents issued by the competent authority of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, namely, signed by the Cardinal Prefect with the approval of the Holy Father.

What I want to stress here is that obedience is only to be given to the official laws, decrees, and instructions signed by the competent ecclesiastical authority of the Holy See.

In the matter at hand, to my knowledge, no such decree has been issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A personal letter has been treated like a decree. Thus the cause for the confusion."

Q. Are Fr. Gobbi's talks and sermons in line with Magisterial/Church teaching?

Some say, "Yes, granted the book of messages has the Imprimatur, but what about the sermons and talks which he gives. Are they in line with Church doctrine?" Fr. Gobbi holds a doctorate in sacred theology from the Pontifical University of the Lateran in Rome. What Fr. Gobbi discusses in his talks, cenacles, interviews, etc. does not deviate from what Our Lady tells him in the messages, and these already have the assurance of being free from doctrinal error.

Last year, our U.S. Headquarters published one of these talks which Fr. Gobbi gave to the cardinal, bishops and priests present at the 1996 International Retreat held for all of the National Directors of the MMP from around the world, where they gathered for a week of intense spiritual exercises with Fr. Gobbi. (Some of the statements which he made therein have been challenged by some who, without any theological training, have attempted to prove that they are contrary to the teachings of the Church.) Many from among those present at these retreats, and not just the archbishops and bishops, are scripture scholars and professors who have doctorates in sacred theology and are deeply steeped in Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Is it not reasonable to assume that if Fr. Gobbi were preaching heresy, that these retreatants, renowned in their fields, would not get up to leave or at least voice their concern, rather than remain there listening to heretical teachings? We can safely say, without a doubt, that they would have been able to discern error if it was being preached to them. **I was there, and not one rose up to question anything that was taught by Fr. Gobbi.**

So we need to ask ourselves...do we put our trust in these members of the clergy, who find no heresy in what is taught by Fr. Gobbi, or do we allow Satan to tempt us into believing the misrepresentation of the MMP offered to us by a few individuals who have no background in theology and exegesis?

Q. What is the spirituality of the M.M.P.?

The message of Our Lady of Fatima, already given official approbation by the Church, is at the core of the spirituality of the Marian Movement of Priests, a spirituality which is beautifully summed up in one of Our Lady's messages:

"Beloved children, walk along the road of love, of purity and of holiness.

Today I am happy to see how my motherly message has now spread to every part of the world.

*Many priests, but especially the faithful in great numbers and with great enthusiasm, have responded to my invitation **to consecrate themselves to my Immaculate Heart, to be united with the Pope, to walk along the way of divine grace, to flee sin, to pray the holy rosary and to gather together in cenacles of unceasing prayer, made with me and through me.***

(317bcd, Dec. 8, 1985)

The Fruits

It is important to note that millions of bishops, priests and laypersons who belong to the Marian Movement of Priests would attest to the tremendous spiritual benefits which they have derived from reading the messages and participating in cenacles of prayer. Millions upon millions of rosaries, consecrations to Our Lady and great fidelity to the Pope have borne tremendous fruit for the Church and have been a help to it as it walks in the footsteps of Our Lord. The many prayers made by the members of the Marian Movement of Priests in their cenacles have been and will continue to be a strong help for the Church. (cf. *“To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons” – Preface, xxviii-xxix*)

Q. What are the benefits of believing in private revelation?

His Eminence Bernardino Cardinal Echeverria Ruiz, O.F.M., now deceased, went beyond just giving the Imprimatur to the book of messages. He recognized the great spiritual benefits which would be derived from them. He writes:

*“After reading and deeply meditating the messages given by Our Lady to Don Stefano Gobbi, I consider it a privilege not only to be able to give the Imprimatur to this edition of the book, *“To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons,”* but also to take this opportunity to recommend the reading of these messages. They will contribute to the spread of devotion to Our Lady.”*

And we know that the Church **will not deny us graces from heaven** in mandating that we must wait for the approval of a said apparition or locution. His Holiness, Pope Urban VIII had this to say:

“In cases which concern private revelations, it is better to believe than not to believe, for, if you believe and it is proven true, you will be happy that you have believed, because our Holy Mother asked it. If you believe, and it should be proven false, you will receive all blessings as if it had been true, because you believed it to be true.”

St. Paul said:

“Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything, holding fast to what is good.” (Thes. 5:19-21)

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The Coming of Jesus and The Millennium

The subject matter in question being too complicated for me to venture into without the expertise of the masters in this field of theology, I have availed myself of the excellent research done by Fr. Joseph Iannuzzi, O.S.J., S.T.D. In his book, “The Triumph of God’s Kingdom in the Millennium and End Times”,¹ **which we have found to be the foremost authoritative work on the study of the Millennium**, Fr. Iannuzzi gives a comprehensive treatise on this subject as contained in the public revelation of the Church: Sacred Scripture and Tradition (the Fathers and Doctors of the Church); and the Magisterium. **It is important to note that he does not make reference in any way to private revelation to support his claims.**

A few things I would like to emphasize:

1. Fr. Iannuzzi’s work is so extensive and thorough, that I could not possibly treat all of the subject matter. For those who wish to further their study of these topics, the information needed to obtain his books is provided in the footnotes.
2. Although he makes no reference to private revelation, in an email to M.T.M., a copy of which Fr. Iannuzzi sent to me also, he confirmed his belief in the messages given by Our Lady to Fr. Gobbi. **I find it significant to note that Fr. Iannuzzi, who has a doctorate in spiritual-mystical theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University and who has studied eschatology in such depth, “has no doubt as to the veracity of Don Gobbi’s locutions.”**

Dear M.T.M.

“I am almost finished with a new book², with the bishop’s imprimatur and my diocesan nihil obstat, on the millennium and its circumstantial heresies. It is, in my estimation, infinitely better than my last book. It

¹ *The Triumph of God’s Kingdom in the Millennium and End Times* ©1999 St. John the Evangelist Press, Available from: St. Andrew’s Productions (Tel. 1-888-654-6279; www.saintandrew.com)

² *Creation’s Splendor (unofficial title)* For more information about its availability, you may contact St. John the Evangelist Press, Havertown, PA 19083 (Tel. 610-853-9801)

*holds no contradictions to the former, rather elaborates on the numerous inconsistencies in terminology among the burgeoning private revelations. **I have no doubt as to the veracity of Don Gobbi's locutions**; however, I have several serious concerns as to their interpretation by laity and prelates alike. I pursued my doctorate in spiritual-mystical theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, magna cum laude. I say this solely to emphasize the credibility of my view in this matter. I often hear the 'coming of the Lord' taken totally out of context from thousands of mystics who have interpreted it in a different light altogether. This is but one of the issues I bring out in my book. **If laity and prelates knew this bit of information alone, it would have avoided droves of persons disavowing their belief in Fr. Gobbi's messages and other authentic locutionists...**"(emphasis mine)*

*In Christ,
Rev. Joseph Iannuzzi, O.S.J., S.T.D.*

3. I have used many of the excellent references from Fr. Iannuzzi's first book, some of which I have juxtaposed with Our Lady's messages to Fr. Gobbi and also excerpts from a talk which Fr. Gobbi gave at an international MMP retreat in San Marino in 1996. **These prove that Fr. Gobbi is not teaching Millenarianism, but rather the acceptable belief in "The Millennium" to come.**

"The Millennium" vs. "Millenarianism"

Let us begin by defining our terms and seeking their appropriate applications:

The Millennium (also known as the temporal or millenary kingdom) will be established by Jesus when He comes in glory **in his spirit. Jesus will not be present in the flesh**, but will reign in **our will** and, in a most powerful way, **by means of the Eucharist**. The duration of this kingdom cannot be interpreted as a literal 1000 years.

The doctrine of **the Millennium** – an “age to come”, an “era” of peace or “some mighty triumph of Christianity before the end” – has been accepted as sound doctrine.

“ ‘The Teaching of the Catholic Church’,³ which bears the Church's required seals and was published in 1952 by a theological commission of qualified experts, clearly states that it is not contrary to Catholic teaching to believe or profess ‘a hope in some mighty triumph of Christ here on

³ *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London, 1952.

*earth before the final consummation of all things. **Such an occurrence is not excluded, is not impossible**, it is not all certain that there will not be a prolonged period of triumphant Christianity before the end.’ ” (The Triumph of God’s Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi - p. 75)*

Millenarianism (Latin, *mille*, 1000) is the condemned position that Jesus Christ would come down to earth **in the flesh** (in his glorified body) and **reign as an earthly king** with his saints for **a literal one thousand years** before the end of time. Various offshoots of this heretical and excessively literal interpretation of *Revelations 20* also manifested itself in the early Church, e.g. “carnal millenarianism”, the added Jewish-Christian error of carnal pleasures and excesses as part of the thousand year reign; and “mitigated or spiritual millenarianism”, which in general retained the literal thousand year reign of **Christ visibly in the flesh**, but rejected the aspect of immoderate carnal pleasures.

Any form of belief that Jesus Christ will return in his resurrected body to the earth and **rule visibly on earth** for a **literal one thousand years** (millenarianism and its many forms including mitigated millenarianism) has been condemned by the Church and must be categorically rejected. **This anathema does not include, however, the strong Patristic belief held by many Church Fathers and Doctors of a “spiritual”, “temporal”, “second” (but not final) or “middle” coming of Christ to take place before the end of the world.**

Church Fathers on the “Intermediate Coming” and “the Millennium”

This coming of Christ **in the Spirit** upon the earth for a significant period or “age” has been taught in different degrees and expressions by the Church Fathers, among them Papias, St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Hippolytus, Lactantius, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Augustine and others.

St. Bernard, Abbot and Doctor:

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his “*Sermo 5, Adventu Domini*” clearly speaks of another coming of Christ which he places between the first in the flesh (Christmas) and the final coming in glory for the Last Judgment. **He calls this middle coming the “Intermediate Coming.”**

“We know that there are three comings of the Lord. The third lies between the other two. It is invisible, while the other two are visible. In the first coming, He was seen on earth, dwelling among men...In the final coming, ‘all flesh will see the salvation of our God, and they will look

upon Him whom they have pierced.’ The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect will see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In his first coming, our Lord came in the flesh and in our weakness; **in this middle coming, He is our rest and consolation.** In case someone should think that this middle coming is sheer invention, listen to what our Lord Himself says: ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him.’ (*Sermo 5, Adventu Domini, 1-3; The Triumph of God’s Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi - pp. 78-79*)

St. Justin Martyr, Church Father

“St. Justin Martyr, martyred with six companions in Rome when he was beheaded for the sake of the Christian faith, is considered the most important apologist of the second century. He wrote two Apologies in defense of the Christian religion: “The Dialogue with Trypho”; and other writings... It is in his long “Dialogue” – a two-day conversation with Trypho, a man of Jewish origin – that St. Justin mentions an era of peace when quoting the prophet Isaiah...

‘If you ever encountered any so-called Christians who do not admit this doctrine [of the millennium], but dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham ...do not consider them to be real Christians...[for] I and every other orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished, and enlarged city of Jerusalem, as was announced by the Prophets Ezekiel, Isaias and others.’ ” (The Triumph of God’s Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi - pp. 29-30)

St. Justin continues by quoting from the following passage of Isaiah concerning the Millennium:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my

chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their children with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord." (Is. 65: 17-25 - RSV)

What does the Magisterium of the Church say about this "Intermediate Coming"?

"As our Holy Father has so often quoted, this millennium will be marked by a 'new springtime in Christianity', will be 'intensely Eucharistic', at its dawn will 'make Christ the heart of the world', and will have as its 'goal and fulfillment...the life of each Christian and the whole Church in the triune God.' (passim Tertio Millennio Adveniente; The Triumph of God's Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi - p. 165)

In many of his talks and documents, Pope John Paul II seems to anticipate the return of Jesus in glory. His prayer (in part) on March 30, 1985 in St. John's Square, Rome, was:

"The Church is the community of the little ones — of the little children who today ardently await the return of Jesus in glory, because the hour of delivery is drawing near for the young Mother of the new Advent: the Birth of Jesus in glory...."

At the end of his speech given in Edmonton [Alberta], Canada on September 17, 1984, ("Osservatore Romano", September 27, 1984), the Holy Father said:

"May the God of peace be with us, here in Canada and everywhere. May justice and peace kiss once again at the end of the second millennium, which is preparing us for Christ's coming in glory."

Then in Denver in August 1993, at World Youth Day, the Pope said at the end of the vigil [August 14]:

"The young people of the Eighth World Youth Day thank You from the bottom of their hearts. Maranatha! Here, from Cherry Creek State Park in Denver, from this gathering of young people from all over the world, we cry out to You: Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!" (cf. Rev. 22:20)

The following day, August 15, 1993, he concluded his homily with the following:

“This pilgrimage must continue – it must continue in our lives; it must continue in the life of the Church as She looks to the Third Christian Millennium. It must continue as a new advent, a moment of hope and expectation, until the return of the Lord in glory. Your celebration of this World Youth Day has been a pause along the journey, a moment of prayer and of refreshment, but our journey must take us even further, even to the return of the Lord in glory!”

Does it seem rational that our unceasing prayer would be: “Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!” if all that we had to look forward to was the final judgment? No – we are full of hope because we are anticipating a renewed kingdom of holiness, of justice, of love and of peace.

Fr. Gobbi’s Teaching on this “Intermediate” or “Second” Coming

Let us examine one of Our Lady’s messages concerning this second coming, which has been termed by the Church Fathers as the “Intermediate Coming.”

“Today I announce to you that there is about to be born the new Church of light, which my Son Jesus is forming for Himself in every part of the earth, so that it will be ready to receive Him, with faith and with joy, in the proximate moment of his second coming.

The glorious reign of Christ, which will be established in your midst, with the second coming of Jesus in the world, is close at hand. This is his return in glory. This is his glorious return, to establish his reign in your midst and to bring all humanity, redeemed by his most precious blood, back to the state of his new terrestrial paradise.

*That which is being prepared is so great that its equal has never existed since the creation of the world. Prepare yourselves with humility, with faith, with intense prayer. **Prepare yourselves by gathering together, each and all, in the spiritual cenacle of my Immaculate Heart.** Prepare yourselves in silence and in expectation.*

I reveal my secret only to the hearts of the little, the simple and the poor, because it is being accepted and believed by them. For this, Jesus is working powerfully in these times, to prepare his coming in the lives of the simple, the poor, the pure, the little.

With a small number of these children, the Lord will soon restore on earth his glorious reign of love, of holiness and of peace.”

(Message #435 b-f, “To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons”)

In a talk which Fr. Gobbi gave at a 1996 international clergy retreat, he shares his own understanding of this second (intermediate) coming of Jesus⁴:

“Traditionally, we have always identified the return of Christ in glory with the ‘Parousia’, when He will come as Judge, since there has never been any in-depth theological study on this topic. This is also the case for other truths which are believed, but about which no in-depth studies have ever been made. Of late, these messages which refer to Christ returning in glory to this world have given rise to a more serious theological study on this subject.

...Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church speak clearly of a glorious coming of the reign of Christ into this world, apart from the one at the end as Judge! (...)

Brother priests, I think then, that on this theme as well we are in full accord with Sacred Scripture and with the teaching of the Church. We must indeed open ourselves to this new perspective. I was told that the following question was addressed to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: “Is the return of Christ in glory to be interpreted as his return for the Last Judgment, or rather on this earth?”⁵ The answer was as follows: “The Church has never taken an official stand on this subject, therefore one can interpret either way.”⁶

Fr. Gobbi's Teaching on “The Millennium”

There is the erroneous belief, among some, that Fr. Gobbi's explanation of the intermediate coming of Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom falls into the category of “mitigated millenarianism,” which “cannot be taught safely.”

To place everything in perspective, in the following section I have quoted extensively from Fr. Gobbi's 1996 speech, portions of which have been called into question by some

⁴ Excerpted from the official translation of a talk entitled, “The Triumph, the Second Coming and the Eucharistic Reign,” which Fr. Gobbi gave at the International Retreat and Spiritual Exercises in San Marino on June 24, 1996. In attendance were Cardinal Echeverria from Ecuador; the former Nuncio of El Salvador, a faithful member of the MMP; Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos, a doctor in biblical exegesis from Lima, Peru; and 25 bishops and 300 priests from around the world. (Copies of this talk are available from our National Headquarters.)

⁵ Editor's note: “on this earth...” - that is, a glorious return of Jesus before his final coming as Judge.

⁶ Fr. Gobbi is referring to a response given by Cardinal Ratzinger during a 1990 interview with Martino Penasa.

and even labeled as heretical. We will prove that Fr. Gobbi's teachings are in no way contradictory to accepted Church teaching and its proper interpretation.

One Thousand Years – Literal or Symbolic?

First, let us examine what Fr. Gobbi had to say about the duration of the Millennium. On this topic as well, Fr. Gobbi is in line with the teachings of the Church.

“Actually, Scripture says, ‘to reign for a thousand years’ – ‘a thousand years’ is a biblical term; it can also be a symbolic expression.”
(The Triumph, the Second Coming and the Eucharistic Reign, Fr. Gobbi, p. 10)

In other words, the “thousand years” symbolically signifies a long period of time, an era, and not necessarily a literal period of time.

St. Justin Martyr says:

*“Now...we understand that **a period of one thousand years is indicated in symbolic language.**”* (St. Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho; The Triumph of God's Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi, p. 85)

Scripture says:

“Do not be ignorant of this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day”(cf. 2 Pt. 3:8)

“To your eyes a thousand years are like yesterday, come and gone, no more than a watch in the night.” (cf. Ps. 90:4)

What will this “Return of Christ” consist of?

In the following passages⁷, Fr. Gobbi explains that the Coming of Jesus will coincide with the union of several elements:

“...Brothers, let us try to understand: what does ‘return’ mean? Christ is in heaven; He is returning because, in his human nature, He has already come. He is returning in a relative sense, since, with his divinity, Jesus is already present in the Eucharist. He is returning insofar as He will manifest Himself to this world in a glorious way and will bring his Kingdom to this world. Therefore, his Coming will coincide with the union of several elements:

(1) At last, the prayer of the ‘Our Father’ which Jesus taught us will be fulfilled; it will have its perfect completion. The Divine Will will be fulfilled

⁷ Excerpted from his talk, “The Triumph, the Second Coming and the Eucharistic Reign,” (1996)

in a perfect way by all creatures, thus bringing forth the Kingdom of the Divine Will upon this earth. (p. 12)

Jesus, in the 'Our Father' which you taught us... dear Jesus, we have been repeating it for two thousand years... you teach us that prayer is infallible – it always obtains results. What did you teach us to ask for? 'Our Father, who are in heaven, sanctified – glorified – be your name. Your Kingdom come; your Will be done...'

'Your Kingdom come!' But listen...do you think that after two thousand years in which this invocation has been repeated throughout the world – 'Your Kingdom come, Your Kingdom come...' – that at the end, this Kingdom of Christ will not come? It will come! – for the perfect glorification of the Father. And as the Kingdom of Christ comes, all creatures will be led to fulfill the Divine Will in a perfect way, because the first to prevent us from doing the Divine Will was Satan. What was Satan's victory in the earthly paradise? To lead our first parents to make a choice that was contrary to the Will of the Father – to the Will of God! (...) But she will crush his head – do not worry! The Pope said: 'Her offspring – Christ in her, Mary in Christ, the Mother united with the Son, the Son united with the Mother.' Therefore, dear Mother, I am pleased that you will crush the head of that huge serpent. Crush it!

In the end, the power of Satan will be destroyed because he will be rendered powerless! Being bound, he will no longer be able to do harm; he will no longer be able to lead creatures to say 'no' to the Will of the Father, because creatures will say 'yes' to the Will of the heavenly Father. In this perfect fulfillment of the Divine Will, creation will return almost to its original state – to a new earthly paradise, in which all creatures will say 'yes' to the Will of the heavenly Father.

(...)

Christ will bring about his Kingdom – a Kingdom of holiness and of docile obedience to the heavenly Father.

...this cannot happen, except by a most special outpouring of the Holy Spirit: the Second Pentecost."

(2) It will coincide with the Second Pentecost. (p. 15)

(...)

Then, fire will come down; the Holy Spirit will descend – tongues of fire, spiritual tongues! Understand that the Second Pentecost, as the bishop said this morning, is not an invention of Don Stefano [Gobbi]. Pope Paul VI, John XXIII and the current pope have prophetically spoken about it. Why the second [Pentecost]? Because the first already took place in the cenacle of Jerusalem, and it

transformed the apostles and the disciples to such a point that some thought: 'Are they drunk at nine in the morning?' The second will take place on a worldwide scale; it will descend upon the whole world, not only on the cenacle! It will transform the hearts and the souls of all, and all will sing joyfully to the Lord, so much so, that perhaps the angels of heaven will ask themselves: 'Are they drunk at nine in the morning?'

Brother priests, [Jesus' return in glory] will coincide, then, with the miracle of the Second Pentecost, which will renew...[souls]. But do you understand that, by bringing the gift of the renewal into souls, it brings the gift of salvation?

*I will read to you the message of Pentecost given on June 4, 1995: **"Tongues of Fire."***

"- Tongues of divine fire will bring heat and life to a humanity which has now become cold from egoism and hatred, from violence and wars. Thus the parched earth will be opened to the breath of the Spirit of God, which will transform it into a new and wondrous garden in which the Most Holy Trinity will make its permanent dwelling place among you.

- Tongues of fire will come down to enlighten and sanctify the Church, which is living through the dark hour of Calvary and being stricken in her pastors, wounded in the flock, abandoned and betrayed by her own, exposed to the impetuous wind of errors, pervaded with the loss of faith and with apostasy.

The divine fire of the Holy Spirit will heal her of every malady, will purify her of every stain and every infidelity, will clothe her again in new beauty, will cover her with his splendor, in such a way that she may be able to find again all her unity and holiness, and will thus give to the world her full, universal and perfect witness to Jesus.

- Tongues of fire will come down upon you all, my poor children, so ensnared and seduced by Satan and by all the evil spirits who, during these years, have attained their greatest triumph. And thus, you will be illuminated by this divine light, and you will see your own selves in the mirror of the truth and the holiness of God. It will be like a judgment in miniature, which will open the door of your heart to receive the great gift of divine mercy..."

(546d-g, "To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons")

Fr. Iannuzzi on this "spiritual" coming of Christ—

(...) "The Son, therefore, while unique and consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit, is regarded by the author of the Book of Revelation as the

protagonist of the end times who receives assistance from the other two divine Persons. And it is here where the spiritual descent of Christ comes into play. Because Christ will not descend in the flesh in human history, he will come by way of his glorified Spirit who will purge, illuminate and unify all creation. This is just one example where both the Son and the Spirit are present and active in the same operation. Intimately united with the Father, both the Son and the Spirit, in virtue of their consubstantial and collaborative effort in salvation history, will bring about the transformation and unification of creation. This process, referred to as Christ's spiritual descent through his Spirit, is evidenced by Gregory of Nyssa and other Church Fathers' usage of the words, 'May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us', as a substitution for the petition, 'Your Kingdom come' in the Lord's prayer." (The Triumph of God's Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi, p. 95)

Contrary then to the false teaching of mitigated Millenarianism, which held that Jesus would rule in person in his glorified body on this earth, Jesus will reign in his Spirit in hearts, souls and wills. He will transform and sanctify all things by means of his Holy Spirit – that Spirit which emanates from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit would not be able to carry out this transformation were it not for Christ's redemptive act. The Spirit in Christ will perform the work of the transformation – in other words, the Holy Spirit's mission is to apply and complete God's plan of redemption.

Fr. Gobbi (cont'd)

(3) It will be the greatest miracle of the divine mercy – the triumph of Jesus' merciful love – which will open the world to a new era, a new civilization, to finally know at last the civilization of love. (p. 17)

This Second Pentecost will also coincide with the triumph of the merciful love of Jesus, the divine mercy that comes for us.

“And then the Holy Spirit will work the new miracle of universal transformation in the heart and the life of all: sinners will be converted; the weak will find support; the sick will receive healing; those far away will return to the house of the Father; those separated and divided will attain full unity.

In this way, the miracle of the Second Pentecost will take place. It will come with the triumph of my Immaculate Heart in the world...”

(546hi, To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons)

(...)

And so you understand now, how once all have returned to salvation, they will breathe the air of the Kingdom of God in our midst, and it will be a kingdom of holiness and of justice, of purity, of love, of joy and of peace. Then, once the influence of him who is a murderer by definition is removed – the one who, opposing God, brings hatred, egoism, division, violence, war into the world – then once his power is destroyed, with God being among us, a new civilization will finally flourish: the civilization of the children of God who live in his kingdom – the new civilization of love.

(4) But, above all, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart and the return of Christ in glory will coincide with the advent of the Eucharistic Reign of Christ.”
(p. 19)

Imagine this! In this renewed world, where the Father is glorified, where Christ manifests his reign, where the will of creatures reflects that of the Father, where the Holy Spirit has renewed the people, where the prodigy of the divine mercy is fulfilled – in this world the Eucharistic Christ will be able to explode with all of his divine power! Brother priests, we believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist with his glorious body and with his divinity, on this earth as He is in heaven; it is only the veil of the species that keeps us from seeing Him, but his presence is the same. And so I ask myself: how is it that in heaven Jesus is the bliss and the joy of all the blessed, yet here on this earth, where He is present in the Eucharist, He cannot explode with his power and become our joy and greatest beatitude? Why doesn't this happen? The Eucharistic Christ cannot manifest his power because of the obstacles we put in the way.

...the obstacle is sin – individual sin, social sin, sin set as the norm of action. All of this sin is a rejection that we make; it is a barrier that we place, because of which the Eucharistic Christ cannot manifest his divine power. But when Satan is cast into hell, when the door of the abyss is closed and the power of Satan is destroyed, these obstacles will be removed. Then will Jesus in the Eucharist explode. He will manifest Himself in all his power; we will see Him beyond the species; we will feel Him because He will work within us most powerfully as God, because in the Eucharist Jesus is present with the fullness of his divinity in our midst! And as God, He will then succeed in transforming our hearts; He will succeed in transforming souls; He will succeed in transforming families; He will succeed in transforming nations...Finally, after so many years of division, and after so many (almost useless) efforts of ecumenism, the unity of the Church will be achieved and we will truly have the Eucharistic Reign of Christ within us.

*Therefore, I would almost like to say: **Jesus who returns and manifests Himself in glory unites with Jesus who is present in the Eucharist**(Emphasis mine); and He will almost open wide the doors of the species, which still keep Him veiled to us, so that He may manifest Himself with his power and transform everything,*

forming at last the new heavens and the new earth. Therefore, the return of Christ in glory will also coincide with the great triumph of the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus.

...I truly believe that what Our Lady tells us in these messages is true. (emphasis mine) *Her Immaculate Heart cannot triumph except in the triumph of Christ, and Christ will obtain his greatest victory and his greatest triumph only when He brings his Kingdom into this world and the adversary is defeated. With what joy will the Heart of Jesus open to say: 'Father, You are glorified at last!' With what joy will Jesus turn to us and say: 'Finally, your food is to do the Will of my heavenly Father! Just as it was for me, so it is for you. My Kingdom is spreading in all of you, in the joy of fulfilling the Will of the Father alone, in each one of you, my brothers whom I have redeemed!'*

Finally, all of his divine power will pour forth from the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and we will then know the joy of living, of savoring, of experiencing all the effects of the paradise which we will have with the triumph of the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus. We will be on this earth, yet we will be beyond it. We will not yet be in heaven – it will be a paradise on earth, which Our Lady is preparing for us through the triumph of her Immaculate Heart in the world. Praised be Jesus Christ!" (The Triumph, The Second Coming and the Eucharistic Reign, Fr. Gobbi, pp. 10-21)

Following is a beautiful teaching by Fr. Iannuzzi on the Eucharistic reign of Jesus:

"The temporal kingdom, therefore, will have at its core, in the hearts and souls of all its faithful, the glorious Person of Christ Jesus who will shine forth above all in the triumph of his Eucharistic Person. The Eucharist will become the summit of all humanity, extending its rays of light to all the nations. The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, dwelling in their midst, will thus cultivate in the faithful a spirit of intense adoration and worship never before seen. Freed from the deceptions of the contriver, who will be enchained for a time, the faithful will gather around all the tabernacles of the earth to render homage to God – their sustenance, their solace and their salvation." (The Triumph of God's Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi, p. 127)

Do the above excerpts from Fr. Gobbi's talk sound like the doctrine of mitigated Millenarianism which teaches that Jesus will come down to earth to reign in the flesh with his saints for literally one thousand years? NOT AT ALL! On the contrary, his explanations and teachings are very much in line with the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, the Scriptures and the Magisterium. In his talk, he clearly states that Jesus will

reign on earth by means of his Eucharistic Person and by means of the Holy Spirit (Second Pentecost) who will transform and sanctify all things, but most of all the hearts, souls and wills in which Jesus will reign. He is not speaking of a Jesus who would come on earth to rule in the manner of our political and earthly kings. He is not speaking of a second coming where Jesus would come in his glorified body and remain on earth for 1000 years. The expression, “Second Coming” used by Fr. Gobbi is the equivalent of the “middle” or “intermediate” coming spoken of by the Fathers of the Church, and **not** the final coming for the Last Judgment. The kingdom that will be established by Christ after his middle coming is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” The kingdom Fr. Gobbi speaks about is the earthly paradise, lost through sin and regained through Christ’s Redemption. In this earthly paradise Christ will reign in his Spirit and by means of his Eucharistic Person. His reign will be a reign of holiness, of justice, of peace, of love and of joy.

The prayer of the “Our Father” taught us by Jesus will finally be fulfilled: his kingdom will have finally come, his divine will lived on earth as in heaven, and his holy Name sung and blest by all his children in songs of joy and of thanksgiving. Once this earthly paradise is sanctified by his Spirit, Jesus will present it to his Father as his gift of love, the fruit of his Redemption. Once again, the Father will take great pleasure in his creation.

The passages which we have quoted from Fr. Gobbi’s talk (*The Triumph, the Second Coming and the Eucharistic Reign – 1996*) **are definitely not a description of mitigated millenarianism**, but rather of the “Millennium” as taught by Our Lady in the messages, as found in Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers, and as taught by the Magisterium of the Church.

It is important to note that the Magisterium has not yet made a definitive pronouncement about the “millennium or “temporal kingdom.”

“In these latter days on the threshold of the third millennium, disputes inevitably arise in spite of the Church’s authoritative voice. Although she possesses the power to either close the matter or allow for further doctrinal development in its clarification, Holy Mother Church has nonetheless opted for the latter. She has assumed a cautious position with regard to the concept of a millennium, due primarily to the resurgent tendencies of the past that have most commonly led to a slippery slope quest for “millenarianism.” However, understood in a spiritual sense, the question of a millennium or temporal kingdom as promoted through the “spiritual” writings of the Church Fathers remains open to a definitive pronouncement by the Magisterium.” (The Triumph of God’s Kingdom..., Fr. Iannuzzi, p. 166)

Especially significant are the words of Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in this regard. Theologian Martino Penasa, presented him with this question of Christ's spiritual millenary reign (not millenarianism), and the Cardinal reassured him that the matter is still open to discussion and that **"the Holy See has not yet made any definite pronouncement in this regard."** ("È imminente una nuova era di vita cristiana?" *Il Segno del Soprannaturale*, Udine, Italia, n. 30, p. 10, Oct. 1990; *The Triumph of God's Kingdom...*, Fr. Iannuzzi, p. 43)

Having thus proven that Our Lady's messages to Fr. Gobbi and his own teachings in this regard are in no way contradictory to that which is taught by Holy Scripture, the Magisterium, the Fathers of the Church, and contemporary Doctors in Sacred Theology (e.g. Fr. Joseph Iannuzzi, O.S.J., S.T.D.), we have the assurance that we are allowed to believe in a spiritual and temporal earthly kingdom.

Should we continue to hold our cenacles? Absolutely!

Our Lady's cenacles are the key to her power. By means of them she prepares the hearts and souls of her children to receive her Divine Spouse, the Holy Spirit who will sanctify and transfigure her children into the likeness of her Son Jesus. So please, DO NOT abandon your cenacles. Do not let false rumors and erroneous teachings pull you away from them.

May Our Lady, our sweet and loving Mother, keep you always in her Immaculate Heart!

"Evangelize all men, preaching that the reign of God is at hand. The moment of the second coming of Jesus is drawing close, the moment of the return of Christ in glory, to restore in your midst his reign of grace, of holiness, of justice, of love and of peace. Announce to everyone this, his glorious return, so that hope may blossom upon the world and the hearts of men be opened to receive Him. Throw open the doors to Jesus Christ who is coming!"

To this end, preach the need for prayer and penance; for the courageous practice of all the virtues; for a return to the perfect cult of love, of adoration and of reparation, offered to Jesus present in the Eucharist. Spread everywhere the cenacles of prayer which I have been asking of you: among children, youth, priests, the faithful..."

(468mn, "To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons")