



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
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Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

EMBARGOED UNTIL January 21, 1999 11:00 a.m. EDT

Statement by Most Rev. Daniel P. Reilly, Bishop of Worcester

Over the past eleven years, many unexplainable circumstances have occurred around an innocent, bed-ridden girl named Audrey Santo. In cooperation with the family, I have asked a team of esteemed medical and theological professionals to review the situation to determine its possible impact, negative or positive, on the family and the Catholic faithful.

After a year of careful planning and evaluation, the commission has reported its preliminary findings to me. A summary of those findings is available to anyone who requests them, but I want to share some specific thoughts and concerns at this time as Bishop of the Diocese of Worcester.

The most striking evidence of the presence of God in the Santo home is seen in the dedication of the family to Audrey. Their constant respect for her dignity as a child of God is a poignant reminder that God touches our lives through the love and devotion of others.

There are inexplicable manifestations of oils and other substances emanating from religious objects in the Santo home. They are still under study. The purpose of the Church's investigation is not simply to become a promoter of claims of the miraculous. Rather, it is to review the theological foundations for such claims to assure that the faithful who follow them are not being misled.

In the case of Audrey herself, more study is needed from medical and other professionals regarding her level of awareness and her ability to communicate with the people around her. This is critical to the basis of the claim of her ability to intercede with God. In the meantime, I urge continued prayers for Audrey and her family. But praying to Audrey is not acceptable in Catholic teaching.

We are not yet able to confirm claims of miraculous events occurring at Audrey's home or as a result of a visit to Audrey, or from the oils associated with her. One need not make a personal visit to the Santo home. Indeed, continued demand for personal visitation poses the risk of compromising the family's ability to continue to offer excellent care to their daughter.

Further study has also been recommended and approved by me regarding the composition and source of the oils and other substances. In doing this, I want to underscore that any paranormal occurrences are not miraculous in and of themselves. The consistent practice of the Catholic Church has been not to use such occurrences as verifications of miraculous claims.

Finally, more systematic study must be done before the Church can even begin to evaluate the concept of "victim soul," which has been applied to Audrey. We must proceed quite cautiously here, since this term is not commonly used by the Church except for Christ himself who became the victim for our sins and transgressions on the cross.

While further study is being conducted, please pray for Audrey, for her family and for all those seeking healing and hope. I also ask for prayers to assist us so that this continued investigation will strengthen our faith in God's divine mercy and love.