

# The Order of Saint Charbel

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Tuesday, March 21, 2000

Father Peter Joseph  
Vice-Rector  
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Dear Fr. Peter,

Greetings! I wish you well in your pastoral ministry to the many vocations under your care. I have never written you before. I am a Catholic priest originally ordained for the Diocese of Galveston-Houston on May 20, 1978. Since 1987 I have been associated with the 'Little Pebble' (Mr. William Kamm) and I am a member of the Order of Saint Charbel of which he is the Founder. I am also now an Australian citizen since 1997. I have been the spiritual director and confessor of Mr. Kamm for 13 years. I am also the Superior of the Community.

I wanted to write to you regarding your article in the February edition of *AD 2000* entitled "**Private revelations: 'Keep to what is countenanced by the Church'**". I thought your references to Jordan Aumann's book to be very helpful. However, I think you could have better touched upon the power of God's Sanctifying Grace in the soul. I also wish you would have touched upon the awesome Goodness of God and His Mercy to the soul whom He raises to mystical heights of union with Christ. I would like you to believe that I am not presuming to "teach" you anything. I am not a "theologian" and I am not an "expert" in theology. I found your article disappointing and deserving of a retraction regarding your referral to the Little Pebble. You should have left your reference to him out of your article altogether. You failed to distinguish with theological precision such a problematic issue as "private revelation" and specifically, regarding the Little Pebble. Because you chose to insert your negative reference to him in your article -- you should have explained the wider picture to the public. You could have contacted Mr. Kamm or myself for a fuller explanation. You could have referred to the documents which "*pronounced against*" and given a more balanced presentation in deference and in justice to Mr. Kamm. In your article you wrote:

*"Some individuals have been pronounced against by name, e.g., Vassula Ryden and the Little Pebble, William Kamm"*

What are you trying to say? What is your point in making such a simplistic reference which can only be taken in a negative way because of your use of the expression: "*pronounced against*"? This expression is not proper for the content of your article as you have neglected an integral presentation of the whole subject. It would have been better for you to leave this reference to Mr. Kamm out altogether! You did not explain yourself regarding Mr. Kamm. It is not good journalism because it is not fair to Mr. Kamm. Your expression serves only to further the "stereotype" image in the minds of some of the public who are mesmerised by the negative and sensational media presentations of the past. The public statements by certain members of the Hierarchy also propagate the stereotype of a "sect" or "cult" leader. It is easy to "label" a person as

*"pronounced against"* without further explanation. However, it is unjust and not "real" -- it sterilises the reader from the real person and situation. Thus, rash judgment based upon suspicion continues to flourish. Saint Thomas has written well on this evil and why we should always assume the best about a person when we are confronted by a suspicion. If I may include a quote of Saint Thomas who writes:

*"I answer that, as stated above (A.3, Reply Obj. 2), from the very fact that a man thinks ill of another without sufficient cause, he injures and despises him. Now no man ought to despise or in any way injure another man without urgent cause: and consequently, unless we have evident indications of a person's wickedness, we ought to deem him good, by interpreting for the best whatever is doubtful about him."* (Summa Theologica, Part II-II, Q.60, article 4)

I am not saying that you think ill of Mr. Kamm. I am also not saying that you despise him! I am simply saying that your article contributes to the overall negative stereotype of Mr. Kamm. I am saying that you ought to interpret for the best whatever is doubtful about him in your own mind -- otherwise to make statements which are remarkably imprecise -- is to stimulate suspicion in the minds of the readers. Again, Saint Thomas shows wisdom in dealing with these things:

*"He who interprets doubtful matters for the best, may happen to be deceived more often than not; yet it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man, because in the latter case an injury is inflicted, but not in the former."* (Summa Theologica, Part II-II, Q. 60, article 4, Reply Obj. 1)

In actual fact you could have made a better presentation of this difficult subject by highlighting more the reality of moral certitude in faith. I would like to suggest that you add further precision to your own thoughts about the Little Pebble. For instance, the real problematic issues confronting the Seers, mystics and privileged souls is not so much the problem of discernment of spirits (I am not minimising this) -- rather it is the problem of **natural justice** in relation to the Seer and the Hierarchy responsible and competent. If you re-read Church History concerning this aspect of discernment from the Hierarchy -- the picture is often quite different than what you portray in your article. While it is true that the "sure charism of truth" is vested in the Successors of the Apostles -- the reality of discernment in practice is often skewed -- it breaks down because of personal sin and rash judgment on the part of those who stand as judges! Thus, defects of natural justice owed to the Seer(s) really become central to the quest for the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth".

I know we never like to think of the Clergy being less than fair and honest in these matters. However, history shows that it has often been a part of the equation. In many journals and media presentations, in fact, some journalist go so far in this direction that it is pathetic -- as if the Bishop, or priest cannot make a mistake or commit errors of law and/or fact! It is easy to see why the corpus of Canon Law had to come more and more into the foreground -- in order to safeguard the rights of the faithful (Canons 14, 50, 221, 1572, et al) and to uphold accountability to procedural fairness (or equity) regarding contentious matters. I would like to propose an example.

Take for instance the Trial of Saint Joan of Arc. This is a remarkable trial to say the least. It clearly demonstrates the principles regarding natural justice. When these principles "fly out the window" -- discernment becomes impossible -- as there are other hidden agendas. These hidden agendas are often from the very ones who are vested with the "sure charism of truth". The charism is not at fault -- it is personal sin and a failure to practice the fundamental virtue of Justice -- that is the problem. I do not want to burden you with retelling this page of history -- however, I would like to highlight a few elements which are important. There was a complete failure of procedural fairness in Saint Joan's trial -- the defects of natural justice were manifold. Those who perpetrated the injustice sent her to the fire. This was a terrible page of history. She went to her death because she would not betray the moral supernatural certitude in faith that God bestowed upon her through her "voices". All of the gymnastics of false accusation through psychological manipulation and verbal brow beating were attempts to make her out to be a "witch"! It is no wonder that she could not place any confidence in the Bishop Cauchon. How could anyone appeal to her conscience about obedience

to her judges!! How could they demand under obedience that she take an oath to tell them everything when she had been told by her "voices" how to respond to them!! They manipulated the messages of her "voices" in order to make out that the real problem was Saint Joan's "disobedience" to their authority as her judges!! This is where the real diabolical influence was -- with her judges -- not in Saint Joan!! The "problem of Joan" was a false construction created by her judges -- in order to setup the "evidence" with which to convict her out of her own mouth!! It was not Saint Joan who was disobedient to the Church. It was her judges who betrayed the Church!! The Higher authority in Rome would never have condoned such a sham trial!! If I may now conclude my point from this quotation of a remarkable indictment against Bishop Cauchon:

*"Besides Joan's illness, another disturbing incident occurred. Cauchon was anxious, as we have seen, to make the trial a very correct and well-run one. A highly respected authority on canon law, a Norman priest called Jean Lohier, arrived in Rouen as Joan fell ill. Cauchon assembled all the documents concerning the trial, took them round to Lohier's lodgings, and asked him for his opinion of the case. Lohier studied the papers and promptly declared that the trial was invalid. He gave as his reasons: 'The trial is not following the regular and proper procedure of such trials. It is being conducted in what is virtually a private court, and those taking part are not fully and completely free to give their honest opinion. The honour of the King of France is involved, as she champions his cause, yet he has not been asked to appear, nor is he represented by anyone. In addition, no written charges have been produced and this simple girl has no counsel and is left on her own to answer questions on very serious matters put to her by the most learned theologians.'" This verdict by Lohier shook Cauchon profoundly. He at once hurried away to consult a small, intimate circle of his confederates. He told them, "If we are to believe Lohier, we ought to start the trial all over again, for what we've done so far is useless." There was a long and serious discussion, but at the end Cauchon decided to stand firm. "By St. John, we won't stop. We'll carry on with the trial as we've started it'." (Saint Joan of Arc by John Beevers, Tan Books and Publishers, 1981, pages 133-134)*

So much for virtue and good example from this member of the Hierachy!! So much for the charism of discernment!! There was from this point on a complete resistance to grace because his will was set in place and only extraordinary humility could make him swallow his pride!! So much for fairness!! So much for truth and honesty!! What about the 10 Commandments!!

Your article was misfocused. You failed to highlight the real problematic issues that surround private revelations in general. I have picked out (5) of the main elements in your article which are only partial perspective's -- that is they say more by what they leave out. For instance, in your article you wrote:

1. *"Christian faith cannot accept revelations which claim to correct the teaching of the Church or enjoin disobedience to the lawful directives of her pastors." (Fr. Peter Joseph, page 20)*

**My Answer:** With due respect, Fr. Peter, your statement has already conditioned the facts when you say "claim to correct" and "lawful directives". The problematic issue is sidestepped -- namely, the unlawfulness of directives from the pastors which project upon the true reality -- a false assumption of claiming to teach the Church!! Your words are true for the type of situation you have in your mind -- but they beg the real question -- the defects of natural justice on the part of the competent authority acting as judge!! Justice still remains a virtue which is owed to the Little Pebble and other Seers!! Does not Mr. Kamm have the same right of all Catholics to the protection of Law (Canon 221)? Secondly, what about the whole concept of "development of doctrine" in the Catholic sense as expounded by Cardinal Newman, and many others before him, like Saint Vincent of Lerins? What about Saint Thomas understanding of the role of Prophecy in the life of the Church (S.T., II-II, Q. 174, article 6). You mentioned this text in your article but you failed to

quote it. It is a very important text. I would really like to go into this but it would take me too far afield for the purpose of this letter.

2. *"It is forbidden, as well as sinful, to propagate private revelations which have received a negative judgment from the local bishop, the conference of bishops, or the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" (Fr. Peter Joseph, page 20)*

**My Answer:** Your statement by itself is correct as far as it goes. If that is the authentic conclusion of the competent authority after its final deliberation with all accountability in place and all appeals exhausted. However, again your setup of this statement already conditions the response. You failed to distinguish the fact that the Bishop at the local level might have reached a false conclusion which is uncovered in the appeals process. Why should you exclude that possibility. There is certainly precedent in the history of the Church. Therefore, your statement is not correct under the circumstances of defects of natural justice. It follows also that it is not sinful to propagate private revelations which are not lawfully judged to be in error. The burden of proof lies with the judges. It is also a principle of jurisprudence that "you are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt". Mr. Kamm and I have already written extensively on the defects of natural justice in the ecclesiastical investigation of Mr. Kamm currently underway.

3. *"Even should the local bishop mistakenly disapprove of a genuine revelation, obedience to the Church remains paramount. In some cases, it is a sin to propagate a private revelation, but it can never be a sin not to propagate one ... In fact, if an alleged visionary disobeys a legitimate order from the bishop this is a sure sign that the message is not from God." (Fr. Peter Joseph, page 20)*

**My Answer:** On the contrary, the right of appeal is guaranteed by Canon Law and suspends the execution of a judgment within the meaning of Canon 1638. Many of Christ's faithful would recognise straightaway that such a mistake by the Bishop would be at most a "doubtful law". Thus within the meaning of Canon 14, such a "disapproval" by the Bishop would not oblige as it would be certainly a doubtful law. Thus, obedience does not come into play at all, because there is not yet an authentic judgment. It is also wrong to say that it is not a sin of omission "not to propagate one". It is always a sin of omission to wilfully neglect to discover the truth to the detriment of others. The problem of obedience is not a problem when the "order" from the Bishop is not legitimate!! It is also a sure sign of defects of natural justice on the part of the Bishop.

4. *"It is easier to pronounce against visionaries than in their favour." (Fr. Peter Joseph, page 19)*

**My Answer:** This is obvious, but what is the point? The real matter concerns truth and justice. The fact is that negative judgments have bad consequences for all concerned. It causes needless suffering and oftentimes, it is a scandal because it shows the great lack of pastoral care which the Shepherd of the Diocese owes in justice to every member of his flock -- especially those most in need. Those who are the most marginalised are usually the Seers who have been the subject of negative pronouncements against them!! They have suffered from all of the "fall-out" from Diocesan statements which label them so unjustly.

5. *"The simple fact is that most claimed revelations are false. It is extremely foolish, therefore, to devote oneself to propagating a disapproved or dubious message, which might actually come from the Father of Lies." (Fr. Peter Joseph, page 19)*

**My Answer:** This is simply a false generality. How can one know in advance what is a dubious or disapproved message when the final judgment is not in yet? Your statements only portray the fact that you condition the scenario in your terms -- thus ruling out the other possibility of defects of natural justice on the part of those who sit as judges.

Your article is out of balance. His Holiness John Paul II gave insightful spiritual direction on the role of charisms in regard to the reform of the Christian Community:

**JOHN PAUL II:** "This fact shows the possibility and usefulness of freedom of speech in the Church: a freedom which can also appear in the form of constructive criticism. The important thing is that what is said truly expresses a prophetic inspiration coming from the Spirit. As St. Paul says, 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2 Corinthians 3:17). The Holy Spirit fosters in the faithful a manner of acting characterised by sincerity and mutual trust (cf. Ephesians 4:25) and enables them 'to admonish one another' (Romans 15:14; cf. Colossians 1:16). Criticism is useful in the Community, which must always be reformed and must try to correct its own imperfections. In many cases it helps the Community to take a new step forward. But if it comes from the Holy Spirit, criticism must be animated by the desire to advance in truth and love. It cannot be given with bitterness; it cannot be expressed in insults, in acts or judgements which offend the honour of individuals or groups. It must be filled with respect and with fraternal and filial affection, and it should avoid recourse to inappropriate forms of publicity by always adhering to the directions given by the Lord about fraternal correction (cf. Matthew 18:15-16). If this is the profile of freedom of speech, we can say that there is no opposition between charism and institution, because it is the one Spirit who enlivens the Church with various charisms. The spiritual gifts also help in exercising the ministries. They are bestowed by the Spirit to help advance the Kingdom of God. In this sense we can say that the Church is a Community of charisms" (**L'Osservatore Romano, N.26, 1st July 1992**)

Needless to say, Saint Bridget of Sweden and Saint Catherine of Siena had their task set out for them by the charism they were given by God to instruct no less than the Vicar of Christ himself -- to return from Avignon to Rome. There was a clear need to reform the Church in particular ways. Saint Catherine was a particularly wonderful example of a Seer who had quite a following -- including priests. However, she too was a sign of contradiction and many of the clergy opposed her. Again His Holiness says:

**JOHN PAUL II:** "It appears from the history of the Church and particularly from the lives of the Saints that frequently the Holy Spirit inspires prophetic words meant to foster the development or the reform of the Christian Community life. Sometimes these words are addressed especially to those who wield authority, as in the case of St. Catherine of Siena, who intervened with the Pope to obtain his return from Avignon to Rome. There are many faithful and, above all, many Saints who have given Popes and other Pastors of the Church the light and strength necessary for fulfilling their mission, especially at difficult times for the Church" (**L'Osservatore Romano, N.26, 1st July 1992**)

In conclusion, I think you ought to retract your reference above if only because you are claiming to stand for truth and justice. You owe it to your own conscience that in this contentious matter -- already reserved to the competent authority, Bishop Wilson (and subsequently under appeal to a higher tribunal) -- that you suspend your negative comments until after the appeals process has run its course and a definitive canonical judgment is made by the competent authority. We are under no illusion about this investigation. God's Will cannot be thwarted..

For your information, we have our own website now. I have put most of the important documents on this website and a good summary of the major elements of the Mission and Messages of the Mother of God. You will now be able to get alot of information on the Little Pebble from this site. Particularly important for you is Message 512. It is a major defence of the Little Pebble providing much of the theological precision needed. If you want to correspond with me further, I leave it to you. I would be happy to dialogue with you on these things as long as it is edifying for both of us. At least you could get reliable information close to the source. I wish you well. May Jesus Bless you and Our Lady caress you tenderly to Her Immaculate Heart.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Malcolm L. Broussard, Jr.

cc.: **AD2000** cc.: Bishop Philip Wilson