

Mike Garde, Director of Dialogue Ireland

“The House of Prayer”: an Irish apocalyptic Marian group at the edge of Europe

Introduction:

We are here in Perpignan focussing on the issue of Apocalypticism as we reflect on developments at the tiny French village of Bugarach in the Pyrenees Mountains. Here at Pic de Bugarach we came close to those waiting for the end of the world — as supposedly (but not really) predicted by the ancient Mayan calendar. The group has gathered there waiting for the day, believing they will be taken aboard a star ship hidden inside the mountain.

There are different varieties of Apocalypticism depending on the theological or ideological construct of the group. I want to discuss Marian Apocalypticism, but before doing so we need to look at what Apocalypticism is?

Background:

Apocalypticism is the belief that there will be an apocalypse, a term which originally referred to a revelation of God’s will, but now usually refers to belief that the world will come to an end time very soon, even within one’s own lifetime. This belief is usually accompanied by the idea that civilization, as we know it, will soon come to a tumultuous end with some sort of catastrophic global event such as war. Apocalypticism is often conjoined with esoteric knowledge that will likely be revealed in a major confrontation between good and evil forces, destined to change the course of history. This esoteric knowledge is often mediated by a charismatic figure that uses this charisma to exercise undue influence over others. Charisma linked to Esotericism is a powerful cocktail which is difficult to penetrate. An apocalypse (Ancient Greek: ἀποκάλυψις apocálypsis, from ἀπό and καλύπτω meaning ‘un-covering’), translated literally from Greek refers to a revelation of something hidden. Today, it is commonly used in reference to any prophetic revelation or so-called End Time scenario, or to the end of the world in general.

Relating this general concept then to “The House of Prayer,” we note that according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, the era of public revelation ended with the death of the last living Apostle. A Marian apparition, if deemed genuine by Church authority, is treated as a **‘private revelation’** that may emphasize some facet of the received public revelation for a specific purpose, but it can never add anything new to the deposit of faith. The Church will confirm an apparition as worthy of belief, but the Catholic believer is not required to believe in these revelations.

So this private **revelation** is generally only a problem in Catholicism as once the door is opened people like Christina come rushing in and find the space for their cultist agenda. The Catholic theological position makes it a sitting duck for all manner of fraud to develop. Added to this is the proliferation of Marian Sites like Fatima, Lourdes and Knock here in Ireland which specialise in these **‘private revelations.’** Now these have received official recognition, but often commercial and business interests drive these new sites and the pressure for recognition increases. One thinks of Medjugorje which has mushroomed into a commercial hub. Here the bishops have opposed developments, but most of the visionaries are not even resident in the area and this raises the issue as to how the visions can be evaluated when they continue to be geographically spread. One of the conditions for evaluation is that they have

ended! Certainly Achill is totally dependent on the HoP for its financial survival. No one in the area will as a result speak out.

Irish Catholics are not completely clear about the role of Mary in salvation as often she seems to be added as a fourth member of the Trinity and is regarded as a co-mediator with Christ. Normally in Catholicism God is the only object of worship, but people commonly talk about praying to Mary or a saint, rather than having a devotion to them. A kind of Ancestor devotion is common as part of Folk Religion where people talk to dead relatives and in some cases pray to them. Mary appeals to those who view Jesus as a distant unapproachable Judge and Mary as the gentle mother who intercedes with her son. Christina twists this gentle mediatrix of grace into a judgemental enforcer mother superior who can be placated only by being under Christina and her side kick McGinnity. Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus/ “outside the church there is no salvation,” in this context is interpreted as if you are not in Christina’s ark called HoP you are going to drown.

Origins of House of Prayer

The rugged landscape of Ireland’s largest offshore island Achill is spectacular, and it is here where The House of Prayer is to be found. Gallagher, in her own words, was an “ordinary housewife” until the mid-1980s, when she says she had a vision of Our Lord. Since then, she claims to have regularly been receiving messages from heaven, the tone of which have become extremely threatening. She has also allied herself with Fr Gerard McGinnity, a priest who is highly controversial in his own right. Using donations from her increasingly large following, she built the ‘House of Prayer’ on Achill Island, followed by an empire of houses in the US and Mexico. The Achill Island property has become the site of regular, devoted pilgrimages.

Gallagher, who has no formal source of income, is living in a €4m mansion near Dublin with four houses in Co Mayo in the West of Ireland.



Compare and contrast:

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2011/08/05/let-us-draw-you-a-picture-of-the-house-of-prayer/>

The most recent was exposed in June. None of this takes into account the charity she established in the United States, called the 'Confraternity of Our Lady Queen of Peace', which has assets worth over \$800,000. The charity, which was set up after the House of Prayer in Ireland lost its charity status here, owns a number of houses across the United States. Over the last year there is also serious dissension over there and leaders have left her.

Not Theology but influence:

The evidence of such wealth has come as a sickening, shocking surprise to Christina Gallagher's followers, some of whom have donated their life savings to the House of Prayer because they were convinced the organisation was in dire need of cash. Also the publication of the book by Jim Gallagher entitled, *Immaculate Deception* in 2009 has totally transformed the understanding of the situation. Before that it was viewed in a kind of theological fog of argument and counter argument in regard to whether these visions were authentic. Jim has followed the money trail relentlessly and has shown that the use of Apocalypticism is merely a way of controlling her members. The role of tabloid journalism which is totally rejected by Eileen Barker, Emeritus professor at the LSE is here a servant of getting the truth out. Barker confuses the tabloid medium as using shock and exaggerated stories to sell newspapers with what is really happening namely following the evidential trail and not getting lost in the fog of 'New Religious Movements.' The relentless work of this journalist has been a great asset to Dialogue Ireland and we are both regarded as the great Satans' by Christina. Here vulnerable Adults generally of an older generation are groomed, and mentally disabled. They are told not to read the newspapers or go near the TV. Nor are they likely to go to the net where they can find the information to free the mind of its information disability.

In other words placing the problem within a Catholic authority context is a total waste of time. We are not dealing with theological issues but criminal abuse and a Marian scam. This story illustrated this,

After the House of Prayer lost its charity status in Ireland, some followers were invited to a secret meeting. "We all arrived on the bus, and by the time we got there, we were already very tired," said the person, who noted that the majority of people present were elderly. "Fr McGinnity started by saying a full rosary. Then he started reading these messages from Our Lady and from Jesus. "The messages were very threatening, saying that the House of Prayer needed money and that if we were financially able to help, then we had to do so, and if we didn't, we were facing eternal damnation in the next life. "A slip of paper was passed around and €1m was pledged. Fr McGinnity said this wasn't enough and he sent around the paper again until 2m had been pledged. At this particular meeting there were people openly talking about their financial affairs. There were two or three people who said they had money put aside for their old age, but Fr McGinnity told them to give the money anyway, that they would be looked after in the future. It was like mass hypnosis at that meeting."

The use of apocalyptic-type messages in pursuit of donations seems to have become a trademark of the House of Prayer. On 18 July 2006, Christina claimed to have received the following message from Jesus:

"If the House of Prayer in Texas is not free of debt in the ninth month of this year, it is to be dissolved. The greater part of that state will be levelled and torn to shreds."

The money was raised, the House was safe, and nothing happened to the innocent people of Texas. New scams like the Matrix medal, talk of building Nuclear bomb shelters, and having a particular painting they supply as essential to avoid hell fire are all part of the stock in trade of this Marian snake oil sales woman. She claims to have prophesied that the Twin Towers were going to be attacked. However, the FBI do not have a record of a call from her?

But while many people might dismiss such missives as delusional, and might even regard them with amusement, the danger of the House of Prayer lies in its evident credibility to its followers . . . most of whom are elderly and deeply devout. They mistakenly believe this is a more committed form of Catholicism and are determined to bypass their home parishes.

With McGinnity standing at her side, Christina Gallagher has the back-up of someone whom many devoted Catholics regard as one of Ireland's holiest priests. McGinnity gained hero status amongst traditional Catholics in 2005 when it emerged that he had been effectively banished by the Church 20 years previously for blowing the whistle on the sexual proclivities of Dr. Michael Ledwith, Vice President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland's premier Catholic Seminary. Many years later, Ledwith resigned from the college following more allegations of inappropriate contact with young men. The beleaguered McGinnity became a martyr overnight. He was cast out and was sidelined. He became a small fish in a big pond. The HoP enabled him to get his revenge. He became a big fish in a small pond. Unlike his adversary Michael Ledwith who joined Ramtha a New Age Group in Washington State.

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2009/07/03/house-of-prayer-rte-prime-time-may-2008/>

"He's Christina's full-back," said one former follower. "He's the reason I believed her. He's the reason I gave money. I would have thought of him as a very holy priest. He gives her all the credibility she needs."

McGinnity is Gallagher's only real link to the official Catholic Church, a fact that was strongly emphasised in a statement released by Archbishop Michael Neary in 2008.

"People regard Fr McGinnity as a very saintly priest, so when they see him, they think they're in safe hands,"

said one former follower. In that statement, Neary says that the House of Prayer has no church approval, and he encourages all church members not to hesitate to enquire at the diocesan office about...

"the standing of any work describing itself as Catholic, should they be in doubt."

Now this position was a good holding position 15 years ago, however we have a continuing problem. The HoP claim to be Catholic and the Archbishop does nothing in fact by his silence to challenge this position. This emboldens them and they flout him and make him look ineffectual. They are openly challenging him and saying we are True Catholics. The ball is now firmly in his court and he should demand that Cardinal Brady remove McGinnity from his Diocese. Then he should proceed to full excommunication of Christina. This failure of Church discipline encourages confusion and is an indirect endorsement of Christina Gallagher. Fr McGinnity on the other hand is from another Archdiocese, and the Cardinal is delinquent in that he has not disciplined his priest who by his presence lends the Cardinal's blessing at the door. So now the feeling on the street is that McGinnity must have something on him so nod, wink, even the Cardinal knows Christina is genuine. Will this be like his

response to child abuse in the '70's? He claims these issues were not understood then. He can't claim that Elder Abuse is not understood! No he has known and refused to act.

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2011/07/31/house-of-prayer-rte-prime-time-april-03-2008-now-on-youtube/>

It's not the first such statement that has been made by the Tuam Diocese, and yet the denouncement of the House of Prayer has yet to be made by any higher ranking Catholic representatives. Many former followers have questioned why Fr McGinnity has been permitted by his superior, Cardinal Sean Brady, to publicly advocate an organisation that is not supported by the church . . . an organisation, indeed, that clearly disseminates what can only be interpreted as heretical messages.

In fact Cardinal Brady faced with pastoral issue and threat to the integrity of the Catholic Church has promised much and delivered nothing. He has just refused to intervene consequently giving more oxygen to the HoP which is in Catholic terms a heretical sect totally at variance with Catholic teaching. In regard to Cultism it is a cultist mind bending Marian scam.

Here is an example of a person who wrote to him and there are likely now hundreds of others as well.

Dear Cardinal Brady,

I am writing as a concerned Catholic and a daughter of a very heavily abused woman as a result of the Achill House of Prayer. My Mother began attending the House of Prayer Achill 8 years ago, she attends every Saturday. She is highly influenced by Cristina Gallagher and Fr. Gerard McGinnity. She has taken out large loans in order to fund this relationship with the House of Prayer (HoP). Our family have tried to reason with her many times but she is unwilling to listen and suspicious of all family members. My mother was a wonderful woman, she worked as a xxxxxx for 45 years and won awards for her xxxxxx, professionalism and devotion to xxxxxx and was a well respected member of the community. She has been transformed, now she believes she has a message from God given to her through visions, she believes she must establish a 'House of Prayer', she believes if she makes eye contact with anyone including family and friends for longer than a second the devil will jump into her through her eyes, she fasts (no food) for six days a week and has lost half her body weight over 8 years, she is aged (Edit DI over **65**). She is highly under the influence of the Achill House of Prayer mind control; she has tried to make our family believe copious 'alleged' messages from the Virgin Mary and God from Christina Gallagher which were based on **frightening apocalyptic conspiracies**. She has bought many artefacts from the H of P shop. She attends mass up to six times a day and can say 100 rosaries per day, she watches the religious TV channel all night and she does not sleep. The difference between the Catholic Church and the House of Prayer is not clear to my mother and to the other H of P members that I know. This Marian cult has literally poisoned and destroyed the relationship with my mother and her close and extended family members, friends and acquaintances.) She no longer communicates with family and friends yet all are extremely concerned for her health and safety. Though she is the primary carer for a family member with a disability, she recently in an effort to obtain more money took his lifesavings from him which was hidden under his bed...

DI comment: Under the undue influence of this Non Catholic* Marian Scam a woman who is normally highly ethical has been reduced to a thief.

..He was extremely distressed and has left him with little security after she mortgaged our home. It is truly a mental torture for our family. Although I have asked for advice from religious specialists, general practitioners, psychiatrists, mental health professionals and the Gardai, our remit is limited until the larger organisation of the House of Prayer is disbanded. It is a clear that there is a lack of understanding of the abuse that is being perpetrated by the Achill House of Prayer on vulnerable adults within the Irish population. Often those who become members of the H of P are lonely having suffered severe tragedy and trauma in their lives and they turned to this spiritual organisation for help and guidance yet they are being abused in the most grotesque way without their knowledge. Although my mother appears to be acting on her own free will she is not, she is terrified by the threat of eternal damnation predicted by Christina Gallagher if she does not abide by the sanctions imposed by her and Fr. McGinnity.

I am writing to you as a member of your Church to insist that you to take some action, authority and leadership against Christina Gallagher and Fr. McGinnity and finally put a stop to this wicked crime against my mother and the elderly people of Ireland

http://www.nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk/publications/social_services/Safeguarding_Vulnerable_Adults.pdf

*(It does not in any way fulfil the conditions of being part of the Catholic Church)

In conclusion then we have found that Apocalypticism is the trigger for overwhelming the mind and disabling the radar so that the thoughts can be controlled. The future depends on the response of the Catholic Church. Will it act to assist this process of continued mind control or will it participate in the freeing of the mind which books and articles by people like Jim Gallagher can affect. The role of our Trust is to be there for those and their families as they, 'take up and read.....'



<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/category/house-of-prayer/>

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/tv3-irelands-secret-cults/>

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2011/08/05/let-us-draw-you-a-picture-of-the-house-of-prayer/>

We here are not looking at the group from a theological perspective but rather from that of influence. However the criteria brought forward here could form the basis for evaluating whether this is a cultist entity or a genuine spiritual movement.

<http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2009/09/10/sifting-the-wheat-from-the-ares-20-signs-of-trouble-in-a-nrms-peter-j-verre/>