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In Response to Inquiries Concerning the Lady of All Nations Apparitions

As Bishop of Haarlem/Amsterdam, I have been requested to make a statement regarding the authenticity of the apparitions of Mary as the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam during the years of 1945 -1959. Many members of the faithful and bishops have emphasized the urgency for clarification. I also have been personally aware that this development of devotion, which has spanned over 50 years, call for this.

As it is known, my predecessor, Msgr. H. Bomers and myself had previously given permission for public veneration in 1996. As to the supernatural character of the apparitions and contents of the messages, we did not give our judgment, but declared that "everyone is free to make a judgment for himself or herself according to their conscience." Having had a generally positive attitude towards authenticity, we decided to await further development and to "discern the spirit" further (cf. 1 *Thes* 5:19-21).

Over the period of six subsequent years, I observed that the devotion had taken its place in the spiritual life of millions all over the world, and that it possesses the support of many bishops. Many experiences of conversion and reconciliation, as well as healings and special protection also have been reported to me. In full recognition of the responsibility of the Holy See, it is primarily the task of the local bishop to speak out in conscience regarding the authenticity of private revelations that take place or have taken place within his diocese.

Therefore I have asked once again for the advice of theologians and psychologists concerning outcomes of previous investigations, and the questions and objections deriving from them. Their recommendations state that no theological or psychological impediments for a declaration of supernatural authenticity can be found therein. I have also requested the judgment of a number of brother bishops concerning the fruits and development of the devotion, who within their own dioceses have experienced a strong devotion of Mary as the Mother and Lady of All Nations. In light and virtue of all these recommendations, testimonies, and developments, and in pondering all this in prayer and theological reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the apparitions of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam consist of a supernatural origin.

Naturally, the influence of the human element still exists. Authentic images and visions are always transmitted to us, in the words of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, "through the filter of our senses, which carry out a work of translation..." and "...are influenced by the potentialities and limitations of the perceiving subject" (Cardinal Ratzinger, *Theological Commentary In Preparation for the Release of the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 28, 2000).

Unlike Holy Scripture, private revelations are never binding upon the conscience of the faithful. They are a help in understanding the signs of the times and to help live more fully the Gospel (cf. *Lk* 12:56, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 67). And the signs of our times are dramatic. The devotion to the Lady of All Nations can help us, in my sincere conviction, in guiding us on the right path during the present serious drama of our times, the path to a new and special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Who alone can heal the great wounds of our times.

To follow the further development of this devotion and to come to an even deeper insight into its meaning, I have installed a commission whose task it will be to continue to document all initiatives, experiences, and testimonies stemming from the devotion in order to help insure and preserve a correct ecclesial and theological progress of devotion.

I hope this has provided sufficient information and clarification.