

KOREA — ARCHBISHOP SAYS 'THE MIRACLES' AND MESSAGES OF NAJU ARE NOT FROM GOD

KWANGJU, Korea (UCAN) -- Archbishop Victorinus Youn Kong-hi of Kwangju has declared that so-called "miracles" attributed to the Blessed Mother in Naju city have produced no evidence that "they are supernatural and thus from God."

In his declaration Jan. 1, the Feast of Mary the Mother of God, Archbishop Youn also warned that to consider the alleged events in Naju as supernatural is regarded as "an act of breaking the unity of the faith of the Church."

It said that as the "authentic teacher of the faith and legitimate shepherd," he wished to give priests, Religious and laity in the archdiocese "an authoritative interpretation" regarding the phenomena and messages which reportedly have happened to Julia Youn Hon-san of Naju and her statue of Mary.

The 50-year-old Youn, a mother of four, claimed that many "miracles" have happened in her home in Naju, 25 kilometers south of Kwangju, since June 30, 1985, when Mary's statue shed tears and later gave her "private revelations."

The archbishop said the phenomena, such as Mary's statue shedding tears and fragrant oil, Youn's levitation and vision, showed no evidence that they were supernatural. Instead, the archbishop suggested, "Perhaps they can be said to show some preternatural power."

The so-called "Messages of Our Lady of Naju" that Youn claimed to have come from Mary, the archbishop said, show "several human and artificial elements."

Parts of the contents were copied, plagiarized or cited from other books, while other parts show discrepancies between Youn's handwritten private diaries and the published materials, the Kwangju archbishop said.

He concluded that the messages lack authenticity and credibility and bear no conclusive evidence that they are "private revelations."

Concerning the alleged miracle of the Eucharist falling down from heaven, Archbishop Youn explained that it is "contradictory to the doctrine of the Catholic Church that says only through a legitimately ordained priest's consecration does the Sacrament of the Eucharist begin to exist."

He also denounced Youn's claim of the Eucharist turning into a piece of flesh when she received Communion as against the Church's teaching that while bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, their species remain.

Based on the investigation results, Archbishop Youn said that publication or dissemination of materials on the Naju events is "officially forbidden," and he called on Catholics to refrain from reading the materials.

He also asked Youn to discontinue the memorial service that is held on the anniversary of the alleged first weeping of Mary's statue, and to no longer spread her personal experiences and the so-called messages of Mary.

Prayer meetings held in Youn's hall that enshrines Mary's statue are forbidden, the archbishop said, while asking the people helping Youn as volunteers to return home and exercise "authentic devotion" to Mary.

He also reminded clergy that the previous prohibition of saying Mass, celebrating liturgy and the Sacraments at any private places related to Youn is still valid.

"Except for the parish priest who has jurisdiction, other priests who have been acting as supporters should now refrain from playing any further role" in the affairs of Naju, said the archbishop's declaration.

The archbishop's directive was read in all parishes of the archdiocese on Jan. 1 and also sent to religious institutes throughout South Korea and to related groups abroad.

On Jan. 8, Brother Raphael Song Sung-hwan, a member of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual and an interpreter for Youn, told UCA News that although Youn will obey the archbishop's directive she will appeal to the Church.

However, the 33-year-old Brother Song said many did not agree with the judgment and theological interpretation of Archbishop Youn in his directive.

He also said that following the directive, some theologians from abroad had sent fax messages expressing their support for Youn and the "miracles."