

## **Singapore Catholic authority warns of fake prophets and preachers**

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The local Catholic authority, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore, has warned its devotees of fake prophets and preachers.

In the latest issue of CatholicNews, the authority's official newspaper, the Chancery, an arm of the Archbishop's offices, contributed an article highlighting two women who claim to have received divine messages.

They are a self-proclaimed Irish seer called Mary Carberry or "Maria Divine Mercy", and another self-proclaimed prophet named Ms Fabienne Guerrero, who is believed to be French.

According to the Chancery, Ms Carberry has claimed for years to have received messages from Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. She has a significant international following, including one in Singapore.

Her "ministry", however, has been rejected by the Dublin archdiocesan authorities and other European, American and Australian dioceses, said the Chancery.

Meanwhile, Ms Guerrero, who came to Singapore last November and gave unauthorised private lectures, said she was sent to warn people that they were "destined for hell if they continued practices like having their mortal remains cremated".

Those who attended her talks "reported hearing a troubling mix of her story of reconversion to the Catholic faith after years of self-inflicted abuse, and her explicitly mentioned 'divine revelations' that she was a prophet".

Ms Guerrero had also originally intended to speak at public venues like Toa Payoh's Church of the Risen Christ, but the Catholic Church here stopped it.

It is not clear if Ms Guerrero has left Singapore.

Her local supporters are believed to be followers of "Maria Divine Mercy", and some of them have distributed "unusual devotional objects" such as Marian medals, Benedictine crucifixes and small prayer cards.

The Chancery said these unapproved activists "often present un-Catholic messages alongside more orthodox elements", thereby passing off as authentic.

"Rather like Mary Carberry, Guerrero strenuously avoided Singapore's Catholic authorities," the article read.

"She and the local Catholics who organised her talks repeatedly ignored archdiocesan Chancery regulations for foreign speakers to first obtain permission to conduct ministry here."

The Chancery added that such regulations exist to protect local Catholics from possible confusion as well as "theological, doctrinal, spiritual and moral harm" by unapproved activists.

The Chancery had previously put up a notice on its website in November cautioning against Ms Guerrero, "Maria Divine Mercy" and unapproved fund-raising by foreign priests.

A spokesman for the Catholic Archdiocesan Communications Office said that as "Carberry and Guerrero's claims are not in line with the Church's official teachings and theology, it is necessary for Church authorities to help local Catholics distinguish and know the difference between authentic teaching and those that are false".

Dr Mathew Mathews, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies who studies social cohesion in Singapore, said there will always be preachers with ideas that go against the mainstream.

"The reasons can range from personal interests in developing a base of followers to just having a different conviction.

"Sects and movements that are not orthodox arise routinely, and some become more acceptable over time," he said.

But Dr Mathews added that religious bodies have the right to warn its members that some teachings are not in line with their beliefs.

"Some teachings which are propagated may cause substantial friction, for instance preachers who might call their audience to uncivil behaviour or even violence. In those cases, it is very important that religious groups and governments address such teaching."