

MEDJUGORJE NEWS

New Zealand

Issue n°42– September 2006

FREE

Facts about Medjugorje

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Under no circumstances is any form of money, fee, or charge of any kind to be applied to this newsletter.

However **the Editor relies entirely on Divine Providence for the expense of producing it and any donation will be gratefully accepted.** As we are registered as a "legal charity with a donee status" (under the name of *MEDJUGORJE NEWS TRUST*) any donation of over \$5.00 can be claimed for income tax deduction purposes. **If a receipt is required immediately, a stamped self addressed envelope would be appreciated.** Otherwise it will be sent with the following issue of *MEDJUGORJE NEWS*.

(Please make all cheques payable to *MEDJUGORJE NEWS*.)

The Editor would gladly welcome any contributions from readers, especially those directly or indirectly connected with Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje.

If you wish to receive this newsletter directly, please send your name and full postal address, (PRINTED, please) and you will be included in our list of subscribers.

ANY ISSUE RETURNED BY NZ POST AS "UNKNOWN AT THIS ADDRESS" WILL AUTOMATICALLY RESULT IN THE ADDRESSEE BEING DELETED FROM OUR MAILING LIST. So, *please advise us of any change of address.*

Kindly, please check also that we have your correct name and address and let us know if either needs to be amended.

As its name implies, the aim of this newsletter is essentially **the spreading of the messages received by the visionaries** in Medjugorje, according to the wishes of Our Lady.

Please Note

The official position of the Catholic Church remains as set down by Pope Paul VI in 1966, i.e. **"in matters of private revelation, the faithful are free to promote and propagate the messages without any reference to Church authority:**

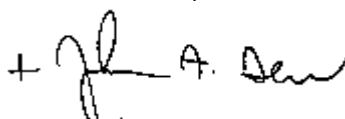
- 1- **Provided that in doing so they willingly submit themselves to the ultimate official pronouncement of Holy Mother Church on the matter.**
- 2- **Provided that the content of the messages does not constitute a danger to faith and morals."**



Dear Paul

Thank you for approaching me at the Wellington Eucharistic Convention, asking for permission to distribute copies of "Medjugorje News" in the Archdiocese of Wellington. As with my predecessor, Cardinal Thomas Williams, I too have no objection to your distributing copies of "Medjugorje News" in the Archdiocese of Wellington

Yours sincerely in the Lord

+ 

+ John A Dew
Archbishop of Wellington



The Medjugorje Story

On the evening of 24 June 1981, in the parish of St James in Medjugorje, six young people claimed to have seen the Blessed Virgin Mary on Podbrdo Hill. The next day four of the six alleged another meeting with Our Lady, and said they spoke with her. On this occasion, the four teenagers (three girls and a boy) were joined by another young boy and a teenage girl. These six became the definitive visionaries in Medjugorje; they are Ivanka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Vicka Ivankovic, Ivan Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic and Jacov Colo.

Since 1981, these six young people have been the centre of world attention, and medical and scientific studies. Their principal claim is that practically every day to the present time, our Blessed Lady has been appearing to one or more of them, and that from her they have received thousands of messages for the parish of Medjugorje and the world. All six still claim apparitions, though only three of them now on a daily basis, and each of the six says that he or she has received, or is in the process of receiving, ten secrets. The first of the secrets is to be revealed to the world through Mirjana Dragicevic, and the third is said to be concerned with a permanent sign that will authenticate the apparitions and be a help to conversion, and will be evident to all at Medjugorje. The visionaries say that Our Lady identifies herself to them as the Queen of Peace.

As a result of these claims, more than forty million people have visited Medjugorje from all over the world and there have been many assertions regarding remarkable signs and wonders, cures and spiritual healing. There is no doubt at all that those millions of people have found a pilgrimage to Medjugorje one of the most spiritually significant experiences of their lives.

THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE

The Blessed Virgin Mary proposes a six-point programme:

1. Faith - Belief in God and in the supernatural. It is your true vision. Therefore live by it.
2. Commitment to God - Let Him direct your life. Begin by turning away from sin in true conversion and repentance.
3. Prayer - Regular Mass, monthly confession, daily rosary and dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
4. Fasting - Bread and water on Fridays (and Wednesdays) if you can. If not, at least cut back or practise some other form of self denial.
5. Peace - In your own heart, in your family and neighbourhood and workplace, in all your human relations and reaching out to the war-stricken world.
6. The Holy Bible - We should read part of the Holy Scripture every day.

The Messages of Mary are addressed not only to Catholics but to the whole human race, regardless of beliefs or religion.

Email Your Petitions to Medjugorje!

All petitions will be presented to Our Lady by Vicka or Ivan during one of their apparitions. Your petitions will not be read by anyone. They are completely confidential. Only Our Lady will know their content. Please do not include any questions when sending petitions, since we do not read them.

Email Your Petition To:

molitvene.nakane@medjugorje.hr or to:
medjugorje-mir@medjugorje.hr

Post Your Petition to Medjugorje!

Put your written petition in a sealed envelope, enclose it in another, stamped, and addressed to:

Medjugorje Sentinel,
PO Box 746,
Pennant Hills, NSW 2120, Australia.

Petitions are posted from there twice a month to Medjugorje where they are handed to one of the visionaries who presents them to Our Lady during an apparition.

Afterwards petitions are burned at the site.

News from Medjugorje can be found at the official website:

<http://www.medjugorje.hr/>

We acknowledge and accept that the authority regarding the authenticity of apparitions, locutions and related messages as well as all private revelations from **Our Lord, Our Lady or any Saint rests with the Holy See of Rome whose final judgement we will respect and obey.**

We also affirm our total allegiance to our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, our Priests and Bishops and our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI.

However, this being said, the universality of Our Lady's messages means that many people from other denominations or other faiths are coming to Medjugorje in great numbers and are themselves witnesses to the Medjugorje phenomenon.

Furthermore the many conversions and miracles which happen in this wonderful and holy place cannot be ignored.





Our Lady's Messages



25 April 2006

"Dear children!

Also today I call you to have more trust in me and my Son.

He has conquered by His death and resurrection and, through me, calls you to be a part of His joy. You do not see God, little children, but if you pray you will feel His nearness.

I am with you and intercede before God for each of you.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 May 2006

"Dear children!

Also today I call you to put into practice and to live my messages that I am giving you.

Decide for holiness, little children, and think of heaven. Only in this way, will you have peace in your heart that no one will be able to destroy. Peace is a gift, which God gives you in prayer.

Little children, seek and work with all your strength for peace to win in your hearts and in the world.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 June 2006

"Dear children!

With great joy in my heart I thank you for all the prayers that, in these days, you offered for my intentions.

Know, little children, that you will not regret it, neither you nor your children. God will reward you with great graces and you will earn eternal life.

I am near you and thank all those who, through these years, have accepted my messages, have poured them into their life and decided for holiness and peace.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 July 2006

"Dear children!

At this time, do not only think of rest for your body but, little children, seek time also for the soul. In silence may the Holy Spirit speak to you and permit Him to convert and change you.

I am with you and before God I intercede for each of you.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 August 2006

"Dear children!

Also today I call you to pray, pray, pray. Only in prayer will you be near to me and my Son and you will see how short this life is. In your heart a desire for Heaven will be born. Joy will begin to rule in your heart and prayer will begin to flow like a river.

In your words there will only be thanksgiving to God for having created you and the desire for holiness will become a reality for you.

Thank you for having responded to my call."



From the Editor

Medjugorje 25th Anniversary

It is 25 years ago on June 25 that Our Lady appeared to the six visionaries for the first time. For this occasion, we publish in this issue a photo taken on the day of the anniversary. Several hundred thousand pilgrims were there!

Apology

You may have noticed that this issue is later than usual. I have been ill for nearly a month and I could not find the energy to do anything but rest and sleep! That may explain why this edition may not be up to the usual standard.

Changes to the Post Code System

Thank you to all those who have advised us of their new postal code. We have taken note of them. However we will still be using the old post codes for maybe the next two or three issues, as the change over is not compulsory yet. To save on the mailing costs, all the NZ mail must be sorted out per post code, and the two systems cannot be mixed.

To enable us to go on to the new system, we will have to amend every one of our addresses. This will take quite a lot of work as we have over two thousand NZ addresses! And for each address, we have to check every street (and, in some cases numbers in those street) to get the exact code!



In the meantime we will accept with gratitude your new code.

Petitions to Our Lady

Please **DO NOT SEND YOUR PETITIONS to Medjugorje News**. Look at page 3 and you will find an address and an e-mail address where they can be sent.

Pilgrimages from Holland

A Dutch reader sent us the following message which may be useful for those who want to go to Medjugorje when in Holland: "My brother gave me an address of someone who organises bus trips to Medjugorje: Fam A.N. Mol, Gemenebos 19, 1861 HE Bergen NH, Holland – Tel 072 581 2873"

About 'Medjugorje News'

Our last issue was printed at 4,550 copies.

Testimonies

Please consider writing of your own pilgrimage experiences. These are probably our most popular articles.

Article about Medjugorje in NZ Catholic

The "NZ Catholic", in its issue n°244 published an article titled "Visionaries asked to end their claim". I am printing below my letter to them as I feel this article was biased and full of inaccuracies.

You will also find in this issue an article about Garabandal. It will explain the Church's position regarding reported apparitions.

Paul Farge

Open Letter to "NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC"

Re your article "VISIONARIES ASKED TO END THEIR CLAIMS" (in your issue n°244)

Dear Sir,

I feel it is my duty, both as a faithful reader of your publication as well as editor of the magazine "MEDJUGORJE NEWS" (distributed to and read in NZ and overseas by thousands of readers) to vent my concern about the above-mentioned article.

Is it fair and accurate reporting? Have you checked the accuracy of its source? What do you think the average reader, reading only the main title will think? I certainly know the answer to this last question: *Medjugorje has been condemned by the Church!*

Over the past few months I have received several messages supposed to have been issued by the present bishop of Mostar (but which are, in fact, from one of his supporters). They are so biased, so full of half truth if not outright lies that I have had to ask this person to stop sending them to me. I can only guess that your article is from the same source.

During the last world war, the Nazis were masters at claiming that a lie told often enough could be believed as truth.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been gathering a lot of documents which, when you receive them, will, I hope, allow you to form a more balanced opinion of the whole affair.

FACTS:

- The Church has never officially endorsed any earthly apparition to individuals since the beginning of the Church in Rome as being articles of faith and, I am sure, never will, even though miracles happen all the time in La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, and many other places of worship or through the intercession of many holy people, like St Pio, St Margaret Mary Alacoque etc.

- Many of these places or people have, at some stage or another, suffered from the reluctance or even the downright opposition of the local clergy and bishop (La Salette, Lourdes, St Pio...etc), so Medjugorje is not an exception.

- Some recent ones, however have received the blessing of local ecclesiastic authorities (Kibeho, in Rwanda, for example).

- In the case of Medjugorje, however there is another factor, a human one: the jealousy of the local bishop against the Franciscans of his diocese, which brings the whole affair to a sad and, I dare say, sordid aspect.

- Not long after the beginning of the reported apparitions in Medjugorje, a renowned French theologian, Abbé Laurentin (an expert in these matters), with the help of a scientist, Professeur Joyeux, conducted a series of tests and

experiments on the six visionaries. (It is after reading in a book the positive results of these tests that I personally became convinced of the authenticity of these apparitions). You may be interested to know that similar tests have recently been undertaken again and with the same conclusions.

- Miracles happen every day in Medjugorje: I personally know two people miraculously and instantaneously cured there. Hundreds more are reported every year! Also small miracles happen all the times: what decided me to go there in 1994 was that the chain of my rosary beads turned unexpectedly to gold colour; and this I have witnessed dozens of times on other people's rosary chains. Why would God or Our Lady give some of us these precious signs unless to draw us there?

- When I was there for the first time, in May and June 1994, the war was raging in that area. Guns could be heard, warplanes were flying over, but Medjugorje was a haven of peace. But, some 30 km away, Mostar was ravaged and I saw the Bishop's palace left a burnt out shell, the brand new cathedral badly damaged and the Franciscan church (which had been used for many years as the cathedral) totally destroyed. When I went there again in 2004 many buildings in Mostar were still in ruins.

- But most of all, one must ponder: if Medjugorje is a rotten tree, how can it produce so many good fruits? One has only to go there to see why it has been called the "confessional of the world". An American bishop once said: "If it was not for Medjugorje, I'd have to close my seminary!"

These facts, haphazardly jotted down, contradict most evidently the claims by the bishop of Mostar. And it is no wonder that, faced with such blatant hostility, at the Vatican, in May 1986, Cardinal Ratzinger dissolved the local bishop's commission and ordered the (then) Yugoslav Bishops Conference to set up a new one. He gave no reasons for this action, unprecedented in the history of the Vatican, which has always left such investigations to the local bishop. In October, Cardinal Kuharic of Zagreb and Archbishop Franic of Split sent a joint letter to all the bishops, asking for nominees from each diocese.

Thus, the matter is now in the hands of a national commission -- albeit different from the one formed immediately after Cardinal Ratzinger stripped the Mostar diocese of its authority over the matter.

I enclose some documents which should enable you to write a more balanced article. I feel you owe it to your readers, and this article should have at least the same place and the same emphasis as your early one.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Farge

Note: Since the publication of the article in NZ Catholic, some clergy are reluctant and even object to the distribution of Medjugorje News in their parishes!

If you cannot get it from your church, I'd advise readers who usually obtain our magazine that way, to write to us to put their names on our mailing list.

Readers' Letters

From South Africa Thank you again for your Medjugorje News. When I saw it in my mail box, I felt as if Christmas, New Year, Easter and my birthday had arrived all in one day!! After having had to leave my beloved Zimbabwe, we moved to South Africa. In Zimbabwe we had so many Prayer Groups, Rosary Groups & everyone got to hear about Medjugorje and Our Blessed Mother's messages. Here, in South Africa, no Prayer Group that I can find! I started a Rosary Group and only three turned up and it wasn't long before I was left on my own in the church praying the Rosary!

(If anyone in or near Merivale 3291,KZ Natal, could help, please contact the editor who will pass on the info).

From USA: Thank you for The Medjugorje News which I do enjoy so much. It is far superior to others I have read...

From NZ: I have just read the June issue – quite by chance! It came at a low time in my life. I feel refreshed and a re-connection to my faith.

From a teacher in Labasa, Fiji: ...I found this 2000 issue n°20 in my file. Our Lady must have really wanted me to find this issue and to photocopy for students...

From Tauranga: For a long time I've wanted to send you a note to say how much I've found your newsletter to be so supportive in my faith. When I get your paper I read it from cover to cover and I wish our priests would refer to the many inspirational articles to their parishioners during their homilies. Maybe I should write to our Bishop and suggest that to him.

I do struggle to try and say the rosary on a daily basis, it is my problem and I need to organise my day a little better for it.

From a Wellington priest: This is a most inspiring magazine! Please keep up the great work in spreading Faith, Hope and Light to all who get the chance to read it. THANK YOU!!

From K...: I read M.News without fail during my lunch time at work and feel very intensely drawn towards all the articles based on people's experiences of miracles in their lives and get very inspired by them. It makes one's faith stronger by the day.

Excerpts from Children of Medjugorje

From Denis & Cathy Nolan and Sister Emmanuel - <http://www.childrenofmedjugorje.com/>

15 June 2006

Fr Don Calloway in Medjugorje

Many know about the wonderful conversion of Don Calloway from delinquency to priesthood. He is now posted in Steubenville, as the vocations director for his community, Marians of the Immaculate Conception. At the beginning of June, Fr. Don was visiting Medjugorje. He answered a few of my questions:

Sr Em: When you go on mission, how do you find the people of God today?

Fr Don: Everywhere I see that the family is very much under attack and many people are indifferent to the Faith. I can't even imagine what is happening in the heart of Our Lady, seeing the young generation growing up knowing almost nothing about the faith.

In my travelling and speaking, I assume that nobody knows anything about the faith. I start from the basics, lay the foundation and then build on that. So many of them are not getting this from their parish. Some of the convents I have been to are so New Age, feminist, ecological, more concerned with trees or whatever. It is unbelievable. I got kicked out of a Catholic high school in the Caribbean because they were promoting contraception and I was preaching against it.

I think that in many ways the people who need the message of Medjugorje the most are the priests, because often the way that they are preaching is not communicating the solid stuff. The people are just like sheep without a shepherd. They don't know where to go so they are going to anyone who is calling out to them. It is bad in the parishes, in the schools, the Catholic universities, in the diocese, in the chancelleries, etc. The smoke of Satan has crept in to so many areas.

SE: Do you mean that Our Lady failed in Medjugorje? After 25 years we should see the world be converted and be reconciled. Such was the plan she expressed from the very beginning. Has this plan failed?

FD: I think we have failed her; we have ignored her requests. She is saying 'I need your prayers, I need your sacrifices.' Fasting is an example. Yes, it is difficult, but it seems that we reject this part of the message. Then we have wars and all kinds of problems in the family, the diocese, convents, parishes, and still nobody is fasting, or so few. I think that the influence of the world is so strong that the sacrificial element of living the Gospel is too difficult for most people. We want instant. Everything has to be now.

I think we are failing Our Lady in a certain sense. I think that we are trying to come up with our own ways to make things better, but they are human ways. They are not ways of sacrifice. The Mother of the Prophets is ignored. The world hates prophets and tries to silence them. You can almost see Our Lady, the Mother of Prophets, crying. It is the same for the priests. When the priests want to preach the Gospel powerfully, almost immediately they are taken away from their parish and put out in the country where they have a parish of ten people. The persecution is great. The evil is strong. I think that Jesus and Mary are looking for victim

souls. They want victim souls, people who continue the sacrifice of Christ for the world. There are so few people who offer themselves for this.

SE: Have you found places which give you hope for the future?

FD: Actually yes, within the belly of the beast so to speak. In the United States there is a new generation of priests coming! They are zealous, they are on fire, and many of them have had some kind of conversion experience. Most of them have struggled with something, but through John Paul II, through a World Youth Day, through a Marian apparition, they come back to the faith and live an intimate relationship with Jesus and Mary. Now the seminaries in the US are being filled up with these zealous men. There is a whole new generation coming in, what I call the John Paul II Generation. They were formed by that holy man and now they are going to be the ones who are taking the lead. I think Our Lady is secretly forming this army that the world can't see, and if the world could see it they would hate it. At some point, they are going to be the ones to lead the charge for the battle.

SE: Father, your community is very involved in the Divine Mercy as revealed to Sr. Faustina. Can you explain how Medjugorje is connected with Divine Mercy?

FD: Divine Mercy and the events of Medjugorje both really came upon the scene about the same time. You can think about Faustina whose work began in the 30s but was banned for many years. Only with the Pontificate of John Paul II did it become approved, and then it started strong and went everywhere. In the same way, at the beginning of the Pontificate of JP II, Medjugorje starts.

These realities are, in my opinion, the two crucial elements of the New Evangelisation. You have to tell the people things that will shake them up. This takes a revelation, something out of the ordinary. Medjugorje and the Divine Mercy is the 'one-two punch' for the spiritual life today! That is basically what I tell people: The Rosary and the Chaplet of Mercy. God is offering us these things from heaven.

SE: The merciful Christ speaks of a time of mercy and the Queen of Peace speaks of a time of grace. These two words, mercy and grace, have the same root in Croatian!

FD: The Holy Spirit is definitely doing something through the New Evangelisation. The whole world is ready to be re-evangelised. When you want to make something grow in the field, you put manure on it. Within the last fifty years that is what has happened in the Church: it has been stinky, it has been a mess. But when the new springtime comes it will be beautiful!

SE: Our Lady is gathering a people willing to be dedicated to her, just like the Lord, Who changed the world with twelve men. This He can do again! Fruitfulness does not depend upon numbers but on holiness. Then there is hope.

FD: Exactly! As the vocations director for our community (MIC), I see that we are getting good vocations. They are part of the new generation. They want orthodoxy, they want faithfulness, and they are open to Medjugorje, because they have seen the fruit. God is at work, we just have to

wait and trust.

All the gifts are at hand

It is true that today's world is seeking peace but does not know where to find peace! Now, having Divine Peace, the Shalom, means to be complete, to be filled. Is there anything that we are missing?

Well, let me share here some luminous words that Jesus gave to Marthe Robin, the French mystic who lived the Passion for 50 years, until her death in 1981. Jesus revealed to her that for each year, each nation, each soul in this world, He had placed in the huge garden of the Church a complete treasury of His infinite merits, in order to meet all needs. Through these gifts, we have everything necessary to take care of all issues, to attend to all miseries, to satisfy all souls, and to provide for all atonement. If things are dark, it is because we neglect the given graces, we refuse them, we sometimes even look down on them, and reject them. Then we find ourselves as if the graces had never been given.

Marthe was emphasising that these graces are given in overabundance. Remember the Wedding at Cana where, after the miracle of Jesus, the quantity of good wine far exceeded the needs! There is such an overabundance of these graces that, if we accepted them, there would be enough to raise up all peoples, to sanctify all men even those who have fallen the lowest, and to free all souls from Purgatory.

Seeing the gifts of God offered in vain, Marthe could also see the serious responsibility of the Church Militant with its carelessness and numerous betrayals. Jesus made her understand that this is why He has allowed the enemies of the Church to oppress her. (This is like what happened to the people of Israel when they were not faithful to the true God!) Marthe offered herself to make atonement; she prayed day and night, and joined her sufferings to those of Christ.

Our Mother's comings to Medjugorje constitute a great part of the gifts offered by God to our generation. I can't help asking two questions:

-What would the world be like today if we had accepted and lived the messages?!

-What will the world be like if, on this very day, each one of us decides to begin or resume walking on the way to holiness, guided by the hand of Mary?

Mirjana tells us

On June 2, the visionary Mirjana Soldo received her monthly apparition at the Cenacle. She said that the Gospa did not give any classic message. She blessed all the people present and our religious articles. Her face was serious when she emphasised again the importance of the priest's blessing:

"Remember, children of mine, that it is my Son blessing you. Do not accept it so lightly."

Mirjana added that the Gospa talked to her about things that are to happen and also said to her :

"There is no way without my Son. Do not think that you will have peace and joy if you do not have Him in the first place."

Mirjana stated, "I can't say that the Gospa was sad or joyful. She was preoccupied, her face showed loving care."

15 July 2006

On July 2nd, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Cenacolo, in the presence of a huge crowd. At the end of the apparition, Mirjana shared with those present this message:

Dear children,

God created you with free will to comprehend and to choose: Life or Death. I as a mother and, with motherly love I desire to help you to comprehend and to choose life.

My children do not deceive yourselves with false peace and false joy. Permit me, my children, to show you the true way, the way that leads to life – my Son. Thank you!

To choose life and not death is the invitation that Our Lady is offering us in these troubled days. In our culture, we see blatant invitations to death everywhere, and to resist them, one must have a solid prayer life and an awareness that we are on a battle-field. Victory will be ensured by God's mercy; He will have the last word!

In the midst of the darkness of the "culture of death" there are marvellous lights shining, which are given by God, and which announce of the New Pentecost of Love.

One of our good friends from Ireland, Bernadette Goulding, of "Rachel's Vineyard", lived through the darkness resulting from her abortion and now supports other women who experienced abortion. In her

ministry, death and life are dramatically manifesting themselves. Here she shares some thoughts about these issues.

"I will always regret that I chose Death and not Life for my child. I deceived myself with a false peace and a false joy.

Every abortion is a death in a family. After death you need to grieve, but with abortion you are not allowed to grieve. With abortion there is no body, no funeral, no graveside, no focus for the grief, so the grieving goes on and on.

During Rachel's Vineyard weekends, many women realise for the first time that they are mothers. They realise they are not grieving over a bunch of cells, that they are grieving over the loss of their children. They come to understand that Jesus is the only True Way, that any other way is false.

There is a wound in your soul that only the Divine Physician can heal. We speak our pain to the Merciful Jesus, who offers the gift of His forgiveness. We have rejected His gift of Life, and now He offers us His gift of Mercy and forgiveness.

One of the passages of Scripture that is good to read is John 4, the woman at the well. Jesus knows all about her, and yet this woman with a past carries his message of Life and of Living water to her people.

God can use our sins to make better people out of us. He has used my abortion to bring the message of hope and healing to so many women. He can make miracles out of our mistakes."

Father Robert Thorn, back in Medjugorje!

Father Robert Thorn (former teacher of Transcendental Meditation) offers us a first hand witness about false peace:

"I had a close friend who was so calm and at peace all the time and I asked him how he did it. And he said, 'Well, I do Transcendental Meditation.' I got a little information from him, and decided I wanted to try it. From the moment I started it I felt so much peace flowing into my body. I really felt an incredible amount of peace. It got me away from drugs, because the TM program didn't allow it. Eventually, I became a teacher of TM.

Because of the encouragement of my brother, I came to visit Medjugorje but only as a tourist, out of curiosity.

One night, up on Apparition Hill, I was kneeling at the foot of the cross doing my Transcendental Meditation and some other pilgrims were praying next to me. One of them began to pray in tongues, and as soon as he started I had this uncomfortable feeling in my gut. I felt like I had to say something. All of a sudden I began to speak in tongues and he and I began to converse in tongues! This shows that the evil one can also speak in tongues!

After my experience in Medjugorje, I continued my work and travels, but began reading the Bible and praying the rosary. I was still doing TM and was experiencing uncontrollable attraction for different women. I was living in sin.

I returned to Medjugorje (en route to rendezvous with a Turkish woman for a romantic getaway in Istanbul). After a few days, I cancelled the rest of my plans and remained in Medjugorje. I had an experience one evening at the healing service in the church, right after mass. I was kneeling down, imagining the blood of Christ just flowing over me. I had my eyes closed, and all of a sudden I saw this ugly black creature, kind of a cross between a lobster crab and a beetle, going across my mind's eye. I said instinctively, That is an evil spirit. I need to get rid of it.'

When a priest heard this in my confession, he said "Ah that is interesting. Tell me, have you been fasting?" I said, "Yes," and the priest replied, "Good, because *the power of the Holy Spirit is greater when you have been fasting.*"

This priest was an exorcist and so, through a long intense night of prayer, we renounced and bound, in the name of Jesus Christ, the spirits that were in me. I felt incredible pain in my gut. It would start coming out my throat as burps, one time I actually saw a jet of steam come right out of my mouth! I was flat on my hands and knees on the floor and the priest was sprinkling me with Holy Water, he placed the crucifix against my gut and the pain was incredible.

At one point during this night, when the priest demanded, "In the name of Jesus Christ, who are you?" I found myself reciting my mantra from TM. Now it is forbidden to say your mantra out loud because it weakens its power to take you "within", so it surprised me that I would be saying it. I later asked the priest if there was anything wrong with TM, and I explained that what I had recited was my TM mantra. He said, "Well, it responded to the power and authority of Jesus Christ!" Later, both he and I found out the meaning of this mantra, and it was the demon of lust.

At another point during the process, the name of one of the demons was that of a master in TM!

After this, I stopped doing TM "cold turkey" and started coming frequently to Medjugorje, spending time on Krizevac and praying for discernment. I started a novena and on the third night, while attending mass, I clearly heard, during the offertory prayer "I want you to be a priest."

I was shocked. I didn't know what to do. I walked out of the church, in a daze, to the restaurant I always went to. I was praying to Mary. I said, "Mary if this is really what you want of me, you have to help me with my desire to get married and have children." She said in response, "I'll give you more children than you could ever imagine."

Sr. Em: How do you explain the kind of "peace" you had when you started TM?

"Now, I recognise it as a false peace. In going back and looking at all the teachings of TM, all of a sudden it was all just as clear as day to me that what they are talking about are demons! In TM you will feel that you have all you want fulfilled, because you go into this field and the demons provide for all your needs. And of course the demons are going to provide for your needs because every time you meditate, you are caressing them and stroking them and they want you to come back! This peace that you feel through TM is a false peace, centred on yourself. You are just caressing your own EGO and then you feel good. You don't realise that you are becoming "Jesus resistant" so to speak! But true peace flows from God to you when you turn to Him. TM instead is total self gratification."

15 July 2006

On August 2nd the visionary Mirjana Soldo received her monthly apparition. After the apparition she shared with us the following message:

"Dear children, In these peace-less times I am coming to you to show you the way to peace. I love you with an immeasurable love and I desire for you to love each other and to see in everyone my Son – the Immeasurable Love. The way to peace leads solely and only through love. Give your hand to me, your Mother, and allow me to lead you. I am the Queen of Peace. Thank you."

Mirjana added: "It has been a long time since I saw the sky open, the sign of the Cross, a heart and the sun." (These three signs are normally shown to the visionaries who have daily apparitions. Mirjana did not explain the symbolic aspect of these three signs as they are clear enough by themselves.)

A New Commission for Medjugorje?

A notable event: According to the Catholic News Service of July 24, 2006 and other news papers like Croatian Vecernji List of July 16, 2006, Cardinal Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo announced that a new commission for Medjugorje will be formed in September. The members of this International commission are not yet known. This announcement came after a Bosnia and Herzegovina Bishops' meeting held in Banja Luka from July 12-14 2006. The primary goal of the new commission will be to decide whether or not Medjugorje may be officially recognised as a Marian Shrine. From there, other aspects of Medjugorje will be earnestly analysed.

In this regard, an interesting observation has been made in Rome. This year, (25th anniversary of apparitions), the Vatican's official travel agency for pilgrimages, Opera Romana Pelligrini, organised about 14 pilgrimages to Medjugorje by bus and 24 by plane!

Early signs of this commission could be seen in 1999 when Father Francois-Xavier Wallays, General Superior of the Community of the Beatitudes, and several of his priests visited Arch-Bishop Tarcisio Bertoni, then the secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, Arch-Bishop Bertoni said: "One should consider Medju-

gorje the same way we consider Czestochowa - a very popular Marian Shrine in Poland." Let us wait with hope and in peace. Our task now is to pray that in Rome this new commission will be put together with wisdom and that its works may serve the salvation of many. If Pope John Paul II has been able to write to his friends, Zofia and Marek Skmarnicki of Krakow that he went every day to Medjugorje through prayer, it shows that he had perceived this providential grace of Medjugorje for our time. Here is an extract from one of the letters sent to Zofia and Marek:

"I thank Mrs. Zofia for everything concerning Medjugorje. I, too, go there every day as a pilgrim in my prayers: I unite in my prayers with all those who pray there or receive a calling for prayer from there. Today we have understood this calling better. I rejoice that our time is not lacking people of prayer and apostles." (John Paul II, Dec 8, 1992) See PS 2.

As we await new changes for Medjugorje, let's remain faithful to the latest official document dated May 26, 1996 (number 154/81 – 06419), coming from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome:

"The Church allows private pilgrimages to Medjugorje and doesn't allow official pilgrimages. She asks that the pilgrims who go to Medjugorje may be accompanied by pastoral care."

Cease fire for Lebanon!

Here in Medjugorje, Lebanon is very much in our hearts and prayers! During the youth festival in the beginning of August, the Parish Priests often mentioned the absence of our dear Lebanese pilgrims; and the huge crowd of young people prayed for them with intensity. It was a very touching sight to see. Since there were only a handful of Lebanese people representing Lebanon among 49 other countries, when each country was introduced, Lebanon received the longest applause. Many of the young people were weeping for them. Since the beginning of the war, Medjugorje priests have been constantly recommending Lebanon to the mercy of God.

On this note, it is important to add that several versions of a fake message attributed to the Gospa given to Ivan has been circulating in France, USA, Canada and even Lebanon. When asked about it, Ivan denied that this message was given to him. Moreover, it is easy to recognise that this stressed language doesn't belong to Our Lady. It is important to remain prudent and to not acknowledge the rumours, (one more about Medjugorje). Instead, it is wise that we only acknowledge the official messages that are transmitted from Medjugorje. If one day Our Lady were giving a message for a particular situation or country, this message would be quickly transmitted on the usual websites.

Of course, we must continue to pray for Lebanon! These last weeks, on the mountain, Our Lady has been repeating, "pray for peace in the world". She doesn't mention any country in particular. The war is in the hearts of men and has invaded the entire world! She is counting on us!

When the Gulf War broke out in January 1991, according to Vicka, Our Lady said: "When a war breaks out somewhere, it is because there is already a war in your hearts. And this war in your hearts can only go outside. But if you make peace in your hearts, then the exterior war will cease immediately"

Praying for peace in Lebanon means first, to examine our hearts and extract from them any kind of rejection, hatred, jealousy, bad desires and anything that closes us on ourselves. It means give all evil away to Jesus so that He may burn it in the ardent fire of His Divine Heart. By doing this it will be worth more than all the "cease-fires" of men and politics; because Satan, the murderer, will be defeated and disarmed. This is a true "cease-fire". It is a "cease-fire" that lasts because it attacks hatred from the root and defeats it! And the best part is that this can be done in your own home!

Yes, Our Lady is counting on us as much as our brothers and sisters - victims of this war - are counting on us!

Starving in a food store

Maria Janczuk was born in Poland and during World War II suffered privation, torture and hunger in a Nazi concentration camp. After the war she lived in Leeds, England. On 22nd January, 1971 she was found dead of starvation in her house. She weighed only 41 pounds, and it was evident she had been wasting her health. But her cupboards were full of eggs, butter, cheese and milk, which she had hoarded. The policemen who investigated said, "It was like a food store." The horrors of life and hunger in the concentration camp had probably created a fear in her mind, which remained with her through the rest of her days.

She died of starvation, even though her kitchen shelves were stocked. - There is an abundance of blessings, promises, assurances of peace, joy, strength, life, salvation, eternal life and all that one needs in this life, in the Word of God. The Psalmist prays, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your Law." (Ps.119:18) Yet it is a pity people die of spiritual starvation.

Daniel Sunderaj in 'Manna for the Soul'

Medjugorje Facts

From time to time, I receive anti-Medjugorje messages, most of which come, directly or indirectly, from the Bishop of Mostar. In almost all the reported apparitions of Our Lady, at some stage some members of the Catholic hierarchy have been outspokenly against them. So, this is no exception and one could even say that it is the exception which confirms the rule. *Ed.*

A New Zealand writer who lives in Fatima just sent his study about the events in Medjugorje. The title is simply " Medjugorje Fact Sheet ". He is an expert on Fatima . He is wondering if really Medjugorje is the continuation of Fatima. Simply read the FACTS and judge yourself. (Copyright to L.M.- Fatima)

There are hundreds of thousands of people who have returned to full communion to the Roman Catholic Church as a result of Medjugorje. I am one of them. Before Medjugorje, I was pro-choice, indifferent to the Vatican and the Pope, probably more New Age than Christian despite having been "brought up" Catholic. As a result of my trip to Medjugorje in 1994, I have become strongly pro-life, truly believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the bride of Christ, I have a great love for the Eucharist, and I am leading a Catholic Young Adult group that teaches according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

While I am aware of the bishop's statements, doubts & discouragements, the Vatican (higher authority) remains undecided, and has not prohibited people from visiting Medjugorje (but has prohibited priests/parishes from official organized trips there, to avoid confusion about whether it is "approved.")

Scripture states that we will know something is of God by its fruits. Jesus also states that "if they are not against us, they are with us." The

fruits of Medjugorje have far outweighed the negatives through the number of conversions & "reversions." Some of the most faithful, loving, committed Catholics in the church today had their "rebirth" through Medjugorje. If this place is of the devil, then God has conquered it and used it for the good. People going to Medjugorje go to confession, go to daily Mass, and often participate in praying 20 decades of the Rosary daily. The priests in Medjugorje at a minimum "intend to do what the church does" which is the primary requirement for validity of sacraments.

Yes, there are things that are questionable, abuses of what may have happened there, and things requiring further investigation, but that has existed with every apparition site, and believing in an apparition is not a requirement of our faith. On the other hand, spreading the information below could potentially work against the Holy Spirit if the Holy Spirit is using this place to bring people back home. The Magisterium remains indifferent right now, it has not formally rejected or approved Medjugorje, so either promoting it (claiming it is gospel truth), or discrediting it

(pushing that it is definitely false) is disobedient to the Magisterium... personal opinion excepted.

I could do an analysis of quotes by priests and bishops that are counter to the teachings of the church, and use that as evidence against the church. It doesn't make the Church false or invalid... but it is one of the main sources of apostasy today.

Please pray about what you are doing. I would strongly advise you to focus your efforts on living and teaching the gospel rather than disproving something that has been leading people back to the Gospel & the Church for 25 years. How disappointing that would be to go to heaven, only to find our Blessed Mother sad that we deterred others from finding their way back to the Church and the Eucharist. The core messages of Medjugorje: Pray, Fast, Convert, Go to Confession, Receive the Eucharist are all in line with our faith. We need to be getting this message out regardless of where it comes from.

May God give you peace. In Jesus through Mary,

Marco DeCapite

Garabandal – The Church's Position

By Colin Donovan S.T.L.

The history of all approved apparitions shows that the Church requires unequivocal evidence of supernaturality. This can be cures, as at Lourdes and Beauraing, or a supernatural prodigy, as at Fatima. The reason from the Church's mystical theology is that most mysticism (as both St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross teach) is mediated by the angels (who have a created angelic nature). What the good angels can do, the bad angels can imitate, so that many so-called "supernatural" phenomena are merely preternatural (above human nature, but not above the angelic nature). At Garabandal this would include the ecstasies, the ecstatic walks, the returning of rosaries and medals to the proper owners and so on. None of these things, much less the miraculous photos, rosaries turning gold etc. of more recent alleged apparitions, proves anything to the Church about the divine origin of a phenomenon. *In the absence of some clear supernatural proof neither the local bishop or Rome is likely to approve an apparition.*

While two commissions convened by bishops of Santander, Spain, have stated that there were no phenomena which would authenticate the events as certainly supernatural they did not condemn the message. In this regard, the first commission stated, "we have not found anything deserving of ecclesiastical censure or condemnation either in the doctrine or in the spiritual recommendations that have been published as having been addressed to the faithful." The bishop who called the second commission, Bishop del Val, upon retiring from office stated in an interview that the message of Garabandal was "important" and "theologically correct." Indeed, some of the prophetic elements of the

message can be found in private revelations which have been approved since the initial decision on Garabandal in the 1960s. For example, the concept of a worldwide warning can be found in the Diary of Saint Faustina (Diary n.83), and both the message of Divine Mercy given to her (Diary n.1588), and that of Akita (approved by the local bishop), speak of chastisement if mankind does not ultimately repent. Similar prophetic content can be found in the writings of Elizabeth Canori-Mora and Mary of Jesus Crucified, both of whom were beatified by Pope John Paul II, as well as in prophecies given by God to Blessed Anna Maria Taigi and St. Caspar del Bufalo. Finally, the principal promoter of Garabandal, Joey Lomangino, testifies that it was Saint Padre Pio who told him the Blessed Virgin was appearing at Garabandal and he should go.

It seems, therefore, that notwithstanding the decisions of two commissions accepted by the bishops of Santander, that *there are reasonable grounds for individual Catholics to find Garabandal credible.* The children themselves predicted that the message of Garabandal would be approved with difficulty, but in sufficient time to spread it. Perhaps this means that the "warning" (a clearly supernatural event) must occur first for approval to be given. Given the seriousness of the times we do well to heed the message of conversion, whether proposed by Fatima or some other source such as Garabandal, Medjugorje or another, without fear, that is, with complete confidence in God's providence for us and the world. The future will take care of itself if we remain spiritually prepared for anything. This has always been the advice of the saints, anyway.

From "The Messenger of the Two Hearts" Hampton, Vic. Australia

"We must take great care never to do anything before having said our Morning Prayers...The devil once declared that if he could have the first moment of the day, he was sure of all the rest."

Medjugorje - A Clear Witness

Fr. Dermot McCarthy, ordained a priest in 1966, Editor of Religious Programmes in RTE, honoured for his lifetime achievement in religious broadcasting, a consulter of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications at the Holy See and former Administrator of the Pro-Cathedral of Dublin, was in Medjugorje in June 2006, together with a large group of about 300 Irish pilgrims. At the end of his pilgrimage, he shared with us his thoughts and experiences. (Interview by Lidija Paris)

Fr. Dermot, would you be so kind as to tell us about your first contact with Medjugorje?

Fr. Dermot McCarthy: This is my second visit to Medjugorje. When I first came here, 19 years ago, I was administrator of St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, which is the Catholic cathedral of Dublin. The archbishop, Dr. Kevin McNamara, was near the end of his life, he was quite ill, and I - as administrator - had received various requests from groups in Dublin who were connected with Medjugorje, to have gatherings and prayer services in the cathedral. I was aware that there was a difficulty about the recognition of the apparitions in Medjugorje, and that the local bishop had not given his assent, and I did not want to place the then or future archbishop of Dublin in an awkward situation vis-à-vis his episcopal colleague in Mostar. I had heard various stories about the sun spinning and rosaries turning to gold, and of course daily apparitions to the six visionaries, I said, I'd better go and see!

I came with a group to Medjugorje. I came rather sceptically, but I was immensely impressed. The sun did not spin for me, and my rosary beads stayed the same colour, but what I saw here was a tremendous outpouring of faith, of belief, of holiness. As I said in a homily during Mass with my group two days ago, the priesthood of the laity took on a completely new meaning for me, because I saw that ordained priests and lay people were supporting each other in a mutually powerful way. This is in accordance with what Our Lady said right from the start. It was also interesting that there was no unique ritual happening here, as in Lourdes, where you go and bathe in the water, you touch the rock of the grotto and walk in torchlight processions. You cannot do those things at home, but everything that happens here you can do at home. She was reiterating what she had said at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you!" That was very striking for me. The fact that people were cramming the church for prayer, a great well of volume of song, of outdoor queues of penitents for confession - the confessionals were not built at the time - all of that made a lasting impression on me.

Nothing extra was built back then, we stayed at a farm house about a kilometre from Medjugorje, I was very conscious of the fact that we were staying at somebody's home. We were given a warm welcome. One of the other striking things about the apparitions here in Medjugorje at that time was the obvious support from the people of the parish for what was happening here. I did not sense any small town jealousy or hear any muttered comments like; why should her daughter or his son be given the apparitions, and not my children?" There was wonderful support from all the people. That also had to be the influence of Our Lady in this parish.

I was very impressed. I went back to Dublin, saying to myself: we had better wait until the new archbishop is appointed, before we have any Medjugorje events in the cathedral, but I will actively support any such requests when he is appointed. And that happened in due course. Now, I am back, 19 years later...

In the meantime, you became the Editor of Religious Programmes in Irish television...

In 1991, I was asked to become head of religious programmes in RTE, Ireland's national broadcasting organisation. I had already a long experience of working in the media. I was ordained priest in 1966, and from 1965 until 1982, I worked with three other priests in the documentary film unit RADHARC the Gaelic word for View or Panorama. We made television documentary films all over Ireland at first, and later around the world. It was a most exciting time for making documentaries of a religious nature. Our series, which was immensely popular on Irish television, was never narrowly focused; we covered the issues, initiatives, movements and interesting people that influenced the Catholic Church immediately after the Vatican Council. We went to Brazil, to Africa, to Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong, and dozens of other countries. The programmes helped to open the eyes of people to the realities of the worldwide Church. We Irish have always had the idea that missionaries went out from holy Ireland, brought

Christ to all these people, and gave them the faith. There is a certain amount of truth in that, but there is another truth: in many ways, our missionaries went and discovered Christ very much alive and active in those communities. Many missionary priests, brothers, sisters and lay workers were coming back to Ireland and bringing some of that energy, enthusiasm and fire of the Gospel into what was a rather traditional and tired Church at home.

Many priests and Bishops speak about the tiredness of the Church in western countries. Many also appreciate what is happening in Medjugorje, because so many pilgrims come back home, and bring a new zeal to their parishes, Now, 19 years after your first coming, have you seen changes here in Medjugorje?

The spirit has not changed, and that is great to see. I find the same kind of enthusiasm, the same kind of welcome and warmth here, as 19 years ago. Of course, there are more cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops, larger houses and more plentiful places for pilgrims to stay. But even the simple thing the fact that pilgrims can make themselves a cup of coffee or tea at any time of the day in their 'pansion', is hugely appreciated. I am here with a group of 300, it was the initiative of Heather Parsons, who has written three books about Medjugorje, to bring this group together, a big group to manage, but I have heard no complaints, apart from some about snoring room-mates! On the contrary, there have been many very positive comments. I don't see any sign of a rip-off here and hope it never happens. Thankfully the same atmosphere inspired by the evident faith of pilgrims still obtains here. I like the new facilities for pilgrims; they have been added with quiet and practical efficiency. The church, of course, is far too small to accommodate everyone. There is no virtue in continuing discomfort! And the standing-room-only crowding breaks every modern health and safety rule! But I'm sure the authorities here are contemplating building a more spacious covered place of worship. It is long overdue.

How do you see the spirituality of Medjugorje - if there is a spirituality of Medjugorje at all?

I have been asking the question of myself and others if there is a distinct spirituality of Medjugorje. I do not think there is. I think it is more a call to deepen the spirituality that we already have. A new understanding of what we all received as children, in school and home; it is a reawakening of that, it is a renewal of that kind of uncomplicated faith, unembarrassed faith. As for the apparitions of Mary, at first you feel - if she is the Mother of God - her messages should be more theologically substantial. In fact they are deceptively simple. And I say to myself: I have been through theology courses, maybe this is the time for me to get back to the simple faith that we all have, and we grew up with. Time to look again at what Our Lady is saying, read the messages again, re-read them, and read between the lines, between the words.

She has to speak in words that are understandable to people of all ages, all races and all backgrounds. And here am I, coming with my theological training and an innate sense of clerical superiority in matters religious which I believe is more a hindrance than a help in understanding Our Lady's messages? One has to be humble enough to start over and think it through again. The spirituality of Medjugorje is a spirituality that can apply to everybody. It is about returning to our homes, whatever country we come from, re-energised, re-enthused, finding anew the truth that has been there for 2000 years. And above all, she directs us back to Her Son all the time. Some of the things that she says are very challenging. Some of the things to which she calls us are not easy: fasting on bread and water two days a week, 3 rosaries daily and so on. I have to re-organise my time and look again at the schedule, and see, have I the bottle to do this? Am I willing to make the time to do it? I think Medjugorje is very necessary at this moment in the history of Europe and of the world. It is a call back to a simpler faith, which is not simplistic, naive, or disconnected from the realities of life. It is a daily recognition that there is a God, that we have a Saviour who saved us, that His Mother is constantly introducing Him to us and calling us to

listen to Him, and that the Holy Spirit is there, surrounding and supporting us with divine love.

Our Lady is speaking about God the Father, about God the Creator, about creation, while calling Herself Queen of Peace, she is touching the key issues of our time, in which there is a danger of destroying our resources, inner war within ourselves, between what is right and wrong for the whole humanity...

In a number of messages, she says: 'Read the signs of the times. What does she mean? It could very well be the global unease, the global fear, the global poverty gap, the societal greed in certain parts of the world, including, regrettably, my own country. The signs of the times it is a very pregnant phrase, I think that Medjugorje is a recall moment for all of us to think about these things, but not to be despondent, rather to find ways of bringing about the peace of which Mary speaks so often, in every area of our lives, private and public, according to our individual spheres of influence.

You have heard the visionaries speaking. They are most of the time saying the same thing. You are a man of the media, of television, of communication. How do you understand this way of transmitting the message? Pilgrims hear it again and again, and they seem never to have enough of it'

The visionaries do not play according to media rules. They don't go along with the commandment 'thou shalt be new all the time, thou shalt be different, thou shalt be colourful'. Everything must be edgy or alternative according to the gospel of today's media. I am reminded of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who likewise said the same thing over and over. We cannot judge Medjugorje by the standards of most media coverage. We have to think for ourselves and not be influenced by trends or fashions in public opinion. It takes courage to withstand the constant pressure, especially on young people, to perform and conform to other people's opinions often the product of clever marketing. Medjugorje holds a mirror up to my own beliefs and challenges me to think again for myself!

I am impressed by the way the visionaries speak. I was listening to Mirjana the other day; there was no sense of trying to shock, no sense

that she was tired of talking about her experiences. She was as enthusiastic, as clear and as riveting as I feel she would have been 25 years ago. I met both Mirjana and Ivan this week. There was no self-opinionated sense of celebrity about them, which is a natural temptation, but obviously foreign to them. There is no sign that they want to draw attention to themselves, attention all the time to what Mary is saying, yes, and to the messages that she is giving, not to themselves. That comes across very clearly.

All that you are saying are signs of authenticity. According to you, why is the Church still hesitant?

I find it amazing that the local Church has not yet confirmed what is happening here in Medjugorje. I am not a canon lawyer but whatever canonical reasons are being put forward to delay official recognition, it is scandalous that the official Church here in Bosnia and Herzegovina is so far behind the people of the world who, year after year, spend so much time, financial resources and energy to come and pray here on Apparition Hill, on Krizevac. That does not happen for such a long period because of some kind of deceit. I think of Gamaliel addressing the Sanhedrin in the Acts of the Apostles: "If this is a purely human invention, it will break up of its own accord, but if comes from God, not only will you not stop it, you could even find yourselves fighting against God." I believe the official Church loses credibility for herself by not backing up what is happening in Medjugorje. It seems to me that Catholics throughout the whole world have given their blessing, their affirmation, their own recognition. People generally are not stupid and certainly not 25 million over 25 years! Any prelate who would visit incognito and watch for a day what is happening here in Medjugorje, the evident depth of belief, the spirit of true contrition and prayer, and join pilgrims struggling up Krizevac, some bare-footed, as they contemplate the Stations of the Cross, could not but be convinced that all this is a clear witness to a divine presence in a uniquely powerful way, that Medjugorje is indeed a place chosen by the Lord himself for his Mother to appear.

From Medjugorje Herald, Ireland



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Story of the Blessed Sacrament - Montreal, Canada, 1807

Long years ago, a young America girl journeyed from her home in Vermont to a convent in Montreal. She had read about nuns and had a great desire to see for herself what a convent was like. She was a Protestant and her people were not too well pleased at her request, but they granted it. She would learn much in the convent, they said. Other Protestant girls had finished their education in convents, why not Fanny?

So one day Fanny went to the door of the old Congregation Convent in the heart of Montreal. The convent gate sister admitted her and the good religious welcomed her most tenderly. Weeks passed; Fanny was not happy. She mocked openly at the rites she could not understand. The children wondered much, and fearing that they would be scandalised, the Reverend Mother decided to send the young girl back to her people in Vermont.

Among the Sisters was one who had a deep attachment for the Protestant pupil. She longed to bring her into the fold, and make her life satisfied and happy.

"I grieve to send the child home," said Mother, "but she does not improve and there is nothing else to be done."

"Give her another trial, dear Mother," pleaded the Sister. "Let her stay with us a few more

weeks. God and his Blessed Mother may change her heart."

The Superior granted the petition and again was disappointed in the result. The last day of Fanny's probation was drawing near. It was September 8, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Fanny spent the afternoon with the teacher she loved, but there was nothing in her conduct to show a change of spirit. She was still a doubter and spoke her thoughts in words that deeply grieved the religious. Yet Fanny helped to prepare the flowers for the altar, for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Sister lifted the vase and was about to take it to the chapel, when something made her pause. "Why not send Fanny, the unbeliever?" Turning to the young girl she bade her take the vase and place it on the altar. "Be sure," added the Sister, "to adore Our Lord when you are there." Fanny laughed and went away with the flowers. She did not believe. Why should she bow before the altar? In her home town Catholics were called idolaters. She would not become one. Thinking thus she reached the gate of the sanctuary, opened it, but could go no farther. She made another effort and yet her feet seemed powerless to move. For the third time she tried, only to fail; and then, overcome by awe and a strange compelling influence, she

fell upon her knees and said her act of faith, the first she had ever made. Her God was present in the tabernacle, and there, humbled and ashamed, she knelt for some time. Then rising, she approached the altar and placed her fragrant flowers before the Blessed Sacrament.

Fanny's conversion was complete. "After such a miracle," she said, "I must give myself to the Saviour."

There was bitter opposition to overcome, but at last her mother yielded, and accompanied her daughter to Montreal, where, in the chapel of Hotel-Dieu, Fanny realised that her lifework was to be among those holy women.

High above the altar a picture of the Holy Family looked down upon the Americans. "See, dear mother. Saint Joseph wants me here," said Fanny, and there she found absolute content.

Wonderful are the ways of our dear Lord opens to His children to find their true home. As we read the story of the "First American Nun," our hearts are stirred by the divine mercy that gave to Fanny Allen the grace to become a Catholic and a devoted religious.

Fanny Allen was born November 13, 1784, at Westminster, Vermont, and she died of lung trouble, at Hotel-Dieu, Montreal, December 10, 1819. Her father was General Ethen Allen, the patriot; he professed no religious belief.

A Mother's Story

My story begins early in 1982 when my husband and I were happily married with five sons and a daughter, all of them growing up healthy and well.

But then our youngest boy, Chris became discontented at school and from there on everything seemed to go wrong for him. He left school and started working in a men's outfitters, but even then I felt he was uneasy with himself. We tried to get to the bottom of his problem and the doctor said it was just a growing-up thing. Well, he went out to work dressed in his good jacket and a new pair of shoes that he had bought a couple of days previously. God help us, it was the last time we saw of him alive.

He took his own life out at a local beauty spot, not far from where we lived. From then on, our lives were turned upside down, each of the family searching for the answers and the reasons why this tragedy had happened.

I thought I would finish up in a mental hospital. I really was heading that way. The pain, the grief and the blame were hard to handle. My husband and I drifted apart and our lives were in pieces. One day I was lying in bed after working a night-shift at the hospital, when the phone rang. It was a friend asking if I would like to go to Medjugorje. What had I to lose? I had tried everything else.

I went to Medjugorje, hardly knowing what day it was, walking around in a daze and blaming God for my terrible loss. But our Blessed Mother was truly a mother and seemed to take me under her mantle and comfort me.

While in Medjugorje, I had a dream about my son Chris. We were both sitting on a staircase in what seemed like a school. He was sitting one step above me and I said to him: "Son, I'll take you home from this," and he replied: "Mum, I'm okay."

I said the same thing three times but after the third time Chris answered: "Mum, I'm fine, and I love it here." The dream was so real -perhaps it was - but after that I really felt that Chris was in our Blessed Mother's care. I spent the rest of the week in Medjugorje in silent prayer and shed many tears, but they seemed to be tears of relief. Our Lady had shown me that she was a true mother.

My husband died in 1993 (R.I.P.) and please, God, I will be back to thank our Blessed Mother in person this year. I have always wanted to return to Medjugorje and now this seems to be the right time. May Our Lady's special care be with us all as we walk through this life and meet again in our heavenly home.

From Medjugorje Herald, Ireland

Editor's note: When I went to Medjugorje for the first time, in 1994, I was still mourning for two of my sons who both committed suicide, five and a half years apart, and both aged 29. I was crying every day and could not find the peace of mind I so much needed. I found that peace in Medjugorje, and there, I knew within my heart that my children were in Heaven with Our Heavenly Mother. May all parents who have gone through the same ordeal know God's infinite Mercy and be assured of their salvation.

Paul F.

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Jesus is here!

Sr. Briege McKenna tells a story that she witnessed in some Latin American country. She was there to conduct a healing service, as part of a Mass. The locale was unusual, in that it was in the midst of a city dump, where most of these people lived, and from which they scraped and gathered whatever they could to keep body and soul together.

The altar was a large cardboard box, and five priests concelebrated the Mass.

Just before the consecration, a little woman made her way to the front, carrying what looked like a bundle of rags. She placed the package right there on the makeshift altar. Briege was shocked to discover that the rags contained a tiny baby, and the baby was so badly burned that there was a stench of burned and rotting flesh. She looked towards the priest beside her, who assured her that he had no problem, and to allow the baby remain there.

At the consecration, there was a spontaneous outburst of acclamation from the vast gathering, who had nothing of this world's goods, but who had living

faith in the Eucharistic presence. 'Viva Cristo Rey! Viva Cristo Rey!', they repeated again and again.

Briege had her eyes closed and she was experiencing profound emotion in the midst of such an outburst of faith. When things quietened down, she opened her eyes and, at once, she noticed that the baby had been removed from the altar. A short distance away, the mother held the baby, as tears rolled down her cheeks, and the people around her began to look in her direction. Briege took a few steps forward and, to her amazement, the child was totally healed, and all the signs of the burns had disappeared. With a deep sense of awe, she asked the mother what had happened. The mother looked at her, and without the slightest hesitation, or any great sense of puzzlement, she simply whispered: 'Jesus is here.'

Jack McArdle in 'And that's the Gospel truth'

The call of the modern prophet

An anonymous student poet put it well:
- I will do more than belong - I will participate.
- I will do more than care - I will help.
- I will do more than believe - I will practise.

- I will do more than be fair - I will be kind.
- I will do more than forgive - I will love.
- I will do more than earn - I will enrich.
- I will do more than teach - I will serve.

- I will do more than live - I will grow.
- I will do more than be friendly - I will be a friend

Harold Buetow, in 'God still speaks: Listen'

EWTN TV IS HERE!!

From the beginning of June this year EWTN television has become accessible to New Zealanders via free to air satellite broadcast. It can be received using a small dish like the one used by Sky. There are no on-going costs or subscriptions once the hardware is set up. EWTN assures us that it will stay that way for the foreseeable future.

As many of us are aware, EWTN is a Catholic media network which has grown into the largest religious media network in the world since its humble beginnings 25 years ago. It is based in the state of Alabama in the USA. EWTN now reaches out not only via satellite and terrestrial television, but also through shortwave and satellite radio and the internet. EWTN TV is now seen in 127 countries with an estimated audience of 118 million households.

This network was started by Mother Angelica, a Poor Clare nun with US\$200 because she found the commercial television studios were not interested in following the principles of the Catholic Church in their broadcasts. Some of the stations which had been having her as a guest had programmes that contradicted the teachings of the Church and she decided to have her own studio and broadcasting station. She converted a garage into a studio in the monastery in Irondale, a suburb of Birmingham, Alabama. Mother Angelica called the station *Eternal Word Television Network* after the description of our Lord as the Eternal Word by St John in his gospel. It has grown into the large network it is today entirely through public support. This growth happened without a business plan or a financial apparatus! Its monthly budget now is estimated to be over two million US dollars!!

Mother Angelica retired from day to day running of the network after she suffered a stroke a few years ago and spends her time praying or resting. However, the network she founded has not slowed down in its growth.

The television broadcasts include daily Mass, twice daily rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet. Other regular programmes include *Threshold of Hope*, in which Fr. Mitch Pacwa, an engaging Jesuit priest, reviews the encyclicals of Pope John Paul the Great. *Sunday Night Live* is a programme where Fr. Benedict Groeschel, a very wise and elderly Franciscan priest in New York, takes phone calls from viewers to answer

questions regarding their faith. *Journey Home* is another engaging programme in which Marcus Grodi, a former Lutheran minister interviews converts and 're-verts' to the Catholic faith. *Mother Angelica Live* is a repeat telecast of a series of her teachings. Important events like papal visits are broadcast live. Many of these programmes are also broadcast on the radio and available for download at the EWTN website.

EWTN's website is a real treasure trove for Catholics and anyone interested in the Catholic faith. Its URL is <http://www.ewtn.com/>. This website has an extensive document and audio library which allows free downloading of all material. All the television and radio programmes are also available live. There is a podcast where the radio programmes can be downloaded into your mp3 player. A web page gives resources on the teachings of our Church. Another page has a catalogue with an extensive collection of books, audio and video material and religious articles for sale.

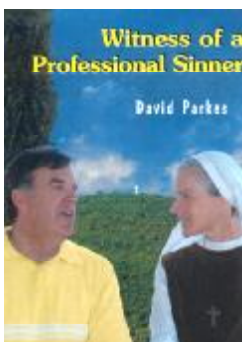
The influence of EWTN has been extensive. Thousands of former Catholics have returned to the Church and the faith of all Catholics has been strengthened. Many non-Catholics, including hundreds of protestant pastors have joined the Church because of its influence. EWTN has been a major force in the pro-life movement in the US and campaigns hard against diluting the traditional teachings of our Church. It is staunchly behind the Pope and the teachings of the magisterium.

EWTN initially contacted Sky TV to include EWTN in its line up. As Sky reaches 40% of New Zealand households there would have been an immediate wide coverage. Unfortunately, Sky has a purely commercial agenda and would do so only for a fee. Around the same time direct satellite broadcast of EWTN was being introduced in Australia and they included a beam aimed at New Zealand soon afterwards. EWTN has provided us with a free phone number to assist with installation. The number is 0800 000 885 and it will connect you with AAACOM. On the other hand DIY installation is not complicated and a lot cheaper. Those interested will find all the information they need at:

<http://www.freetv.co.nz/>

The reception is crystal clear. The satellite also has several other free to air stations and several free radio stations.

Installation can be arranged in the Auckland area by contacting PETER CORNWALL, MYRIAM TAPE MINISTRIES, Phone 094183428 for pricing & options.



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In the Palm of her Hand

Many times I have been asked to tell this story; my immediate response is usually one of two things - to either water down the small part that I played, or to remove the third party from the story. This time I am going to rise above my ego, swallow my pride, for if I don't I will deny our Blessed Mother the honour and glory which she deserves, in how she used me and the core team like a tapestry to fulfil her plan and it will also give you a glimpse into how Gospa has each of her children in the palm of her hand! So this is the story of how youth festival came to fruition.

In May of 2004 during a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, during Holy Mass I felt an inner voice speak to my heart, though at the time, I was unsure whether or not it was the Holy Spirit working through me or whether it was just me in all of my humanity. I was 'at home' in my usual spot at the English Mass, in the choir box. For some reason I found myself glancing at the crowd, (I guess it may have had something to do with the fact that I was in awe of all those faces filled with beauty and love for Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the altar). To gaze into these faces was for me to gaze into the face of Jesus. Then I felt this message speak to my heart, "Wouldn't it be lovely to bring a group of young people here to Medjugorje for the Youth Festival from Northern Ireland, a group of young people who would never have the opportunity to see or feel this love?" - to give them a chance, a chance to see that there is a different kind of life out there available to each of us, (and not just the young), if we only but choose to follow that path!

So, after Holy Mass, I thought I would speak with Sean Conroy, from Galway. I told him about the task that I thought Gospa wanted me to undertake on her behalf. I then finished with ... "but I think that I am too old as I would not be able to reach the young". To which he responded, "yes, maybe you are too old," but he went on to tell me about some amazing guy, (older than me), that he knew that worked with the young going around giving various talks etc.

Well then, I thought, "That's that then!" I thought that after talking with him and sharing my thoughts and feelings that may be it was just me getting caught up in the enchantment of this place, (which can happen). So I went on my way to pray at Our Lady's statue, which is just to the side of St James' Church. For some strange reason this thought just wouldn't leave me. It kept bugging me (that's a lovely way to describe the power of the Spirit, but it was just how I felt). Anyway, whilst praying at the statue, I met Thomas Gallagher from Derry, an outstanding man with a very gentle nature. I knew that he was involved in the same kind of youth group in Derry, so I thought just to get this out of my system once and for all, that I would share the morning's events with him. So I proceeded to tell him the story, to which he replied as soon as I finished, (not even giving me time to draw breath), "I think you would be just perfect!" I was taken back, this wasn't the answer that I was looking for, I guess I wanted him to agree with Sean or to tell me that something like this was out of my league, (which I thought it was!) I was stunned by his reply so much so that I didn't know how to react. So, in the event of never being struck for an answer, I responded with,



"I'll have to pray about it some more, a decision like that can not be taken lightly!"

When I returned home, one Saturday morning after Holy Mass, I was having breakfast with a friend who also happened to be with me on the same pilgrimage. I told her what I thought Our Lady wanted me to do - just to gauge her reaction. She immediately replied, "I think that it is a great idea!" Immediately I responded with, "Will you help me then?", and without hesitation she agreed. When breakfast had been scoffed, while we were waiting for everything to digest (even the venture that lay before us, my good friend told me that the more she thought about the pilgrimage, the more she believed in it). For me, this was like looking at myself in the mirror. I felt that this was confirmation, and so the youth pilgrimage was conceived.

Now the pact had been made, the whole trip was consecrated to our Blessed Mother and the next few months were spent mainly in prayer and brainstorming ideas of how to raise money to assist these young people with their fares to share in this pilgrimage.

With Our Lady in the driving seat she had to transport us, to find leaders, workers and prayer warriors.

At this time I was working in a school and asked one of my colleagues if she would be interested in accompanying us on our trip. She didn't rule it out, but wanted to pray about it. So that was one leader down (please God!)

I had heard Mark Lenaghan speak, and anyone who knows of Mark knows that he is a fabulous speaker. He was converted through Our Lady and when he is not witnessing on her behalf, he teaches religious education. I was steered into his path, shared our story and asked if he would like to come on board and join us in responding to Our Lady's call.

Like Fiona, he too was praying about it, so armed with these charismatic people, (the

leaders were starting to fall into place (I hoped!). The next part of the journey was twofold: to embark on finding a spiritual leader and to be led to the youth. Neither of these proved to be too difficult a task. Throughout every fundraising event we spoke out in faith, promoting the messages of Our Lady of Medjugorje and word soon got around about our quest and it stirred an interest, even if it was a negative one!

Apart from raising money, a great community spirit had enveloped certain members of our prayer group, who rose to any new challenge that was set before them (Prayer warriors and workers were now in place also!).

We decided that we would take 33 young people, both girls and boys - one to represent each year that Jesus was on earth. A budget was worked out to accommodate this trip and so we started with the selling of holy wares and a coffee morning.

Leading up to Christmas 2004, we held a raffle and sold tickets and we even managed to sell them around the neighbouring parishes. A fireside quiz was devised and sold in various shops. Funds were starting to increase (even if only on a drip system - very slowly!).

The next strand of the plan to unfold was finding the young people to go. I didn't believe that this would be a problem and I also believed that a good number of boys would go (nothing to do with the fact that Mark Lenaghan works in an all boy's school!)

In early 2005, we were invited to a few schools to promote our pilgrimage and soon young people started to show an interest.

Time was starting to march on and one of the ladies from the prayer group decided to run an old time dance, which proved to be a great success.

At this stage, things were starting to take shape, but we hit a small obstacle. For various reasons, we discovered that we didn't have a plane to take us there!

So here we were armed with the youth, with some money to help them with their fares, but no plane. We didn't want to share this with the young people or the committee as we did not want to panic anyone (just yet).

Back to Our Lady! We gave her this mission. A few weeks went past and still no plane. Accommodation no problem, insurance sorted, yet still no plane.

What could we do? Other than pray! The applications were coming in fast and furious, but still no plane! Six weeks had passed, and still no plane, so I made a conscious decision that no more young people would be invited to join this trip, as we were sitting with deposits not cashed, no plane and the youth totally oblivious to what was going on!

I woke up early one morning with numerous problems running through my head. I was on the verge of returning the un-cashed cheques and admitting defeat, as I felt that I was being unfair to my fellow leaders and not totally honest with the parents of the young people. I felt an inner voice speak to my heart, "How can I refuse anyone, if the Lord Himself refuses me nothing".

I knew then that the trip was going to go ahead and that we would take as many young people as the Lord wanted to Medjugorje. How we were going to get them there was another thing, but we would be there!

Every day I would search the internet or spend hours on the telephone looking for flights, to no avail (not for the number of seats that we were looking to accommodate anyway!) - Aer Lingus, Croatia Airlines, German Wings, British Airways, Virgin Airlines, anyone who was flying somewhere close, where we could get a connecting flight that would fly to Croatia. But still no flights!

It got to the stage that I imagined Our Lady standing with her hands over her ears saying to Jesus, "Hey Jesus, here she comes again!" Does she really think that I didn't hear her the first time?"

You can imagine at this stage, just under three months to go, young people looking forward to their trip and no plane to take them there! Mark had been stalling his students' parents, as we couldn't give out the actual date of the trip and Fiona was asking me if I was either "totally bonkers, or had great faith!"

Going to bed at night, I was counting airlines, to see if there was one that hadn't been approached! In the meantime, Harry, from Medjugorje Peace Tours, was trying to assist us the best he could and he managed to get us a plane there - but we had no way home. Great, I thought, this is half the battle; at least we will get there. At this point we could give the parents a real departure date. But we still had the 'small' task of getting home again.

A little stressed, I went to the prayer meeting as I did every week to beg our Lady and her Son to find us a plane. It became a ritual of our prayer warriors, "Well any word of a plane yet?" and they knew the response, before I opened my mouth. But this night I was able to tell them that we had managed to get one that would take us there, but didn't have one to bring us home. I thought that this was a great achievement, but they looked a little puzzled. I think they thought that I had finally lost the plot at this stage!

The numbers of youth had surpassed the original 33, which meant that we were seriously under budget, just to add to the obstacles. Another coffee morning/evening was organised and yet another dance by one of the members

of the group. Still we had no return plane! Fiona organised a sponsored walk, which was great. This was the first time that the young people were able to get together to mix, as they were coming from various schools and only knew those from their own environment.

Another week rolled past and I went to the prayer meeting again, begging Jesus to sort this out as, after all, we were only doing the will of his mother. I remember that night that a lady (who was oblivious of our quest) spoke on the Holy Spirit. She said that if there is something that is bothering you, command the Holy Spirit to take it over and sort it out for you. I can remember thinking/Aye right, if only it were that simple".

The next day I was following my morning ritual and was praying before the Sacred Heart and I thought to myself, I've nothing to lose here, so I said "Holy Spirit - I command you to find us a plane to take us to and from Medjugorje TODAY as I'm tired of begging and Our Lady is sick of listening to me".

At 2.00 pm exactly that day I received a telephone call from Marian Pilgrimages to tell me that they had a plane that would take us to and from Medjugorje but we had to stay a little longer than the week!

There are no words to express how I felt at that moment in time. After thanking the Holy Spirit for sorting this out finally, I immediately responded with, "O thee of little faith" and asked Jesus to help me in my unbelief. Sinead, the leader in charge of the music ministry, came up with the name for our group 'Totus Tuus', after the late Holy Father John Paul II and because Pope John Paul II was Mark's idol's motto.

Back on track, we delved into finding the rest of the money to assist these young people with their fares (we were seriously under budget as the numbers were creeping up)!

A 'Can't Cook, Won't Cook' was held (Fr Mel 'poor thing' was one of the participants), a Table Quiz, and two of the parents of the young people organised a car boot sale to help boost funds. Fiona raffled a signed Celtic football. The prayer group donated money and yet the number of young people still increased.

With under a month to go, we still needed to raise money, but this was a small task compared to the obstacles that went before us. A relative of one of the young people went to a car boot sale and gave us the money that was raised. Someone else from the prayer group undertook a sponsored fast. Other people gave donations, and the family of one of the youth organised a surprise party for his father and no presents were to be given. All money in lieu was given to us and to Marie Curie Cancer.

A lovely couple (whom I have the pleasure of knowing from my travels to Medjugorje)

designed, (and paid for) the T-shirts (and banner) that became our armour for the week.

I am very quick to use the word "people", but these are not just ordinary people - these people were angels, heaven sent and it was because of these, good angels, their prayers, and financial support that the Totus Tuus Youth Pilgrimage came to fruition.

You want to know how the trip itself went? - Most of them went out as strangers, not only to themselves, but to God. When they returned - they returned as friends, friends of Jesus and Mary and friends of each other. It is possible to see the JOY in their eyes. Jesus first, Others second and Yourself last. JOY! How many young people actually went? Forty-eight young people, ranging in ages from 15 - 24 -twenty-eight girls and twenty boys. Eight leaders and spiritually led by Fr. Mel Byrne CP.

On arriving in Medjugorje I had the task of collecting the radios that would be needed for the translation throughout the youth festival and the first person I met was Thomas Gallagher from Derry. I couldn't believe it, confirmation or what!

Since returning from Medjugorje, the young people have settled back into their lives and try to meet as often as they can to share their stories. They meet regularly as a group to pray and for other social activities like bowling.

In October, we travelled to our native shrine, Knock, in Co Mayo and whilst it wasn't Medjugorje the young people that went really enjoyed it. Every one of them was touched in their own way and they feel that their souls were enriched by their experiences (in Knock as well as Medjugorje!)

They want to return again this year to Medjugorje for a refill and some want to try and find out what it was that touched their hearts (bearing in mind, the varied ages of these young people). Others want to return to that special spot that spoke directly to their heart and those that are called to go this year by our Blessed Lady all look forward to meeting others on the same journey as themselves.

"And we will follow you; yes we will follow you, wherever you will lead, for we believe your message is true!"

(Lyrics taken from the hymn Totus Tuus, performed by Dana, upon the Holy Father's visit to Knock Shrine, Co Mayo, 1979). This song became our theme song for the week and it is the motto that we try to draw strength from. For it is only in God that our souls can truly find rest. Something that these young people have just discovered.

Alle-lu-ia! (Jean Reynolds)

From Medjugorje Herald, Ireland

Editor's Note: for those in New Zealand or Australia the thought of organising a trip to Medjugorje is probably unrealistic. But what about sponsoring a trip to World Youth Day in Sydney 2008, or leading or encouraging fund-raising efforts in your parish for your entire youth group to go? Who knows what the benefits to them and to the future of Catholic life in New Zealand might be? Watch out for opportunities and suggestions or, better still, take the initiative yourself and pass on your ideas to others. www.wyd2008.org

MY EXPERIENCES IN MEDJUGORJE

In the valley of peace where Heaven meets the Earth

The last twelve years will stand out in memory till my days on earth shall end. The people you meet there, the stories of healings and conversions sitting on the mountains sharing stories of heartbreak and joy. By coming to Medjugorje you find so much peace and when in the presence of Our Lady they find hope and an answer to prayer.

Every year thousands of pilgrims flock here from all over the world, all searching for something deeper on their journey through life in this humble place of peace, known as the light between the hills. In the valley below where you can share in the presence of Our Lady at the Blue Cross mountain on a moonlit night. With no more tears in your eyes you will never walk alone. Pilgrims walk through the fields in early morning, praying the rosary and getting a glimpse of the sun coming up over the hills that shines on the Hill of Apparitions where for twenty five years, millions of pilgrims made their way to this stone path mountain. In this most peaceful place on earth listening to the birds sing in the trees outside the church. In the evenings, while so many pilgrims line up outside to get confession as priests sit for hours, every evening hearing confessions in the boxes nearby. People flock to the church for the beautiful Croatian Mass with standing room only, with the singing of Croatian hymns ringing out across the mountains. Some people sit under the trees outside, rosary beads in their hands. More sit down at the beautiful statue of Our Lady, everyone with their own thoughts on their minds as they struggle to find peace and answers to problems of everyday life. Many priests with amazing testimonies, some are called to the priesthood through Medjugorje.

Since my first visit to Medjugorje I was very impressed at seeing so many young people come here every year. It's great to see them crowding into church for Mass and Adoration. I suppose they too are searching for their own peace in life. The groups of young people are increasing every year. At night I love sitting on

the wall down by the stature of Our Lady watching all different groups that come to pray and sing at the statue while more just walk around the church grounds saying their own rosaries. I look forward to every Monday night when everyone makes their way through the fields to the Blue Cross mountain where one of the visionaries has an apparition of Our Lady. Everyone is rushing to be there for this special event which is such a privilege. Sitting on rocks or on the ground as a rosary and singing goes on for three hours to listen to the boys from Cenacolo Community - a very interesting place for recovering drug addicts to listen to their group singing on the mountain would move anyone's heart to tears.

The mountain is covered with pilgrims and I keep thinking if they could only see this back home. Everyone making their way in the dark, some with torches down the mountain at eleven o'clock at night while some stay at the blue cross praying and singing all night. One of the highlights of the week is the three nights of adoration at the church. You cannot really explain the peace and presence one feels at this healing hour of peace, hope and love. As the crowds overflow into the church packed to the doors, people sitting on the floors, any little bit of space just to be there. One way you could explain: it is like climbing the stairway to Heaven to see who is going to get there first waiting for the doors to open to run in there without being checked. Just to be there in the presence of Jesus. Every year when I stand in the church at this adoration, I feel so happy to see all these people all searching for God in their lives, especially so many young people like

crossing the bridge over troubled waters to be held in the arms of an angel. I will comfort you, be not afraid, I'm always with you.

Leaving Medjugorje is heartbreaking for many pilgrims with tears in their eyes at the English Mass on the day they leave as they listen to the beautiful words of Our Lady of Knock hoping to be back in this wonderful place next year. I have seen men and women in tears, leaving heartbroken, afraid of losing the peace they find there as they say goodbye to many friends they have met on the mountain, in restraints sharing stories, drinking coffee together. Meeting after Mass to go to this famous Irish restaurant called Kathy's Kitchen for the lovely Irish breakfast and the homemade brown bread where many Irish pilgrims meet every day.

So this is my experience in Medjugorje since I first went there twelve years ago, a place of peace which will always be close to my heart and in memory of the special friends I have met through the years. Thanks to Our Lady for bringing all these pilgrims from all over the world to Medjugorje to find peace in their hearts and anyone who has been to Medjugorje to find peace in their hearts and anyone who has been to Medjugorje will never forget the trip to this most peaceful place on earth and you will never walk alone again so I leave you with the words of Our Lady 'if you knew how much I love you, you would cry for joy'.

God bless all pilgrims to Medjugorje with peace, hope and love on their journey through life.

*Hanna Mai Hutchison Dingle, Co. Kerry.
(From Medjugorje Herald, Ireland)*

The Healing Power of One "Hail Mary"

By Brother Knight Tony Zuniga

Let me share an unforgettable example of the power of one Hail Mary with the power of belief. This happened about ten years ago.

I receive many phone calls from people asking for prayers. These calls come from all over the world. One day my phone rang and a woman's lovely voice asked me if I was Tony Zuniga. I said yes. She then told me that she had heard about me and wondered if it was true that I help people with all kinds of problems in their lives. I simply told her that I always try to help anybody I can. "What's your problem?" I asked her.

She said, "It's not me, it's my sister. She is very sick and dying. Can you help her?" I had been professing the power of one Hail Mary and the power of belief for so many years that I didn't even ask her what kind of problem or sickness her sister had. I just blurted out, "Tell your sister to believe and to pray one Hail Mary and turn her problem over to Mary, the mother of God. Then tell your sister to forget about her problem and go to sleep. God will take care of everything for her and she will be healed."

I almost went into shock when she answered right back, "What's a Hail Mary?"

And before I could even answer her, she added, "We're Hindu. We are not Christian. But I'm interested in this Hail Mary of yours. Let me get a pencil and paper and write it down." So I recited the Hail Mary to her over the phone and she thanked me. That was it. That's all we shared.

She called back about a month later to tell me that her sister had been completely healed. She also added that both she and her sister had now become Catholics. And that she was very happy because her father and mother were now also thinking of becoming Catholic.

When she told me the above story, I went straight to the Blessed Sacrament and gave thanks once more for what God had accomplished through me. I also thanked the Holy Spirit for prompting me to speak to her about the Hail Mary.

We are not alone. God is always with us. As Bishop Fulton J. Sheen once said, "When God is with you, who dares to go against you?"

And don't forget that His Son Jesus is also with us. He is real, alive and present in the Holy Eucharist in all the tabernacles of the world and available to all of us at all times until the end of the world.

Queen of the Cosmos

Sunday, June 11, 2006

Reinhold Gasser, originally from the Tyrol, but now living with his wife Maureen in Sheffield, visited Medjugorje for the first time in May 2006. He came in search and thanksgiving; he followed the stars – and discovered Mary and Jesus in a most remarkable way. This is his witness.

The last year was a very hard time for Maureen and me. Our daughter was ill and our son separated from his wife and little daughter. I said to Maureen, we will go on a pilgrimage to thank Our Lady for Sonia's recovery and to ask for help for Mark. Maureen's immediate response was, "We will go to Medjugorje!"

I had never had any inclination to go there and it would not have been my choice. Seeing how keen she was I never objected. Maureen had been there on two previous occasions and. Each time she returned, much to my annoyance, she never stopped talking about it.

In Medjugorje we had quite a varied programme arranged – a talk from Ivan, one of the visionaries – to which when asked by Maureen, "What did you think of that?" I replied, "That was well rehearsed." When some pilgrims watched the sun behave in a peculiar manner, of course I gave them a good explanation – I give talks on the sun and planets at my Astronomy Society. The Risen Christ statue, made of bronze, has a liquid coming from one of the legs and pilgrims can be seen catching this liquid on handkerchiefs – of course I gave a good scientific explanation for that as well. However, I must say that the Masses we attended were very special and I prayed for our children.

Now because I am an amateur astronomer I was able to make good use of the very dark skies. I had been at the top of Mount Krizevac, at midnight, just shortly after we arrived and spent a good four hours there observing. On Sunday 21st May I walked about 10 miles' radius and viewed the sky on another hill near Medjugorje, returning about one in the morning.

On Monday 22nd May I was looking forward to another good observation night. Maureen, however, said that Ivan was going to have an apparition at 10pm on Apparition Hill, the first place that our Lady appeared in June 1981, and all the pilgrims were invited to be present. I said I wasn't interested because I wanted to go off somewhere quiet but Maureen said since it was our 35th wedding anniversary would I please come along.

Torches were necessary to help us climb the rocky way to the large Cross and Our Lady's statue near the top of the hill. Hundreds, if not thousands, of pilgrims were already there singing hymns and saying the rosary in various languages in the still darkness. At 10pm Ivan told people to kneel and a wonderful peace and stillness, hard to describe, could be felt in that special place.

After the apparition wide beams of light crossed in all directions lighting up the pilgrims in their standing, kneeling or sitting positions. This time I couldn't give an explanation and just had to accept this was something extraordinary.



The sky was magnificent. All constellations looked at their best as I have never seen them before. Needless to say I had my 8 x 56 binoculars and sky atlas and I knew I would have to wait until the pilgrims descended before I could start my star-gazing session. I was quite pleased that I could combine star gazing with pilgrimage and felt secure especially near the large cross and the white statue of Our Lady. I worked my way across the long constellation of *Hydra*, passing the constellations of *Crater*, *Corvus* and *Libra*, looking for *messier* objects. By then almost all the pilgrims had drifted away. Some ladies sang their almost silent *Ave Maria* and they too left on their way down.

By this time I was looking at the constellation of *Scorpius* low down in the southern horizon. At this point a young lady began to sing in front of the white statue of Our Lady, a very moving negro spiritual, whilst her friend stood next to her. As I looked towards the large cross I saw a figure, merging from what I thought at first were two people, into one figure, becoming clearer and clearer into a very extremely beautiful young lady, extremely elegant, perfect in stature and posture. She wore a white veil over her head and a royal blue and golden garment, of shining quality I am unable to describe. I also could not, in words, describe her stunning beauty and I felt cold shivers go down my spine.

My thoughts drifted back to my past life with all my shortcomings and I said twice in a loud voice, "Why me? Why me?" – knowing that this was Our Lady. As I stood there looking in awe she appeared to be listening to the singing girl pouring her heart out in her spiritual song. I composed myself and wondered if I had lost my senses, and I reached down for my binoculars to see more of her in detail, as she was approximately 10 yards away from me; but all in vain,

the magnification did not work and she was still the same. I lowered my binoculars and looked at her once more. By this time the singer had finished her song and Our Lady then faded away into total darkness. I stood there feeling stunned and in a state of shock.

The two ladies started to make their way back down. Quickly, I got all my things together, made my way over to the white statue of our Lady and shouted loudly, "Excuse me, excuse me!" I did not want to frighten the two young ladies, but they replied with a polite hello. In a rather hasty way I asked them, "Did you see her? Did you see her?" They replied, "See what?" I said, "She was over there! She was over there! She was listening to you while you were singing!" And I pointed with my torch to the spot where she had appeared. "She was listening to you. She must have appeared for you." Both girls said, "No she appeared to you, it was for you, we never saw her." They then gave me a hug and could see from my initial reaction that I was in a state of shock.

The girl who had been singing said she had the most important decision of her life to make and all day she had butterflies in her body, especially while she was singing at our Lady's statue. She said everything had now become clear to her. She sang another two spirituals for Our Lady and we made our separate ways down the hill.

I walked back through Medjugorje looking back to the constellation of *Scorpius* which was now in full view. Our Lady's image was still with me and will remain with me for the rest of my life. It was 2.00am when I reached the house where we were staying. I woke up Maureen and she said, "That hobby of yours has become an obsession!" But I said to her, "Something very strange has happened." She saw immediately that I was very shaken and I told her what had happened on the hill that night.

I was happy as well as perturbed. We decided to say nothing to anyone until I had spoken to a priest. I arranged to see a very saintly priest after 10.00am Mass. He heard my confession and I told him the whole story and asked him what I should do. His advice was that I should share my experience with others.

Now I must point out that Our Lady said nothing to me, and you can draw your own conclusions from this, as I have to, but for me she will always be Our Lady of Medjugorje, Queen of Peace and Queen of the Stars.

• Reinhold and Maureen were members of my group of pilgrims that left Birmingham on the evening of Wednesday, June 17, 2006, arriving in Medjugorje in the early hours of the following day. I spoke to Reinhold a couple of times during the week. He, quite rightly, maintained a

healthy sceptism and a firm belief that some of the 'signs and wonders' at Medjugorje could be explained scientifically. He was a patient listener and presented a calm composure when stating his views and explanations. But it was a changed Reinhold I met with the morning after his encounter with Our Lady. He literally was in a state of shock and awe, and moved to tears, as he explained what happened to him the previous night. He remained in this state for the final two days of the pilgrimage. After dinner on the final evening of our pilgrimage, Reinhold kindly gave his testimony to the rest of the group (around 50) before setting off to meet with the two ladies that had been singing beside Our Lady's statue on the night of the apparition. Reinhold presented me his written testimony five days after returning home to Sheffield.

• It is interesting to note that Our Lady appeared to Reinhold (from the Tyrol) beside the



Crucifix presented by pilgrims from the Tyrol some years ago. She appeared on the right side of Jesus (our left, looking at the picture of the Tyrolean Cross alongside). He was not aware of this coincidence at the time; nor was he aware that Our Lady has also been seen at the foot of the Cross on Krizevac.

• In December 1981, in response to a question from the visionary Ivan about sightings of Our Lady at the foot of the Cross on Krizevac, she responded: "Yes, it is true. Almost every day I am at the foot of the cross. My Son carried the cross, and by it, He saved the world. Every day I pray to my Son to forgive the sins of the world."

(From 'The Medjugorje Message', UK)

A Change of Heart

By Michael Blackburn

Michael had heard of the various 'miracles' which took place in Medjugorje. But when he was there he neither expected nor saw any such 'miracles'.

However, during the return journey one of the pilgrims found that the silver chain of his Rosary had become a light gold colour. This caused excitement amongst the pilgrims and Michael wasn't alone in looking at his Rosary to find out whether his had changed. But no, it hadn't.

The plane carrying the pilgrims landed in England and Michael drove himself home. It was only when he arrived home that he next looked at his Rosary. The silver chain had now changed and was a light gold colour.

Nothing happens without a reason and over the next few weeks Michael was to discover that reason.

Michael is a Eucharistic Minister and takes Holy Communion to residential and nursing homes for the elderly. In one of the homes were husband and wife, Philip and Nellie. When Michael next visited he told them about his Rosary and showed it to them. Philip is an exemplary Catholic, very devoted to Our Lady and to the Rosary. He is also blind; so Nellie

explained to her husband about the light gold colour of the chain.

When Michael visited the following week, Nellie was excited to show him Philip's Rosary.

The silver had become bright gold, as bright as brass!

Nothing happens without a reason and there is a happy sequel to this story.

Philip and Nellie preferred not to receive Holy Communion from a lay person; so week after week they missed the chance of receiving the Eucharist.

But following the change to Philip's Rosary, he and Nellie had second thoughts and decided that they would receive communion from Michael.

Five weeks later Philip died, fortified by the Rites of the Church. But on his death-bed he was too ill to receive Holy Communion. The last time he received was a few days earlier when Michael had visited.

It was not too difficult to understand the change in Michael's and Philip's Rosaries was Our Lady's way of ensuring Philip would receive the Eucharist before he died!

(*"The Medjugorje Message", England*)

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Thank God for children saying grace

Last week I took my children to a restaurant. My six-year-old son asked if he could say grace. As we bowed our heads he said, "God is good. God is great... Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby I heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice-cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, my son burst into tears and asked me, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As I held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked

at my son and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer." "Really?" my son asked. "Cross my heart," the man replied.

Then in a theatrical whisper he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, I bought my kids ice cream at the end of the meal. My son stared at his for a moment and then did something I will remember the rest of my life. He picked up his sundae and without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes; and my soul is good already."

Sometimes we all need some ice cream

Witness

By Vicka Ivankovic (This talk was recorded on the 22 September, 2003 in Medjugorje.)

The main messages of Our Lady, those that she is giving for all of us are prayer; peace; conversion; confession, and fasting. And Our Lady recommends to all of us to pray every day all the parts of the Rosary. And she also recommends that we fast twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, bread and water only. In a special way Our Lady is asking from us to pray and have a very strong faith.

When Our Lady is recommending to us to pray, it doesn't mean that she only wants us to pray by lips and using words. Our Lady is recommending to us from day to day to open our hearts, that our prayer can become real joy to all of us.

Our Lady gave us one beautiful example. She said: All of you in your homes would have one flowering plant. And if you are watering this plant every day, putting a few drops of water, you'll see that this plant will be growing, and pretty soon you will have a beautiful rose blooming. It is same with our hearts. If you put into our hearts every day a few words of prayer with the heart, our heart is going to be growing and developing in the same way that this plant was. And if you don't water this plant for a couple of days you will see that pretty soon this plant will be dying and it will look like as it never existed before.

Very often it happens to some of us that when prayer time comes we try to find different excuses, saying we're tired today, we'll do it tomorrow, or the next day; and then when the next day comes we find different excuses saying we'll do it another day, so little by little we put prayer away from us and then it's kind of letting all those bad influences affect us.

Our Lady says, in the same way that this plant is not able to live without water, we are not able to live without God's graces. She says prayer of the heart is something that you are not able to study or learn how to do. You can only live that, step by step, and making progress every day.

When Our Lady was asking us to fast, she also said: For all the sick ones who are not able to fast with bread and water only, they can plead and make their own way of fasting, making little sacrifices themselves. But Our Lady says that there are many healthy ones who try to find excuses, saying when they fast they get headaches, they get sick. What is really missing there is their strong will to do it. Once we decide to do it out of love for Our Lady and Our Lord, then nothing is going to be difficult and impossible for us.

Our Lady wants our complete conversion. She says: Dear Children, all of you when you have problems, when you have illnesses, all of you think and believe that Jesus and I are far from you. But Our Lady says, no, they are always very near us. But we need to open our hearts, and after that we will realise how much they love us all.

Our Lady also would like us to make little sacrifices. But she would be especially pleased if we would give up sins, if we wouldn't commit sins any more. She also says she is giving us her peace and her love, so that we can bring this peace and this love to our families and our friends.

She is also giving us her blessing and praying for us all.

Our Lady says she would be especially happy if we would renew prayer of the Rosary in our families and in our communities. But she is the happiest when parents pray with their children and children with parents, because only when we are united in prayer, Satan is not able to do us any harm.

Our Lady keeps reminding us that Satan is always there trying to disturb us. In a special way he wants to disturb our prayer and our peace. She recommends us to make our prayers stronger; and the strongest weapon against Satan is Rosary beads in our hands. She is also recommending to all of us to have something blessed with us all the time, either a small medal or cross, something that would help us to defend against Satan.

She also recommends that we place the Holy Mass at the very first place in our lives, because these moments are very important, the most important and the holiest, because during this time the living Jesus is coming to us, Our Lady would like us to be especially prepared so that we are able to receive Jesus with great love and without any excuse.

She also recommends monthly confession, and she says: when you go to confession don't go just because you have sins to confess; you can also ask your Priest for advice during the confession so that you can make one step further after that. Our Lady is also very worried and preoccupied about all the young, about the youth in the world, because young people are living in a very difficult and very serious situation. And we can only help them with our love and prayers of the heart. Also, she says: Dear young people, whatever this modern world is offering to you, everything is so temporary. And you can see that Satan is using every free moment for himself trying to attack us and in a special way he is trying to disturb young people and families.

Our Lady also says that these moments and these times are times for great graces, and she would like us to accept these messages, and to live them in our daily life. She also says that we need to pray for our peace and for peace in the world. But first of all she is asking from us to pray for peace in our own hearts, then for peace in our families and in our communities, and once we have this kind of peace we are supposed to pray for peace in the world. Our Lady says that when you are praying for peace in the world and at the same time you don't have peace in your own hearts, that prayer is not so powerful.

Our Lady recommends that in this special time we make our prayers stronger and that we pray for her intentions and for her plans, and that we pick up a Bible every day and read a few verses and try to live those words during the day. Our Lady also recommends that we pray for the Holy Father, for all the Bishops and Priests, and for all our Church because our Church is in great need of our prayers.

During tonight's apparition Vicka says she is going to pray for all of us, and she is going to

recommend all of us to Our Lady, but also at twenty to six, when she sees Our Lady, we need to open our hearts and present to Our Lady all our desires and wishes.

Vicka described the experience that she and Jakov had, when our Lady took them to see Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.

They were together at Jakov's house when Our Lady came and she told them that they were going to go with her, and Jakov thought once they had gone up there, they were not going to come back! He told Our Lady: Well, Dear Gospa, why don't you take Vicka because she has more brothers and sisters and I'm the only child of my parents!

Vicka says they were thinking how long is the journey going to take, how many days or hours, whether we are going to go up through the sky or down through the ground. But Our Lady took me by the right and Jakov by the left hand and she just took us with her.

The ceiling opened to give us enough space to go through, and in one second we arrived in Heaven. And we were able to see that it is one huge endless space, and there is a special kind of light that does not exist on the Earth at all. We were able to see people. They looked the same. There were no heavy or skinny ones. They were dressed in pink, yellow and grey gowns. They all were praying, singing together, and there were small Angels circling around.

Our Lady told us to have a good look, and see how overjoyed, happy and content those who are in Heaven are. There is a special kind of joy that does not exist on Earth at all.

Purgatory is also one huge space. In Purgatory we were not able to see any faces or people; it was dark and foggy in there. But we could feel that people were suffering in there. Our Lady told us that people there are expecting and waiting for our prayers, so that they could go out of there some day.

As for Hell, it is also one huge space. First we were able to see a big fire there in the middle. And we were able to see people before they were being caught on fire and afterwards, and as they are being caught by the fire they become forms of different animals and they look like they were never human beings before.

Our Lady told us that for all those who are there, it was their choice, their decision, their way of life to get there. And she said that all those who are living on the Earth and who are living against God's will and God's commands, even here they live a kind of hell, so when they get there they just continue with the same.

Our Lady says there are also many people on the Earth who believe that when this life is finished, when we die here, that everything is finished. And Our Lady says that if you think so, you are very wrong, because we are just passers-by on the Earth.

From Međugorje Herald, Ireland

Interview with Fr. Alexis Wiehe, diocese of Toulon, France

Fr. Alexis Wiehe, priest of the diocese of Toulon, recently ordained, came on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in December 2005. The experience of Medjugorje has influenced his life and his vocation. He has the permission of his bishop to incorporate the elements that he received in Medjugorje into his pastoral work.

Can you tell us about the influence that Medjugorje has had on your life and on your vocation?

I am French, but I was born in Mauritius. I left there at the age of 19 to go to Paris for my studies. Previously, from the age of 16 onwards, I walked in faith with the humble and the poor at the school of Mother Teresa. However, I did not have a very solid bond with the Church. I had not managed to understand the Church and to love it. I went to Mass from time to time, and only rarely to confession but never with the heart, and without really understanding the meaning of these sacraments. When I went to France, I was confronted with the modern jungle that is typical of a big capital such as Paris. A time of trial and questioning ensued... after two years in Paris I was in deep despair, so much so that I even contemplated suicide. This idea frightened me so much that I knew that I had to do something... to leave Paris because I was in danger. With my training as a social worker, I thought of going to a third world country with a humanitarian agency. I was strongly attracted to South America and India, but a friend who returned from Medjugorje spoke to me about his experience. I was quite challenged, and when I understood that there was humanitarian work required, I felt that I was really called to Medjugorje. That was in 1996, when I was 21 years of age. This feeling awakened in me an extraordinary hope. I spent 4 months in Medjugorje. I accepted Our Lady's messages with great joy, and I sought to put them into practice. After this, I was no longer the same person, thanks to this school of Mary. I felt the call to consecrate everything to Mary and to put myself totally at her service. I left with an extraordinary expectation for my life, my vocation, and for the Church. It is thanks to Mary that I discovered the mystery of the Church and felt a deep desire to serve it. At that time, being a priest seemed so awesome to me, while I myself seemed too small, too imperfect, too unworthy to become one... But I received the grace to believe in this call from God.

And so you entered the seminary then?

I first joined the Community of the Béatitudes, because it was there that I found brothers and sisters who lived the messages, whereas in other Church environments I rather encountered a certain mistrust towards Medjugorje. I entered the seminary in 1998. During the first two years, I had the opportunity to accompany pilgrimages to Medjugorje. The call to priesthood was confirmed, but not the call to life in the Community. I knew that I was to be a priest at the school of Mary, the school of St Louis Grignon de Montfort, and that I was called to evangelise. I returned to Mauritius, but I did not find a favourable en-

vironment there. After 6 months, I understood that I was to forsake my country. It was truly a bleak time. I did not know to whom I should turn. I returned to France in faith, and I went to Mons. Dominique Rey, bishop of Toulon, who had been consecrated Bishop 6 months previously.

Did your bishop know Medjugorje?

He knew prayer groups inspired by Medjugorje and, as a priest, he had visited Medjugorje. He knew that Medjugorje had an important place in my life, and he was always full of good will. One year later, he encouraged me to accompany a group of young people to Medjugorje! This encouragement from the bishop was an extraordinary source of joy for me: I had the desire to rediscover my first call. I returned, deeply convinced that it was necessary to continue to organise trips, and my bishop gave me the green light. During that year, I accompanied three pilgrimages, which bore much fruit. Subsequently I was ordained a deacon. At that time, in 2003, my bishop heard serious criticisms with regard to Medjugorje, and so I returned with another seminarian to Medjugorje to speak with people, in order to ascertain the source of these criticisms. I asked my bishop what I should do. He found that he did not have all the elements for discernment, yet he did not forbid to me to go there. On the contrary, he said to me: "Show me the fruits of Medjugorje!" That was the second exhortation from my bishop which again was a source of hope. To show the fruits in our own diocese: conversions, vocations, unity etc.

Is one pilgrimage to Medjugorje sufficient for the fruits to endure?

This raises the question as to what would facilitate the blossoming of all the graces received when the pilgrimage itself was over: for the Church, in the Church, at the service of the parishes, of prayer groups, of youth etc. Pondering all that in my heart, while journeying to London with the seminarians, I met Robert Toone who in 1990, together with Father Slavko, launched the first gathering of young people, which became the "Youth Festival" in Medjugorje. In England, it became the movement "Youth 2000". This is a direct fruit of Medjugorje, already integrated into, and at the service of, the local churches. I persuaded myself that this was something to promote and encourage in France. I wondered how to help this movement to develop in France. In Paris, there are prayer groups inspired by Medjugorje, founded by very close friends of mine: the group "Abba", the "Pilgrims of Hope" etc... I am following these developments very closely...

Could you continue to come to Medjugorje after your priestly ordination?

After the ordination, it was time to get to grips with the reality of the diocesan Church, of the parish, of the pastoral work with young people and with students, in which I was immediately immersed. I am a curate in a parish, a university chaplain, and I'm also responsible for the promotion of vocations. This is a lot for a young priest to cope with... A young priest must respond to the concrete reality of his situation: to be at the

service of the people and not just at the service of the projects. He must acknowledge the individual, taking the person into account in order to evangelise better, and to support him all the more. It is sometimes very arid: in a parish, every one is not necessarily open to all that one proposes. My priority is pastoral work among students with the objective of leading them to Mary, so that they follow Jesus in her school. Last year, I came for the first time as a priest, without a very precise pastoral project. This year it is much more structured: I had occasion to take along with me the people who form the student core of my chaplaincy.

What concrete fruits do you see in young people?

Here, the young people experience the love of God, and experience Jesus Christ living today. They experience personal salvation. Some of them had deep wounds which stunted their growth. They experience grace here, the presence of Mary full of grace, and that experience of prayer removes the obstacles. They "surrender". They agree to let themselves be led by God, and follow Jesus. Here in Medjugorje, they also experience "Church", which is something that touches us priests. They discover that the sacraments of the Church are not mere extras but are real opportunities provided by the Church to encounter Jesus. They discover regular sacramental practice and full communion with the Church. Many young people, after a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, have a great desire to be educated in the authentic teachings of the Catechism of the Church. They want to deepen their faith, and to understand better the faith and the teaching of the Church. I know of some who have joined schools of evangelisation.

How is Mary leading towards the Church?

I am deeply convinced that Medjugorje is a gift for the Church. I experienced it personally. For me, the fruit of Medjugorje was putting myself at the service of the Church. Today, I am a priest of the Church. When I sought to discern my vocation, I listened to what my spiritual father and my bishop said to me. I saw how Mary taught me precisely this obedience to the Church. I saw it in the young people that I accompanied.

Is it the same among all pilgrims?

What I saw and what I can attest to, is that there are people who do beautiful things here, who do receive graces, but who do not always bear fruit in the Church because of the lack of subsequent support or because of the limits of that support. I noticed in Medjugorje, or after the pilgrims returned home, people who made use of this place just to let the young people have a merely charismatic experience, or to lead them to a certain apocalyptic vision of time, while stressing only one particular message. I saw at which point there can be a spoiling of the fruits of Medjugorje, by people who have only this role as guide, and who do not have a properly authentic sense of the Church. The desire that I have as a priest, is to see groups well supported both during and after the pilgrimage by people who are in communion with, and deeply committed to,

the Church, and who help other people to follow this path. In important spiritual places like this one, one must retain the spiritual dimension but not at the expense of the loving action of the Church. Belonging to the Church also involves a physical response, which is sometimes very costly. Medjugorje is for the Church.

What could the bishops do to support the fruits of Medjugorje?

They should simply encourage the initiatives of the lay people and offer them support, so that, after the pilgrimage is over, they can continue to meet and to persevere in fruitfulness.

Did you know Father Slavko?

Yes I did, as a seminarian. I undertook a fasting retreat with him. Father Slavko is a beautiful priestly figure for me, a priestly model.

What is role of Mary in the life of the priest and in the life of the parish?

Vital! What they proposed to us in the seminary on the spiritual level was not enough for me. What they propose to us as priests is not enough for me. I need to have this personal attachment to Mary and to consecrate to Mary each one of my days and each person I meet. Mary will help us to find the "formulas" for the new evangelisation: new methods, a new language, a new zeal. My bishop gives me the means to develop that. Mary chose a parish here, in Medjugorje. The reality of a parish is the community of its faithful. I encourage the parishioners to become aware of the call which they have received.

Is Medjugorje also a possible model for the renewal of a parish?

I am convinced that this is so. If I become pastor one day, I will seek to bring to my parish the elements that I saw here: daily rosary, Eucharist, the Way of Cross. Something is given in Medjugorje for the renewal of all the parishes in the universal Church. The consecration to Mary bears fruit.

I am a young priest who still has much to learn. I am enormously joyful and hopeful for the Church and for the world, and this joy and this hope are each engendered by Mary.

Interview by Lidija Paris

Club 99

Long ago, there lived a King. He often wondered why he never seemed content with his life. He had all the riches of this world and the attention of everyone wherever he went, but he still felt something was lacking and he couldn't put his finger on it.

One day, the King woke up earlier than usual to stroll around his palace. He entered his huge living room and came to a stop when he heard someone happily singing away. He saw that one of the servants was singing with a very contented look on his face. This fascinated the King and he summoned the man to his chambers.

The man, his servant, entered the King's chambers as ordered. The King asked him why he was so happy.

The man replied: "Your Majesty, I am nothing but a servant, but I make enough to keep my wife and children happy. We don't need too much, a roof over our heads and warm food to fill our tummy. My wife and children are my inspiration; they are content with whatever little I bring home. I am happy because my family is happy."

Hearing this, the King dismissed the servant and summoned his Personal Assistant to his chambers. The King related to him his personal anguish and then related the story of the servant, hoping that somehow, he would be given an answer to the paradox, that here was a King who had everything but was not contented, whereas, his servant, with so little was extremely contented.

The Personal Assistant listened and after some consideration, replied "Your Majesty, that servant is content because he isn't a member of Club 99" He explained that to know what Club 99 was, the King would have to do the following... place 99 gold coins in a bag and leave them at this servant's doorstep.

The King arranged for 99 gold coins to be placed in a bag at the servant's doorstep. The servant was just stepping out of his house when he saw a bag at his doorstep. Wondering about its contents, he took it into his house and opened the bag. When he opened the bag, he let out a great shout of joy...

Gold coins... so many of them. He could hardly believe it. He called his wife to share his joy. He then took the bag to a table and emptied it out and began to count the coins. He counted out 99 coins and thought it was an odd number so he counted again and again and again only to come to the same conclusion... 99 gold coins.

He began to wonder, what could have happened to that last coin that would have made them 100? He searched his entire house and looked around his backyard for hours, hoping that the one coin might have fallen out. Finally, exhausted, he decided that he was going to have to work harder than ever to make up for the one gold coin to make his an even 100 gold coins.

He got up the next morning, in an extremely horrible mood, shouting at the children and his wife for his delay, not realising that he had spent most of the night conjuring ways of the hundredth gold coin.

He went to work as usual - but not in his usual happy mood

The King immediately noticed that the servant's happiness had gone. He was puzzled and promptly summoned his assistant to explain. The King could not believe that the servant who only yesterday had been singing away and was happy and content with his life had a sudden negative change of attitude. He had expected him to be even happier after receiving the gold coins.

The assistant explained "Your Majesty, your servant has joined Club 99. Members of Club 99 have everything but are never contented, they are always struggling to round off the 99 gold coins to 100!"

We have so much to be thankful for and we can live with very little in our lives, but the minute we are given something bigger and better, we want even more! We never realise the price we pay for always wanting more! We often lose our sleep, our happiness and we hurt the people around us as a price for our growing needs and desires. This is what membership to Club 99 is all about!

- Author Unknown -

MARY AND THE CHILDREN

A Present for Mary:

Our little two year old granddaughter was at Mass with us during the week in the serene and gracious Convent Chapel, After Communion, in the reflective silence, she took out my rosary prayer card with a lovely picture of Mary. She unfolded it and holding it in her hands she sang a little song in her own way. Then she folded it up and put it away. Our Lady must have been delighted; it was September 8th, Our Lady's birthday. It was all so breathlessly beautiful.

Christmas:

There were Christmas carols playing on the radio. Surprised our granddaughter remarked to her mother,

"They said 'Jesus' on the radio."

She then went to her toy phone and said, "Hello, Mary, how is Jesus?"

The Rosary:

We pray the Rosary in the church one afternoon a week for children of the parish. Our group is tiny. But recently a lovely young mother has joined us, sitting her baby on a cuddle rug with some toys while we pray.

One day she forgot her Rosary beads and when it was her turn to lead the decade she used the baby's toes. As she wriggled each little toe for the ten Marys, the baby chortled and gurgled. It was one of the sweetest Rosaries.

Dear Mother, Bless our children.

Sent by Pauline Diack, Dunedin

Christian One Liners

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited-until you try to sit in their pews.
 Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisers.
 It is easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one.
 The good Lord didn't create anything without a purpose, but mosquitoes come close.
 When you get to your wits' end, you'll find God lives there.
 People are funny; they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.
 Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door forever.
 Quit griping about your church; if it was perfect, you couldn't belong.
 The phrase that is guaranteed to wake up an audience: "And in conclusion."
 If the church wants a better preacher, it only needs to pray for the one it has.
 God Himself does not propose to judge a man until he is dead. So why should you?
 To make a long story short, don't tell it.
 If your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing, you should consider running for a job in Washington, DC.
 Some minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.
 Peace starts with a smile.
 I don't know why some people change churches; what difference does it make which one you stay home from?

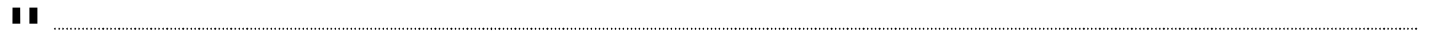
A lot of church members who are singing "Standing on the Promises" are just sitting on the premises.
 We were called to be witnesses, not lawyers or judges.
 Outside of traffic, there is nothing that holds this country back as much as committees.
 Be fishers of men. You catch them - He'll clean them.
 Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.
 Don't put a question mark where God put a full stop.
 Don't wait for six strong men to take you to church.
 Forbidden fruits create many jams.
 God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.
 God grades on the cross, not the curve.
 God loves everyone, but probably prefers "fruits of the spirit" over "religious nuts!"
 God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.
 He who angers you controls you!
 If God is your co-pilot - swap seats!
 Prayer: Don't give God instructions - just report for duty!
 The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.
 The Will of God will never take you to where the Grace of God will not protect you.
 We don't change the message, the message changes us.
 You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him.
 The best mathematical equation I have ever seen: 1 cross + 3 nails= 4 given.

God is love.

Once there was a young man who was having doubts about the existence of God. So he paid a visit to a monk who had a reputation for holiness.
 He asked the monk, 'Do you believe in God?'
 'Yes, I do,' the monk answered.
 'On what evidence do you believe?' the young man asked.
 'I believe in God because I know him,' came the reply. 'I experience the presence of God within me every day.'

'But how is that possible?' the youth asked.
 'When we love, we experience God, and doubt vanishes like early morning mist before the sun,' replied the monk.
 The youth thought about this for a while, and then asked, 'How can I achieve this kind of certainty?'
 'By acts of love,' came the reply. 'Try to love your neighbours; love them actively and unceasingly. As you learn to love them more and more, you will become more and more con-

vinced of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. This has been tested. This is the true way.'
 The monk was only echoing the words of St. John: 'My dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God.'
 Van Gogh said something similar: 'The best way to know God is to love many things. Love a friend, a wife, something, and you will be on the right way of knowing about God.'
Flor McCarthy, in 'New Sunday & Holy Day Liturgies'



Questionnaire

We would appreciate it if all readers WHO HAVE NOT YET CONTACTED US would fill in the questionnaire below. Any comments, requests or criticisms will be welcome

WE WILL REPEAT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE EVERY ISSUE. But only those readers at present on our mailing list who have not responded (**their name on the address label will be followed by the sign '\$\$'**) will be assumed not to be interested in continuing to receive Medjugorje News and **THEIR NAMES MAY BE DELETED**. (*If those who reply wish to give a financial contribution, we would be very grateful, but this is not essential.*)

Yes, I wish to continue receiving the 'Medjugorje News'

No, please take me off your mailing list

My address has changed and is now:

Name **Address** (if not on back or if changed)

Comments

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The following can be obtained from Medjugorje News by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope (225x114mm):

- The ten page Apostolic letter "**Rosarium Virginis Mariae**"
- The seven page Apostolic letter "**Mane Nobiscum Domine**" from the Pope.
- The **four triptych pages**, one for each series of mysteries, with a comment for each Hail Mary (*I have found these to be useful aids to meditation when praying the Rosary*).
- John Paul II's "**Letter to the Elderly**" (6 pages).
- John Paul II's Encyclical "**Ecclesia De Eucharistia**" (12 pages)
- **The Testimony of Catalina Rivas** (5 pages)
- "**Medjugorje: Encounter with the Queen of Peace**", a comprehensive document on the happenings at Medjugorje (11 pages)
- Benedict XVI's Encyclical "**Deus Caritas Est**" (11 pages)

A koha to help with cost of photocopying would be appreciated.

Important reminder

When writing to us or sending us new names and/or addresses, please:

- **Include your Return Address**
- **NAMES & ADDRESSES MUST BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, BLOCK LETTERS**

Have you enjoyed reading this issue?

Is it helping you in your spiritual life?

Do you think others would benefit from reading it?

What about passing it on to someone or leave it in any church porch/foyer or anywhere else, so others can read it too?

- News from Medjugorje can be found at the official website: <http://www.medjugorje.hr/>
- MEDJUGORJE NEWS has its own website: www.medjugorjenews-nz.org

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