



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
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www.spiritofmedjugorje.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATE - FREE WILL OFFERING - PLEASE SEE PAGE 8

If this is the first time you have received this newsletter, and you would like a "Beginner's Guide," please contact us for one.



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VOL. 29, NO. 3

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

March 2016

CURRENT MONTHLY MESSAGE OF FEBRUARY 25, 2016

ON THE 25TH DAY OF EACH MONTH, THE BLESSED VIRGIN GIVES A MESSAGE TO THE VISIONARY, MARIJA, THAT IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WORLD.



"Dear children! In this time of grace, I am calling all of you to conversion. Little children, you love little and pray even less. You are lost and do not know what your goal is. Take the cross, look at Jesus and follow Him. He gives Himself to you to the death on the cross, because He loves you. Little children, I am calling you: return to prayer with the heart so as to find hope and the meaning of your existence, in prayer. I am with you and am praying for you. Thank you for having responded to my call."

This photo of the picture shown above was taken behind St. James Church in 2006. Translated into English from Croatian, the words read, "I did everything for you."



Fr. Bill Kiel

Why Do I Pray?

By Fr. Bill Kiel

Prayer usually is an integral part of our life. Sometimes we pray often and fervently; other times we slack in our prayers and treat prayer as a casual part of life. At times, we pray for specific wants and needs; and there are times when we do not know for what to pray. We may pray through the intercession of a favorite saint, the Blessed Mother, or go directly to God our Father, Jesus, His Son, or the Holy Spirit. During the season of Lent, prayer should be one way to bring us closer to God and realize His love for us, especially through meditating on the Passion of Jesus. *"...today I am calling all of you to prayer. You cannot live without prayer, because prayer is a chain which brings you closer to God"* (1/25/16).

As we journey through Lent, the examination of conscience should help us be aware of our sinfulness and to what extent we decide against God and yield to temptation and sin. We are reminded we *"are free to in freedom decide for God or against Him. See where Satan wants to pull you into sin and slavery"* (1/25/16). If we answer the call to prayer and intercession of our Blessed Mother, She will lead us to Her Son. The Blessed Mother wants all of us to be united with

As of February 25, 2016, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 13,234.

God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Are we responding to the call?

"Pray that you come to know my Son; pray that your soul may be one with Him. ...pray to come to know the truth; to have firm faith which will lead your heart and which will transform your pain and sufferings into love and hope" (2/2/16). These words make us aware we should be praying, especially during Lent, in thanksgiving for the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, and to recognize Jesus as the Truth. As we grow in faith and deepen our relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we should be able to unite our sufferings with the suffering of Jesus.

Jesus showed us His love for us and gave us great hope in His resurrection. Can we pray for anything more important? Our other prayer intentions are important, but our relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the most important.



Praying at the statue in front of St. James Church in Medjugorje

During the season of Lent, make time in your day to quietly meditate on your relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However you pray to Them – directly or through intercessions – just pray, pray, pray!

February 2, 2016 Message to Mirjana

"Dear children, I have called you and am calling you anew to come to know my Son, to come to know the truth. I am with you and am praying for you to succeed. My children, you must pray much in order to have all the more love and patience; to know how to endure sacrifice and to be poor in spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, my Son is always with you. His Church is born in every heart that comes to know Him. Pray that you can come to know my Son; pray that your soul may be one with Him. That is the prayer and the love which draws others and makes you my apostles. I am looking at you with love, with a motherly love. I know you; I know your pain and sorrows, because I also suffered in silence. My faith gave me love and hope. I repeat, the Resurrection of my Son and my Assumption into Heaven is hope and love for you. Therefore, my children, pray to come to know the truth; to have firm faith which will lead your heart and which will transform your pain and sufferings into love and hope. Thank you."

Election Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You told us to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God. Enlighten the minds of our people [in] America. May we choose a President of the United States, and other government officials, according to Your Divine Will. Give our citizens the courage to choose leaders of our nation who respect the sanctity of unborn human life, the sanctity of marriage, the sanctity of marital relations, the sanctity of the family, and the sanctity of the aging. Grant us the wisdom to give You what belongs to You, our God. If we do this, as a nation, we are confident You will give us an abundance of Your blessings through our elected leaders. Amen.

Our thanks to Pat Weller, Dianne Yochim, Peggy Chludzinski, Cindy Bielanic, Mary Tirak, Georgia Chludzinski, Vickie DeCoursey, Kathy Luschini, Rose Leach, Sue Kirby, Julie Hansen, Louise Lotze, and Barb Sirianni for their help with the February mailing. We thank Louise Lotze and Celeste Migneault for their photos in this issue. We also thank our proofreader, Pat Berrier, and our webmaster, Jason Klins. Jason (my son) is getting married next month, so the April issue may be a little late.

Prayer Intentions of Pope

Francis for March:

Families in Difficulty: That families in need may receive the necessary support and that children may grow up in healthy and peaceful environments.

Persecuted Christians:

That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.



“Prayer Works Miracles in You and Through You”

By June Klins

Last fall, my father thought he had a bladder infection, so he went to the doctor, who sent him for a PSA test for possible prostate problems. The number came out 81.9. For his age (87), it should have been 4. We all thought this was an error. Even some medical professionals said they never heard of a PSA that high, but another test confirmed its validity. One doctor suggested this might not be cancer, but just an infection. That was our hope, as he was scheduled for a biopsy.

Two days before Christmas, my grandchildren had a Christmas program at school which was scheduled the exact time as my father’s follow-up appointment for his biopsy. If there is one time I would have wanted the gift of bi-location (being in two places at once), this was it. We did not think my father’s prognosis would be bad, because the doctors were in no hurry for the biopsy, so my father encouraged me to go to the school program. I went to our Adoration Chapel to pray about it, and then felt in my heart I was to go with my father.

When the doctor broke the news that my father had an aggressive form of prostate cancer, and that on a scale of 1 to 10, he was a “10,” it was like someone kicked me in the stomach. We never expected this. The doctor said he would give him a hormone shot that day, that hot flashes were a common side effect, and that he would need to go for a bone scan to see if the cancer had spread to his bones. A nurse came in and said that she did not understand why the doctor said he would give him the shot that day, because the insurance company had to approve it first. She said it would a minimum of two weeks, but possibly up to four months to get the approval. We left the doctor’s office pretty much in shock.

When we got to my father’s house, I stayed for a while with him. He was worried about this news ruining the family’s Christmas. When I left, I drove around looking for a good spot to park and call my sons. I soon found myself at the Carmelite monastery. After I called my sons, I decided to go in and pray. As I walked in the door, it was dark, but I could see a painting on an easel up by the altar. I assumed it was a painting of the Nativity, since Christmas was two days away. But no, it was the Divine Mercy image,



Divine Mercy image at the Carmelite monastery

with the words, “Jesus, I trust in You.” I knew at that moment that it was not by accident that I had been drawn there. After I prayed for a while, I left feeling so much at peace. I went home and immediately contacted the printer to see if things could be re-arranged in the January issue, so that a prayer request could be put in for my father. Then I sent a prayer request to my Medjugorje internet prayer group of over 4,300 people (www.iipg.org). Soon after, my father called to say that the insurance company had already approved the hormone shot and it was scheduled for the Monday after Christmas – first little miracle!

In the meantime, our newsletter was sent out and we were receiving many notes of prayers and Masses being said for my father and my family. The bone scan was scheduled in January. We were pretty concerned about this and braced ourselves for the worst. We shed tears of gratitude when the bone scan revealed that the cancer had not spread to his bones, and a subsequent x-ray of his spine showed up negative for a suspected lesion – second little miracle!

My father’s next appointment was scheduled for July, with another PSA prior to that. So it was a waiting game until then. But the first week of February, the doctor’s office called and said they wanted to see him on February 19 and to have another PSA test before then. He went for the test on Shrove Tuesday, and called me that night with the results. This time the number was 5 – third little miracle! The hormone treatment was working, thanks to all your prayers and Masses!

My father and my family want to thank you for all the prayers and Masses said for him. We are so grateful. But please do not stop praying. He is not out of the woods yet.

On September 25, 2013 and October 25, 2013, Our Lady used the same words: “Prayer works miracles in you and through you.” We say, “Thank you for having responded to Her call.”

Editor’s note: Because your prayers seem to be so powerful, we are thinking of starting an online “Spirit of Medjugorje prayer group.” We need a volunteer to moderate the requests. If interested, please contact me at ijklins1981@verizon.net.

Early Messages

As we reported previously, all the early messages can be read online now at www.medjugorje.org/messagesall.htm. The following is a little sample of what you can read there. (Our Lady’s and Jesus’ words are in italics.)

Monday, November 2, 1981

Why did you show us paradise the day before yesterday?
“I did it so that you could see the happiness which awaits those who love God.”

Jesus appears to them crowned with thorns, and with injuries all over His body. The children are afraid. “Do not

be afraid. It is my Son. See how He has been martyred. In spite of all, He was joyful and He endured all with patience.”

Jesus tells them: “Look at me. How I have been injured and martyred. In spite of all, I have gained the victory. You also, my angels, be persevering in your faith and pray so that you may overcome.”



The Greatest Miracle Ever

By Tara Rohatgi

The seed is planted

About two years ago, my husband and I and our three children (4th on the way) went on a pilgrimage trip to Medjugorje. This was not something we would have ever imagined ourselves doing, but we felt ourselves being called to go and it was an amazing, life-changing experience. A friend of mine assured me that we would continue to see the fruits of our time in Medjugorje unfolding in our family long after we returned. How right she was! One of these fruits was a growing desire to attend daily Mass again. This desire was growing in my heart for months after our return, then something my sister Erin said to me when she was visiting kept coming to my mind and tugging at my heart. "If we really believed what we say we believe about the Eucharist, we would be there (at Mass) every single day!" Wow.... The more I thought about that the more I knew she was right. If we truly believed that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus and

that Jesus is God and that God, the Creator of the Universe waits for us at Mass to give us the gift of Himself, how could we ever miss that?! The more I contemplated this truth the more my heart longed for a seemingly impossible grace; to be able to receive Jesus daily at Mass with my busy family of six: myself, my husband, and kids ages 14, 10, 7, and 2 months.

Over the years, since my husband converted to and I came back to the Catholic faith in 2007, there were times when we attended daily Mass regularly. It was always a grace filled time for us and our family when we made the effort to get to Mass during the week, but it wasn't always our top priority. Things would happen and our commitment would fade and we would stop going every day. Even when we were getting to daily Mass regularly, once summer arrived getting to Mass everyday with all the kids would seem impossible! I never had enough strength of conviction to get the kids up and out to Mass during summer vacation. At the first sign of resistance, my will would crumble. Convinced it was impossible to get them all there, I would resign myself to resuming daily Mass again in the fall.

Seeking help from our Blessed Mother

So last Spring, about a year since our trip to Medjugorje, my husband and I were not attending daily Mass as much anymore. His job had gotten busier and it was harder for him to fit Mass into his schedule. But as we got closer to the end of the school year I began pondering my sister's words again, "If we really believed...we would be there every day" and the desire to

attend daily Mass as a family grew stronger in my heart. Although it still seemed impossible to me at the time and I could not imagine how it could work with my husband's work being so busy, the kids going to different schools and a new baby in the mix, I wrote down a prayer for the Blessed Mother's intercession: "Please pray that our schedules and lives can be arranged so that we will be able to attend Mass together as a family every day". Yes, EVERY DAY. Why not shoot for the moon, right? After all, with God all things are possible! And as Our Lady's mission is to lead us closer to her Son, I knew I could trust her motherly care and prayers for us. I placed my prayer in our prayer jar at the feet of our statue of the Blessed Mother and waited for a miracle.

It wasn't long before things started to change. My husband was able to decrease some of his responsibilities at work, so his schedule became a bit more relaxed. He and I started going to daily Mass together again. When my oldest daughter Meghan finished with school in early June, she happily joined us at Mass every day. By the time the boys got out of school my husband and I had been attending daily Mass again for about a month. And then it happened.

Day one of summer vacation arrived. And I got my miracle. My husband and I explained that we had been attending daily Mass and now that school was out, we were going to continue to attend daily Mass as a family. Plain and simple.

Oh sure, there were some complaints and whining to contend with at first. After all, this was summer! This was not expected! "You mean we have to get up and get dressed for Mass every morning?!" Yes. Every morning. It wasn't easy, but my husband was committed and with his leadership and support, I was able to stand firm despite the objections. Surprisingly, the complaints did not last long and even more surprising was the tremendous outpouring of grace we received as we began our days with Jesus. Even the grace to wake up on time everyday and have everyone ready and out the door was a miracle!

Grace upon Grace

As the weeks went on, this morning routine began to shape our days and our lives in ways that we did not even appreciate at first. We were being filled with God's word and nourished by His Body and Blood every day and it began to change us. Fighting began to decrease. Patience and laughter and listening began to increase. Our home became more peaceful and joyful. Of course we

still have challenging moments, as all families do! But there was a noticeable change going on. Love was growing. As we made God the top priority in our family, so many other things just seemed to start falling into place. Our marriage



Tara's children on their way to Mass in Medjugorje

"If receiving my Son in the Eucharist is the center of your life, then do not be afraid; you can do everything" (Our Lady, 6/2/12).

was strengthened and blessed and we all seemed to enjoy each other more. We began to trust more in God's love and to rely more on the help of our Blessed Mother. But we hadn't had to face any real challenges to our new routine yet. Then we went on our family vacation to Maine in July and we faced the first test of our resolve.

We stay at a cottage on Peabody Pond in Sebago, Maine for a week with just our family. No guests, no friends, just us. Time to get away from it all and reconnect as a family. It is one of my favorite weeks of the year. But it's in rural Maine. To get to daily Mass we would need to drive anywhere from 25 minutes to 45 minutes each way. The Masses were at different churches and times depending on the day. This could mean an hour and a half in the car with all the kids, just to get to Mass. But we had been going every day for about a month and a half... Were we really going to do this?

We're "all in"

My husband and I quickly decided to stick with our commitment to getting to Mass every day, even on vacation, no matter how we had to rearrange our plans or how far we had to drive. We were "all in"! And boy were the graces flowing that week! We had chats in the car about why Mass is so important and how blessed we are to be able to attend Mass daily. We talked about how people in other parts of the world have to travel much further than this to get to Mass and about Catholics who are being persecuted and who risk their lives to attend

Mass. It was an amazing, faith-filled vacation. God seemed to be using this time to prepare us for the even bigger challenge to our resolve that lay ahead... The start of school.

As the summer came to an end and we started preparing for going back to school, we realized we were going to have to make some bigger changes to accommodate continuing to get to daily Mass while getting the boys to school on time. Meghan had decided she wanted to home school for high school, so that was one less place to drive in the morning (and another amazing blessing!). We found a 7 a.m. Mass close by, which meant everyone to bed early and up at 6 a.m. to be ready to go on time. We had our plan and by the grace of God, we were sticking to it!

The school year began. And miraculously we continued getting to Mass every day. Sure, we rush around in the mornings. We often say our family prayer on the way in the car with Michael finishing his breakfast and Mary still in her pajamas. Sometimes I run out the door forgetting to even comb my hair! But the Lord gets us there. We settle

into our pew and pray together. Although we contend with many distractions (especially from our active and mobile 1 year old!), an amazing thing happens...in the midst of our busy family life we get to listen to the word of God and receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. We encounter Christ and His love for us and this makes us want to share His love with others. Being with Jesus is the most important thing our family does.

The greatest miracle ever

We have now been attending daily Mass as a family for about eight months and counting. We have had many new experiences and blessings along the way. We've attended Masses in Portuguese, Latin and Ugandan, in countless different churches and several different states. We

have a new appreciation for the universal Church! Making sure we get to Mass no matter what else we have going on is sometimes a challenge but also an adventure! When I think about how long we have been doing this, it still seems impossible! I know without a doubt it is Christ's grace and strength that get us there along with the prayers of our Blessed Mother. I am so grateful for Our Lady's loving care that called us to Medjugorje and for her prayers that continue to sustain us on this journey to her Son. I am amazed at what God has done and continues to do in our lives! It truly is a miracle, but it's not the *greatest* miracle...

A few weeks ago a woman who attends the 7 a.m. Mass with us asked the kids if they could think about why they come to Mass everyday and let her know in a day or two. She explained that she teaches 5th grade CCD and she wanted to know the best way to explain to 5th graders why they should come to Mass. After giving it some thought, my 10 year old son Matthew told her, "It's so cool that we get to experience *the greatest miracle ever!*...That Jesus becomes the bread and we get to receive Him"! That pretty much sums it up. The Real Presence of Christ

in the Eucharist offered for us is the greatest miracle ever!

We have been so blessed to be able to attend Mass every day! I am so grateful to God for His Goodness and Mercy, for the love of the Blessed Mother, for my husband, Gar, who has journeyed with me in faith and loves me completely, for my amazing children who fill my heart with wonder and for my sister Erin, whose love for the Eucharist inspired us all! May the Lord continue to nourish us on this earthly journey and bring us all to our eternal home with Him one day!

Mary Queen of Peace pray for us!

Editor's note: Tara lives in Waltham, MA. She is the former Operations Manager for Live the Fast (www.livethefast.com). Tara's story was an answer to prayer. I was very moved in January by the Mass which was celebrated on an altar made of snow and attended by 500 people when traffic was stalled on the PA Turnpike for 24 hours. It made me feel so blessed to be Catholic. I prayed in front of the Monstrance in our Adoration Chapel for God to send a story for this issue, hoping to get a story about Mass. When I got home, Tara's story was in my email!

*"Let Holy
Mass be
your life"
(Our Lady,
4/25/88).*



*Tara's family outside of their parish,
Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted, in
Waltham, MA*

Fr. Michael's Confession Experience

By June Klins

In April of 2009, Fr. Michael Lightner spoke at the Totally Yours Conference in St. Charles, Illinois. Father Michael was introduced as a priest who was a football player with dreams of playing for the NFL, but is now scoring touchdowns for the Blessed Mother.

Fr. Michael said he was the youngest of 11 children, raised in a good Catholic home, where the children were told they had to attend Mass every week. When Michael went away to college, he got his first taste of freedom and stopped attending Mass regularly. After his girlfriend broke up with him, he turned to alcohol, marijuana, LSD, cocaine, and other drugs. One night when he was home for Thanksgiving, his mother found his hip sack of marijuana. At this point, she decided that Michael needed to join the pilgrimage to Medjugorje she was leading over his Christmas break. (His mother had been leading pilgrimages to Medjugorje for many years and at the time of this conference, she had been there 87 times!) Michael agreed to go, even though he and his siblings had always made fun of her trips there.

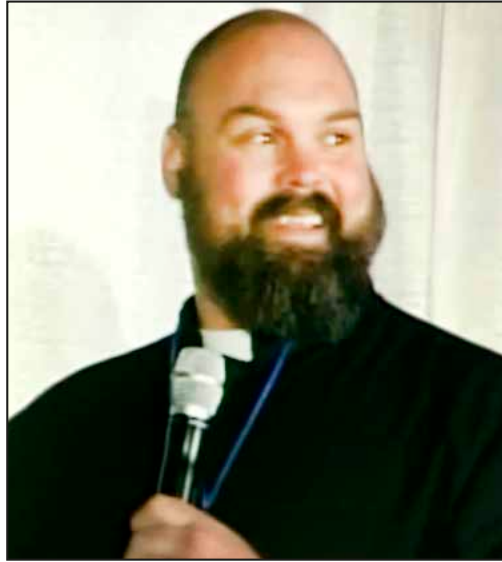
When the group arrived in Medjugorje after a grueling 32-hour trip, Michael's mother said to him, "Michael, I ask one thing of you – just one thing. When you're in Medjugorje, I ask you to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If you can't do it for yourself, do it for me." He replied, "OK, Mom, I will."

Their first full day, Michael's group, which consisted of mostly elderly people (according to his perception of elderly, since he was 20 at the time), got into taxis to get to the church from where they were staying. Michael wanted to walk, so as he was walking across the fields to the church, he said what he called his "first real prayer" of his life: "God, if You exist, I've never felt You. I never saw You, and I never heard You. You could be the biggest con that 12 drunk men ever started. You've got seven days. Otherwise, I'm running my life the way I want to."

When Michael arrived at the church, he looked through all the outside confessionals on the side of the church and there were no English confessors. He went into the church, and there he found an English priest. He decided that since he was there, he should not hold back, but confess everything. This is his testimony of his confession:

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been five years since my last confession. I knelt down. It was the old-style confessional with the grate across. There was no seat to be seated. And I went through the Commandments, and I mean I broke most of them – nine out of ten. If you count gossip for the murder one – killing someone's reputation – then I broke all ten. So as I'm [kneeling] there for 40 minutes, I'm picturing this little old 70 year-old priest with gray hair and none on top, with blood coming out of his ears, from

what I'm telling him. I'm giving him all the gritty details about the drugs and the womanizing, and beating people up for a living, and all of that. And then he comes back and he says, 'For your penance, what I'd like you to do is say five Our Fathers.' And I'm like, 'What?' I didn't say that, but I thought that. 'What? Five Our Fathers? It seems kind of miniscule for that.' And then he went on and he said, 'I want you to meditate on each of the wounds of Jesus on the cross – very methodically and slowly on those wounds – because it's by those wounds that you are forgiven today. Can you do that?' And I said, 'Yes.' And then he started the words of absolution: 'God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins...'



Fr. Michael at the Totally Yours Conference in 2009

"At that moment, I was kneeling like this at the grate (gestures a 90° angle).

And as he's going through that absolution, all of a sudden, I find myself and my shoulders are pinned to the back of the confessional. Now at that point, I was a college football player. I was 315 [lbs.]. I benched about 440 – 450. I squatted well over 600. I was about 15% body fat, but I could move houses... I was forced down like this (gesture) in a double reverse stance, where your legs are pinned underneath you. And I felt this presence inside the confessional. And then he [the priest] continued and he said, 'Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' And at that moment, I felt a piercing in the center of my chest right where my sternum is. And then there was kind of this pain – dull pain – and then this rumbling, almost like a small skirmish, and then something was released to the point where, when it was released, I started to come up... and I was back, with my back straight at the grate again. And my first thought was, 'Oh my God – He's real!' And then I got scared. Then I got scared. And I started to weep.... So I went out to do my penance. I knelt down in front of the cross – the old cross that was there. It was about a 14 feet [tall] cross without a corpus. It was near the confessionals. And I knelt down there, and I cried for about 45 minutes. Like Father Rick [see our April 2015 issue], I saw the people I had hurt. I saw the pain and the damage that I did in their life. And it hurt me to see them hurting for what I did. It was excruciating. Then, all of a sudden, I kind of came out of that, and I pulled myself out, and all of a sudden it was time for 10 a.m. Mass..."

Inside St. James, Michael sat in the choir loft in the front of the church. He said his confession kept running through his head. Then he said he had the most beautiful ecstasy experience of his life. "It was better than any drug; it was better than sex; it was better than winning the big game. It

was better than anything multiplied by 100,000 or million. You could not touch this feeling. It was perfect joy, perfect peace, perfect love, happiness, contentment – knowing that the Father loves you and created you and [you] have purpose in your life. And I was literally afraid to open my eyes.”

Father said this was the beginning part of his conversion, and there were a lot of other things that happened on that

trip, but this experience really put him on the right path. Months later, his mother invited him to go with her again to Medjugorje, and on this second pilgrimage he received his vocation.

Editor's note: You can view an interview with Fr. Lightner on www.marytv.tv, "Fruit of Medjugorje" episode #36.

A Fool for Christ

By June Klins

Minutes after I posted on our Facebook page that the February issue was available on our website, one of the members posted that the picture of the confessionals on page two was upside down. I immediately went to the website to look, and sure enough, it was upside down. Yikes!!! Assuming it was a computer problem, I then looked at the printed issue and it was upside down there as well. I thought, "How could we have missed this when we proofed the newsletter?" We had proofed it multiple times, and we had prayed for heavenly help from various saints, including our patron saint this year, St. Francis of Assisi. I emailed our proofreader, Pat, and to my surprise, she wrote back, "Hilarious!"

When I asked my son, Jason, who is our webmaster, if it was possible for him to turn it upright on the website, he joked that this issue might be worth money now because of the error. (He used to collect coins when he was young and recalled that coins with errors were worth more money.) Pat suggested that maybe we could have a monthly contest

for our readers to find our errors. By now, I was finding it funny, too. At first, I had felt embarrassed, but soon I found myself laughing as well.

At Mass two days later, the priest had a votive Mass of St. Francis, since it was a Thursday and there was no saint's memorial that day. His homily was about St. Francis and how he always maintained his joy, even in suffering. When I got home, I searched some websites to read more about St. Francis and learned that he had a sense of humor and poked fun at himself, calling himself a "fool for Christ." He is often pictured preaching to birds and fish, taking literally the Gospel's command to share the Good News with every living creature. I read that Francis knew that his "talking to the animals" would make people laugh. One author wrote of him, "The sense of humor salts all his escapades."

Do you think St. Francis might have had something to do with the picture being upside down? HMMMMMM.

"Pray, fast, and joyfully witness your faith, little children..." (Our Lady, 10/25/09)

"The ultimate goal of fasting is to help each one of us to make a complete gift of self to God." ~ Pope Benedict XVI

The Wedding Cross

By Bonnie Nesser

A friend gave me a book to read for Christmas in 2011, *I've Come to Tell the World that GOD Exists* by June Klins. I began to read it that winter and, of course, had my favorite stories and sections.

That year, my husband and I decided to go to Medjugorje for our 30th wedding anniversary (his first trip there, my third). As we introduced ourselves to each other as pilgrims preparing for this spiritual journey, I met June Klins, the author of the book I had been reading all winter. Wow, God is so amazing!

I talked with June about a section of the book I wanted to use for our marriage preparation at our parish. My husband and I are one of the couples that assist in this task. The story is called "The Triumph of the Cross in the Home" by Father Angelus Shaughnessy, OFM, Cap. The story tells of a small town near Medjugorje with only 13,000 inhabitants. The amazing thing is that there is no divorce there. The people attribute this to the crucified Lord. The

couples don't talk about finding the perfect partner, but that they have found their "cross." A cross is part of their wedding ceremony and they are reminded to go to Jesus on the crucifix during difficulties in their marriage, not to a psychiatrist or therapist.



Jon Kossan's handcrafted crosses

June gave her permission for us to give a copy of this story to the couples. We read it together during one of their marriage prep meetings with us. My husband and I also purchase a crucifix to give to each couple. We are praying that this small gesture will make couples focus on Jesus in their marriage struggles, and not on themselves. It's a great anniversary present to married couples as well!

Editor's note: Bonnie lives in Uniontown, PA. Jon Kossan (see our November 2015 issue) handcrafts beautiful oak crosses, some with corpuses from Medjugorje. 100% of the donation proceeds goes to St. Philomena Primary School in Uganda (see our February 2016 issue). For more information, contact him at 701-530-9310 or kossanjj@bis.midco.net.

Divine Mercy Sunday is April 3 this year. Jesus told St. Faustina, "The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion [on the first Sunday after Easter] shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment." In this Year of Mercy, let us encourage people to take advantage of this great grace.

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MARY IS CALLING YOU

On June 24, 1981 in Medjugorje, Our Lady appeared to six children. She identified Herself as the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Peace, and has continued to appear daily. Her message is PEACE, peace with God and man. Her words to the visionaries, "I have come to tell the world that God exists. He is the fullness of life, and to enjoy this fullness and obtain peace, you must return to God."

Today, all but three of the visionaries have daily apparitions of the Blessed Mother. During the apparitions, the visionaries do not react to light, don't hear any sound or react to being touched. They feel that they are outside of time and space. All the visionaries declare to see the Blessed Virgin as they see other people - in three dimension. They pray and speak with Her.

The Blessed Mother is confiding ten secrets to each visionary (some are chastisements for the world) and promises to leave a visible sign at the place of the apparitions in Medjugorje for all humanity. This time, this period of grace, is for CONVERSION

and a DEEPENING OF FAITH. After the visible sign, those still living will have little time for conversion.

Father Jozo Zovko, who was the pastor of St. James when the apparitions began, has spoken about what he calls "the weapons" or the "the five stones" of Our Lady. They are: prayer with the heart, especially the Rosary; Eucharist; Holy Bible; monthly Confession; and fasting.

The publisher recognizes and accepts that the final authority regarding the apparitions at Medjugorje rest with the Holy See in Rome.

To borrow an original prayer cloth from Medjugorje for a week, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the address below. You must include your phone number. If you want a prayer cloth we made to keep, send a self-addressed stamped business size (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") envelope with \$.71 postage on it.



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