

THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
P.O. BOX 6614 • ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16512
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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CURRENT MONTHLY MESSAGE OF AUGUST 25, 2014

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.



September is the month of the Sorrowful Mother. We thank Jeff Tiner for the artwork shown above. His conversion story was in our October, 2010 issue. Since then, through the power of prayer, Jeff has become a Lay Canonian Brother. He remains on death row as he awaits a new trial that has been granted. We also thank Deacon Allen Vandecoevering, Jeff's spiritual director, for sending us Jeff's artwork.

"Dear children! Pray for my intentions, because Satan wants to destroy my plan which I have here and to steal your peace. Therefore, little children, pray, pray, pray that God can act through each of you. May your hearts be open to God's will. I love you and bless you with my motherly blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Our Lady of Sorrows

By Fr. Bill Kiel

During the month of September, three Marian days are on the liturgical calendar: September 8 – the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 12 – the Most Holy Name of Mary and September 15 – Our Lady of Sorrows.

The Sorrows of Mary are in relation to being present to Jesus, Her Son, during His suffering and death. She did not lose faith. Mary was with Jesus until the end.

As we reflect on the suffering of Mary, the fourth sorrow is meeting Jesus on His way to Calvary, the fifth is standing at the foot of the cross, the sixth is Jesus being taken down from the Cross, and the seventh is being present at His burial. It is difficult for us to place ourselves in Mary's footsteps. If you have seen the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, you know how difficult it was to watch certain moments when Jesus was being scourged. Can you imagine yourself being there at the moment it took place? In the message reported on February 25, 1998, these words were given: *I call you to a renunciation in this time of grace. Little children, meditate on and live through your little sacrifices, the passion and death of Jesus for each of you. Only if you come closer to Jesus will you comprehend the immeasurable love He has for each of you.*

Often we claim the love of Jesus for each of us is not felt. Is it because we do not meditate on the great suffering He endured for us? If we are not aware of His suffering, we do not appreciate His love for us. As human beings, we are usually willing to suffer for ones we love. That suffering enables our loved ones to know how much we love them. Is that not similar to Jesus' suffering for us? Even though

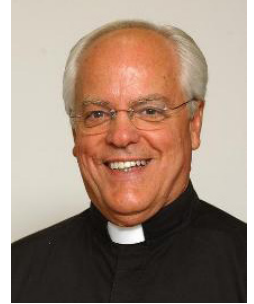
it is not the Lenten season, it may be enlightening for us to meditate on the Stations of the Cross and the Passion of Jesus. We may become aware of His immeasurable love for us.

Mary was well aware of the wounds of Jesus as She met Him on the way to Calvary and saw Him on the Cross. In a reported message of March 25, 1997 we are given these words: *I invite you to take the Cross in the hands and to meditate on the wounds of Jesus. Ask of Jesus to heal your wounds, which you, dear children, during your life sustained because of your sins or the sins of your parents... By Jesus' passion and death on the cross, you will understand that only through prayer you, too, can become true apostles of faith...*

Our Blessed Mother suffered much while being the mother of Jesus, and it was out of love for Her Son and fulfilling the will of our Father. We are benefiting from the suffering of Jesus because He loves us, and we are benefiting also from the love our Blessed Mother has for us as She encourages us to become closer to Her Son, Jesus.

On September 15, remember to thank our Blessed Mother for the sorrows She endured and thank Her Son, Jesus, for His suffering and His love for us.

Editor's note: Father Kiel's updated schedule can be found on our website, www.spiritofmedjugorje.org.



Fr. Bill Kiel

August 2, 2014 Message through Mirjana

"Dear children, the reason that I am with you, my mission, is to help you for 'good' to win, even though this does not seem possible to you now. I know that you do not understand many things as I also did not understand everything, everything that my Son explained to me while He was growing up alongside me – but I believed Him and followed Him. I ask this of you also, to believe me and to follow me. However, my children, to follow me means to love my Son above everything, to



Sacrifice beads

love Him in every person without making differences. For you to be able to do this, I call you anew to renunciation, prayer and fasting. I am calling you for the Eucharist to be the life of your soul. I am calling you to be my apostles of light who will spread love and mercy through the world. My children, your life is only a blink in contrast to eternal life. And when you come before my Son, in your hearts He will see how much love you had. In order to spread love in the right way, I am asking my Son, through love, to grant you unity through Him, unity among you, unity between you and your shepherds. Through them my Son always gives Himself to you anew and renews your soul. Do not forget this. Thank you."

Editor's note: Because Our Lady is asking for renunciation and fasting, we are again offering free sacrifice beads to our subscribers. (See our February 2014 issue for the explanation.) If interested, contact June at jklines1981@verizon.net.

We thank Marge Spase, Joyce Tresler, Barb Sirianni, Sue Kirby, Dianne Yochim, Diane Niebauer, Celeste Migneault, Vickie DeCoursey, Barb Repasy, Annette Ratajczak, Kathy Luschini, Laura DiBacco, Cindy Bielamin, and Sue Taccone for their help with the July mailing. We thank Sue Marks for her photo in the last issue as well as Mike Golovich and Wendy Ripple for their photos in this issue. And as always, we thank Pat Berrier, our proofreader, and Jason Klins, our webmaster.

As of August 25, there have been 11,490 Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions.

Prayer Intentions of Pope Francis for September

Mentally Disabled: That the mentally disabled may receive the love and help they need for a dignified life.

Service to the Poor: That Christians, inspired by the Word of God, may serve the poor and suffering.



Marija Speaks at the Youth Festival

By Ana Shatol

Thursday [7/31/14], the Youth Festival in Medjugorje opened with youth holding signs and flags and introducing themselves and their countries on the altar before Mass. There were so many people – young and old alike. The entire back of the church by the outside altar was a sea of people holding flags and praying. Many people had to bring their own little chairs and were sitting in the aisles. All around the church, people were praying, priests were hearing confessions, the youth were all helping out, and there was much excitement. There were so many priests that they were sitting all around the steps of the altar and all the way down the steps and around the altar. Incredible!

On August 1, the visionary Marija spoke, and it was fantastic. She talked with so much enthusiasm, from her heart, with so much concern for the youth of today – not just the youth, but for all people. One of the things that struck me that she said – and one problem that might not seem that big to a lot of people – is how people are dressed these days and especially around the church.

In Medjugorje, the rules are pretty much like they are in the Vatican – you are asked not to have short shorts, sleeveless tops, or bare torsos for the men. A lot of skin is just not good. There are many people, because of the heat, that are dressed like they are going to the beach. The priests in Medjugorje talk about this all the time, but it doesn't seem to make much of a difference to the many pilgrims who come. Marija said it is very shameful and disrespectful. One priest told me sometimes it seems as though some wear revealing clothes just to throw them, or they think this will tempt the priest. It's just not good.

In Medjugorje I usually help out in the choir box with

the collection and whatever Father and the nuns need. One thing that happens is the Sister will come out on the altar and she looks with an eagle eye at the congregation before Mass starts. Then she looks at me, and with her finger motions me to come over. Then, she will tell me, "See that lady there in that row, down by the door, the one who looks like she is almost naked?" "Yes," I say. She says, "Please go and take care of this." Noooooooo, I dislike this more than anything, but it has to be done, and now Sister watches me the entire time anyway. So, I go and ask the visitor to please find something to cover herself up with – does she have a shawl? If not, she will need to leave the church, get something, and come back. I don't leave until I see that she is moving in some direction, either pulling out a sweater, or leaving to find something to put on.

One time I remember, there was a girl in a backless top, with leather shorts on and high heels. One lady from the congregation – probably about 70 years old – got up, grabbed the girl by the ear and led her out of the church herself that way. There is no "political correctness" or fooling around over here. There is a respect that is shown and they take it seriously.

Nobody much talks about that, but Marija did that day. It's different over here [in Medjugorje]. Many people say when they come to Mass in Medjugorje, it is a breath of fresh air; they feel a respect, a prayerfulness, a solemnity, and the Mass, they say, feels how it should be – maybe how it was long ago, with a respect that seems to have been lost in other places around the world, where anything goes.

Editor's note: Ana is from DeKalb, IL. She and her husband Steve lead pilgrimages to Medjugorje.

Only a Blink

By June Klins

At least five times since January of 2007, Our Lady has reminded us that everything "is passing." I don't think there is anyone who would dispute that. As I gazed at a photo of my four grandchildren, it seemed so very real. My newest granddaughter, Lily Marie, was born on July 15. It seems like only yesterday that my first grandchild, Thomas, was born. Thomas turned eight years old in August! Time passes so quickly.

Two and a half weeks after my granddaughter's birth, Our Lady said through Mirjana, "My children, your life is only a blink in contrast to eternal life." These words really jumped out at me because it seems today that so many people live life as if they think they will get a second chance. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which quotes Hebrews 9:27, clearly states that there is no "second chance" after death. "When the single course of our earthly life is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives" (CCC 1013).

There is no reincarnation. There are no "do-overs."

But the good news is that while we still have breath, we DO have a second chance! One time I heard a priest say that because God loves us so much and wants us to be with Him forever, He gives us two options – the "easy way" or the

"hard way." The easy way is to live and love the way Jesus taught us. He sends His beautiful Mother as a teacher and a coach to help us to do that. If we follow Their instruction, we begin to live a life of peace, love, and joy – a foretaste of Heaven. But if we choose the hard way, then through His permissive Will, God allows chastisements – personal and otherwise – so that we get on our knees in prayer, petition, and repentance and crawl back to Him. Before he was pope, St. John Paul II wrote similarly, "If the Word did not convert you, the blood will."

"Do not delay turning back to the Lord, do not put it off day after day" (Sirach 5:8).



Picture of St. John Paul II in St. James

Medjugorje – A Taste of Heaven on Earth

By Anita B. Cugini

To say I was vaguely aware of Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje in 1981 is as truthful as I can be. My cousin journeyed there in the early years, and returned with stories of the many blessings she experienced. She was the only one I knew of who had actually been there.

My first gentle whisper from Our Lady, urging me to come, began with the purchase of a dingy rosary with crystal beads with blue centers purchased at a yard sale for \$1.00. The rosary looked awful, but it flooded me with memories of the same rosary given to me by a grade school Sister. My attempt to clean it was fruitless.

As I began to use it, the chain, crucifix and center medal began to turn gold. Puzzled as to what this could mean, I consulted my cousin, Joan, who said this phenomenon sometimes happened to pilgrims' rosaries brought to Medjugorje... Her advice was to "pray on them" and see what happened. A year later, while still using the rosary, my cousin encouraged me to write my story and send it to *The Spirit of Medjugorje* newsletter.

Shortly after submitting my story, I decided to access the newsletter's website and learn what I could about Medjugorje. As I read "The Beginner's Guide", I was dumbstruck when I realized that Our Lady had asked that the anniversary be celebrated on June 25th – my birthday, and the apparitions began in June 1981, the year our youngest daughter was born! I carefully studied the picture of Our Lady on the newsletter's website, trying to memorizing how Her dress, veil, and the position of Her hands and arms looked.

From then on, I knew that I would journey to Medjugorje. The reasons kept mounting: I found a small statue of Our Lady of Medjugorje at a yard sale, which looked exactly like the picture on the newsletter. Then, I lost my beloved rosary with the golden chains exactly two years to the day I first found it, and in the same way – while going to yard sales! Initially I was saddened by its loss, but quickly realized that it was Our Lady's way of saying that these beads, which lit the flame of my desire to come to Medjugorje, would be placed in the hands of another in need of a spiritual boost.

I began asking everyone I knew if they would be interested in going to Medjugorje with me. I told my cousin Joan that I would pay for her trip, if she would accompany me. She kept insisting that she was "too old" to go, and no amount of pleading on my part would change her mind. Everywhere I turned, the response was the same...no one was interested.

Joan encouraged me to pray and said she was sure I would make the trip in "God's time" and a travelling companion would come along. She was right. Five years later, after moving into a different county in my state, I found her.

In 2012, my husband and I moved into a 55+ community and the first thing I did was to join a weekly Rosary group.

When I got to know the members, I confided my wish to go to Medjugorje. To my shock, one of them blurted out, "I can't believe you just said this...my niece has already been there twice and wants to return, but can't find anyone to go with her." My journey had begun.

Sharon, my travelling companion insisted we use the same travel agency she used on both of her prior trips some 18 years ago and stay at the same pension. I put my trust in God and Our Lady and prayed that I had made the right decision.

Initially, we planned to go in May, but then for some reason, we decided to go in June, in time for the 33rd anniversary of the apparitions – my 65th birthday. After I sent my initial payment, time flew. Oddly, I felt no excitement about making my pilgrimage...it didn't seem real...it seemed more like a dream.

Enter the evil one. For six months prior to departure, his physical and mental attacks were relentless. Family issues with grown children, including two with Lupus, my husband's nagging cough that five doctors and

multiple studies could not explain, and thoughts of my first international trip started the downward spiral of my anxiety. I doubted everything. Would the food be too salty, was the milk pasteurized...would I get "Montezuma's revenge" from drinking the water? Little things magnified. Would our accommodations be decent and could I share a bathroom? I was hanging on by a thread.

June 19th drew ever closer, while my doubts and anxiety were out of control. At the beginning of June, I was within inches of cancelling. I couldn't deal with the growing uncertainty (fueled by the evil one) that I felt within me. Then he "hit me with his best shot." Three weeks before departure, I broke out with the worst case of poison ivy imaginable...my first in 60 years! My arms and legs were riddled with inflamed, oozing pustules which began to migrate to my trunk area. The incessant itching was unbearable and sleep was impossible. In total panic, I went to my primary doctor for relief. When his measures didn't help, I called the dermatology office, in tears, begging for an appointment as I whined, "If I got onto a plane and sat next to someone who looked like I do, I would run screaming for the flight attendant." Thankfully they agreed to see me.

Then the first of many miracles occurred...one week from departure, the poison ivy had calmed down. I bought slacks and a long sleeve top to cover up the remnants, and I was flooded with an incredible sense of calm...I WAS going and everything would work out!

Once I arrived in Medjugorje, I spent the first three days in tears...tears of joy because of all the wonderful things that began to unfold. The first morning at 4:45 a.m., I sat on the balcony listening as two roosters crowed back and forth,



The pension where Anita stayed

with the cross on Mt. Krizevac shimmering in the rising sunlight, and I glimpsed the “Morning Star”...the last star to disappear from the night-turned-day sky. It was there and then it was gone...this was the first of many blessings of the trip.

Day after day, blessings and graces rained down, I continued to sob...I'm nobody special...did I deserve to see these wonders? I saw the sun turn a brilliant shade of turquoise, with undulating ripples radiating from it. When I saw this, I couldn't bring myself to look away, and had no problem staring into its brilliant light.

I watched liquid ooze from the knee of the statue of the Risen Christ, much like tear drops running down a bronze cheek. Each night, I assisted at the International Mass, drinking in the cacaphony of different languages being used to pray the Rosary...At the church in Tihaljina, I knelt on the marble floor, inching my way closer to the statue of Our Lady. As I stared up into that beautiful face, her garments turned a brilliant white and the flesh on her face was alive with color, even the blush of her cheeks!

Did the evil one leave me alone once I arrived in Medjugorje? Of course not...his determination to disrupt my pilgrimage was impressive. Two of his attempts were anything but benign!

As a special gift for the cousin who led me to Medjugorje, I purchased a crown for her statue of Our Lady of Fatima. I took it back to my room and placed it in a bag with other religious articles I had purchased. When I looked for it the next evening, it was gone...I literally tore the room apart trying to find it. It was packed in a small white box, the size of the Rubik's Cube, making it unmistakable...it simply wasn't there. Obviously, the evil one was aggravated that I bought this, so he removed it to assert his power. Wrong! I went back the next day and purchased another. This time, it didn't leave my sight until I returned home.

He unleashed his next assault in Ivan's private chapel. Our group was invited to his apparition and we were told repeatedly not to tell anyone. The tiny chapel held 30 people and this privilege was by “invitation only.”

We entered the chapel, Italian pilgrims on the right and English pilgrims on the left, and the Rosary began. I sat on the left side of the church, at the end of the second row. Midway through the Glorious Mysteries, Ivan's apparition began as he widened the distance between his upturned palms (from the pressed palm position in which he prays the Rosary, to greet Our Lady, as this is the way She greets him). I could see his lips moving but heard no sound.

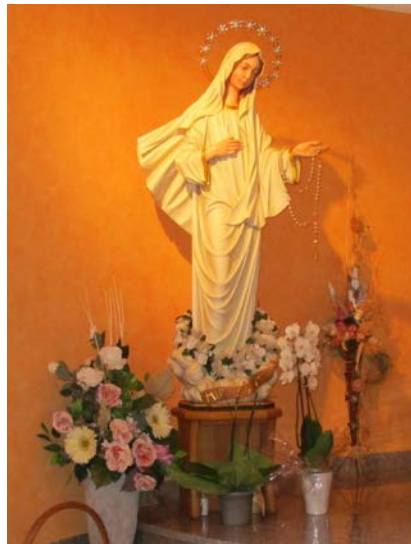
About five minutes into the apparition, the young woman sitting directly behind me, let out a feral scream/growl sound that I can only described as inhuman. Not since the 1970's movie *The Exorcist* have I heard such a sound. She continued this high pitched keening interspersed with hissing and spitting, and I learned later that she lunged at me. Sister, who led our pilgrimage, got up from the first row (using two

canes), and walked back to her. She placed her arms around the woman, who continued to scream, hiss and sob. I heard Sister repeat over and over, “You have to let it out...you have to let it out...” When I turned around, I saw the woman's contorted face as she clutched a large olivewood crucifix to her chest. Needless to say, the entire chapel was terrified!

The apparition ended and our guide asked Ivan if he was aware of this disturbance. Ivan answered he was not. When Our Lady appears, he is in ecstasy...he sees and hears Her alone.

Once outside, a woman from our group shared what she perceived to be Our Lady's voice as she knelt before the Rosary began. She clearly heard a voice say, “I am going to show all of you a sign...do not be afraid.”

Sister spoke with the woman's companion who revealed that this woman had been seeing an exorcist once a week for over a year. When Sister heard about the inner voice, she explained that Mary and the devil cannot exist in the same space...when the devil tried to disrupt the apparition by coming out of this woman, he was thwarted by Mary and his attempt to control the apparition was a dismal failure! One final mystery – no one knew these women, where they came from, or how they got in. They weren't with either group of pilgrims!



Ivan's chapel

Day by day, miracles and blessings continued. I saw Vicka, touched her, and gave her a cord rosary that I made. I also gave one to Ivan. I climbed Apparition Hill and visited Father Slavko's grave.

June 25th dawned, and my ascent to Mt. Krizevac had finally come. Our guide said it was not an easy task, and if it rained that day, or started to rain while we were climbing, we must stop. Climbing, while difficult on dry rocks, becomes extremely dangerous when the rocks are wet. Serious injuries are common.

Mt. Krizevac was mobbed...pilgrims from around the world prayed while waiting to begin their climb. Everyone knew that making the climb on the Apparition's Anniversary was very special. I began to climb, walking stick in

hand, praying with each step...that Our Lady allow me to do this and shield me from harm.

At the Eighth Station (Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem) it began to rain. My heart sank – I didn't believe it! I knew... wet rocks, climb canceled! I asked for a moment's rest to see what would happen. I looked skyward, lifting my arms, and begged Mary to stop the rain. Miraculously, it stopped!

As I reached the giant white cross that I first beheld shimmering in the morning's light, I praised Our Lady Queen of Peace for allowing me to do this on my 65th birthday...My dream that began with a crystal rosary found at a yard sale had become a reality...Medjugorje is a taste of Heaven on earth!

Editor's note: Anita lives in North Wales, PA. Anita shared with me, "The food was delicious, the milk was 2%, we drank well water, and there were more than enough bathrooms for everyone! None of my fears came true."

Forgiveness is Love

By Cathy Nolan

Last night [June 9, 2014], Mary TV aired the testimony of Deacon John Taaffe from Ireland. I have been waiting for this testimony to be shared, as it is incredible!! And it is a great example of what Our Lady is talking about in Her June 2, 2014 message...forgiveness is love!

Please go to www.marytv.tv and watch "Fruit of Medjugorje" Episode 118. I have transcribed here a short part of that testimony. It is a story Deacon John told during his homily in St. James Church, English Mass, June 2, 2014. It makes me cry...

Our Lady is guiding every one of us to Her Son. And every day She is just guiding us so easily and gently back to Her Son. She is encouraging us, the Holy Spirit, God who is alive in each of us, She is encouraging us to be open to Him. Here is a little story I will tell you. You know there are lots of stories when you bring groups here for many years; there are lots of stories and miracles that you see. And the most important miracles are the miracles of the heart. People's hearts, when they come here, may be very hardened. But as the week goes on, they soften, and they come to know God more – they find peace, they find love, they find joy in their hearts.

...I have worked for many years as an addiction counselor, and now I am working with the bishop's conference in Ireland, setting up projects around drugs and alcohol in parishes. But once I was working as a counselor with the health board, and I was working with this girl. This girl was one of the unfortunate people who has gone through a lot of hurt and pain through the Church.

When I met her, first she couldn't look me in the eye, and the pain she was going through...I went home and went before the Blessed Sacrament that night, and I remember the Lord telling me in my heart, "Stick with this girl. Pray for her and keep praying for her." I worked with her and worked with her. She went through a serious hard time, and because of that, she was cutting herself every day. She was overdosing every week. She was jumping into rivers, being dragged out of rivers...And my heart said, "Lord, I am really finding it hard to trust, because this girl is really, really struggling."

I asked her then, "Would you like to come to Medjugorje?" She said, "I can't come to Medjugorje because I can't be around a priest. I can't be near priests." That is where she was at that time. Eventually this girl said, "Listen, John, I'll go over, but I will go over because of the sun; I can sit out on the balcony, and the scars that I have – maybe they will heal up."

The first day we arrived, I said, "Come on, let's go up Apparition Hill. We'll go very early in the morning." And she said, "Ok." We went up Apparition Hill with the group, and as we went up, I looked over at this girl, on her knees taking sharp stones out of elderly people's feet. And my heart broke. And I went up the hill, and I was just praying and praying, saying, "Our Lady, please touch this girl."

I came back down, and I had a little bit of resentment, because our priests are so special. Our priests are really so special. And like everything, there is always one bad apple, like in every part of life. And I went to Confession when I came down that night, and I sat with this priest, and I told him how I was feeling about this girl. And the priest said to me, "Come on, take my hands." So I took his hands, and he said, "Watch the miracle!" And I said, "Father, you don't understand..." And he said, "Trust, trust. Watch the Lord and our Blessed Mother work in this situation."



Open air confession in Medjugorje

I walked away, and sat at the wall by the hedge. There was a tap on my shoulder five minutes later, and this girl said, "John, I was sitting in the apartment, and I felt it in my heart that I have to come down and go to Confession." She said, "Will you come with me? I can't come by myself, will you come with me?" I said, "I can't come with you, but I'll be in the queue with you. I was just with that beautiful, beautiful priest over there.

If you want to go to him, I will stand in the queue with you." She said, "Ok."

She shook. I have never seen drops [of sweat] coming from anyone's hands so much. She got in the queue and we stayed and prayed. As we got to the top of the line, the priest turned and winked at me. She went over and sat down, and I was there saying, "Please, please, please, please Lord..." Ten minutes passed, a half hour passed, three quarters of an hour passed, an hour passed, an hour and a half passed. Wow!! And after an hour and a half, the two of them stood up and hugged each other, and I just started to cry.

That girl came back to me and said, "John, I want to receive Jesus at Mass in the morning. I haven't received Jesus in a long time. I want to receive Jesus." The next morning, she came and received Jesus. She was so full of life again. We went up to the Blue Cross [a day or two later] and talked about leaving things at the Cross, leaving things at the foot of the Cross. And she said, "I forgive him." She didn't find it easy to forget, but she found the words which were the start of her freedom, "I forgive him." That girl now comes to Medjugorje every year with me.

I thank God, because these are the miracles that happen here in Medjugorje. Yes, the Son is waiting for us – the Son is waiting for us in the confessional, where our blessed priests are available for any of us to come and reconcile with God. Use the opportunity this week to reconcile with God because there is no doubt about it. On my first trip I looked at the confessionals and said, "These are the interrogation boxes!" No, it is far from it. These are the boxes that are full of love. It doesn't matter if we don't remember the prayers. The priests will bring us through that. The important thing is to reconcile with God. Reconcile with yourself. Reconcile with our brothers and sisters. Use the opportunity to draw closer to God, especially this week as we move closer to Pentecost. The Spirit is stirring so much within each one of us. I know

that through my time here, the love and peace and joy that I have received in my life, my vocation which I received here, all of these things...my family has come back to their faith through Medjugorje...it's amazing. If we change, then we can change our families, we can change our town, we can

change our country. Amen. (Deacon John Taaffe)

"There is no love without prayer – there is no prayer without forgiveness; because love is prayer – forgiveness is love" (Our Lady, June 2, 2014).

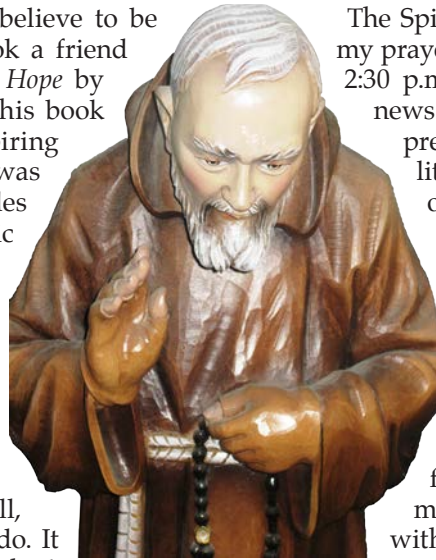
www.marytv.tv

Miraculous Mary

By Stephen Galdo

One Wednesday morning, on what I believe to be June 4th, I sat in my bed reading a book a friend had lent me called *Padre Pio: A Man of Hope* by Renzo Allegri. I definitely recommend this book to anyone; Pio is one of the most inspiring saints that ever walked the earth. I was reading that morning one of the miracles attributed to Pio that involved an agnostic man who was so sick he could barely walk. The man heard of Padre Pio and his miraculous healings and one day muttered out loud: "If you heal me, Padre Pio, I will go to San Giovanni Rotondo." San Giovanni Rotondo was the city where Padre Pio hailed and the monastery of the Capuchins was located. Almost instantly, the man was healed and, against his will, was forced to go to San Giovanni Rotondo. It was there that the formerly agnostic man had an intense conversion experience, coming to know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and becoming Catholic.

This story was so inspiring to me! I could feel the Holy Spirit stirring within me to ask for something big, just like this man who had no faith. At that time I was still fundraising with the Laboure Society so I could enter my first year (postulancy) with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal this fall. On my mind was the \$5000 I still needed to raise. How was the Lord going to do this? Instantly, I went to the Blessed Mother: "Blessed Mother, if you get me a \$5000 donation today, I will make a pilgrimage to Medjugorje."



St. Padre Pio statue in a store in Medjugorje (feast day September 23)

The Spirit was strong within me that day. I knew my prayer was going to be answered! I waited until 2:30 p.m. to check my email, awaiting the good news. And yes, there it was! A couple I had previously met with had decided to donate a little over \$5000! Praise the living God! Is not our Mother miraculous?

Perhaps even more spectacular was the information I found out the next week from my mom. Turns out, an aunt on my mom's side had traveled to Medjugorje in the late '90s. While she was there, she prayed for me (I was 4 years old), and had a Franciscan priest bless a rosary for my mother. Is that not incredible? Tears flooded my eyes. Our Lady loves us so much! We need to approach Her humbly, but with total confidence in Her Son's power and Her intercession. So, next time you think your prayers do not matter for your family members, think again!

I'm not sure when I'm going to Medjugorje, but I'm excited to see what Mary has in store! Also, more exciting news – I have been accepted by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal to enter formation this fall! Something you may be surprised to know is that many of the brothers received their calling, or had a conversion experience, in Medjugorje! I learned this last time I was with the brothers. Thank you all for your prayers, sacrifices, and support.

Editor's note: Stephen lives in Plum, PA. His vocation story is in our March, 2014 issue.

Cross Mountain

By June Klins

Every September, on the first Sunday following the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated in Medjugorje with a Mass on Cross Mountain.

Draga Vidovic, who was a friend of the visionaries, included some interesting information about Cross Mountain in her excellent book, *Salvation of Mankind*. Draga said that Cross Mountain was originally called Sipovac. In 1933 the parish decided to build the cross at the top of the mountain to commemorate the 1900th anniversary of Jesus' Passion and Death. Parishioners carried lime, water, cement, iron, wooden material and sand on their backs up the mountain, even through strong winds and rain. Nearly everybody participated, including children, the elderly, and even pregnant women! The older people claim that since that year, there have not been any significant storms or hailstones.

Draga remembers climbing the mountain as a child every Good Friday, and that the mothers and grandmothers

would pray three Jesus' Rosaries around the cross, all on their knees.

From August 1981 until June 1983, people were forbidden to climb the mountain, except for one day in September of 1981, when authorities did give permission for Mass to be celebrated at the cross. That day 100,000 people climbed the mountain.

One evening, Marija was with the prayer group on Cross Mountain and as she prayed at the 12th Station, Our Lady appeared to her. She said, "Dear Children! The whole ground has been blessed, especially the ground around the 12th Station where my Son died. Therefore, dear children, kiss the ground where you kneel." Draga wrote that when we come to that Station we should always kneel down for prayer.

In a message on August 30, 1984, Our Lady said, "The cross was also in God's plan when you built it. These days, especially, go on the mountain and pray before the cross. I need your prayers."

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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.

The Blessed Mother invites us to PRAYER and FASTING and PEACE. "You have forgotten that with prayer and fasting you can stop a war from happening. You can suspend natural laws."

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 \$.70 postage on it.



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