

THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
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www.spiritofmedjugorje.org

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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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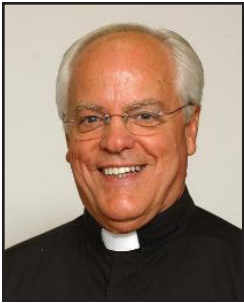
CURRENT MONTHLY MESSAGE OF DECEMBER 25, 2015

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.



January 10 is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The mosaic above, depicting that event, is one of the Luminous Mystery Rosary Stations behind St. James Church in Medjugorje. "I call you all to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon every baptized creature, so that the Holy Spirit may renew you all and lead you on the way of witnessing your faith - you and all those who are far from God and His love" (Our Lady, 5/25/09).

"Dear children! Also today I am carrying my Son Jesus to you and from this embrace I am giving you His peace and a longing for Heaven. I am praying with you for peace and am calling you to be peace. I am blessing all of you with my motherly blessing of peace. Thank you for having responded to my call."



Fr. Bill Kiel

November 2015 Pilgrimage

By Fr. Bill Kiel

"...the Church is suffering and needs apostles who by loving unity, by witnessing and giving, show the ways of God. The Church needs apostles who by living the Eucharist with the heart do great works" (12/2/15).

Our trip to Medjugorje in November of 2015 was more than an ordinary pilgrimage. All eleven on the trip had been on a pilgrimage at least once; several had visited up to seven times. Following All Saints and All Souls Days, very few pilgrims visit Medjugorje; the numbers increase again in early to mid-March. During our stay of 10 days, the highest number of English-speaking pilgrims at Mass was in the mid-sixties, but most often the count was in the mid-thirties. Also, approximately 75% of the shops were closed. The village of Medjugorje was quiet and extremely peaceful; many times when we walked in the village, we were the only people on the street. There were no talks or presentations given during our visit, so our time was just that – our time.

In addition to daily Mass, Adoration, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we had more time for private prayer on Apparition Hill, Cross Mountain, at the Risen Christ, Stations of the Cross and the Mysteries of the Rosary.

Little did we think that the other activities we carried out in the Medjugorje area would be reflected in the opening words of this article.

Our group had the opportunity to visit a Rehabilitation Center in Mostar for physically and mentally challenged children and adults. Catholic Sisters are responsible for the operations of this center that depends on God's Providence for financial and material help. We were able to present

them with clothing, medical supplies and financial help, along with prayers and blessings – truly, a grace-filled time for all of us!

In the past few pilgrimages we became acquainted with two "gypsy" camps. Our group has provided clothing, school materials, food, and personal hygiene articles for the children and adults. Through our visits, we have experienced a change in the people in the camps. The children have improved in their schooling, and have become more aware of their appearance in cleanliness and clothing. One family in the camp has started the process to convert from the Muslim faith to Catholicism. Some have changed their names to "Catholic" names. They always anticipate a Catholic blessing from the priest.



Fr. Bill giving a baby in the gypsy camp his first blessing

Through the last several years, we have befriended several families with medical, financial, housing, and nutritional needs. With financial support of the pilgrims, fund-raising and generosity of many people who know of the needs in the Medjugorje area, help has been given to these individuals and families.

The Eucharist is at the center of our Catholic faith, and as the words given to us ... *the Church needs apostles who by living the Eucharist with the heart do great works; it needs my apostles of love...* our group tried to be Christ to others, and we tried to see the face of Jesus in each person we encountered. Receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist is one of our greatest experiences of our Catholic faith. Living the Eucharist with the heart is being Christ to others, and our group was given the grace to experience it!

Please keep Bob and Mary Ryan in your prayers; they initiated what we hope to continue – helping the impoverished people in the Medjugorje area.

Message through Mirjana on December 2, 2015

"Dear children I am always with you because my Son entrusted you to me. And you, my children, you need me, you are seeking me, you are coming to me and you are bringing joy to my motherly heart. I have, and always will have, love for you; for you who suffer and who offer your pains and sufferings to my Son and to me. My love seeks the love of all of my children, and my children seek my love. Through love, Jesus seeks unity between Heaven and earth; between the Heavenly Father and you, my children – His Church. Therefore, it is necessary to pray much, to pray and love the Church to which you belong. Now, the Church is suffering and needs apostles who by loving unity, by witnessing and giving, show the ways of God. The Church needs apostles who by living the Eucharist with the heart do great works; it needs you, my apostles of love. My children, from the very beginning the Church was persecuted and betrayed, but day by day it grew. It is indestructible because my Son gave it a heart – the Eucharist, and the light of His resurrection shone and will continue to shine upon it. Therefore, do not be afraid. Pray for your shepherds that they may have the strength and the love to be bridges of salvation. Thank you."

Prayer Intentions of Pope Francis for January:

Interreligious Dialogue: That sincere dialogue among men and women of different faiths may produce the fruits of peace and justice.

Christian Unity: That by means of dialogue and fraternal charity and with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians may overcome divisions.



Our thanks to Pat Weller, Sue Taccone, Diane Niebauer, Susannah Klins, Peggy Chludzinski, Chris Falk, Cindy Bielamin, Vickie DeCoursey, Celeste Migneault, Dianne Yochim, Sue Kirby, Louise Lotze, Marge Spase, Julie Hansen, Barb Sirianni, Mary Tirak, and the people who want to remain anonymous for help with the December mailing. We thank Allison Shipley, Mike Golovich, and Judy Pellatt for their photos in this issue. And we thank Pat Berrier, our proofreader, and Jason Klins, our webmaster.



Jakov speaking in Medjugorje

Jakov Answers Questions

The following is an excerpt from an article in *Tutt Maria*, an Italian newsletter given to us by a subscriber who was handed this publication when she was visiting Rome in 2009. We thank Maria Contini for translating it for us.

Jakov's article talks about his experience with Our Lady in 27 years of contact with the supernatural visions.

But the greatest gift..., since Our Lady came here, are the messages She has given to us: pray, fast, penance, and conversion... She repeats this almost every day. These messages have a great importance for all of us.

Question: *We would like to know if Our Lady has a special message for the family, since this has been the Year of the Family.*

Response: Yes, Our Lady said to pray with our families, and that prayer unites us more and more into the family.

Question: *In Lourdes, Bernadette became a nun. In Fatima, Lucia became a nun and accomplished much, while you visionaries of Medjugorje, instead, are all married. What message is there in the fact that Our Lady has chosen you young and then you got married according to the law of God and according to God's love?*

Response: I think that Our Lady gives all of us freedom and also to us (visionaries). She gives us the freedom to choose what we want to do. She gives us the freedom to pray or not to. Our Lady gives us maximum freedom. She expressed the wish that we all should go in the convent. Our Lady can do everything, and if She had wanted me to become a friar, I would have gone... But She gave us freedom, and so I chose to marry.

Question: *Could it be perhaps that marriage in this society is a useful testimony?*

Response: In this day, so many families are destroyed... There are so many problems, so many divorces. I think we can give, through our own family, a great testimony. So many people find it strange that we are all married, because so many tell me that if they saw Our Lady, they would immediately enter the convent; but also, being married is a sacrament, which is Matrimony.

Question: *When you see Our Lady, does Her appearance change from message to message?*

Response: No, but there are times, such as when Our Lady is sad, or when She is particularly happy that Her face is more expressive.

Question: *How was Our Lady dressed the last time you saw Her?*

Response: It was December 25th at Christmas. She was dressed all in gold like when She comes as usual for important events.

Question: *Does She come (only for Christmas) with Baby Jesus in Her arms?*

Response: Yes, I have seen Her only with Him for Christmas.

Question: *What does Our Lady appreciate more – faith, one's abandonment to the Lord, prayer, sacrifice, or making oneself available to others?*

Response: I think that if we are truly converted, if we have faith, everything we do for Our Lady is surely a great thing. Many asked which prayer has more value... Every prayer that we say from the heart has a great value, and I think everything done from the heart has great value.



Please pray the Rosary every day, and include in your Rosary the intention "for the defeat of ISIS and for the conversion of its members." To sign up to be part of this spiritual battle to stop ISIS, go to www.1millionrosaries.com. If you need motivation to do this, please read the article "The Rosary Will Defeat the Claws of Terrorism" in our June, 2015 issue.

Jakov's Message on December 25, 2015

"Dear children! All these years that God permits me to be with you are a sign of the immeasurable love which God has for each one of you and a sign of how much God loves you. Little children, how many graces the Most High has given to you and how many graces he desires to give to you. But, little children, your hearts are closed and live in fear, and do not permit Jesus to have His love and His peace overcome your hearts and to begin to reign in your lives. To live without God means to live in darkness and never to come to know the Father's love and His care for each of you. Therefore, little children, today in a special way pray to Jesus that as of today your life may experience a new birth in God and become a light which will radiate from within you, and thus that you may become witnesses of God's presence in the world to every person who lives in darkness. Little children, I love you and daily intercede before the Most High for you. Thank you for having responded to my call."

A special request from the editor: If your newsletter or donation acknowledgement is later than usual this year, please be patient. My father, Richard, has been diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. Please pray for him and for my family and myself at this challenging time.
Thank you. †

A Great Blessing

By Michael Douglas

I first met Raymond in Medjugorje in August 2007, but it would be another eight years before we would meet up again – May/June 2015 to be exact. I had spoken to Raymond previously about giving his testimony, and when I met him in Medjugorje, we decided to record it. We met in the picnic area beside St. James Church. Giving his testimony was a very emotional experience for Raymond.

Raymond stopped attending Mass after he made his Confirmation. Then, at age 19, he started to drink alcohol. He realized that he was addicted to alcohol, but ignored it for years. Raymond married Helen when he was 23 and, like Raymond, Helen also stopped attending Mass after making her Confirmation. Raymond and Helen have five children – two boys and three girls. In the early years of their marriage, Raymond spent most of his time in the pub, and Helen was left at home minding the children. The loneliness of this life drove Helen to start drinking alcohol, and she also developed a serious alcohol problem. Now the two of them had a drink problem and were both in denial.

Raymond and Helen both suffered with depression, and on a few occasions, Raymond wanted to walk away from their marriage, but it was the love he had for his wife and children that stopped him. Raymond was a taxi driver who worked long hours and would like to relax after work by watching a video. One evening, the video he started to watch was about Medjugorje. Someone had given them this video, but it was just discarded amongst other unwatched videos they had in their home. The next morning, Raymond asked Helen if she would like to go to Medjugorje. Helen's response was "No way. I have no interest in going to Medjugorje." Raymond kept on insisting, and finally Helen agreed to go. Helen thought to herself, "It would be good to have a break, to have a holiday."

The spiritual side did not interest Helen; she was only looking forward to having a good time socializing and drinking. Drinking was a big part of their lives, and they had no plans to stop.

Their first pilgrimage to Medjugorje was in 2002, the same year Raymond watched the video. Just before this pilgrimage, they both started going back to Sunday Mass. They would attend Mass, but not receive Holy Communion, as they did not feel worthy. They returned to Medjugorje another three times that year. Then, in the summer of 2006, they returned to Medjugorje for the sixth time. They were fasting from food on Wednesdays and Fridays, but were still drinking alcohol, as they thought it was only food they needed to fast from. One day, while Helen was climbing Mount Krizevac, Raymond and three of his teen-age children were in Colombo's drinking. Just as Helen arrived back from Mount Krizevac to join her family, she had a vision of Moses throwing the 10 Commandments tablet to the ground. It was at that moment she realized how the evil of alcohol was affecting her and her family. She describes the

vision as like watching a movie. In that moment, Helen's life changed forever. She knew that to save her family she must lead by example. Since that day, Helen has never touched an alcoholic drink, and has never had the desire to do so. Helen told Raymond he would have to stop drinking. Raymond realized if he did not stop drinking, their marriage would be over. He wanted to change, but he was an alcoholic, and had no idea how to permanently stop drinking.

In Christmas 2006, Raymond and Helen returned to Medjugorje. Before their visit, they had been collecting money for Sr. Muriel. When they arrived at Sr. Muriel's, Raymond handed over the money they had collected. It was at this point Raymond heard an inner voice say, "Give her the money." Raymond was confused, because he had already given her the money. Then he heard the voice say again, "Give her the money." Raymond went to his back pocket and took out all the cash he had, and handed it to Sr. Muriel. This was all his spending money, which he would use for drinking. Raymond said that, as they walked away from Sr. Muriel, he felt a great joy within himself.

It was late in the evening when they returned to the village of Medjugorje. The rain was very heavy. They noticed the



Adoration in St. James Church in Medjugorje

church was lit up, so they decided to go over and have a look. The church was full to capacity. Raymond could only get as far as the glass doors, just inside the main doors. Helen squeezed in a little further. At first, Raymond could not see what was happening, then he realized it was Eucharistic Adoration. There was a young priest with long hair and a beard celebrating Adoration. Raymond fell to his knees and started to cry uncontrollably. He had no idea what was happening, but he could not stop crying. Then the priest took the Monstrance in his hands, and as he did, Raymond thought he was going to bless the congregation. He stepped off the sanctuary and blessed the people as he walked through the church. By now Raymond's hands were clasped together and the tears were still rolling down his cheeks. The priest then passed Helen, and as he approached Raymond, Raymond could not look up. As the priest blessed Raymond, all he could see was the priest's sandals, his bare feet and the end of his white robe. At that moment, Raymond knew it was Jesus Himself who had blessed him. With tears still streaming down Raymond's face, he started to sing. He had no idea what was happening. When they left the church, Raymond told Helen what had just happened. Helen never noticed Raymond crying, as she was standing a good bit away from him. Raymond said to Helen, "I need to go for a drink." Raymond was so shocked, this was the only thing he could think of doing.

They crossed the road to the old Colombo's and sat down. A friend of theirs, Ron, came over and inquired if Raymond was feeling OK. Ron had seen that Raymond was crying. Helen said to Raymond, "Tell Ron what just happened." Raymond was speechless. Ron responded, "I don't need to know, because I can see by your emotions you have just

received a great blessing." All of a sudden, Raymond had no desire to have an alcoholic drink, and ordered a coke.

Raymond has not had any alcohol since that day in Medjugorje, and that is eight years now. Since that day in Medjugorje, Raymond's life has completely changed. He no longer has the desire to drink alcohol, and his marriage to Helen has gone from strength to strength. Raymond cannot

thank God and Our Holy Mother enough for what they have done for him and his family. Raymond said, "In all the years I have been to Medjugorje, I have never seen the priest come off the sanctuary and bless individuals with the Blessed Sacrament until that evening, and I have never seen it since."

The Medjugorje Herald, December 2015

Patron Saint for 2016

By June Klins

For a number of years now, we have been randomly choosing the name of a saint to be our "holy protector" for the year. St. Faustina's community used to do this every year on New Year's Day. This can be a fun and educational thing to do with your family, friends, prayer group, or parish. Almost always, there is a connection between the saint and the person or group who randomly picked it. What is especially heartening is the fact that the saint does not leave you at the end of the year. So, if you do this every year, you will eventually have a whole army of holy helpers protecting you!

Although any list of saints can be used, there is a good one on this site: www.marytv.tv/saints-list. You can also use the saint generator on <http://jenniferfulwiler.com/saints/>. However you choose, it is important to pray to the Holy Spirit first! The tradition goes that it is the saint who chooses you, not the other way around. The saint wishes to help you. As you pray with the saint every day, that saint will pray for you and help you.

Pope Benedict XVI recommended choosing a special saint as a model. Speaking in his General Audience, the Pope encouraged everyone to have a devotion to a particular saint, so that the saint can intercede but also be a model to imitate. On October 25, 2010, Our Lady said, "Pray and seek the intercession of all the saints. May they be for you an example, an incentive and a joy towards eternal life."

This year it was my youngest grandchild's turn to pick the saint for *The Spirit of Medjugorje*. I was so excited when 16 month-old Lily picked St. Francis of Assisi! Of course he is a favorite in Medjugorje because the parish there is run by

the Franciscans. There is even a statue of him in St. James Church.

The very next day after St. Francis "picked us," I smiled when the priest at Mass quoted St. Francis in his homily. "A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows," he quoted. I knew right then that St. Francis was ready to help us this year, especially when it dawned on me that the church where I heard the quote was also named St. James! When I later shared this with the priest, he wrote, "I think

that St. Francis will be a good patron. He can also be used for broken family relations. His dad was never reconciled with him over his choice of life style." Little did this priest know that the prayer intention on the paper with the saint's name said, "Pray for reconciliation in the families."

A few days later, I found a book I had received years ago from a Franciscan convent, entitled *Praying with Francis of Assisi*. In the introduction to this book it says that St. Francis is not for everyone, that many would be uncomfortable with him, and that "he appeals primarily to the heart." Wow! That is why he picked us!!! I have always felt that *The Spirit of*

Medjugorje, since its founding in 1987 by Joan Wieszczyk, appealed more to the heart than to the head. I have felt that those who read the newsletter should "read with the heart," akin to Our Lady's call to "pray with the heart." When the newsletter fell into my lap in 2002, I prayed to be able to maintain it as "a newsletter of the heart." I am very excited and anxious to see how St. Francis will guide us this year as our patron. Thank you, St. Francis, for choosing us.

"God has chosen St. Francis as His elected one. It would be good to imitate his life" (Our Lady, 10/7/81).



Statue of St. Francis in St. James Church in Medjugorje

Becoming Poor in Spirit

The following is an excerpt from a talk on December 29, 1984, by the late Fr. Slavko Barbaric.

Fasting means *eating*, not *not eating*. Many people think that when we fast we do not eat anything. This is not so – we eat bread, and Our Lady has asked for bread and water. People have asked me if it is possible to fast on tea rather than water. Of course.

Why is Our Lady asking us to fast on bread? I believe there is a deeper reason: Our Lady is not asking us to go hungry, but to live a life of the poor. A poor person, as Our Lady, is open to Our Lord and to mankind. Practical atheism means: I do not need you. If we start to live one or two days like a poor person with just a piece of bread,

little by little, a process of purification starts, whereby I become detached from the material world and my egoism, and open myself to God and others. A person who is poor in spirit forgives easily. One who is proud, for example, tries to vindicate himself, whereas a person who is poor in spirit tries to make peace; a person who is poor in spirit can never say to Our Lord he does not need Him. A proud person, full of himself, can say to Our Lord that he does not need Him.

Our Lady's teaching is quite radical, but it is quite possible to practice. It is radical, not in wasting our time in prayer or making us live on bread, but in order to prepare us. Prayer and fasting are indispensable means for reaching peace, faith, and to be able to abandon oneself to God.

“May You Never Be Too Old To Learn”

The following is the homily of Canon Dominic Golding V.G. (Diocese of Portsmouth, UK) in St James Church, Medjugorje on June 1, 2015. We thank Judy Pellatt of Portsmouth, UK, for transcribing this inspirational homily.

1994 was a memorable year for all sorts of reasons. In July of that year, Brazil won the World Cup, defeating Italy – 3 to 2. Don't tell the Italians (*laughter*). That same year, that same summer, my Bishop told me off. He had ordained me in June of that year as a priest in his Diocese of Portsmouth on England's southern coast. When I saw him a month later, he was full of enthusiasm – not for me, but for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, then newly-published in its English translation. He asked me, “Dominic, will you be buying a copy?” – to which I replied, “No, Bishop, I won't.” “I have been a Catholic all my life,” I said, “and I know enough about my faith without spending £20 on a book.” He laughed and shook his head. Do you know, a few days later, I received in the mail a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in which my Bishop had written, “To Dominic, may you never be too old to learn” (*laughter*).

How grateful I've been to have received that gift. I have discovered much treasure about the Catholic faith I love – much treasure about the Sacred Scriptures and the traditions of our Church. One of my favorite treasures in the Catechism is the description of the Mass used by the writers of the Catechism to prove the long history of what we do as Catholics. The description of the Mass which they gave was written around the year 155 AD by St. Justin, today's saint. It never ceases to leave me awed – awed with proof that what we do here is so similar to what our Christian ancestors did 2000 years ago.

Asked by a Roman Emperor to explain what Christians did, Justin Martyr wrote: “On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or the country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the Apostles, the writings of the Prophets are read as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered, admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then we all rise and offer prayers for ourselves and others, wherever they may be.

“When the prayers are concluded they exchange the kiss of peace and someone then brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to give to the presider, who takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the Universe, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit. And for a considerable time, he gives thanks that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded prayers and thanksgiving, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying, ‘Amen.’ When the presider has given thanks, and the people have responded, those we call Deacons give to those present the Eucharistic bread, wine and water and they take them to those who are absent.”

Isn't that amazing? So similar to what we do here today; although did you notice that there is no mention of a collection (*laughter*)? Clearly that concept crept in a bit later on. The writers of the Catechism go on to comment about that passage from St. Justin. Is this not the same as the Paschal meal of the Risen Jesus with His disciples? Walking with them on the road to Emmaus, he explained the Scriptures to

them; sitting at table with them, He broke the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. St Justin also said that no one may take part in this unless they believe these things to be true. St. Justin really did believe it. An unmarried layman, he accepted the duty of making his faith better known. Even on the eve of his martyrdom, he used his trial to speak of what he believed. Some might say – like Tobit in today's first reading – Justin walked in the paths of truth, like the psalmist, he took delight in the commandments of the Lord. We may say, he let the message of Christ in all its richness find a home with him. He kept in touch with this message, doing what we are doing now – coming to the Eucharist, believing that here, Jesus the cornerstone (Who

as the Gospel writer tells us) has been sent into our lives by the Lord of the Universe.

Now, many of us might say, “I'm just like that. I'm just like St. Justin – I love my faith, I love coming to Mass. I love the devotional practices such as the Rosary. I love to come on pilgrimage to places like here, places that are believed to be holy.” My friends, this being so, let



Canon Dominic Golding

none of us fall prey to thinking that we know enough. Let's never be too old to learn. In these days of pilgrimage, God has given all of us here time to savor our faith and we do this in so many ways. We do it through conversations we have with those we know and with people we are meeting for the first time. We do it through devotions, through visiting places such as Cross Mountain. We do it, above all, every time we gather for the Mass. In these ways we are sharing our faith.

So let's pray to keep alive the memory of these days. How can we do this? Inspired by God, one way I think is to speak of these Masses. Over the last few days I've been here, I have noticed – and I am sure you have – we are not shy here in Medjugorje to give voice to our faith. We are not shy at Mass to participate loud and clear, because doing so lifts our spirits, doesn't it? We need to do the same at home, in our parishes – even when we are the only ones giving the responses loud and clear. Perhaps like me, you have been to Masses of what I call the “living dead” (*laughter*). The priest says, “The Lord be with you,” and.....the response is almost non-existent. Let's turn up the volume in our parishes to prove what we discover here – that our faith is alive.

The second way to preserve the memory of these days is to use every opportunity to share our faith. Remember, we must not divorce faith from life. We must develop a Christian sensitivity to people of all races and all situations in order to brighten their hopes, to share in the positive

construction of history. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis gives us a wonderful example of this. Just last week, he gave an interview to an Argentinian newspaper which made the headlines back in the UK. In the newspaper I read, it said, "Pope has not watched television since 1990." We might well say, "Well don't worry, Holy Father, there's never much on anyway" (*laughter*). But that headline, that story, was yet another opportunity for us to speak of someone who has captured the imagination of the world – Pope Francis, so willing to share his faith. St. Justin, so willing to share his

faith. You and me, so willing to share our faith. Let's learn from each other. Let's learn from all the members of our Church, both living and those gone before us, marked with the sign of faith; and let's use the tools given us, among them, the Catechism of the Catholic Church. You can still buy a copy. Thanks to the wonders of the internet, it's now available online free, which sort of suggests that when I next see my old Bishop, now retired, he may well say "Dominic, it's payback time."

Motherly Hands

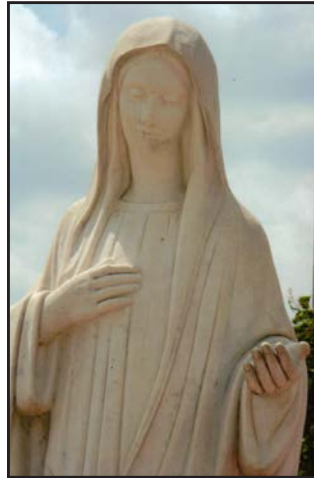
By Bernadine Biss

My husband, Joe, and I received an awesome gift while on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in June of 2015. The day after we arrived in Medjugorje, we climbed Apparition Hill along with our group. On our way back, Joe and I stopped to rest at the plaza in front of Saint James Church. We sat on a bench directly across from the statue of Our Lady. Joe took a couple of pictures from afar, and I went up to take a closer picture.

After dinner, and while we were getting settled into our room, we talked about seeing the sun peek through the clouds for just a few minutes at the time we were praying the third mystery of the Rosary, as we went up the hill. Joe saw the sun pulsating, and I described what I saw as the dancing sun. We then decided to take a look at the pictures we had taken that afternoon from the top of Apparition Hill and, of course, the pictures of the beautiful statue of Mary.

We were amazed at what we saw. The left hand of Our Lady's statue was not stone white as her right hand, and it appeared to look like a hand of flesh. We sat in awe for a number of minutes, and we weren't really sure we were seeing what we were seeing.

The next morning, Joe showed the picture to the spiritual director of our pilgrimage, Father Bill Kiel. Father smiled and told Joe that these things are "all a part of Medjugorje." He further asked Joe to ponder what this meant to him and



why Mary would do this.

The next day, we went back to the plaza, sat on the bench, and Joe told me what Father Bill had said. I knew immediately why the statue appeared this way to me. I told Joe that I have, for many years, asked Our Mother to "hold my hand and take me to Jesus." With that, Joe, told me that during the novenas we prayed before going to Medjugorje, he would ask Mary to spiritually guide him during the pilgrimage. I know She is showing us She heard our prayers, and that She is always with us.

"I desire to take you by the hand and to walk with you ... I will take your lives into my motherly hands, and I will teach you peace and love, and then I will give you over to my Son" (Our Lady, 3/18/12).

Editor's note: Bernadine lives in Greensburg, PA. Fr. Bill Kiel, who gave us permission to use this story, will be the spiritual director of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje June 10-19, 2016. For further information call Den Todaro at 724-837-7434. Visit our website www.spiritofmedjugorje.org to see this picture in color in the current issue PDF.

Prayer Cloth Testimony

By Carrie Przybycin Williams

Bill was becoming increasingly ill early in the summer of 2015, and progressively got worse to the point that he was hospitalized. It was discovered that he was suffering from an infection of the inner lining of the heart, called endocarditis. If left untreated, it can lead to destruction of the heart valves and ultimately be fatal. Unfortunately for Bill, one of his heart valves was damaged and needed to be replaced. He was treated with antibiotics and sent to surgery. Post-operatively, Bill's condition was critical. His oxygen saturation level was dropping, indicating that he was hypoxic, which is a deficiency in the amount of oxygen

reaching the tissues in the body. His wife, Cathy, placed a Medjugorje prayer cloth, loaned to her by a friend, on Bill's chest and *immediately* Cathy witnessed Bill's oxygen saturation levels rise on the cardiac monitor. Bill's condition improved to the point that he was able to be discharged from the hospital, and he continues to regain his health as time persists.

Editor's note: Carrie, who is a nurse practitioner, lives in Indianapolis, IN. To borrow a prayer cloth from Medjugorje or to receive one we made that you can keep, please see page 8.

Bits and "Peaces"

- As of December 25, 2015, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions is 13,036. What a wonderful New Year's resolution this would be to have a Mass said in 2016 for Our Lady's intentions.
- A big thank you to all who renewed your subscriptions last year and all who sponsored someone overseas to receive our newsletter. I am sure Our Lady is smiling upon you.

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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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