



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
P.O. BOX 6614 • ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16512
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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.



EDITOR: JUNE KLINS
PHONE: (814) 898-2143
E-MAIL: jklins1981@verizon.net

EDITOR EMERITUS: JOAN WIESZCZYK
SPIRITUAL ADVISOR
FR. RAY DONOHUE

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The Vatican Has Granted a Nihil Obstat to Medjugorje!

MONTHLY MESSAGE OF JUNE 25, 2025

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.



The photo shown above is one of the beautiful photos taken by Joe Mixan in the book As She Asks by Fr. Jozo Zovko.

The story about how Joe got involved in this project for Our Lady is on page 7. The words in the book below the picture are excerpted from Our Lady's message of April 24, 1994: "Now, in a special way, little children, I invite you to decide to go the way of holiness. Only then will you be close to me. I love you and want to lead you all with me to Paradise."

"Dear children, Also today I thank the Almighty that I am with you and that I can lead you towards the God of love and peace. The ideologies which destroy you and your spiritual life are transitory. I am calling you, little children: return to God, because with God you have a future and eternal life. Thank you for having responded to my call." (With Ecclesiastical approval)



Fr. Ray

Why Did it Take July so Long to Get Here?

By Fr. Ray Donohue

Dublin, Sweet Pea, and I live in Western New York up in the hills, in our cabin, home sweet home. Up here, we had, starting in early last October, snow, snow and SNOW! It started coming down then and never stopped! Up here, up in the high hills of Chautauqua County, we get SNOW and it doesn't stop until usually April. This year it was very LATE in April!

Everything is now in full bloom, the trees are beautiful filled with green, as I live in the woods, surrounded by woods, and we have rain, rain and more rain!

It doesn't snow anywhere near as much below the hills, and it hardly rains any way near as much below the hills! But I wouldn't change it for the world! Seasons change, and so do the seasons of our lives.

We all have good days and some bad days, warmth and coolness. We get sun and then clouds. This is NOT a weather report; but it shows changes in our lives, it shows seasons in our lives, it shows joys and disappointments we all get at times in our lives. It is not a perfect world, and we are not perfect either.

Last month, I told you how wonderful Medjugorje was and is! It was and it is so holy, so life-giving, renewing, joyful, prayerful, and so much more, and yet, they have their difficulties too, just as we all do. I met and blessed and prayed over, and heard holy confessions of countless people, blessing the young and those as small as babies, (blessing the babies, not hearing their confessions). Even in the rain on one day I blessed people in their 80's and older, as well as infants and children, countless teens and mothers and fathers. Even other priests came and we prayed over each other and blessed each other in our holy ministries.

Each day is different, each day we are blessed. Sometimes we take the weather for advantage, and sometimes we also take life for advantage and even God for advantage, and our holy faith for advantage.

As I was typing this, it was pouring like crazy outside, and now the sun is out and it is beautiful – all in a 20-minute span!

I have been blessed to be asked to pray for people, whether it be for themselves, or for loved ones, or for their families, friends, and friends of friends who ask me to pray over them, or for them. I take that very seriously and in God's love and Graces, I pray for those who ask for prayers, at Holy Mass each day, in all my prayers throughout the days and nights, when I am in my car, or walking around outside. And as I am typing this, no fooling, the sun just came out after a huge rain storm, it rained for about 20 minutes, harder and harder, then, it just stopped, and out came the beautiful sunlight and quiet! (Again, this is NOT a weather

report)! God can change anything and everything, weather, situations, and even people, when we pray!

Our lives are very much like today here, raining one minute, pouring the next, dark and dingy, and then, out comes the sun, no more rain, and it is so quiet and peaceful.

I think about those who have heavy crosses, the ill and infirm who deal with sickness, or the well who care for the sick. I have many friends in such situations. For the past 35 minutes it was dark, dreary, pouring rain and all I could hear was the rain pounding on the roof of my cabin, then, just like that, no more noise, and the sun is out beautifully! (Just so you know, I am NOT making this up and it wasn't supposed to be in my article at all, but I feel inspired by the Holy Spirit and the Lord and our Blessed Mother to share what I am seeing, hearing, not hearing, and feeling!)

Change is a part of our lives. Sometimes change is good, sometimes it is not. Change is a part of our lives here on earth. Today as I type this, it is the day after Pentecost Sunday, the end of the Easter season. This year on this Monday (I am writing this article on Monday, June 9th, as we are back in Ordinary time), it is a new feast day that the late Pope Francis decreed to be known as "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church."

The Holy Scriptures show Adam and Eve, as "Eve became known as the mother of the living." And the Blessed Mother became known as "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church!" Mary became Mother of the living, and of Jesus, but also we see Jesus gave the Blessed Mother, Mary, as Mother of us all, those born in Christ! With the 11 disciples, Mary awaited the Gifts of the Holy Spirit! Mary is truly the Blessed Virgin Mary, and She is truly the Mother of the

Holy Church Jesus founded, the One True and Living Church! WE ARE THAT VERY CHURCH! Mary is not just the Mother

of Jesus Christ, but She is indeed the Mother of the Holy Catholic Church, the one and only Church Jesus and the Holy Spirit founded! We are all members of this Holy Church, in union with the entire Communion of Saints!

I see the Holy Catholic Church in action at Saint Columban's on the Lake where I minister as their priest. I am overwhelmed at having my 31st pilgrimage to Medjugorje just weeks ago where I started going on pilgrimages in my mid-20's from my first assignment as a newly ordained priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, right after my Ordination to holy priesthood. I went to Fatima, and to Lourdes and St. Giovanni Rotunda, to Assisi many times celebrating Holy Masses and visiting many holy sites. Our Blessed Mother has shown me many blessings, and gave me many favors, it was, as I told you all before, begun with my mother taking me to the Miraculous Medal Novena when I was six years old, and went every Monday night with her until I entered the Seminary in 1976 when I was 18 years old. I had my sights on my mother, and the Blessed Mother who both had their sights on me! I love our Blessed Mother,



Fr. Ray blessing people in Medjugorje

All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14)

and She loves us with Her Immaculate Heart of pure love, and She is truly our dear Blessed Mother, the Mother of the Holy Church!

Pray and never give up – your prayers are heard, and they will be answered. Go to God, go to His Saints and go to His

Holy Mother Mary, the MOTHER OF THE CHURCH! Since WE are the Church, go in holy prayer, and in a spirit of love, to Mary, Mother of the Church! God bless you!

In Jesus, and Saint Joseph and our Mother of the Church,
~Father ray and my blessed little Dublin and Sweet Pea

Words of Wisdom from Fr. Jozo

By Steve Shawl

The following is another treat from Fr. Jozo Zovko, O.F.M. It is a short excerpt from an interview done with him quite a few years ago. It touches on two of the most important, and most difficult requests from Our Lady: fasting and confession.

How is it possible for people today to accept Our Lady's messages? It seems so difficult in this materialist world when the messages recommend fasting, prayer and confession?

The problem is that many people think they are incapable of fasting, for example. During the retreats, I hear them tell me, after the Wednesday and Friday fast days: "It's the first time I have fasted!" And they are all enthusiastic about this sacrifice. They have quite simply undertaken to follow this path so as to grow, receive help, encouragement and grace, because it has absolutely nothing to do with self-inflicted punishment. The sacrifice is an answer of love. So, today, I don't smoke, because I wish to say to Jesus: "Jesus, I love you!"

If I don't eat today, it is not because I've lost my appetite, but because I desire to grow in love, in my inner freedom. I desire to make a sacrifice and respond to the call. Without these basic messages of Our Lady, man would remain stuck, paralyzed by his fears, his habits.

When someone has decided to freely live the Virgin Mary's messages, this freedom can no longer be taken away from that person's heart; that is why the fruit of that decision is joy.

By acquiring his inner freedom, man receives Grace and the need to fall on his knees and confess. When the visionary Jakov transmitted Our Lady's message about fasting, the fruits were abundant. All the people who came to Medjugorje had but one desire, to confess. That is when we began massively, as priests, to respond to this call. To this

day, Medjugorje is, and remains the biggest confessional of the world! It is a great sign, a very great sign.

I speak regularly with people who have toured all the sanctuaries of the world and it is only in Medjugorje that they have felt such a need to confess, after returning from Podbrdo (Apparition Hill) or Krizevac (Cross Mountain), for example. Divine Grace was in action; they fell on their knees and were reconciled with the Lord.

In your opinion what is the greatest fruit of Medjugorje?



Fr. Jozo in 2024

The greatest fruit of Medjugorje are all these conversions within the Church itself as well as these priestly and religious vocations. Then it is the awakening of the Church to prayer. At Medjugorje, the Church has become alive to prayer. It has turned towards the Eucharist and confession, these basic sacraments of our faith. "My God exists! He is merciful, He is gentle, He has forgiven me, He speaks to me, I have met Him, He loves me! And I too, love Him."

Medjugorje lies in my heart like a vast ocean and each pilgrim is like a river. Whether the river is as long as the Nile or very short, whether it's a calm river or a roaring cascade, what is important is that all enter this ocean. When it enters the ocean, the river does not cease to be, it merges into it and continues to live as an ocean. That is what happens to each one of us pilgrims. By entering Medjugorje, one enters prayer, the radiation of prayer; one becomes a living example in the Church, one enters this gentle warmth that makes our hearts melt, that transforms our hearts. Veils fall from our eyes; light fills our hearts. We feel marvelously well. And we go back home with this thought: "I know where I have been, I now know where I am, I have become Medjugorje." It is a grace, a gift, the force of Medjugorje.

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*Thank
You*

A big thank you to all who have renewed this year. A gentle reminder that it makes it easier if you renew during your birthday month. It is very much appreciated. If You do not want an acknowledgement, please note that with your renewal.

Our thanks to Fr. Ray Donohue, Carol Bleck, Dorothy and Kirk Bennett, Laura and Kevin DiBacco, Tom Kennedy, Tom McIntire, Diane Niebauer, Sue Taccone, Kathy Luschini, Corky Young, Sue Verga, Betsy Truran, Stephanie Koshinskies, Gina Adams, Annette and Chris Fuhrman, Kay Kujan, Cindy Bielanin, Peggy Chludzinski, Peggy Smith, Barb Cesare, Irene and Dan Zuba, Joan and Deacon Jerry Peterson, Marlene Figurski, Ronalee Curtis, Darleen Wilkinson, Kathy Wayman, Louise Lotze, Chris Falk, Rose Heintzel, and Jane Culmer for their help with the June mailing. We thank Joe Mixan, Sue Taccone, Gail Boos, Chris Falk, Joan Peterson, and Josip Elez for the use of their photos in this issue. We also thank our proofreader, Don Spaeder, our webmaster, Jason Klins, and our prayer group administrator, Patti Millar.

As of June 25, 2025, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 40,480. Thank you.

Medjugorje Pilgrimage with Fr. Ray

Editor's introduction: At our May mailing, several of the pilgrims who had traveled with Fr. Ray to Medjugorje in April excitedly shared their stories with us. I asked them if they would each write something about their pilgrimage to share with our readers and they graciously agreed. (Fr. Ray's reflection on this pilgrimage for his 40th anniversary was in our June 2025 issue.)

"I felt rejuvenated after my recent pilgrimage to Medjugorje," wrote Sue Taccone. "There were 15 of us in our group. When we all met up at the Buffalo Airport, those who were strangers to me soon became family. Mary called each of us to Medjugorje, and She and Her Son united us in love.

"When I read the article titled 'Vicka's Example' in the May issue, I realized that Father Ray was living the role of a visionary on our pilgrimage. Like Vicka, Father Ray was continually approached by pilgrims who may have recognized him from Mary TV (marytv.tv) or from one of his numerous visits there, or just the fact that he was wearing his clerical collar. He never turned anyone away or missed an opportunity to bless someone in the street or on one of the mountains we climbed. Like Sr. Emmanuel wrote in the article, we also sometimes felt a little impatient as we waited for Father Ray to finish talking to or blessing the pilgrims. Deacon Jerry joked that now we know how the apostles must have felt! I do know we all realized the importance of him doing the Lord's work.

"Although we will probably never receive heavenly visits from Mary, we too can live the life of a visionary by always availing ourselves to someone in need, whether a stranger, a friend, or a family member. When we do it patiently and out of love, God will give us the strength and vitality we need."

Sue's sister, Betsy Truran, wrote: "I felt like I was with a celebrity. People were so drawn to Fr. Ray. One day as we were walking, we were in a bit of a rural area away from St. James Church and shops, a man came running up to Fr. Ray. He asked Fr. Ray to bless his rosaries and other religious items. He spoke English with a very heavy foreign accent. Fr. Ray gladly blessed his items. The smile on that man's face showed such appreciation toward Fr. Ray."

"One of the highlights of the trip for me," wrote Chris Falk, "was visiting Father Nikola's parish and Father Ray celebrating Mass in that ancient little stone church. I was especially moved by the healing blessing given after Mass. I was the first one in line to receive a blessing from Father Nikola and it was so awesome! I know it did a lot of good for me with my stomach issues. But the most striking thing that brought me to tears was after those two priests blessed us, they blessed each other! It was such a beautiful, tender loving moment between two brother priests! I couldn't take a picture of that. It was just too personal for those two. Our Lady always asks us to pray for the shepherds. Whenever I do that now, it's that image of Father Ray and Father Nikola that is burned into my mind."

Carol Bleck, who has been to Medjugorje many times, wrote: "There were many stories ... like when we were climbing Mt. Krizevac and it was

gorgeous sunshine and hot on the way up. Father stopped at each Station as we prayed the Stations of the Cross. Once we reached the top, you could hear thunder rolling in. Father reached the bottom of the mountain and shelter without getting a drop of rain! I felt responsible for our slower climbers and waited with them. The wind picked up and huge drops of rain began to fall along with claps of thunder that shook us to the core. Lightning lit up the sky several times as I kept praying and thinking about the 365 times in the Bible it says, 'Be not afraid.' We were soaked to the skin and freezing when our friend Marija appeared out of nowhere (no one but myself and Lisa had her number and neither of us had called) and drove us back to the pension. Needless to say, the hot soup never tasted better! Our Blessed Mother wrapped Her mantle around us and brought us safely off the mountain."

Joan Peterson, who with her husband were first-time Medjugorje pilgrims, shared, "I will always be grateful to Mother Mary for inviting us to be with Her in Medjugorje. I loved seeing the Adriatic Sea and the picturesque country side. I enjoyed the homemade soups and bread at Marija's pension and our stay at the pension with other liked-minded pilgrims from Erie and New York.

"Being with Fr. Ray, as our spiritual guide, was a wonderful experience. So many strangers flocked to him and asked for blessings and for him to hear their confessions (even on a street corner across the street from the souvenir shops).

"After Fr. Ray preached the homily at Divine Mercy Sunday Mass, a line formed. Men and women wanted to talk to Fr. Ray. He took his time and patiently heard their stories and requests. He never rushed anyone, gazing into their eyes and really listening to them.

"I met a woman while I was in line for confession on the Saturday before Divine Mercy Sunday. Her name was Celeste (after a nun saw her as a new-born and said she should be named after the Angels). She was born on the feast of the Assumption. She told Fr. Ray later that she received a healing from him after he prayed over her. She wanted me to hear what she had to tell Fr. Ray since she was in the same confessional line as I, and Fr. Ray was her Confessor.

"My most memorable experience was the Mass at the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters. Fr. Ray presided and Deacon Jerry assisted at the Mass. The Mass was about six days into our pilgrimage. I felt so much peace which continued for the rest of my trip."

Joan's husband, Deacon Jerry Peterson wrote, "The trip to Medjugorje was the trip of a lifetime. What a blessing to be in the presence of Mary. I was able to be present at one of Ivan's apparitions. Because Fr. Ray and Ivan are close friends, Father and I were able to kneel just a few feet from Ivan. It was here that I was touched by our Mother. I began to shake (not violently, Mary didn't intend for me to get hurt). Father Ray tells me this was an encounter with Heaven. I was also present at one of Marija's apparitions. Father Ray showed



Fr. Ray and Fr. Nikola

me where to kneel, so that when Mary appeared to Marija, I would be kneeling next to Mary. Imagine kneeling next to the Mother of Jesus!

"I climbed (struggled up) Apparition Hill. I thought I was making good time until I recognized a man who passed me on his way up, and on his way down the hill. It was very humbling to be passed by two corgi dogs trotting up the hill!

"There is so much to tell. Twice, I was able to proclaim the Gospel during the Mass for English-speaking people. I assisted Father Ray at Mass at the Church of St. Blaise in

Dubrovnik. I proclaimed the same Gospel that has been proclaimed in that place for over 900 years! Father consecrated the Body and Blood of Jesus just as others have been doing for over 900 years! This reminds us that the Eucharist and the Gospel are eternal.

"The most memorable part of the trip was watching Fr. Ray encounter those seeking prayer and confession. He treated them with such kindness and tenderness. He gave each person time to encounter Jesus. Fr. Ray offered a glimpse of what it means to 'feed My sheep.'"



Deacon Jerry

Reconciliation

By A Grateful Pilgrim

It was very upsetting when my priest would not speak to me or acknowledge my presence if we happened to meet...

In Medjugorje I had an experience that seemed to me to be a very great miracle. It was a miracle of reconciliation, of the changing and healing of hearts and I find this a more amazing thing than physical healing or material signs.

The story began many years ago when I was living in a different part of the country. My parish was large and lively, I enjoyed playing my part in it and regarded it as a great privilege. Unfortunately, there was a major problem in that I did not get on at all well with the parish priest, which made the work I was doing more and more difficult. Eventually things came to a head and I was excluded completely from any participation in parish life or activities. I continued to go to Mass, of course, that could not be prevented, but my priest would not speak to me or acknowledge my presence if we happened to meet. It was very upsetting and things were difficult for quite a long time. I bided my time, determined to let God sort this situation out, and shortly before I moved away, we did have something of a reconciliation. At least we were speaking!

In September this year, I went to Medjugorje and on the second day I was there, I was walking alone behind St. James Church when I happened to fall into conversation with another solitary lady. As we exchanged details, she told me that a relative of hers who was a priest in the part of

the country where I was living previously was with her in Medjugorje. She asked if I knew him, and gave me the name of my old parish priest!

I admit that as I left her, I felt very shaken by this news. It was obvious that this had not been a chance meeting – there were far too many people in Medjugorje for this meeting of two complete strangers not to have been engineered by the Lord and the only reason that I could think of is that he wanted the priest and I to meet.

The following morning after the English Mass we did meet. I had left the church by the side door and as I stood outside, I saw him approaching and to my surprise, instead of the trepidation and doubts I had expected to feel, I felt a surge of pure joy and delight at seeing him. Even more surprisingly, from the expression on his face as he caught sight of me, he felt the same! We ran into each other's arms and hugged. "I can't believe this," he exclaimed, "but I'm really pleased to see you!" There was nothing feigned or forced about this. The reconciliation was heartfelt and joyful and it did not come from us. It came from God, our loving Father, who wants only love between his children.

Later I thought that this is what it will be like when we get to Heaven. We will see all these people that we did not get on with on earth and find ourselves crying out from the heart, "I'm so pleased to see you!"

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An Extraordinary Message on the Anniversary

June Klins

As She did last year, Our Lady asked Marija to invite people to climb Apparition Hill for nine days prior to the anniversary on June 25 to pray the Rosary for peace. Our Lady requested people meet at 4:30 AM. Her apparition would be at 5:00 AM. What a blessing to have been able to be present virtually for this on marytv.tv!

As they began to pray, it was still dark outside, but when the Apparition occurred, it was daylight and the roosters were crowing. It was as if they were saying, "Wake up, people. WAKE UP and PRAY!"

At the Novena's end, Our Lady surprised us and said there would be a public apparition to Marija on the morning of the anniversary, June 25, same place, same time. Denis Nolan of Mary TV said he could not remember there ever

being a public apparition on the anniversary day!

After the apparition that morning, Marija said, "During the apparition, when Our Blessed Mother came, I entrusted to Her all of us who are here and everything we carry in our hearts...I asked Her to intercede before Her Son Jesus for peace – peace in our hearts, peace in our families, and peace in the whole world. Our Blessed Mother prayed over us and blessed us all. I asked Our Blessed Mother if She had a message for us. She smiled, extended Her arms, and began to pray in Her mother tongue, Aramaic, and at the end, She said: 'Dear children, be bearers of peace. Satan is strong and wants war and unrest—he wants hatred. That is why I call you to be my children, children of my heart.'"

Ivanka: Mary is All About Humility

The following is excerpted with permission from the book, *Twilight of Marxism: Medjugorje, The Downfall of Systematic Evil, and the Fulfillment of the Secret of Fatima* by Dr. Thomas Petrisko.

Being the first chosen to appear to by the Virgin Mary, it would seem logical that Ivanka has been especially led by her since that moment.

Perhaps more apparent than the others in some ways, Ivanka seems to conduct herself in imitation of Mary; always somewhat silent and serene, humble and thoughtful.

Amongst the six, she is almost hidden at times, preferring to stay in the background, away from attention. Like Mirjana, though, her words reveal that she knows Mary well. And, she has taken to heart what she has learned from the Queen of Peace.

God has a plan for each soul, says Ivanka, and it begins with assigning a soul a Guardian Angel who has a name you can discover through prayer. Most importantly, since our Guardian Angel always sees God, he, therefore, always sees God's plan for us. It is a plan, Ivanka explains, each person must follow to get to Heaven and it involves much prodding from our Guardian Angel, especially to repent.

Once again, Ivanka emphasizes, it all comes down to prayer. Prayer brings grace and, ultimately, grace leads to repentance. The Our Father, she notes, is an especially important prayer, for it can guide our days in helping us to find God's will.

All those who turn to Mary for help in seeking God's will receive her love, her power, her tenderness, Ivanka advises. No one is refused. Mary cares for all her children, whether they know her or not. She is, Ivanka reminds, their *Mother*.

Ivanka has been told that the Virgin Mary loves her children with "the Father's love" – a Father who wills pain and discomfort for none of His children. But, God does want his children to sacrifice. Those who sacrifice by fasting, Ivanka stresses, build a closer relationship with God

because it greatly pleases Him. Fasting, she stresses, cures people of the sickness of sin.

Most importantly, according to Ivanka, Mary is all about humility. The Virgin once said to her, "Ivanka, I am humble because I know God." Humility, Ivanka learned, is a *fiber* of the soul, a condition of it. It is not an external characteristic, but rather, a sign of one's relationship with God. Therefore, it cannot be ascertained with the senses.

In interviews, Ivanka has emphasized the following:

- + Peace and simplicity are the fruits of prayer and fasting. They are gifts from God.
- + The Virgin Mary wants her children to avoid places of temptation. They can easily take our mind and heart off of God.
- + People should fast with love because the reward is very great.
- + Mothers who work should never feel guilty. Prayer will help to experience the peace they need in their busy lives.
- + One can recognize the presence of Satan where there is hate, anger, rage, violence, and disorder. When someone's actions are agitated and harsh, this is an obvious indicator of the Evil one's presence. Prayer stops the Devil's power.
- + Allow God to be a Father. Accept His loving plan for your life.
- + Angels communicate with us when we offend God. This is because it troubles them and they let us know. The angel will give us no peace until the action that offends God is halted.
- + Mary knows what's in every person's heart. She has been given immense powers in Heaven and on Earth to come to the aid of her children. Her power comes from Jesus's love for her.
- + Mary has come to Medjugorje to call all the people on Earth to her Son, Jesus – to His ways.
- + Jesus is the way home to God the Father.
- + The Mass is for all people on Earth. It is offered for non-Catholics, even if they don't realize it. The Mass is the power of Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross that gives people the strength to walk their path on earth towards the Eternal Father's waiting arms. The Mass helps all of God's children to find His will for them.

And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility" (1Pet 5:5)



Ivanka and her husband with their grandchildren

Our Lady's Annual Apparition to Ivanka on June 25, 2025.

The visionary Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez had her annual apparition on June 25, 2025. At her last daily apparition on May 7, 1985, Our Lady confided to Ivanka the 10th secret and told her that she would have an apparition once a year on the anniversary of the apparitions. The apparition, which lasted 6 minutes (6:39 PM – 6:45 PM), took place at Ivanka's family home. Only Ivanka's family was present at the apparition. After the apparition, Ivanka said: Our Lady gave the following message: "Renew family prayer. Pray, pray, pray." Our Lady gave us her motherly blessing. (With Ecclesiastical approval)

"The spirit of humility is sweeter than honey, and those who nourish themselves with this honey produce sweet fruit."
~ St. Anthony of Padua, our patron saint for 2025

As She Asks

By Emmanuel Musa

The following testimony of Joe Mixan is excerpted from *Fruit of Medjugorje* #574 on marytv.tv, aired on 9/9/24. Last month we featured his wife Suzana's testimony.

My name is Joe Mixan and I'm from Omaha, NE. I'd like to provide a little bit of our story, my witness to the fruits of Medjugorje in my life. I think I first heard of Medjugorje in about 1983 or 1984. I was in high school and my mother had shown me a little article about how the Virgin Mary was appearing to these six children in what was Yugoslavia at that time. And I just never really doubted it. I just believed the story. I went to grade school and my parish was named St. Bernadette, so of course, I knew the story of Lourdes. So I just didn't doubt that the Virgin Mary was appearing in this country that I really didn't know much about.

In 1992, I went to hear a woman speak about Medjugorje, and she said that Our Lady has promised that She will protect anyone who goes there in faith. So I really started looking into trying to go on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, but it was very difficult because there were none being offered because of the war. It took a while, but we finally found a group that was going. I went on this trip and it changed my life. [At this point Suzana tells her story, which is in our June 2025 issue.]

I'd also like to talk about my second trip to Medjugorje. It was three months later, after my first pilgrimage. I was 26 years old, relying on the Providence of God. I really didn't have any money, but somehow, I got a free ticket because of miles that I earned or something. I stayed here for three months. So in 1993 I had a chance to really travel around with some of the Franciscan priests. There were convoys going on, and humanitarian aid coming in during the war. Soon I got to know a young guy named John Bouton, who ended up becoming a Grey Friar years later.

It was really during that second trip in 1993 when I lived here... that we met Patrick and Nancy [Latta]. He had just arrived into town. As people probably know, they're building the castle. The project's been going on for 30 years now. It was during 1993, those three months, that I really had a chance to do a lot of photography and I got to know Nancy. She loved to look at photographs. I would constantly bring and show her photographs. So then, she would show them to Fr. Jozo Zovko.

Then after that second trip, I was back home, and maybe another year went by and I came back to Croatia again in 1994 when Pope John Paul II was in Zagreb. It was the first time a pope had visited this region since like the 8th century I think. I got to be a part of that, which was amazing.

A little bit after that, I got a call from a lady in Chicago who said, "I'm doing a book for Fr. Jozo. I'm helping edit a book for Fr. Jozo, and he wants to use your photographs." So again, relying on the Providence of God – I don't even know this woman – but I load up a suitcase full of photographs.

(It wasn't digital then where you could just go with a little hard drive.) I had a whole suitcase full of photos and go to Chicago. Her name was Carrie Swearingen. I spent like three days with her. We were kind of fighting like brother and sister on photo selection and so on.

A year later, a book was published called *As She Asks* by Fr. Jozo. They pretty much had it exclusively at Siroki Brijeg. Busloads of pilgrims would go from Medjugorje to Siroki Brijeg to hear Fr. Jozo speak, and they'd have those books there. It's printed in eight different languages – so satisfying for me because Fr. Jozo was taking care of a lot of the orphans because of the war and helping people as much as he could, and this book was a vehicle to help that. To see it published in all these languages and look back prior to my first pilgrimage, how I felt somehow being called to use my photographs and to see how all those fruits came together... And they still do. I think right now in 2024, I think it is my 20th trip here, and I'm still doing some photos...

I think myself, being a photographer, I just look back to all the artists throughout the centuries – painters or sculptors or the Sistine Chapel – I'm not saying I'm on that level at all, but to have my camera and to be

able to capture some of these images that were going on in a very sad and dramatic time, in the 90s ('92, '93/'94)...There was a lot of additional suffering here, just a lot of hardships, but the most satisfying thing for me is to capture people in prayer, whether it's in the church or on Cross Mountain, or it's on Apparition Hill, or even to see the lines of all the people going to confession.

As a photographer, that's just a special thing for me to capture – people in prayer, people going to confession, and so basically that's what Fr. Jozo's book is called, *As She Asks*, and it deals with what are the main themes. What has She been asking all these 40+ years? Prayer, fasting, the Eucharist, Confession, conversion. To have that opportunity to get to know the really good Franciscan priests, Fr. Slavko Barbaric, Fr. Svetozar [Kraljevic], Fr. Jozo Zovko – was an incredible time in my life.

Of course, eventually when we got married and had three kids, we couldn't travel here as much as we used to. But we did start bringing groups here. So just to expose other people to the graces that are going on here... You don't know even by telling your story or showing a video or showing pictures, you don't know what kind of seeds you're sowing. And you just hope people will really find their purpose in life in whatever that is – whether they come here to help in a humanitarian way, whether they come as a dentist, we know like at Mother's Village where they would take care of the kids and their teeth and everything else. It's very satisfying to have been a part of this.

marytv.tv



Pages 13 and 14 from the book *As She Asks*

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On June 24, 1981 in Medjugorje, Our Lady began appearing to six children. She identified Herself as the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Peace. 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, the Blessed Mother still appears daily to three of the visionaries, and annually to the others. They are all now adults. 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. They declare to see the Blessed Virgin as they see other people — three dimensional. They pray and speak with Her.

The Blessed Mother granted to confide ten secrets to each visionary (some are chastisements for the world). Some of the visionaries have received all ten secrets. Our Lady promised

to leave a visible sign at the original site of the apparitions in Medjugorje, for all humanity. In the meantime, this period of grace is for conversion and a deepening of faith.

Father Jozo Zovko, who was the pastor of St. James when the apparitions began, has spoken about what he calls "the weapons" or "the five stones" of Our Lady (as in the story of Goliath). They are PRAYER with the heart, especially the Rosary; EUCHARIST; BIBLE; monthly CONFESSION; and FASTING.

On September 19, 2024 the Vatican announced that the apparitions in Medjugorje received a nihil obstat.

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