



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
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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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VOL. 36, NO. 9

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2023

MONTHLY MESSAGE OF AUGUST 25, 2023

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

"Dear children! In this time of grace, I am calling you to prayer with the heart. May your hearts, little children, be raised in prayer towards Heaven, so that your heart may feel the God of love who heals you and loves you with immeasurable love. That is why I am with you, to lead you on the way of conversion of heart. Thank you for having responded to my call."



The month of September is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. The Church celebrates the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15. The artwork to the left is the work of the late Frank DeAndrea, father of subscriber Mark DeAndrea, who kindly gave us permission to use it on our cover. You can read about a saint who was devoted to Our Lady of Sorrows on page 3.

The Changing of the Colors in Autumn Teach Us a Wonderful Lesson

By Fr. Ray Donohue



Fr. Ray

As I turned my calendar to September, I have already been astounded by the color of the trees changing into a beautiful red, or golden, or a combination of beautiful colors! Living in the woods, as I do, the wonderful colors of autumn make me speechless and in awe of the power and imagination of God!

As I begin raking the leaves, and preparing for Fall and what is to follow, taking in summer things and putting them away for

new seasons to come, after being all hot and sweaty, tired and dirty, even smelly, it is such a great joy to jump into a refreshing shower or a soothing bath, soaping myself all up and rinsing off all the sweat and dirt and grime, and being totally refreshed and clean again!

And so it is with Holy Confession, a wonderful, Holy Sacrament and gift from God Himself to us! Confession cleanses the soul, and the body! The Holy Sacrament of Reconciliation puts us in good odor with God, making by the grace of God and our Free Will, the choice of being forgiven and cleansed because we know our soul is dark and dirty and smelly because of our sins, and that God through Jesus gives our soul and heart and whole being the forgiveness we so desperately need and desire, to be refreshed and joyful and without stain!

We can put on a TON of perfume or cologne, but if we are hot and smelly and perspiring, we still stink and we can't hide it by some quick fix. We need to cleanse ourselves completely! The same is true if we don't bathe in the holy waters of Baptism and Confession, as all we are then doing is hiding the smell. But we still stink, there is NO covering it up! Fancy "smell-ums" won't take the place of the healing of Confession, saying to ourselves, "I don't need to go to Confession, God understands." That is the devil speaking to us, as the evil one tries to disguise evil to make it smell good, when evil is filthy and rotten and smelly. You can't change the smell of evil, and it will only get worse if you fail to be cleansed by God's Grace!

Only Holy Confession with a complete contrite heart, as we humble ourselves before God, can purify our souls and body, and again make us ONE with the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Nothing else can take its place!

As a priest, I hear many times: "Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been, well, I can't remember the last time I was to Confession, maybe a few years or so." Do

I yell, or chastise that person, that penitent?? NEVER! It was God Who brought that person to have enough strength and guts to kneel before Him and confess those sins to Him through His priests! I tell that person who has been away,

waiting for me to yell at him or her, that Jesus is dancing in Heaven because they came to Holy Confession!

As a young person, we had 4 or 5 priests in my parish. Confessions were every Saturday from 3:30 to 5:00 pm and the Vigil Mass was at 5:00 pm. There were 4 confessionals in the church, one on each side of the church, and we always knew which confessional the pastor was in, because he used to raise his voice and yell at the penitent, and you would see that the whole line would scatter to other priests' lines except for the ones who were elderly and couldn't hear him yell! All the other priests were calm, and gentle and welcomed the people back to good Grace with God. I am sure the yelling priest thought he was doing the right thing, as a parent might scold a child, but how often do we see Jesus yelling at someone coming to be forgiven or healed? The priest is there in the stead of God, and Jesus is working through him in the Holy Sacrament of Holy Orders. God gave the priest the authority to forgive sins, as humbling as that is for all priests. Only once do I remember in Sacred Scripture does Jesus tell a woman who asks to be healed, who was not what we would call a "Church-goer" or religious. Jesus said to her: "It is not right to throw the food of the children to dogs!" The woman responded to Jesus: "Please Lord, even the dogs eat what falls from the Master's table!" Jesus responded to her: "For such a response, go in peace, your FAITH has healed you!" Jesus SAW her faith in action! She asked, and she received! That is what Holy Confession is, we ask for forgiveness, we

are truly sorry, we pray that we will not commit that sin again, and we receive the Grace and Gift of total forgiveness! That woman didn't talk the faith, she LIVED the Faith and Trusted in Jesus, as we should and must trust in Jesus, no matter what! That changed that woman's life and her actions, and so will a good, holy confession do for us!

One of the most important issues of Salvation is being aware of our sins, regretting them, turning away from them, trying never to do them again, and confessing them! God gives us so much Grace and strength in this

holy Sacrament we should never, ever, be afraid to come to God and ask for forgiveness through HIS Holy Church in the Holy Sacrament of Confession. We should RUN to confession and feel the love and grace of God, like a good clean shower for the soul!

The autumn leaves change from green into beautiful, beautiful colors as they are transformed, and so it is with us! Change can be hard and difficult, but it can bring about great peace and beauty! God gives the Grace to all those who ask from their hearts! Remember what our dear Blessed Mother keeps telling us over and over: My dear children, "Pray from your Hearts", not rattling off a prayer like we were auctioneers, fast and without any thought behind them. She asks us to: "PRAY FROM OUR HEARTS"! Holy Confession is just that – Jesus gives us this Sacrament, and it is powerful and holy, that is why Our Lord has given us the priests and the Holy Church.



Confessionals in Medjugorje

"I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk 15:10).

If someone comes to me or any priest and says: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned, and, Father, I hate this person and I will never forgive them for what they have done to me (or a family member)" or whatever it was they had done... no priest can forgive them, because they are not sorry; they harbor a grudge and hate in their hearts and soul and whole being! A person must be truly sorry for the sins they commit and not blame anyone else for what they themselves do, or did or thought. We must be contrite to be forgiven.

The Bible says for us to pray for our enemies, but it does not say to pray for them to win – and they will win out if we do not forgive them, or let it go, but, they will not really win out because they have to answer to God, as we all do. Remember again: "If you forgive your neighbor's sin, so will the Father forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive your neighbor; neither will the Father forgive you your sins." Jesus means this. Our Eternal life is on the line.

Change is hard, but it can be beautiful. Forgiving someone and giving it all up to God is beautiful, just as the changing of seasons are beautiful. As the leaves fall off the trees, so then in Holy Confession, do our sins fall off us, and as we burn the leaves so do our sins burn away after a good and holy Confession!

It is better to burn the sins, than to have our soul burn eternally in Hell...and YES, Hell really does exist! God doesn't put us into Hell. WE put OURSELVES in Hell, by NOT going to Confession, Holy Mass, living the TEN Commandments. And if we slip up, if we fall, as we all do, God gives us, out of HIS Love, HOLY CONFESSION, so we can be contrite. As we forgive others and confess our sins to God in Holy Confession, God forgives us! God doesn't want anyone to go into Hell. He wants us to spend eternity in Heaven with HIM, God created us for such a purpose, and we have been given that gift by following His way of love and forgiveness, as we put ourselves into Hell by not feeding and cleansing our soul. The body is just the container, the soul is Who we really are. Don't let the body get the best of us, listen to your soul, to the goodness and love that our soul is. As we feed the body, so we must feed the soul with purity, kindness, love, prayer, forgiving others and letting it go, fidelity, holiness and using the Holy Sacraments regularly.

Even though I am retired, I am busier than ever celebrating Holy Masses for people, and even going to people's houses who are shut-ins, to hear their confessions, anoint them,

hold their hands in holy prayer. There is no good reason at all for not getting to Holy Confession! If you can't go to the priest, I am sure there is a priest who will come to you! (You CANNOT go to Holy Confession via a computer or a telephone, it has to be in person!)

Remember and pray the words of the Act of Contrition with your heart and soul, not just as something you remembered by heart, but pray these holy words slowly and with thinking of every word you pray from your heart: "O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest ALL my sins because of Thy just punishments. But, most of all because I have offended Thee, my God, Who are all Good and deserving of ALL my Love. I firmly resolve with the Help of Thy Grace, TO SIN NO MORE AND TO AVOID THE NEAR OCCASIONS OF SIN. Amen"

I end with the holy words of absolution that I and all priests say at the end of a good and Holy Confession; and remember, we priests go to confession, too. I do my very best to go once a month as our Blessed Mother asks us to do, and it has made me holier, gentler, more peaceful on the inside and outside, and a better priest! Our Lady is our Mother, and She knows what is best as our Mother.

The Holy Words of Absolution in Confession: "God, the Father of mercies, through the Death and Resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to Himself and poured out the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of His Church, may God grant you pardon and peace. And I absolve you from all your sins, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AMEN.

P.S. Don't be hot and tired and sweaty and smelly from the worldly things, but, jump into the shower of God's Holy Grace in the most Holy Sacrament of Confession – be cleansed inside and out, and begin anew! You'll feel a thousand times better inside and out!

With love and many prayers for you, one and all,
~Father ray and my faithful and pure little dog, Dublin ☺

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for September: For people living on the margins –
We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance.



St. Gabriel

St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows

St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows was born Francesco Possenti in Assisi, Italy in 1838, one of thirteen children. After a youth devoted to the world and society, attending the theater, chasing women and earning the name, "the dancer", he was led to the Passionists by Our Lady, making his profession on September 22nd, 1857.

His life with the Passionists was given to prayer, sacrifice and a devotion to Our Lady and the contemplation of Her sorrows over the suffering of Jesus. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 23.

Many miracles have been attributed to him since his death. St. Gemma Galgani was healed when she prayed for his intercession. Pope Benedict XV declared him a patron for young people.

"Love Mary! She is lovable, faithful, constant. She will never let Herself be outdone in love, but will ever remain supreme. If you are in danger, She will hasten to free you. If you are troubled, She will console you. If you are sick, She will bring you relief. If you are in need, She will help you. She does not look to see what kind of person you have been. She simply comes to a heart that wants to love Her. She comes quickly and opens Her merciful heart to you, embraces you, and consoles you and serves you. She will even be at hand to accompany you on the dying trip to eternity."

A Gathering Place for the Body of Christ

The following is a transcription of a video by Dana Scallon from the "Medjugorje Movie Project" Youtube channel (www.youtube.com/@MedjugorjeMovieProject).

My name is Dana and I'm an Irish singer. I'm a recording artist, and for most of my adult life I've been involved in commercial music, but also in Catholic Christian music. I recorded the Rosary with Father Kevin Scallon, a number of Rosaries that have really traveled throughout the world. My husband and I wrote a hymn called "Our Lady of Knock", and I wrote the theme song for the 1993 World Youth Day. The song was called "We Are One Body".

In 1991, my husband and I were aware of Medjugorje, and we had actually witnessed a complete transformation and conversion of someone very close to us. We had bought this lady a ticket to go to Medjugorje. She was very upset and angry and away from her faith at that time, and did not want to go. She finally relented because she said, "Well if you can't get the money back for the ticket, I'll go." She went very angry and disturbed by many childhood memories, very difficult mother-daughter relationship. My husband said, "I'm nearly afraid to pick her up after a week, because if it wasn't a good experience, you know she'll be even more angry." And he picked up a woman who was completely different! She was at peace with herself, she was at peace with her memories, her life, and she went on in her life to be just a saintly woman. She said that when she knelt at the top of Krizevac, she experienced the feeling of arms around her that she believed were her Heavenly Mother's and that she found the mothering that she needed for healing.

So in 1990, we went to pray about what we felt was a call in our lives to move from Ireland to America, and it was a very big decision, so we went to Medjugorje to pray about it. I think we both agreed that we don't need to see any miracles. We don't need to see the spinning of the sun or any of the phenomena that other people had seen. We just need to go and pray for discernment and what to do.

The first night we arrived there, I remember speaking with a priest and a small group that were there together, and one of the girls said, "You know we arrived the night before last and I thought how lovely that they light up the cross at the top of Krizevac in the blue light all night... I found out the next morning – there was no electricity on Krizevac! So it was really a Heavenly light around the cross!"

We went to the English Mass. It was a very simple Medjugorje then. There were no hotels. We stayed in someone's home with a group that we had come with. None of us knew each other really, but it was peaceful. It was beautiful. We did not see any of the Miracles of the Sun or whatever, so by about three-quarter way through the week, I think we were both thinking, "Well, it wouldn't hurt to see something so we could just have that memory to take back with us." It was almost at the end of our stay there, we were at Mass in St. James Church, and we actually got

a seat. My husband said that was one of the big miracles of Medjugorje, to get a seat in that church which was always packed! Then the priest at that time – I think it was Fr. Philip – announced (before or after Mass, I can't remember which), "We have a very famous person with us in the church today and I would like to invite her to come up onto the altar." I'm looking around to see who it could be, and then he said, "I want to invite Dana to come up on the altar and I'd like her



Dana

to sing 'Totus Tuus', which was a song that my husband and I had written in 1979 actually after Pope John Paul II came to Ireland. I was totally shocked because we had gone with a little group from Ireland. It was full of people from all over the world and we didn't know Father Philip. I thought, "Oh my goodness, how does he know? Why is he asking me to come up to the altar?" When I got up there, he told me that it was because our friends from New Orleans, Al and Patty Mansfield, who were the founders of the Southern Regional Catholic Charismatic Conference, heard that we were there. They were searching for us all week and that if he would announce this from the altar we'd be able to connect. We really believed that it was God's way of telling us, "The people who

called for you to stand on that altar in that miraculous place were from America," and that's what we were praying about – should we go to America? We felt it was a piece of a puzzle...and of course we kept on praying about it. We eventually did actually move to America.

But what was the most stunning memory of that time was when we went to Fr. Jozo's church, I think it was just outside of Medjugorje. We bought some of the beautiful images of the face and the shoulders of Our Lady, that very famous image of the statue. We had about three or four images and when we came back from visiting his church, we wanted to go and eat, and one of our group said, "Well let me take that for you." They were rolled up, just a little piece of paper. "I'll make sure I'll keep it in my room and I'll give it to you in the morning." So we said, "OK," and the next morning, when we met at breakfast, she was in tears. She said, "I am so sorry. I don't know what happened, but when I lifted it this morning, it was soaking." We were leaving later that day and we thought, "A glossy photographic image, if it gets wet, it's destroyed." She said, "I don't know how it happened." She hadn't opened it, but it was soaking wet. We thought maybe she left it under the radiator. She said, "We checked everything. The radiator wasn't on. There was no water in the room. I don't know what happened." She gave it to us, and we didn't actually unroll it until we were in the airport. The images were perfect! I happened to get a seat beside her on the plane and she explained that she'd been thinking how it could get wet, because when she looked at it, the image was soaked.

Then she said that she had gone to Medjugorje a year after her husband had died. She had been through a bereavement



Image of Our Lady

course and she went to Medjugorje to write her letter to her husband. She was going to take it to the top of Krizevac that day, the day in which we went to see Fr. Jozo's church. She was going to burn the letter at the top of Krizevac, and that was hopefully some kind of a closure on the grief she felt. When she went back to the house we were staying in that day, she had left the images of Our Lady on the bed beside her and she started to write her letter to her husband. She said, "I wept. Tears flowed for hours and hours as I wrote that letter. I just sobbed." Then she looked at me and she said, "Our Lady was crying with me, wasn't She?" I said, "I don't know any other explanation." There was no water in that room. The image was soaking wet, and yet there was no discoloration at all on this glossy photographic print. It was perfect. So we just accepted that it could have been the only thing that happened. So I gave her a copy. I said, "This is obviously for you." We believe that that was a beautiful miracle we witnessed, just in one little life. You know nobody's life is little, but what I mean is – of all the thousands of people who went there, that we would be able to glimpse that compassion, that mercy, that love that she was shown in that very difficult moment in her life. So that was our first visit. We kept another image of Our Lady which went to our homes. We often thought about that woman.

I'd often heard people say that Medjugorje calls you to come back. You just don't decide. In 1991, after that, actually we did move to America. I lived there for eight years and then we returned to Ireland. But it wasn't until 2022 that we finally felt this definite call to go back. It just kind of materialized for both of us at the same time. It was maybe August. We said, "We have to go, we must go, and we must go at the beginning of September." When we were just beginning to look at flights and things, we called a friend of ours, a priest who took pilgrimages there. He said, "You're meant to come with me because my group's going on the 7th of September." We thought, "Great!" We could not connect with his group, we could not get flights at all, and we thought we would just go ourselves. We were this close to doing it when a very dear friend, Sr. Briege McKenna – who was actually the nun who prophesied that the apparitions would begin in Medjugorje to the parish priest at that time – she has a very strong connection with Medjugorje – she was visiting close to us and came to see us. We said, "We're going to go to Medjugorje," and she said, "Well, you have to come with me because we're going on, I think, the 16th or 17th of September." Her mission is the intercession for priests. She said, "We're going to have a core group Mission there and

you have to come with us." We got flights like that, but she was only going for four days and we wanted to go to pray. We wanted to go to pray again like in our first visit, because we kind of felt like God was going to do something or was calling us to do something and we didn't know what. So we wanted to go there to pray about it and discern what we would do. We had a wonderful time there with Sr. Briege and the priests.

They left and there was such a feeling of joy in Medjugorje. We met people from Ireland, we met people from different parts of the world, and without exception, people would say, "I've been here many times but I've never experienced this feeling of joy that was there." It was so beautiful and peaceful. Anyway, we came to our last evening and we were in the hotel. There were only four other ladies who were going to be in the hotel that night and in the dining room. We ended up sitting at the one table. We had such a beautiful dinner with them, a beautiful sharing with them. It turned out that one of the ladies told me that she had been praying for me and for my husband, a beautiful woman called Angie Lake. She had been praying for me for years in the different endeavors in our lives, both involvement in political life and...Everyone's life goes through difficulties and we had come through an extremely challenging and difficult time. I thought, "Oh my goodness. I come to Medjugorje and meet... (We didn't recognize each other), someone who had been praying for us for about 20-25 years! I was so touched by the Body of Christ that we are, the Body of Christ that even when we don't know it, there are members of the Body of Christ who are lifting us up and supporting us and praying for us. I think that's one of the gifts of Medjugorje just like that first visit when we were praying, trying to discern should we go to America. Sitting in St. James Church, our American friends are also there and are part of the confirmation that we're to go to America!

I do believe that it's like a gathering place for the Body of Christ. It's a gathering place where people come from all over the world and you can meet people that you either know yourself or they're part of a circle of people that you know, but when you leave Medjugorje, you're sharing the memory and the inspiration of Medjugorje with people from all over the world. It's a very important alive place. The message of Medjugorje is as alive today as it was when it was first spoken and heard and shared in the 1980s. We believe that Medjugorje actually evangelized the United States of America through the 80s and the 90s because so many people went there and were strengthened in their faith or converted to their faith, and they came back and it spread all over the United States of America. And it's part, I think, of a great blessing, a great blessing that's been poured out all over the world.

Our thanks to Fr. Ray Donohue, Carol Bleck, Dorothy Bennett, Tom McIntire, Elaine Brady, Diane Niebauer, Sue Taccone, Laura and Kevin DiBacco, Tom Kennedy, Annemarie Harrington, Kathy Wayman, Louise Lotze, Barb Cesare, Chris Falk, Sue Verga, Georgia Chludzinski, Betsy Truran, Marlene Figurski, Peggy Chludzinski, Cindy Bielamin, Irene and Dan Zuba, Joan Peterson, Jane Culmer, Susannah and Molly Klins, and those who want to remain anonymous for their help with the August mailing. We also thank our proofreader, Don Spaeder, our webmaster, Jason Klins, and our prayer group administrator, Patti Millar.

As of August 25, 2023, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 39,716. Thank you.

Be Silent! Swallow, Suffer, and Then Smile

When I got my itinerary for my pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 1999, I wondered why we would be visiting a drug rehabilitation community for men. It seemed odd. But after we visited the community, called Comunità Cenacolo, I understood. The testimonies were so inspirational! The program is not a therapeutic one, but rather, it is a "School of Life" based on Jesus Christ. The Holy Eucharist is the heart of Comunità Cenacolo. The young men and women also entrust themselves to Mary, Mother of God. Since then, I visited Cenacolo numerous times and also the women's Cenacolo. (We have used the testimonies in previous issues.) In 2018, I was blessed to attend Mass at the men's Cenacolo and what an awesome experience that was – one of the highlights of the pilgrimage! These men are so on fire for the Lord!

The Comunità Cenacolo in Medjugorje is one of 72 houses in 20 countries (including 4 in the US), founded by Mother Elvira Petrozzi, to provide hope and healing to those who suffer from addiction. Life in the community is "based on a simple, family-oriented, orderly life" with a foundation of prayer, work, discipline, friendship, faith, and sacrifice.

*"Well done,
my good and
faithful servant"
(Mt 25:21).*

Mother Elvira passed away on August 3, 2023, several weeks after the 40th anniversary of the Community's founding on July 16, 1983. Recently, I came upon something Mother Elvira wrote (or said) and thought this was a perfect time to share, as this month we celebrate the Triumph of the Cross.



Mother Elvira

"We [Comunità Cenacolo] have a saying that's applicable to the moment of suffering and provocation. It consists of four main words: 'Be silent! Swallow, suffer, and then smile.' When someone is corrected and justifies himself, the other young men tell him, 'You missed the boat!' They're talking about the boat of maturity, of self-control, of the capacity to be

silent and not answer back and to suffer with dignity and in silence. I teach these things to our young men and women, because . . . they must be prepared. Their boss at work will not admit that he is wrong; their husbands or wives will not want to be at fault; their children will argue and talk back, yet still someone will have to 'lose' so that peace can reign. Yes, peace is more important than anything, and to know how to 'lose' is our security.

"It is the mysterious school of the cross, of a God who did not explain it but embraced it, experiencing it in the flesh of His crucified Son. Jesus invites us to gaze upon Him, to ask Him for faith and love, so that our heart will not lose hope because, through the darkness of Good Friday, our eyes see the splendid light of Easter morning. The Risen Jesus is our true hope, for in Him pain and death have been defeated."

Thank you, Mother Elvira, for all you have done to help change the lives of so many. May you rest in peace!

Prayer – the Real Miracle

By Sr. Emmanuel

One evening on Križevac... After the Balkan war, my Mexican friends came to Medjugorje with a group of 45 pilgrims, including 15 priests. One of the priests, having had to cancel his trip, was replaced by another pilgrim. But I will let Emilio, the leader of the group, tell the story of what he considers to be one of the most incredible events in his life:

"From the beginning of the trip, our group was embarrassed to see this newcomer drinking a lot of alcohol and even harassing women. He was aggressive and disrespectful. And yet he was a priest, replacing the priest who had cancelled his trip! You couldn't tell from what he was wearing that he was a priest.

"Once we arrived in Rome, our first stop, he disappeared for 4 days, and no one knew where he was. He only showed up for the departure to Split, loudly expressing his anger at having to go to this small hamlet of Medjugorje. His attitude was becoming more and more unbearable, his arrogance was detestable.

"On the first day of the pilgrimage, our group went to see the visionary, Vicka, who gave pilgrims the main messages of the Blessed Mother as well as her personal experience. My wife and another friend were near this priest, in order to be the last ones to come under the hands of Vicka who prayed for the pilgrims. The priest began to utter sounds like animal cries, and began to vomit. As for Vicka, she kept calm and continued to pray in peace, trusting that Mary would take

care of this strange pilgrim.

"At the end, Vicka raised her hand towards him while praying silently for him, when suddenly he uttered a horrible cry and fled. Vicka continued to pray for the members of our group. She laid hands on us in silence.

"On the last day, it was very cold and snowing a lot. Then only four of us insisted on climbing Mount Križevac. We were enthusiastic, even though we were not wearing warm clothes or proper shoes.

"As we were walking alongside the church in the direction of the mountain, we didn't see anyone outside because of the icy wind. However, we heard a voice shouting out to us in the distance. It was that priest! He asked us where we were going, and expressed his wish to go with us. We accepted, though reluctantly. He took a bag with him that contained what was needed to celebrate Mass.

"The climb was very difficult, given the icy wind and snow. We were frozen in our ordinary street clothes! Once we got to the top, we sat in circles to attend Mass. Then, little by little, we started feeling as if we were enveloped in a very gentle and warm atmosphere that protected us from the wind, cold and snow. Our clothes dried quickly. A mysterious light illuminated us, while the day had already dimmed very quickly. Mass began.

"At the moment of the offertory, the priest kept silent for a few minutes, knelt down, and turned his face to heaven.

Then, in an extremely loud voice, he asked our Heavenly Father to forgive him for every one of his sins. He spoke all his sins aloud, while weeping and begging God for mercy. We were completely dumbfounded! But we felt compelled to do as he did, and in turn, we each confessed our sins out loud.

"We then had the most beautiful experience of our lives. At the end, we were filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, we couldn't stop singing. We went back down the mountain without any fear despite the dark night. A light illuminated each of our steps. We got to the pension at midnight. Then the priest told us how he had gradually lapsed. He was disappointed by a series of difficult obstacles in his pastoral ministry, and had become deeply discouraged. That was when he sank into alcoholism and some other deadly traps.

"Eight months later, he shared with us his great joy at having been able to restore his parish upon his return from

this pilgrimage, and how, with God's grace, he had adopted Our Lady's spiritual riches in his pastoral ministry: the Rosary, the Eucharist, Adoration and the main messages of Medjugorje... In short, this beautiful resurrection spread like wildfire!"

As for us, what can we learn from all this? There is a missing piece in this story, which will remain the secret of the King. What happened in the heart of this priest between the prayer with Vicka and the moment when he wanted to climb the mountain with us, in this icy cold weather? Prayer... That is where the real miracle is! The fervent prayer of an entire group as well as Vicka's obtained a pathway to peace for this lost heart. Fervent prayer is what obtained this wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Mount Križevac! God alone knows the many fruits that have flowed down from there to the whole Church and to the world!

Children of Medjugorje, www.sremmanuel.org, August 2023 report.

"Today, I saw the Lord in great beauty, and He said to me, 'My loving host, pray for priests, especially during this time of harvest.'" (St. Faustina's Diary, #980)

Mary Will Take Care of It

By June Klins

About 15 years ago or so, I was contacted about bringing the visionary Ivan to our city to speak. (The visionaries were allowed to speak in churches at the time.) I was excited, and when I shared this with our spiritual advisor at the time, the late Msgr. James Peterson, he was thrilled at this opportunity to have Ivan speak and for Our Lady to appear in our city! Although permission was not needed from a bishop for a priest to host the visionaries from Medjugorje, Fr. Pete (as he wished to be called) felt he wanted to present this opportunity to our bishop (who is now deceased) as a courtesy.

Probably about 6-8 weeks later, Fr. Pete called me and said during the previous weeks, he had called our bishop, written a letter to our bishop, and then – like the persistent widow in the Gospel story (Lk 18:2-6) – Fr. Pete scheduled a meeting with our bishop in person. The bishop explained that the reason he could not be supportive of this event was that he did not want to be disloyal to his brother bishop, the Bishop of Mostar (the bishop of the diocese in which Medjugorje is located). Not long after that, a priest told me that he had gotten a letter from our bishop saying we could no longer lay the Medjugorje newsletters out at his parish. He added, "Don't worry. Mary will take care of it."

A little about the Bishops of Mostar since the apparitions began: When the apparitions began in 1981, the Bishop of Mostar at the time was Bishop Pavao Žanić. He initially believed in the apparitions, but later became a fierce opponent. On an "Update from Denis" from Mary TV on August 12 (<https://marytv.tv/thank-you-for-being-here/>), Denis Nolan recounted, "I remember when Gabe Meyer had interviewed the Bishop [Žanić] for the *National Catholic Register*, April 1, 1990 issue. He had a tape recorder in front of him. He said, 'Your Excellency, what do you want to have happen in Medjugorje? What can the priests and visionaries do to work with you? What

do you want to have happen in Medjugorje?'... He said, 'Simple. I want Medjugorje destroyed.' And out of charity to the Bishop, he said in his article, in parentheses, 'as a phenomenon'."

In 1993, Bishop Ratko Perić succeeded Bishop Žanić as Bishop of Mostar. He held the same stance as Bishop Žanić. He considered the apparitions to be false.* On February 27, 2017, the *Jutarnji List* reported that Bishop Perić claimed that the Virgin Mary had never appeared in Medjugorje, adding that alleged apparitions were more a form of manipulation from visionaries and priests who worked there. Bishop Perić retired in 2020 and was succeeded by Bishop Petar Palić.

In his August 12 update, Denis Nolan shared what he called a "historic" event at the Youth Festival in Medjugorje this year when Bishop Palić knelt in prayer before a statue of Our Lady of Medjugorje!!! Furthermore, Bishop Palić commissioned young people to go out into the world and spread what they received in Medjugorje! Words came to my mind, "Don't worry. Mary will take care of it."

Denis continued in his update, "This is historic. The devil all along has wanted war and hatred, all along, everywhere...Don't get into any arguments about Medjugorje. It's only by Grace...This brought great joy to Our Lady. **Let's remember to pray for all shepherds in the Church today.**"

**The only official statement on Medjugorje from the Church is the 1991 Zadar Declaration from the Yugoslav Bishops Conference in which the apparitions were declared "non constat supernaturalitate," which means the apparitions are not approved, but neither are they condemned,*

that the Church is still open to investigation. In 1998, the Secretary of State of the Vatican clarified that the personal opposition of the local bishop in Medjugorje is his own personal position. It is not the official position of the Catholic Church.



Photo credit: Medjugorje.hr

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MARY IS CALLING YOU

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.

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

If you want a prayer cloth we made, send a self-addressed stamped business size (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") envelope with \$.90 postage on it.



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VOL. 36, NO. 9