

# THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE

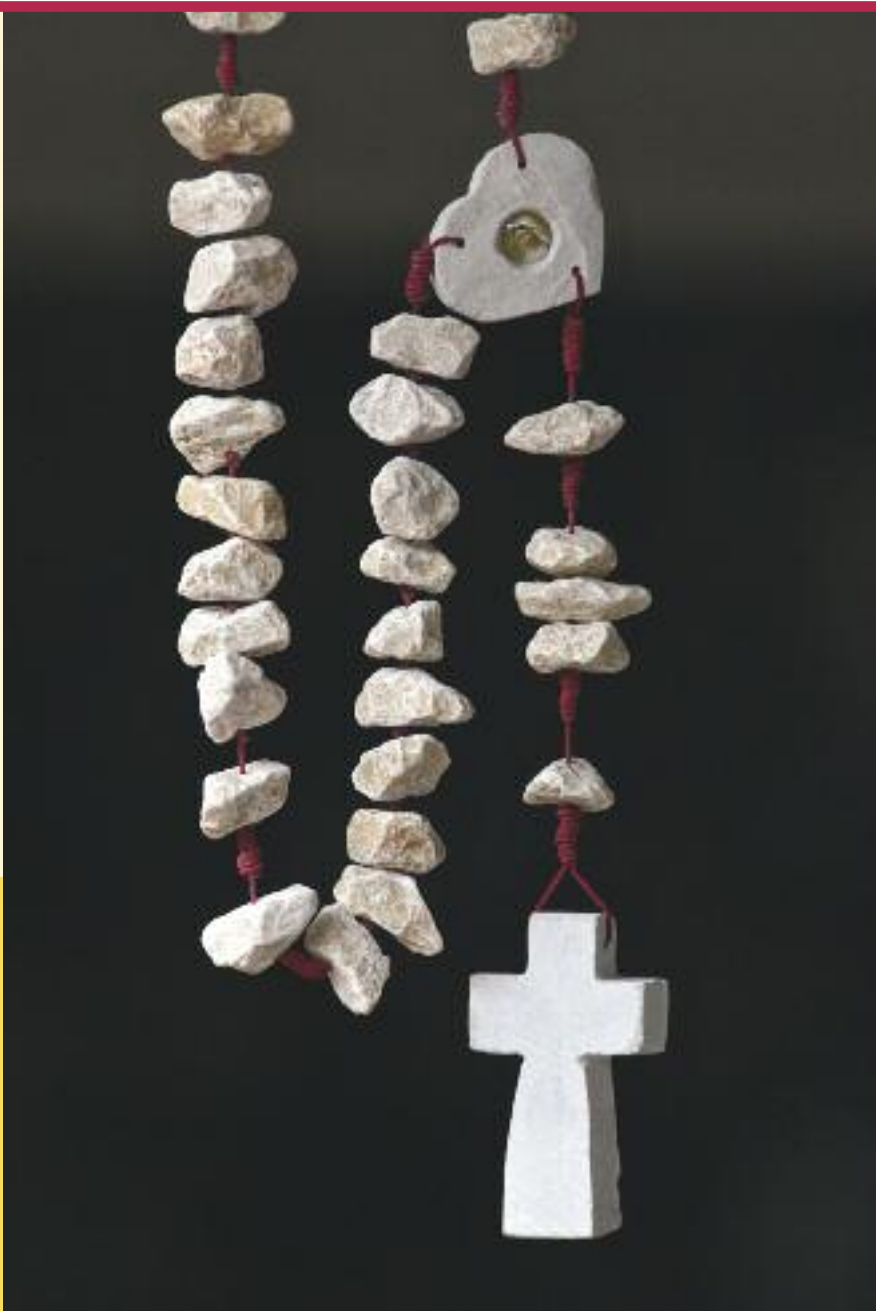


*Message of Our Lady given to Marija, May 25, 2012*

*Dear children! Also today I call you to conversion and to holiness. God desires to give you joy and peace through prayer but you, little children, are still far away - attached to the earth and to earthly things. Therefore, I call you anew: open your heart and your sight towards God and the things of God - and joy and peace will come to reign in your hearts. Thank you for having responded to my call.*

**JUNE 2nd MESSAGE TO MIRJANA**

● Dear children, I am continuously among you because, with my endless love, I desire to show you the door of Heaven. I desire to tell you how it is opened: Through goodness, mercy, love and peace – through my Son. Therefore, my children, do not waste time on vanities. Only knowledge of the love of my Son can save you. Through that salvific love and the Holy Spirit he chose me and I, together with him, am choosing you to be apostles of his love and will. My children, great is the responsibility upon you. I desire that by your example you help sinners regain their sight, enrich their poor souls and bring them back into my embrace. Therefore pray; pray, fast and confess regularly. If receiving my Son in the Eucharist is the centre of your life, then do not be afraid, you can do everything. I am with you. Everyday I pray for the shepherds and I expect the same of you. Because, my children, without their guidance and strengthening through their blessing, you can not do it. Thank you.



**PILGRIMAGE TO THE MEDJUGORJE YOUTH FESTIVAL**

**August 1-8, 2012  
departing from  
Leeds / Bradford**



**Sponsored places for priests**

Contact Bernard Gallagher 0121 429 8349  
[medjugorjeuk@gmail.com](mailto:medjugorjeuk@gmail.com)

***It is impossible for us to refrain from speaking of what we have seen and heard.***



## RENEWED IN FAITH

by Andrea Torielli

***“Before coming here I went to church only at Christmas and Easter. I came to Medjugorje alone, one month after the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001, an event which really shocked me. To me, it was as if I had come home, to find myself and true peace. That first time when it was time to leave, I was terrified, I feared that the happiness I experienced would vanish...”***

It’s almost noon and the sun warms the brown stones of Mt Podbrdo, apparition hill, where 31 years ago, in June, children from this remote village in Herzegovina claimed they had seen ‘Gospa’ the ‘Queen of Peace’ for the first time. There is a man who is saying the rosary whilst climbing the uphill path, barefoot. His name is Fabio Sghedoni, 46, married with four children. Fabio is the owner of *Kerakoll*, an Italian company with a turnover of 350 million euro a year and eight plants in Europe with over one thousand employees that manufacture tile glue and export it around the world. That first trip to Medjugorje a decade ago has changed his life and now Sghedoni, who returns every three months, has just finished building a town to give misfit children a home and teach them a skill.

“In 2001” he says, “I was supposed to come to Medjugorje with a Polish priest that I knew. But because of a problem with his passport, he was stuck in Munich and as if that wasn’t enough, my luggage got lost. I found myself alone in Medjugorje, without anything, without knowing the language. I participated with the other pilgrims in the Eucharistic adoration, I visited Mt Podbrdo for the first time, and I met one of the visionaries, Vicka. And while she spoke of the apparitions of Our Lady and her messages of conversion, I began to cry bitterly. At that moment I realised what it meant to experience the love of God...”

This was an unsettling encounter for the entrepreneur from Italian city of Sassuolo. It brought him closer to faith and led him to decide to do something for those affected by civil war in the Balkans. “I had received so

much here and I felt the need to help heal at least some of those inner wounds that I felt in this land.” Even if the small country of Bosnia Herzegovina, which has become one of the world’s most visited pilgrimage sites, was spared from the bombs during the war in former Yugoslavia, all around, the conflict has left many inner and outer scars. “It hasn’t just destroyed homes but has also left wounds in people’s hearts” confides Sghedoni. “I still remember a man once telling me: ‘I know who killed my father, it was my neighbour, but I have forgiven him’. Many others find themselves in this same position and are unable to overcome it. I wanted to do something to restore their hope.”

Fabio is an entrepreneur from the region of Emilia Romagna in Italy, he’s not a mystic. He knows nothing of the theological debates surrounding the Marian apparitions: those of Medjugorje are not yet recognised by the Church. The bishop of Mostar is against, other bishops and cardinals are in favour, Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Cardinal Camillo Ruini to head an investigative commission to examine the testimonies and messages. “We trust in the Church and its decisions” says Sghedoni, “I do not want to go into the matter any further. I come here to pray to Our Lady, I’ve seen thousands of people receive the sacraments, rediscover the faith and change life – Just as it happened to me.”

A tangible mark which he, together with his family, decided to leave on this place, to express their gratitude, is a citadel that covers seven acres just outside of Medjugorje. It is made up of seven buildings, including two homes to house and train disadvantaged young people. “I wanted to offer these war children a second chance, the possibility of making it, by teaching them a skill.” So in the citadel, as well as a hotel for pilgrims, there are also workshops and cooking schools. Young people learn to become bakers and cooks. There is also a small building for sports activities which can hold up to two thousand people. This is open to all young people’s teams in the area who want to train. “The Citadel of Joy” is now run and enlivened by the New Horizons community, founded by Chiara Amirante. “It cost about ten million euro. We built it thanks to the help of many others, even though the bulk of the funds came from my family and from Kerakoll.”

Fabio looks down, as he says the rosary again and resumes the climb, barefoot, stopping for a lengthy prayer before the white marble statue that stands in the place where the first apparition was witnessed. “I will never be able to pay back as much as I have received” he whispers.

• adapted from *vaticaninsider.lastampa.it*



## MESSAGE TO MIRJANA

May 2, 2012

● Dear children! With motherly love I implore you to give me your hands, permit me to lead you. I, as a mother, desire to save you from restlessness, despair and eternal exile. My Son, by his death on the Cross, showed how much he loves you; he sacrificed himself for your sake and the sake of your sins. Do not keep rejecting his sacrifice and do not keep renewing his sufferings with your sins. Do not keep shutting the doors of Heaven to yourselves. My children, do not waste time. Nothing is more important than unity in my Son. I will help you because the Heavenly Father is sending me so that, together, we can show the way of grace and salvation to all those who do not know him. Do not be hard-hearted. Have confidence in me and adore my Son. My children, you cannot be without the shepherds. May they be in your prayers every day. Thank you.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

• for Krysia Wills (RIP), Dagma Pendle (RIP), Colm O'Donnell, Gary, Rhian, Peter Harrison, Fionna Myrlees, Mifter, Justina Orton, Nicky Carroll, Sue & Nathan Purcell, Bridie Duigan & family, George Mealey, Pat McCarthy, Margaret Faloon & family, Fr Kieran, Harkin family, Maggie Dillon & family, Claire and Marie Gallagher, Maureen, Vince Neal and family, Stuart, Lisa & Murray, Anthony Jones, Fr Petar Vlašić,

***“Before coming to Medjugorje I went to church only at Christmas and Easter...”***

## PRIESTS' GROUP TO MEDJUGORJE

● The priests' group pilgrimage to Medjugorje last month went very well indeed. Eight priests, one deacon and a gentleman entering his final year of study for the diaconate joined the group which left from Birmingham on May 19 and returned on May 26. The pilgrimage was booked through the Irish tour operator Marian Pilgrimages and the group accommodated at the Santa Maria.

The priests were also blessed with an invitation to attend Our Lady's apparition to Ivan in his private chapel.

Here is a selection of the many comments received from the priests: *most rewarding... a very powerful experience... a wonderful pilgrimage... a week full of blessing and inspiration... a fantastic week of prayer and companionship... it renewed me in the faith... grateful thanks to all those who made this pilgrimage possible... wonderful liturgies... an uplifting occasion... very appreciative for this opportunity... a joy to be part of the fellowship and friendship of the group...*

Thank you to all sponsors for their financial support in helping to put this group together. Without the kindness of many generous hearts this would not have been possible.

Plans are in process for another group of priests to visit Medjugorje in September. If you know of any UK based priest that may welcome an opportunity to visit Medjugorje, please contact Bernard on 0121 429 8349 or email [medjugorjeuk@gmail.com](mailto:medjugorjeuk@gmail.com)

## NEW MEDJUGORJE STAMP

● Pictured is the new Medjugorje postage stamp issued on June 1, 2012. Designed by Vijecko Lučić, the *Gospa* stamp is available from the post office situated next door to the Franciscan shop in Medjugorje.



## ADDED APPOINTMENT FOR NUNCIO

● Archbishop Allesandro D'Errico, apostolic nuncio to Bosnia Herzegovina and to Montenegro, is now also the papal nuncio to Croatia. His new appointment was announced last month.

## ONE HUNDRED AND STILL CLIMBING!

● Meet Jack "the farmer" O'Sullivan, 100 years old and still fit and well enough to climb Apparition Hill and Mt Krizevac during a recent visit to Medjugorje.

Jack first came to Medjugorje when he was 92 and has returned twice since then.



He is a frequent visitor to holy shrines. Last month he also journeyed to Lough Derg, closer to home but nevertheless one of the toughest pilgrimages to make in Ireland.

Jack lives in Killarney and dispensed with "home help" when he was 88, saying he was "putting more into the pot than he was getting out of it!". So now Jack looks after himself (his wife died 50 years ago), cooking and cleaning. His nearest neighbour lives about half a mile away. He uses the phone a lot to keep in touch with friends and neighbours and friends visit him.

Although Jack smoked until he was 75 and drank until he 95, it took him only four hours to get up and down Mt Krizevac on his latest visit "but that" he says, "was because they took me down the back way down the mountain. They thought it would be easier for me, but I think it was really because it was easier for the others. And if it is God's will I should come here again, I shall be coming down the front path next time!"

## MEDJUGORJE CALLING PILGRIMAGE

● The *Medjugorje Calling Foundation* pilgrimage is scheduled for 6-13 October. The cost is £514 for seven nights half board. Single room supplement is £120. Contact John Hoskins via email: [john.hoskins@medjugorjecalling.com](mailto:john.hoskins@medjugorjecalling.com)

## ST MICHAEL'S NIGHT OF PRAYER

● There is a night of prayer every Monday at St Michael's parish church, Belfast.  
6:30 Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary  
7:00 Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary  
7:30 Holy Mass  
8:15 Glorious and Luminous Mysteries  
8:45 Prayers for healing before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.  
contact: Reggie Donnelly for further details: 02890 622200.

## BENEDICT AND MARY

● Mary Most Holy, the pure and immaculate Virgin, is for us a school of faith destined to guide us and give us strength on the path that leads us to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Remain in the school of Mary. Take inspiration from her teachings, seek to welcome and to preserve in your hearts the enlightenment that she, by divine mandate, sends you from on high.

• *Benedict XVI, May 2007*

● I invoke the maternal intercession of Most Holy Mary, in whose hands I place the present and the future of my person and the Church.

• *Benedict XVI, on his election as Pope*

● Hvaljen Isus i Marija!  
"Praised be Jesus and Mary!"

• *Benedict XVI, December 1, 2010*

● May the Virgin Mary help us to rediscover the beauty and the profundity of Christian prayer."

• *Benedict XVI, July 25, 2010*

● May Mary, Mother of Mercy, Refuge of us sinners and Star of the new evangelization, accompany your journey...

• *Benedict XVI, March 9, 2012*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...** Marguerite O'Kane & St Martin's Prayer Group, Tony & Anne Penman, Renée Namih, North West London Medjugorje Centre, MC, Thomas Murphy, Mora Moore, BR, Betty Lawson, Fr John Barnes, Gail Hewitt, Mark Peter, Fr Billy Molloy, Peter Ashworth, Julia Bonner, Madeleine Scott, Mick O'Donoghue, Tricia Nugent, Ed O'Hare, Phil Dowding, Pauline Thaha, Reggie Donnelly, Shirlye Gregory, Sue Purcell, Maureen McAdorey, Ellen Gardiner, P. Batoni, Marie Bedingfield, Caroline Easton, Nicole Polkey, Margaret Faloon, Diana Smyth, Rose Tang, Amelia Mascarenhas, Malachy Kelly, Jill Nash, Anne & George Mealey, Gill Pantry, Ben Carter, Sheila North, Robert Wehrmeyer, Anna Querci, Frank Wright, Jim & Janet Phare, Una Lyons, Thelma Binnington, Bridget Smith, Barbara Sinnott, Joan Coates, Electa Almeida, Mick O'Donoghue, Marie Lavery, Christina Canale, Peter Gason, John Manley, Mate Vasilj, Emzed, Andrea Tornielli, Fr Dwight Longenecker, Mike Buckley, Medjugorje Information Centre, zenit.org, Children of Medjugorje.

**"A joy to be part of the fellowship and friendship of the group..."**



## CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH PUBLISHES NORMS REGARDING DISCERNMENT OF PRESUMED APPARITIONS

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recently published its *“Norms regarding the manner of proceeding in the discernment of presumed apparitions or revelations”*, translated into various languages. The document was approved by Pope Paul VI and issued by the congregation in 1978 though it was not then officially published as it was principally intended as a direct aid for the pastors of the Church.

Over the course of the years the document has appeared in various works dealing with the subject in question, although without the authorisation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which is the competent authority in such matters. Since the contents of the Norms are already in the public domain, the congregation believes it is now opportune to publish them.

The publication is accompanied by a preface written by Cardinal William Joseph Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, extracts of which are given below.

“In the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God held in October 2008, the issue of the problems stemming from the experience of supernatural phenomena was raised as a pastoral concern by some bishops. Their concern was recognised by the Holy Father Benedict XVI, who inserted the issue into the larger context of the economy of salvation in a significant passage of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*. It is important to recall this teaching of the Pontiff.

“As the Fathers noted during the Synod, the uniqueness of Christianity is manifested in the

event which is Jesus Christ, the culmination of revelation... He Who ‘has made God known’ is the one, definitive word given to mankind... The Synod pointed to the need to ‘help the faithful to distinguish the word of God from private revelations’ whose role ‘is not to complete Christ’s definitive revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history’. The value of private revelations is essentially different from that of the one public revelation: the latter demands faith; in it God Himself speaks to us through human words and the mediation of the living community of the Church.

“The criterion for judging the truth of a private revelation is its orientation to Christ Himself. If it leads us away from Him, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, Who guides us more deeply into the Gospel, and not away from it. Private revelation is an aid to this faith, and it demonstrates its credibility precisely because it refers back to the one public revelation. Ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation essentially means that its message contains nothing contrary to faith and morals; it is licit to make it public and the faithful are authorised to give it their prudent adhesion. A private revelation can introduce new emphases, give rise to new forms of piety, or deepen older ones. It can have a certain prophetic character and can be a valuable aid for better understanding and living the Gospel at a certain time; consequently it should not be treated lightly. It is a help which is proffered, but its use is not obligatory.

“It is my firm hope that the official publication of the *Norms regarding the manner of proceeding in the discernment of presumed*

*apparitions or revelations* can aid the pastors of the Catholic Church in their difficult task of discerning presumed apparitions, revelations, messages or, more generally, extraordinary phenomena of presumed supernatural origin.”

### NORMS REGARDING THE MANNER OF PROCEEDING IN THE DISCERNMENT OF PRESUMED APPARITIONS OR REVELATIONS

#### ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THESE NORMS

1. Today, more than in the past, news of these apparitions is diffused rapidly among the faithful thanks to the... mass media. Moreover, the ease of going from one place to another fosters frequent pilgrimages, so that Ecclesiastical Authority should discern quickly about the merits of such matters.

2. On the other hand, modern mentality and the requirements of critical scientific investigation render it more difficult, if not almost impossible, to achieve with the required speed the judgements that in the past concluded the investigation of such matters (*constat de supernaturalitate, non constat de supernaturalitate*).

When Ecclesiastical Authority is informed of a presumed apparition or revelation, it will be its responsibility:

- a) first, to judge the fact according to positive and negative criteria;
- b) then, if this examination results in a favourable conclusion, to permit some public manifestation of cult or of devotion, overseeing this with great prudence (equivalent to the formula, ‘for now, nothing stands in the way’) (*pro nunc nihil obstare*).
- c) finally, in light of time passed and of experience, with special regard to the fecundity of spiritual fruit generated from this new devotion, to express a judgement regarding the authenticity and supernatural character if the case so merits.

**“Shrines are... luminous stars in the Church’s sky... spiritual clinics...”**

## I. CRITERIA FOR JUDGING, AT LEAST WITH PROBABILITY, THE CHARACTER OF THE PRESUMED APPARITIONS OR REVELATIONS

### A) Positive Criteria:

- a) Moral certitude, or at least great probability of the existence of the fact, acquired by means of a serious investigation;
- b) Particular circumstances relative to the existence and to the nature of the fact, that is to say:
  1. Personal qualities of the subject or of the subjects (in particular, psychological equilibrium, honesty and rectitude of moral life, sincerity and habitual docility towards Ecclesiastical Authority, the capacity to return to a normal regimen of a life of faith, etc);
  2. As regards revelation: true theological and spiritual doctrine and immune from error;
  3. Healthy devotion and abundant and constant spiritual fruit (for example, spirit of prayer, conversion, testimonies of charity, etc.).

### B) Negative Criteria:

- a) Manifest error concerning the fact.
- b) Doctrinal errors attributed to God Himself, or to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or to some saint in their manifestations, taking into account however the possibility that the subject might have added, even unconsciously, purely human elements or some error of the natural order to an authentic supernatural revelation.
- c) Evidence of a search for profit or gain strictly connected to the fact.
- d) Gravely immoral acts committed by the subject or his or her followers when the fact occurred or in connection with it.
- e) Psychological disorder or psychopathic tendencies in the subject, that with certainty influenced on the presumed supernatural fact, or psychosis, collective hysteria or other things of this kind.

It is to be noted that these criteria, be they positive or negative, are not peremptory but rather indicative, and they should be applied cumulatively or with some mutual convergence.

## II. INTERVENTION OF THE COMPETENT ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

1. If, on the occasion of a presumed supernatural fact, there arises in a spontaneous way among the faithful a certain cult or some devotion, the competent Ecclesiastical Authority has the serious duty of looking into it without delay and of diligently watching over it.
2. If the faithful request it legitimately (that is, in communion with the pastors, and not prompted by a sectarian spirit), the competent

Ecclesiastical Authority can intervene to permit or promote some form of cult or devotion, if, after the application of the above criteria, nothing stands in the way. They must be careful that the faithful do not interpret this practice as approval of the supernatural nature of the fact on the part of the Church.

3. By reason of its doctrinal and pastoral task, the competent Authority can intervene *motu proprio* and indeed must do so in grave circumstances, for example in order to correct or prevent abuses in the exercise of cult and devotion, to condemn erroneous doctrine, to avoid the dangers of a false or unseemly mysticism, etc.

4. In doubtful cases that clearly do not put the good of the Church at risk, the competent Ecclesiastical Authority is to refrain from any judgement and from any direct action (because it can also happen that, after a certain period of time, the presumed supernatural fact falls into oblivion); it must not however cease from being vigilant by intervening if necessary, with promptness and prudence.

## III. AUTHORITIES COMPETENT TO INTERVENE

1. Above all, the duty of vigilance and intervention falls to the Ordinary of the place.
2. The regional or national Conference of Bishops can intervene in certain cases.
3. The Apostolic See can intervene if asked either by the Ordinary himself, by a qualified group of the faithful, or even directly by reason of the universal jurisdiction of the Supreme Pontiff.

## IV. ON THE INTERVENTION OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

1. a) The intervention of the Sacred Congregation can be requested either by the Ordinary, after he has done his part, or by a qualified group of the faithful. In this second case, care must be taken that recourse to the Sacred Congregation not be motivated by suspect reasons (for example, in order to compel the Ordinary to modify his own legitimate decisions, to support some sectarian group, etc.).
- b) It is up to the Sacred Congregation to intervene *motu proprio* in more grave cases, especially if the matter affects the larger part of the Church.
2. It is up to the Sacred Congregation to judge and approve the Ordinary's way of proceeding or, in so far as it be possible and fitting, to initiate a new examination of the matter.

# THE MISSION OF SHRINES

by Br John M Samaha SM

● A shrine is a church or other sacred place visited by the faithful as pilgrims for special devotion. A pilgrimage is a journey by the faithful to a shrine, a place made sacred. The concept of pilgrimage is gaining ascendancy in this postconciliar time. We have a heightened awareness that we are a pilgrim people en route to our eternal destiny. Vatican Council II reminded us that we are a pilgrim Church.

Only in the postconciliar period has any thought been given to defining the concept of shrine or to developing official criteria about shrines. We find no reference to shrines in the 1917 Code of Canon Law, in the writings of Vatican II, or in Pope Paul VI's instruction on proper devotion to Mary, *Marialis Cultus*.

Pope Paul VI remedied this situation emphatically, and called for serious reflection on the role of shrines in the life of the Church. At the first meeting of rectors of Marian shrines in Italy, Paul VI urged them to "lift their voices and let their existence be known in the Church." In the annual addresses to the rectors of Marian shrines, meetings which he initiated, Paul VI was concerned with the meaning of shrines and their place in the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church. He described shrines as "spiritual clinics" (1965)... testimonies of miraculous deeds and of a continual wave of devotion (1966)... luminous stars in the Church's sky... centers of devotion, of prayer, of recollection, of spiritual refreshment" (1970).

He recommended that shrines have a full programme of sacramental and pastoral activity, and that they be centres of genuine religious intensity. He made it clear that devotion is an extension of liturgy and a preparation for it, that all Christian worship leads to Christ.

Previously, academic theology gave no consideration to shrines. The former Code of Canon Law, Vatican Council II, and papal instructions did not mention shrines. Shrines had no formal or canonical Church recognition.

Then Paul VI rose to the occasion and instigated the legislation on shrines contained in the 1983 Code of Canon Law which now guides the Church.

Canons 1230-1234 define shrines as sacred places of pilgrimage, animated centres of intense Christian life which foster liturgical and sacramental practice and cultivate sound devotion.

**"Shrines are... testimonies to miraculous deeds and continuous waves of devotion..."**



## MY MEDJUGORJE STORY

by Fr Dwight Longenecker

● I was an Anglican priest living in England, in 1985 when I was invited by a group of Anglicans and Catholics to visit Medjugorje. I didn't want to go. Being a former Evangelical-fundamentalist I wasn't too keen on apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. I opted out. They insisted. I dug in my heels. They said someone else would pay for it. I didn't want to go. They cajoled and twisted my arm until I said 'yes'.

So off I went and this was in Medjugorje's hey day. All I can do is report my memories of that visit: People were everywhere making confessions. Mass was non stop in the church of St James in the village square. Crowds lined up to see the visionaries who were still living there and still teenagers and still having daily apparitions. The Franciscans preached mightily. There was a strong charismatic element—praise and worship music and fervent preaching.

If my memory serves me, at six o'clock in the evening the visionaries would go to the side room off the sanctuary of the church where the visions occurred. The whole town would begin praying the rosary. All the visitors prayed too. At 6:20 the visions would start. Around 6:40 they would stop and the people would pray the last set of mysteries.

On our second day there I sat on the balcony of our guesthouse with a large woman named Eleanor. As we began the rosary I looked up and the sun was a blaze of light in the sky. I looked down to the car parked below and the sun was reflected in the hood of the car as a blaze of light. Eleanor and I prayed the rosary

together. I had my eyes closed. At 6:20 Eleanor gave me an elbow in the ribs and pointed. The sun was now a disc of white light in the sky like a Eucharistic host. Then as I watched it began to spin, first clockwise then anti clockwise. Sparks spit out from the rim of the sun like a firework. I looked down and the sun was a white spinning disc on the hood of the car. I don't think this would have happened if it was just my eyes playing tricks on me. Plus, Eleanor saw it too. That's why she gave me an elbow in the ribs. I am not sure how long this lasted, but when we spoke about it to our fellow pilgrims they said many people in the town square had reported the same phenomenon.

A few other strange things: the days we spent there were ones of incredible fellowship. We seemed to be on a higher plane of consciousness. We seemed to love one another and we laughed joyously almost constantly. Think of being on vacation with really good family and friends and being high the whole time on the love and joy you were sharing. We also met pilgrims from around the world and established an instant family like rapport, and oh yes, the new rosary I bought there was a pewter colour, but when I got it home—still in its package—it had turned a gold colour.

So now what do I make of all this? Well, the same as I make of the other supernatural experiences I have had. It was inexplicable. That's why it was supernatural. I cannot rule on the authenticity and I am not much interested in the controversy. I know the experience I had bolstered my faith. It

was one of the things that drew me to Catholicism 'cause let's face it, the Protestants don't really have stuff like that! Also I was drawn closer to the Blessed Mother. Somehow I understood her role and the blockage I had as a Protestant was further eroded.

Does this mean I am a die hard Medjugorje devotee? No. I've followed the story a bit over the years. I wish them well and I hope it will one day all be sorted out. If the church says the whole thing is authentic I don't have a problem. If it is ruled inauthentic I don't have a problem.

My own opinion is that something authentic happened there at some point, but that it has been infected with human ego, greed and probably a concerted attack by Satan. The waters have been muddied. Bad stuff has now happened to discredit the events. Whatever transpires, I will accept the church's decision and don't really mind one way or another.

I thank God for what I experienced at Medjugorje, but the truths of the Catholic faith and the authority of the Catholic Church are what are most important, and I am sure the Blessed Virgin would approve of that.

I tell this story, by the way, because I have been asked to – not because I wish to cause controversy or upset people on either side of the controversy. As it happens, I've had some pretty wonderful supernatural experiences along my way with Christ, and I take them all with a sense of wonder and a pinch of salt and try to keep my eyes on Jesus.

- sourced from [www.patheos.com](http://www.patheos.com)
- [www.dwightlongenecker.com](http://www.dwightlongenecker.com)



Philip Illsley with some of his Welsh pilgrimage group praying the Rosary below the Blue Cross, the site of many apparitions of Our Lady.

**"We met pilgrims from around the world and established an instant rapport..."**



### **PILGRIMAGES TO MEDJUGORJE FOR 2012... ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority**

**ATOL protects you from losing your money or being stranded abroad. It does this by carrying out checks on the tour operators and travel organisers it licenses, and requiring them to take part in a financial guarantee scheme managed by the Air Travel Trust (ATT) which provides the funds to protect customers should a firm fail. In some cases a licence holder will also provide a bond, which is lodged with the ATT and provides additional funds. If a tour operator goes out of business, the CAA will ensure you do not lose the money you paid over, or if you're abroad, it will arrange for you to finish your holiday and fly home. Check that you have ATOL protection. [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk)**

<i>Date</i>	<i>leaving from</i>	<i>cost from</i>	<i>contact</i>	<i>telephone</i>	<i>other information</i>
JUNE 20 to 27	EDINBURGH		Roger Foster	01475 793987	Medjugorje 31st anniversary
AUG 1 to AUG 8	LEEDS		Bernard Gallagher	0121 429 8349	<b>International Youth Festival</b>
AUG 14 to 21	GATWICK	£514.00	Ian Walker	020 8863 3635	via Dubrovnik
AUG 19 to 26	BELFAST	£519.00	Reggie Donnelly	02890 300980	or Jean Reynolds 02844 830979
AUG 31 to SEP 7	GATWICK		Joe Lam	0203 5567591	
SEP 6 to 13	MANCHESTER		Josie Clintworth	0151 4865205	
SEP 8 to 15	GATWICK		Mary Gillespie	01582 579120	
SEP 8 to 15	GATWICK		Barry Henwood	01202 398216	
SEP 8 to 15	GATWICK		Caroline Leszczar	01293 851281	
SEP 9 to 16	EAST MIDLANDS		Patricia Oakshott	01482 802483	
SEP 15 to 22	NEWCASTLE		Marie Bedingfield	01642 530739	
SEP 15 to 22	BIRMINGHAM	£534.00	Theresa Griffith	0121 604 4061	via Dubrovnik
SEP 16 to 23	GATWICK		Jan Cavanagh	01473 730426	
SEP 16 to 23	EDINBURGH		Roger Foster	01475 793987	
SEP 20 to 27	MANCHESTER		Ann Molloy	0161 8815129	
SEP 22 to 29	BRISTOL		Philip Illsley	01443 203305	
SEP 22 to 29	GATWICK		Barry & Marie Authers	01959 523619	Children of Medjugorje group
SEP 22 to 29	GATWICK		Niki Murrill	01737 210794	
SEP 23 to 30	EAST MIDLANDS	£534.00	Kath Gambin	0116 234 0103	via Dubrovnik
SEP 25 to OCT 2	BIRMINGHAM		David & Myrna Harwar	01926 771384	
SEP 29 to OCT 6	BELFAST	£519.00	Reggie Donnelly	02890 300980	or Jean Reynolds 02844 830979
SEP 29 to OCT 6	GATWICK		H. Hauschild	07810 310316	
SEP 29 to OCT 6	GATWICK		Joe Chavez	0774 8638402	
OCT 6 to 13	GATWICK		John Hoskins	07956 297503	
OCT 14 to 21	EAST MIDLANDS	£534.00	Kath Gambin	0116 234 0103	via Dubrovnik

**The ATOL number for Marian Pilgrimages is 10206**

## OPEN YOUR HEART

by Fr Peter Arabia SJ

● This testimony by the Fr Peter Arabia was written in August 2007, a few months before his unexpected death at the early age of 49.



● This past June I made another pilgrimage to spend two weeks in prayer and reflection. I had the joy of being present for the 26th anniversary of the apparitions and attending the priest's retreat. However, this is the first time that I am writing a reflection on my experience in Medjugorje.

A good friend of mine, Mate, suggested that it was time for me to start writing about my experiences. Actually his exact words were, "Yo, Father don't you think its time to start writing about all that has happened to you!" (By the way, unlike me who only speaks English and a bit of Spanish, my friend was able to ask me the same question in five different languages!) I was touched by his invitation and sat down to write this reflection.

When I was studying theology as I was preparing to be ordained a Jesuit priest, I learned that "symbols/signs (given by God) have an excess of meaning." This insight came alive again this past June while I was in Medjugorje for the anniversary of the apparition and the priest's retreat (this trip was either my ninth or tenth trip – I have lost count – now instead of counting how many times I have been, I thank the Blessed Mother for her loving invitation to come and stay!)

Undoubtedly, the extraordinary symbol that we are given in Medjugorje is that the Blessed Mother has been appearing here for the past twenty-six years. We must understand that the Blessed Mother always points us to a greater sign than herself. She always draws us to her Son. In Medjugorje, we are truly given a gift because Mary calls us to her Son through the sacraments. As a priest, I am touched and moved when I see pilgrims returning to the Eucharist and to confession. I find that when I celebrate mass and hear confessions, I experience a little bit of heaven. As a sinner myself, I often feel unworthy when I am listening to pilgrims during confession and they generously open their hearts and their lives to me. It is through the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession that we are given the grace to be healed and to courageously become signs to the world of God's fidelity and love. This is one of the many graces that exist in Medjugorje – the grace to be a sign like our

Blessed Mother. If we live and embrace the messages of Medjugorje we too will point other people to Jesus.

This time in Medjugorje, I had a feeling of being at home. I was no longer a visitor... I was returning home... home where I would experience peace and be filled with awe and wonder. This feeling of being at home began the minute I arrived. Within minutes of my arrival I was given the gift of being present for an apparition. I have experienced this gift many times, but this time, while I was kneeling and praying I had a sense that Mary wanted me to again open my heart to how God would use me during my stay. This feeling of being at home is both a grace and a challenge. Since, when you are at home you can no longer sit on the side lines and wait for God to act. When you are at home you are called to labour with God. When you are at home you are called to live the Gospel with all your mind, heart and soul.

There are so many stories that I can share of my time in Medjugorje, so many experiences of God's love and Mary's presence that even thinking of them makes me feel humble and grateful! However, let me share with you one experience of how God works through our Blessed Mother.

During my two weeks in Medjugorje, I had been praying to celebrate mass for the Cenacolo community. As a matter of fact, I had started praying for this even before I arrived in Medjugorje. As circumstances were in Medjugorje, it appeared that my prayer was not going to be answered, since during my first week I was not asked to celebrate mass and during my second week there were plenty of priests present for the retreat. The Cenacolo community had many priests to celebrate mass for them. As my time in Medjugorje was drawing to a close I had resigned myself to the fact that I would not be celebrating mass for the Cenacolo community. As a matter of fact, on Friday as part of my fast and prayer I said to the Blessed Mother "Mary thank you for all the gifts you have given me during my two weeks here. Thank you even for the fact that this time I will not be celebrating mass for the Cenacolo community. Also thank you for allowing us, the priests, to be present at an apparition." (We, the priests, on retreat had been told that the visionaries would be present that evening and we were invited to attend the apparition.)

Little did I know that even though I thought I was being generous in my prayer Our Blessed Mother had other plans. Within moments of my prayer, my friend and my gracious host, Mate, received a call from the Cenacolo community. He said, "Father, the women's community of the Cenacolo needs a priest to celebrate mass tonight at six, can

you do it?" They have no one else? I asked myself can I celebrate mass for the community. Now my prayer was finally answered, but not the way I expected. What was I supposed to do? If I celebrated mass I would miss the apparition. At that moment, I had a great sense of peace. I felt as if Mary said to me, "Be at peace I will honour whatever decision you make." After a few moments, I said to Mate, "Yes, I will do it." I realised that the invitation Mary had given me to open my heart meant just that – open your heart to my Son in every way possible. It is only when you open your heart and even more so when it breaks that you begin to understand the love that Jesus has for you.

I had a wonderful and blessed experience celebrating mass for the women of the Cenacolo community. I felt again as if I was in heaven. Their singing and their prayers (in Italian) filled me with joy. I felt as if I was on holy ground!

I told the women a story about when I returned from my first trip to Medjugorje. My first trip was in 1985, and on the plane ride home I fell sound asleep. When I was asleep, I saw in my mind's eye Mary and she was holding the baby Jesus. I heard Mary say to me, "Peter, my son, take my Son back with you to the United States". In the background, I heard singing, it sounded like angels to me. I had never heard these voices again – until I celebrated mass for the women of the Cenacolo community. I told them that their voices reminded me of angels.

So now, I am back in New York City. I am preparing to begin my new assignment as a teacher of theology at one of our Jesuit high schools in Manhattan. Each day, I face the challenge of living from the graces I experienced in Medjugorje, but more importantly, living from the grace of the sacraments. So you see, next time you receive a sign from God – open your hearts – for He wants to use you as an instrument of His love and care for all whom you meet.

### Fr Peter Arabia SJ

• Born June 14, 1958 • Died March 4, 2008

• The memorial garden for Fr Peter Arabia at the St Ignatius retreat house in New York.



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