

THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE



Message of Our Lady given to Marija, September 25, 2013

Dear children! Also today I call you to prayer.

May your relationship with prayer be a daily one.

Prayer works miracles in you and through you; therefore, little children, may prayer be a joy for you.

Then your relationship with life will be deeper and more open and you will comprehend that life is a gift for each of you.

Thank you for having responded to my call

We know that...

PRAYER WORKS MIRACLES.

Pope Francis, October 8, 2013

In her latest message to the world given to the Medjugorje seer Marija on September 25, Our Lady said:

PRAYER WORKS MIRACLES

in you and through you; therefore, little children, may prayer be a joy for you.

THE ROSARY IS A SCHOOL OF PRAYER, AND A SCHOOL OF FAITH!

Pope Francis, October 6, 2013

The fact remains very clearly that Medjugorje has become a place of prayer. When one speaks about Medjugorje then one must above all else speak about it as a school of prayer. Mary has so often, nearly in every message, called us to prayer and does not tire of repeating this message. Humanity's deepest yearning is to remain in contact with God, and therefore Mary tells us to open our hearts and then to respond to her message.

Fr Slavko Barbaric OFM, July 1997



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

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER...

● Apologies for the long delay in sending out this latest edition of the newsletter. As a way of compensating for holdup it's a double issue, sixteen pages instead of the usual eight. I did point out in the last edition that the newsletter would likely be published only every two to three months in the future. That's still the situation, as I am not in the best of health these days.

PILGRIMAGE DATES...

● The Medjugorje pilgrimage season draws to a close around the end of October, but if any group leaders have dates and details for 2014 and would like them published in the newsletter, then now's the time to let me know. There are two group leaders that have dates booked for next year and these pilgrimages are offering a substantial discount for "early bird" bookings.

Anne Molloy is organising two pilgrimages leaving from Manchester: May 11-18 and September 10-17. Telephone Anne on 0161 881 5129.

Judy Pellatt is travelling to Medjugorje departing from Gatwick on May 28 and returning June 4. Contact Judy on 02392 863585.

WHEELS ON FIRE

● Over the 32 years of apparitions at Medjugorje there have been many exceptional signs of faith and perseverance shown by pilgrims, but perhaps one of the most unusual was by a group of who cycled recently to the shrine from Padua in Italy.

It's not the first time that pilgrims have cycled from afar to Medjugorje but this group completed their gruelling journey of 800 kilometres (500 miles) with a difference – the team climbed Apparition Hill to finally meet with Our Lady carrying their bicycles!



Fr JOHN McCAFFERY

● Fr John McCaffery OFM, (pictured above) the former Spiritual Director to the Medjugorje Apostolate of England and Wales, died in Italy on July 2. He was 78 years old. May he rest in peace.

This is the email notification distributed by Fr Piero who Fr John was staying with since retiring from active ministry two years ago. *"Yes, it is hard to say but it is true. He died a week ago, on Tuesday July 2nd on the late afternoon. Yesterday there was the funeral with the presence of Father Quentin and the Provincial, Father Michael. [...] His body has been buried in Saccolongo a town close to Padua. Beside the friary where he passed the last two months. He was treated with chemo and the last chemotherapy was fatal to him. God Bless. Fr Piero."*

SEER'S NEPHEW ORDAINED

● Filip Pavlovic, nephew of the visionary Maria Pavlovic-Lunetti, was ordained a priest on Sunday, June 15. The ordination was conducted in Zagreb cathedral, the

Assumption of Mary, by Cardinal Josip Bozanić.

PREPARING THE GROUND?

● The Medjugorje parish continues with its work in improving facilities for pilgrims. In recent months seating capacity has been extended around the outside altar with new benches added beyond the perimeter path. The gravel area around the outside altar has disappeared under new block paving. A canopy has also been erected where the new confessionals were built to keep the area shaded for pilgrims waiting in line for confession. There is also a plan to erect another canopy to cover all the seating area that surrounds the outside altar. Signage has been placed at the foot of Apparition Hill and Mt Krizevac as to restrictions and hazards when climbing. There are also voluntary rescue teams operating on the hills, especially when there are large crowds accessing the area (see page 7).



"May your relationship with prayer be a daily one..."

MEDJUGORJE

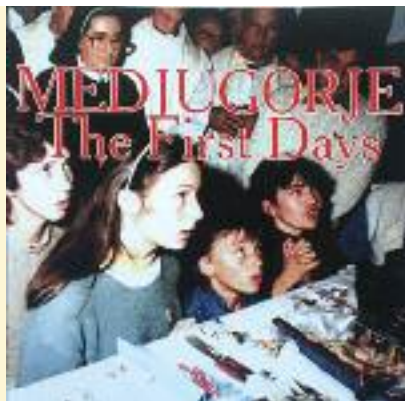
THE FIRST DAYS

● *Medjugorje: The First Days* – written and compiled by James Mulligan, a Catholic priest serving in the Archdiocese of Westminster in London – presents a very detailed chronological account of the Medjugorje phenomenon as it unfolded over the crucial first few days. Meticulous research has resulted in a graphic and absorbing account of the beginning of the claimed apparitions of Our Lady of Medjugorje.

The book contains, for the first time in any language, a full, unredacted transcript of 22 tape recorded interviews and on-the-spot commentaries with the visionaries.

The interviews and commentaries were recorded during the first week of the apparitions and the transcripts provide quite compelling evidence which strongly points to the authenticity of the Medjugorje phenomenon. The book is lavishly illustrated with many never before published photos.

The basis of this first account of the first seven days of the claimed apparitions at Medjugorje is the transcription of the translation from Croatian of 22 tape-recorded interviews/on-the-spot commentaries with the alleged visionaries. All the recordings were completed within the first seven days of the alleged apparitions and provide invaluable source material.



The recordings were carried out by the Franciscan priests of Medjugorje – mainly the parish priest, Fr Jozo Zovko – and by a parishioner, Grgo Kozina.

The bulk of the recordings were confiscated by the Yugoslav State Security Police when they raided the Medjugorje parish rectory on August 17, 1981, but fortunately copies had been made.

These copies have found their way all around the world and only now has the opportunity come to have them all collected.

Snippets of transcriptions from these recordings have been published sporadically – but this is the first time that all the material has been collated, translated and published. In 1988 a Medjugorje-born Franciscan priest, the late Fr Ivo Sivric, who was then living in Canada, published and translated a substantial tranche of the recordings into French, in his book *La face cache de Medjugorje*.

This was a valiant attempt, and his translation is basically sound, but Fr Sivric was hindered by a large amount of the material being missing and was also frequently flummoxed, it seems, by the modern day terms and the colloquial expressions of the young visionaries.

These transcriptions are a treasure from many angles.

They provide a very graphic, on-the-spot description of those fast-moving, unprecedented events of June 1981, and they leave the reader in no doubt of the absolute conviction of the young visionaries that are seeing Our Lady.

As might be expected in the ad hoc and un-choreographed manner in which the recordings took place, there are some moments of confusion – but such moments are rare and there is a remarkable consistency and coherence to the visionaries' narration of events.

The steadfast conviction of these young people that are seeing the Blessed Virgin Mary shines through against the backdrop of outright hostility from the Communist State authorities and the scepticism, at the time, of the Franciscan priests in the Medjugorje parish, and points strongly to the authenticity of Medjugorje.

Medjugorje: The First Days
published by Boanerges Press,
boanergespress@gmail.com

PRAYER CHANGED ME...

● Fr Charles Colazzi comes from New Jersey and during his recent visit to Medjugorje – his ninth – he spoke about his life, vocation to the priesthood and experience of Medjugorje.



He first travelled to Medjugorje with a group of young people when he was 16 and when he truly experienced the beauty of the place. "As a young man, I went to the church but did not particularly like the faith. During my visit to Medjugorje I had a strong experience of prayer that completely changed me. After I returned home, I started loving prayer, I spent time Adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and I prayed Rosary every single day."

Four years later, he went to the seminary and was ordained a priest before his next visit to Medjugorje. "That was all a really beautiful experience. I would say that I fell in love with Our Lady, with Jesus. Everyone experiences something different, whether it

is inner healing, feeling of love and intimacy, or perhaps miracles, because we all feel something different. Confessions in Medjugorje are very significant; people are really different when they return home. Usually people who confess here feel something. Very often their life changes completely and they experience the grace of good confessions that happen after 20 or 30 years of wandering. For me as a priest that is a highlight here in Medjugorje", said Fr Charles.

A SPECIAL PLACE...

● Andrea Cunningham recently made her fifth visit to Medjugorje, in the company of her husband.



"This indeed is a special place. I heard about the apparitions at the beginning of 90's and I arrived here for the first time in 1994, the year I married.

"How does Medjugorje help me? It binds my relationship with God, renews my faith, gives me strength.

"I think it is really easy to become part of hectic life, the stress of everyday living – we are easily distracted by other things – and when you come to a place like Medjugorje, that means a return to the nature, a return to the personal relationship with God", said Andrea who thinks that young people always seek for something, and they actually seek God.

"It is wonderful to see so many young people here who walk around and pray Rosary and they all look so natural, since it is easier for them to do that here than back home. It is hard to be like this at home because there is general opinion that something is wrong with the people who pray and not do some other things.

"I do not know what will happen in the future. I can only say that Medjugorje is a little piece of heaven on this earth, and that is what we are all longing for, whether we are aware of that or not. We are longing towards that, and here you get the feeling that it is possible to attain that."

"After I returned home I started loving prayer..."

LATEST MESSAGES OF OUR LADY

A SIGN FOR OTHERS...

● Would it be ever possible to calculate all that we ask of Our Lady, all the favours, all the times we beg for her intercession, all the pleas and petitions we place before her? The number is incalculable.

Yet, in her August message, Our Lady is very specific about what exactly we should ask for: To be a sign to others. And what is this sign? That we may be prayer, peace and love.

What a difference we can make to the lives of others and the world if we allow God to help us become people of prayer, peace and love! And he does want to help us in this way. Our Lady's opening words in her message assures us of this. **"Dear children, also today, the Most High is giving me the grace to be with you and to lead you towards conversion."**

To be a sign to others is to be a light for others – light for the world. Jesus says, *"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on a lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5 : 13-16)

To decide for conversion is to say daily, with enthusiasm: "I want to be a sign to others."

JULY 25 message to Marija

Dear children! With joy in my heart I call all of you to live your faith and to witness it with your heart and by your example in every way.

Decide, little children, to be far from sin and temptation and may there be joy and love for holiness in your hearts.

I love you, little children, and accompany you with my intercession before the Most High.

Thank you for having responded to my call.

AUGUST 2 message to Mirjana

Dear children, if only you would open your hearts to me with complete trust, you would comprehend everything.

You would comprehend with how much love I am calling you; with how much love I desire to change you, to make you happy; with how much love I desire to make you followers of my Son and give you peace in the fullness of my Son.

You would comprehend the immeasurable greatness of my motherly love.

That is why, my children, pray because through prayer your faith grows and love is born, the love along which even the cross is not unendurable because you do not carry it alone.

In union with my Son you glorify the name of the Heavenly Father.

Pray, pray for the gift of love, because love is the only truth: it forgives everything, it serves everyone and it sees a brother in everyone.

My children, my apostles, great is the trust that the Heavenly Father has given you through me, His handmaid, to help those who do not know Him, that they may reconcile with Him and follow Him.

That is why I am teaching you love, because only if you have love will you be able to respond to Him.

Again I am calling you to love your shepherds and to pray that, at this difficult time, the name of my Son may be glorified under their guidance. Thank you.

AUGUST 25 message to Marija

Dear children! Also today, the Most High is giving me the grace to be with you and to lead you towards conversion.

Every day I am sowing and am calling you to conversion, that you may be prayer, peace, love - the grain that by dying will give birth a hundredfold.

I do not desire for you, dear children, to have to repent for everything that you could have done but did not want to.

Therefore, little children, again, with enthusiasm say: 'I want to be a sign to others.'

Thank you for having responded to my call.

SEPTEMBER 2 message to Mirjana

Dear children, I love you all.

All of you, all of my children, all of you are in my heart.

All of you have my motherly love, and I desire to lead all of you to come to know God's joy.

This is why I am calling you. I need humble apostles who, with an open heart, will accept the Word of God and help others to comprehend the meaning of their life along side God's word.

To be able to do this my children, through prayer and fasting, you must learn to listen with the heart and to learn to keep submitting yourselves.

You must learn to keep rejecting everything that distances you from God's word and to yearn only for that which draws you closer to it.

Do not be afraid. I am here. You are not alone.

I am imploring the Holy Spirit to renew and strengthen you.

I am imploring the Holy Spirit that, as you help others, you too may be healed.

I am imploring Him that, through Him, you may be God's children and my apostles.

For the sake of Jesus, for the sake of my Son, love those whom He has called and long for the blessing only from the hands which He has consecrated.

Do not permit evil to come to reign.

Anew I repeat – only along side your shepherds will my heart triumph.

Do not permit evil to separate you from your shepherds.

Thank you.

SEPTEMBER 25 message to Marija

Dear children! Also today I call you to prayer.

May your relationship with prayer be a daily one.

Prayer works miracles in you and through you; therefore, little children, may prayer be a joy for you.

Then your relationship with life will be deeper and more open and you will comprehend that life is a gift for each of you.

Thank you for having responded to my call.

"I want to be a sign for others..."



My children, permit God's blessing to fall on you...

God's blessing is God's blessing. Sadly there can be times when we have difficulty in recognising God's blessing in our life.

Pope Francis is a wonderful witness to God's blessing. He raises his hand continually in blessing, and is commissioned daily by God to do so.

His blessing falls on people in many ways, not always visible, especially when we fail to acknowledge or understand God's blessings in life.

Just recently, Medjugorje was handed a double-blessing from the direction of Rome.

Both blessings were for a group of Medjugorje representatives (which included the parish priest and others pastors) who travelled to Rome in October.

The first blessing was an audience with Pope Francis.

The second blessing for the Medjugorje group was the official invitation to be part of the Marian Day of Prayer in St Peter's Square on Saturday, October 12.

Marian groups from all over the world were invited to take part, and Medjugorje was not excluded or left on the sidelines for this event.

This is also a blessing, a blessing for all children of Our Blessed Mother to be gathered under her mantle, Mother Church, and to be united in witnessing and proclaiming the greatness of the Lord to a watching and waiting world.

The Almighty has done great things at Medjugorje, he has filled the hungry with great blessings.

Dear children, I, as a mother, am coming to you and showing you how much God, your Father, loves you. And you? Where are you, children of mine? What is in your heart in the first place? What is not permitting you to put my Son in the first place? My children, permit God's blessing to fall upon you. May God's peace permeate you, the peace that my Son, and he alone, gives.

Medjugorje message, September 2, 2005

COULD HAVE... SHOULD HAVE...

I do not desire for you, dear children, to have to repent for everything that you could have done but did not want to.

● In all of her messages to the world given through the Medjugorje visionary Marija, Our Lady has never used the word 'repent' until now – and in such a way which suggests if we continually ignore the call to conversion of the heart, a time of pain and regret will follow.

She is not specific about when this time of repentance may be, if it is Purgatory or is linked to any of the secrets given to the visionaries, but to "have to repent for everything that you could have done but did not want to" suggests that repentance is key to conversion of the heart and responding to the call of Jesus through his Blessed Mother.

Repentance is necessary; of that there is no doubt.

In Luke's Gospel (5 : 32) Jesus says: "I have not come to call the virtuous, but sinners to repentance."

When Catholics attend Mass they are given the opportunity to acknowledge their

sinfulness and express repentance during the Penitential Act. They also admit to what they have failed to do.

And yet in this latest message Our Lady says: "I do not desire for you, dear children, to have to repent for everything that you could have done but did not want to."

Is Our Lady saying that repentance, though essential, is only part of the process of reconciliation between the Father and his children, that the journey home, the path to holiness – daily conversion – has also to be undertaken and completed?

In an earlier message – August 25, 2007 – Our Lady gave this warning: "You who are far from God's mercy, convert so that God may not become deaf to your prayers and that it may not be too late for you.

Therefore, in this time of grace, convert and put God in the first place in your life."

Brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus to make more and more progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live: the life that God wants... what God wants is for you to be holy. 1 Thessalonians 4 : 1, 3

The Catechism teaches:

1431 Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have

committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart).

1439 The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the centre of which is the merciful father: the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy – all these are characteristic of the process of conversion. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life – pure worthy, and joyful – of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ who knows the depths of his Father's love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way.

"Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One."



JESUS IS OUR PEACE

More than 100,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square in response to Pope Francis' appeal to make 7 September a day of fasting and prayer for peace, in the light of the dramatic circumstances which had engulfed Syria. This initiative was welcomed and applauded not only by Catholics and other Christian confessions, but also by Buddhists, Jews and Muslims, and even those who do not belong to any religion. This is the homily by Pope Francis:

"And God saw that it was good. The biblical account of the beginning of the history of the world and of humanity speaks to us of a God who looks at creation, in a sense contemplating it, and declares: *it is good.* This, dear brothers and sisters, allows us to enter into God's heart and, precisely from within him, to receive his message. We can ask ourselves: what does this message mean? What does it say to me, to you, to all of us?

"It says to us simply that this, our world, in the heart and mind of God, is the 'house of harmony and peace', and that it is the space in which everyone is able to find their proper place and feel 'at home', because it is 'good'. All of creation forms a harmonious and good unity, but above all humanity, made in the image and likeness of God, is one family, in which relationships are marked by a true fraternity not only in words: the other person is a brother or sister to love, and our relationship with God, who is love, fidelity and goodness, mirrors every human relationship and brings harmony to the whole of creation. God's world is a world where everyone feels responsible for the other, for the good of the other. This evening, in reflection, fasting and prayer, each of us deep down should ask ourselves: Is this really the world that I desire? Is this really the world that we all carry in our hearts? Is the world that we want really a world of harmony and peace, in ourselves, in our relations with others, in families, in cities, in and between nations? And does not true freedom mean choosing ways in this world that lead to the good of all and are guided by love?

"But then we wonder: Is this the world in which we are living? Creation retains its beauty which fills us with awe and it

remains a good work. But there is also *violence, division, disagreement, war.* This occurs when man, the summit of creation, stops contemplating beauty and goodness, and withdraws into his own selfishness.

"When man thinks only of himself, of his own interests and places himself in the centre, when he permits himself to be captivated by the idols of dominion and power, when he puts himself in God's place, then all relationships are broken and everything is ruined; then the door opens to violence, indifference, and conflict. This is precisely what the passage in the Book of Genesis seeks to teach us in the story of the Fall: man enters into conflict with himself, he realizes that he is naked and he hides himself because he is afraid, he is afraid of God's glance; he accuses the woman, she who is flesh of his flesh; he breaks harmony with creation, he begins to raise his hand against his brother to kill him. Can we say that from harmony he passes to *disharmony*? Can we say this: that from harmony he passes to *disharmony*? No, there is no such thing as 'disharmony'; there is either harmony or we fall into chaos, where there is violence, argument, conflict, fear.

"It is exactly in this chaos that God asks man's conscience: *Where is Abel your brother?* and Cain responds: *I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?* We too are asked this question, it would be good for us to ask ourselves as well: Am I really my brother's keeper? Yes, you are your brother's keeper! To be human means to care for one another! But when harmony is broken, a metamorphosis occurs: the brother who is to be cared for and loved becomes an adversary to fight, to kill. What violence occurs at that moment, how many conflicts, how many wars have marked our history! We need only look at the suffering of so many brothers and sisters. This is not a question of coincidence, but the truth: we bring about the rebirth of Cain in every act of violence and in every war. All of us! And even today we continue this history of conflict between brothers, even today we raise our hands against our brother. Even today, we let ourselves be guided by idols, by selfishness, by our own interests, and this attitude persists. We have perfected our weapons, our conscience has fallen asleep, and we have sharpened our ideas to justify ourselves. As if it were normal, we continue to sow destruction, pain, death! Violence and war lead only to death, they speak of death! Violence and war are the language of death!

"After the chaos of the Flood, when it stopped raining, a rainbow appeared and the dove returned with an olive branch. I

think also of the olive tree which representatives of various religions planted in Plaza de Mayo, in Buenos Aires, in 2000, asking that there be no more chaos, asking that there be no more war, asking for peace.

"And at this point I ask myself: Is it possible to walk the path of peace? Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace? Invoking the help of God, under the maternal gaze of the *Salus Populi Romani*, Queen of Peace, I say: Yes, it is possible for everyone! From every corner of the world tonight, I would like to hear us cry out: Yes, it is possible for everyone! Or even better, I would like for each one of us, from the least to the greatest, including those called to govern nations, to respond: Yes, we want it! My Christian faith urges me to look to the Cross. How I wish that all men and women of good will would look to the Cross if only for a moment! There, we can see God's reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and peace is spoken. This evening, I ask the Lord that we Christians, and our brothers and sisters of other religions, and every man and woman of good will, cry out forcefully: violence and war are never the way to peace! Let everyone be moved to look into the depths of his or her conscience and listen to that word which says: Leave behind the self-interest that hardens your heart, overcome the indifference that makes your heart insensitive towards others, conquer your deadly reasoning, and open yourself to dialogue and reconciliation. Look upon your brother's sorrow – I think of the children, look upon these – look upon your brother's sorrow, and do not add to it, stay your hand, rebuild the harmony that has been shattered; and all this not by conflict but by encounter! May the noise of weapons cease! War always marks the failure of peace, it is always a defeat for humanity. Let the words of Pope Paul VI resound again: *No more one against the other, no more, never! ... war never again, never again war! Peace expresses itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of justice but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love.* Forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation – these are the words of peace, in beloved Syria, in the Middle East, in all the world! Let us pray for reconciliation and peace, let us work for reconciliation and peace, and let us all become, in every place, men and women of reconciliation and peace! Amen".

• source: Vatican Information Service

"No more one against the other... no more, never!"



MEDJUGORJE'S MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

● Anyone who has journeyed up and down Apparition Hill or Mt Krizevac will know the risk and danger of falling and sustaining injury.

Climbing up and down the hills is routine for locals, but for visiting pilgrims the effort isn't as easy and over the 32-year span of apparitions, countless people have injured themselves by falling or, in some cases, even collapsed and died.

There are also the rare occasions when pilgrims wander off-track, become disorientated and get lost on the hills. This scenario has happened twice in past weeks. Unfortunately, in the first instance the Italian pilgrim had died before he was found. Thankfully, the Slovakian lady who went missing was rescued after a short time (pictured).

Until recently, first aid was usually administered by fellow pilgrims, or by volunteer doctors and nurses at the Order of Malta medical centre beside St James church. If hospital treatment was required, then depending on the seriousness of the injury the person was ferried to Mostar hospital twenty miles away by taxi or ambulance.

But now a group of young local people have formed a team committed to act as volunteer rescuers on the hills. They are affiliated to the Mountain Rescue Team in Mostar and the Order of Malta centre in Medjugorje and number about 35 with ages ranging from 21 to 35. The team renders

basic first aid on site and stretcher casualties off the mountain to the waiting ambulance.

It has to be stressed that this team are all civilian volunteers and receive no financial assistance for their work. They fund all their own kit and equipment and travel costs, and if they are called from work to assist with any rescue they go without their wages.

These young people were in action searching for five days on the mountains for the Italian pilgrim who went missing recently. Those days and nights were accompanied by atrocious weather conditions in a hostile terrain.

The volunteer group also assisted with the safety of many youngsters from around the world who attended the annual Medjugorje Youth Festival in August.

Sadly, the Medjugorje rescue team is under-equipped and under-funded, but although they lack resources they do not lack the commitment to volunteer to serve the pilgrims and having to place themselves at risk in doing so.

If any reader feels they may be able to assist in any way with providing resources, equipment or funding in any way to assist this volunteer group, it would be greatly welcomed and appreciated.

A welcome contribution to the group's important work was recently made by one of the local Franciscan priests, presumably on behalf of the parish, when each volunteer was presented with a pair of climbing boots.

Bernard Bradley is the man to get in touch with if you would like to help in any way.

You can reach Bernard at bjbradley@yahoo.co.uk or write to him at 17 Ebury Road, Watford, England WD1 2RE. Bernard's mobile number is 0044 (0)7958 003776.

Meeting God and Medjugorje...

by Fr Thomas McHugh

● On September 2 dawn was breaking across the mountains that enfold the village of Medjugorje. We gathered on the lower slopes, many thousands following the track shaped by millions of pilgrims who have been to this place – a holy place – a place of encounter with God.

People come here because it is believed that Our Lady appeared here to six teenage children with a message of "Peace, Peace, Peace and only Peace". Since then the revelations continue with the Gospel message.

On September 2 many thousands waited for "God's appointed time" of 8:30am. We waited in silence – and prayer. There was total silence that you could slice with a knife". Mirjana Soldo was totally absorbed in prayer – a moment of encounter with God and his mother Mary.

The core of the message meditated to us, that moving through the visionary Mirjana from Mary the Mother of God echoes what has often been prayed on, preached and explored here at St Joseph's [church], the Word of God. A summary of the message follows:

"My dear children, I love you all, all of you are in my heart... I desire you to come to know God's joy... I am calling you... to be humble apostles who, with an open heart will accept the 'Word of God' and help others comprehend the meaning of their life alongside God's Word by listening with the heart and through prayer and fasting."

(Please see the full text in the church porch).

I plead with you dear reader to prayerfully use the Wednesday Word inside this newsletter as one sure way of meeting the living God.

Fr Thomas McHugh
St Joseph's Parish, Bromley, Kent



"Many thousands awaited for God's appointed time of 8:30am..."

MEET SEAN BLOOMFIELD

Director of 'The Triumph'

● The following is a transcript of the testimony of Sean Bloomfield, which can be seen in the archives of "Fruit of Medjugorje" on www.marytv.tv. It is one of the testimonies of Episode #71.

● My name is Sean Bloomfield and I'm the founder of Queen of Peace Productions and now co-founder of a new film company called *Triumph Films*. I've been coming to Medjugorje since the year 2000. I never would have thought that I would come to Medjugorje. When I was younger, I was baptized Catholic, but never raised in any church setting. Up until I was 20, I really hadn't been inside a church.

I was in college studying film-making and creative writing – trying to get a degree so that I could go onto maybe Hollywood to try to make films – definitely would have been more secular films. One day, my Mom called me and said, "Do you want to go to Medjugorje?" I had an adventurous spirit, so I said, "Sure, why not?" I looked it up on the map, and I saw it was near Croatia. So there were a lot of pictures of beautiful coastline, beautiful beaches, and gorgeous water. And so I figured, "This will be great. I'll have a beach holiday while my Mom is on this silly religious pilgrimage."

So I joined the group and went with my Mom. We got off the plane, got on the bus, and started heading down the coast, and I was in heaven! I thought, "What a beautiful place!" But pretty soon the bus turned away from the coast, then just started going up into the rocky hills and kept going farther and farther away from the beach. Then all of a sudden people started praying the Rosary, and it really kind of scared me. I hadn't been around anything like that before in my life.

We got to Medjugorje and I wanted to have nothing to do with this group of what seemed to me like "religious fanatics." I told my Mom, "You go to church, and I'm just going to do my own thing though." I ended up wanting to go climb Apparition Hill. I just figured I'd kind of go hiking. I had no idea, no reason why, but I just wanted to get out. I started walking towards Apparition Hill and I kept feeling kind of a pull from this taller mountain – Cross Mountain. And halfway to Apparition Hill I really couldn't take it anymore, and I said, "I'll go for the taller mountain." I went there and started climbing Cross Mountain.



• Sean and his wife Lisa with Anna, the first born of their three children.

When I got there, I saw an old lady who was going barefoot, and at first I thought she was crazy, and then I thought, "If she can do it, I can do it. Why not? I've got nothing else to do here." I took off my shoes and started climbing barefoot. I was taking my time – obviously it is very rocky for those who've done it. When I got up somewhere around the Third Station, I saw a priest coming down towards me. And he was wearing white vestments and giant rosary beads this big [gesturing with his hands] around his neck. He was coming down toward me. I remembered he had brown hair, brown eyes, and a really nice smile. I looked up at him. He smiled at me. I smiled at him. I looked down to take my next step and in that split second I thought, "What is that priest doing up here dressed like that? It seems kind of strange." In this split second I looked down and then looked back up, he was gone! He had been maybe 10 feet in front of me. So I started looking in the bushes for him. It was all thorny briars. I didn't know much about priests, but I thought they're probably not going to be playing jokes on somebody up on the mountain. After that, I thought, "Maybe there's something to this." Before that, I thought it was all a made-up story.

I got to the top of Cross Mountain and it was dark by the time I got to the top. I sat down and I thought about the priest with the big rosary beads around his neck, and I pulled out a rosary my mom had given me at the beginning of the trip and a little pamphlet about how to pray the Rosary. I started praying it for the first time in my life. I sat up there for a long time. I felt an amazing peace in my heart that I never felt before, and really started to think, "You know, there's something to this!" Many

more things happened to me, and most of that was internal. I think I needed a real good slap in the face by seeing something in front of me because I was not a believer at all.

The biggest thing that I found here [Medjugorje] and the biggest thing I tell people now is CONFESSION. It was the most amazing thing I ever experienced in my life – going to Confession and getting rid of all the baggage that I had been carrying around for a long time. It took the darkness out of my heart that I had felt – that I didn't realize was there – and replaced it with peace and really – LOVE.



I've tried to carry that with me, and every time I come here, the first thing I do is I run to Confession. Before that, it was a terrifying thought to me.

After I got back from that first trip, I went back to college. It was my senior year. I was a totally different person and I probably scared a lot of my friends. I know I scared my girlfriend who I had been dating since high school. They could see a definite change in me. The biggest change was that I didn't really care about making films that were about something that was not miraculous. All I wanted to do was come back to Medjugorje and produce a film about it, so I could share what I had experienced with younger people of my

"You go to church, I'm just going to do my own thing..."

generation. One year later – after I graduated, – that's what I did. I got a camera (my grandmother helped me buy a really good camera) and I came here [Medjugorje] and everything just fell into place. I was able to interview some of the visionaries, and interview people who had had healings, and videotaped some of the apparitions. Everything just seemed like it was meant to be.

Since then – that was the year 2001, when I produced the first film – since then, I've produced seven films, not just on Medjugorje, but one also on Kibeho, Rwanda (an apparition that started the same year as Medjugorje). I've traveled to a lot of other Marian shrines – Lourdes, Fatima, and some of the smaller ones like Banneux in Belgium and Laus in France. I really kind of pieced together how amazing these Marian apparitions are. I feel so blessed to be a part of sharing that knowledge and these graces with people through the media, like John Paul [Bl. Pope John Paul II] asked us to do before he passed away.

More recently, about two years ago, I teamed up with a partner and we started filming a project called *The Triumph*, that was really meant to be a film about the core of Medjugorje – that is the conversion of somebody who is so far away, a nonbeliever. We ended up meeting a young man and he was here on his first day. His mother had dragged him here just like my mom dragged me here. And he was having a lot of problems. He didn't believe it – maybe partially, but barely. I asked if I could follow him around with a camera and he said, "Yes." We interviewed him that first day and he expressed his doubts about Medjugorje and almost his anger and resentment about even being there. We followed him throughout the course of that first time and we were able to have him be present at Mirjana's apparition. He was right in front of her. I won't spoil the ending, but what happened was miraculous, like so many other conversion stories. But this one was caught on tape!

Now the goal with *The Triumph* is to get it out in front of as many people as possible. It's being screened in theaters right now in the U.S. It has been, so far, in about 25 theatres [well over 100 at time of printing]. It also premiered in Australia and the UK, and there's even going to be a showing in South Africa. We hope to do one here [Medjugorje] soon. The goal is really to show it in the theatres and have all the Medjugorje believers bring all of their friends and family who have ever made fun of them for believing in something as crazy as Medjugorje. Based on the reviews so far

from nonbelievers who have gone to see it, it's changing lives. That was the whole goal from the very beginning. I'd like to ask everybody to pray for *The Triumph* and consider hosting a screening in your own neighborhood. It's pretty easy, and it's a really good way to get the message of Medjugorje out to the world.

I would like to conclude by saying Medjugorje has not only changed my life but everybody in my family. I told you about my girlfriend (who was 16 when I met her) and when I came back from Medjugorje the first time she was a little bit scared about what happened. I brought her a few years later. She had not even been baptised. She had no religious upbringing – a very good person at heart, but just had no religion. When she came here, I kind of let her do her own thing, just like I had done my own thing. She had so many amazing experiences. The one that I will tell you about – she ended up on Apparition Hill with Ivan, and she didn't realize she was right next to him. I was separated [from her] at the time – I think I was taking a nap or something – and she ended up going up there. So I ended up going up, too, but I was, at that point, pretty far back in the crowd. I remember right from where I was (it was night-time) and I saw this light coming across the sky; it looked like a satellite from far up. But this was moving kind of like a snake pattern and it was coming down and getting brighter. It went to the top of Apparition Hill and that's the last I saw of it. I thought, "Wow – that was pretty amazing!" It's not something you see every day. It turns out – after the apparition, I ran into my girlfriend, Lisa, and she was shaken. She was moved. She was in tears. She couldn't stop talking about what she saw. What she saw – she saw the same light that I saw. But then after that, she saw that light coming down through the trees on

Apparition Hill, coming down towards her and over the heads of people. She was looking around to see if anybody else saw it, but most people had their heads bowed or maybe they couldn't see it. I don't know. But she said it came down towards her. She didn't know what to do. She was a little scared at that, but then it flashed three times. "It was about the size of a basketball," she said. It flashed three times and then disappeared. At that moment that it disappeared, that's when she then looked up and that's when the apparition started. She told me this. She hadn't read anything about Medjugorje. A lot of people have said that before the visionaries see Our Lady, there are three flashes of light. She had never heard that before or read that. I thought it was pretty amazing that she talked about that. After that, she decided to become Catholic. And she went home and got baptised, got her First Communion, Confirmation, and she joined the Catholic Church right before our wedding.

We had a beautiful Catholic wedding. Now we have three children, and we bring them to Medjugorje all the time. I'm at the point where now I've lost count of how many times I've been to Medjugorje, but it's probably somewhere between 25 and 30. I just can't get enough of it. It's an amazing place. I think it's the most important supernatural event since Jesus walked the earth. Really – I think it's that important. And I think it's only going to become clear in the future how important this is. The little I can do to help the world know about it, that's all I want to do.

Medjugorje is really a place of peace. It is also a place of joy and I encourage everyone to experience this message of peace and share it with others. That's the way that we're going to help Medjugorje get out into the world.



Apparition Hill, Medjugorje

"Medjugorje is really a place of peace and joy..."

Where
the
streets
have
no
name...



*Where the streets have no name...
I want to run, I want to hide,
tear down the walls that hold me inside;
I want to reach out and touch the flame
where the streets have no name.*

So sang U2's Bono on the band's 1987 album, *The Joshua Tree*.

The words could easily lend themselves to the village of Medjugorje where the streets have no name and the flame of love, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, has attracted millions to the shrine these past 32 years.

But on this front there are significant changes about to happen in Medjugorje. A new status is on the horizon, and often when this happens, so also a desire to rename and reflect the transformation in state and mission.

It can be no coincidence that plans are in preparation to name all the Medjugorje streets – until now, streets

with no name. Neighbouring Bijakovici, where the apparitions of Our Lady first took place, will also be assigned street names.

The main street that runs through the Medjugorje village and up to Bijakovici is to be 'christened' with the name of JOHN PAUL II. Fourteen other streets will be named after Franciscans (including Fr SLAVKO BARBARIC), and the rest of the streets given the name of historical figures.

This action in naming the streets will clearly identify the significance of the two principal districts of the Medjugorje parish, just as the name-changing in Scripture is seen as a sign of an important and new role in God's plan, a new calling.

Abram became Abraham, Jacob was renamed Israel, Levi became Matthew and, of course, the most notable, Simon became Peter (Cephas meaning Rock). There are many more biblical examples.

Pastoral changes at Medjugorje

New appointment brought message to Medjugorje from John Paul II...

● The Herzegovina Franciscan Province of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has announced new appointments for the Medjugorje parish of St James the Apostle.

The most notable is 69-year-old Fr Ivan Dugandži who has pastored twice previously at Medjugorje – in the early 70's and then from 1985 to 1988. It was during his second placement that Fr Dugandži met with Pope John Paul II and spoke with him about Medjugorje. The Holy Father is reported to have said: "You can tell everyone that each day I pray for a happy conclusion to these events."



Mention of part of the conversation was made in an archived issue of the *Medjugorje Messenger* (#17, 1990), a publication edited by the London-based Jesuit, Fr Richard Foley, who died in 2003.

"After the general audience on April 2, 1986, I had the great joy of meeting the Holy Father (JP11) personally. Of course, we spoke of Medjugorje. He showed great sadness that such an important matter had not been studied more profoundly..."

"He told me that he follows the events continuously, while we know that he asks for videos and other material.

"As I was leaving, he called me back and whispered in my ear: 'You can tell everyone that each day I pray for a happy conclusion to these events'.

"Finally, he gave me a farewell embrace. This evidence of the Holy Father's good will fills me with hope."

The full team of appointed priests pastoring at Medjugorje is Fr Marinko Šakota (parish priest), Fr Viktor Kosir, Fr Karlo Lovri, Fr Ivan Dugandži, Fr Mladen Herceg, Fr Dragan Ruži, Fr Ivan Landeka, Fr Stanko Kosi and Fr Josip Marija Katalini.

Priests leaving the Medjugorje parish include: Fr Svetozar Kraljevic (Zagreb), Fr Tomislav Pervan (retired) and Fr Danko Perutina (Citluk)



Medjugorje... soon to have its streets named...

● When the Year of Faith was announced in 2012 I asked God what I could do to increase my faith and the faith of our parish in Bromley, and what he put on my heart was to take a group to Medjugorje. I know from my first visit in 1987 – for two and a half days – that it really made my faith come alive.

As our departure date approached I became more apprehensive daily – terrified might be a more accurate word – but I always felt God saying to me, “Your task is to get them there and the I’ll do the work.” A reading I had several times was: “Yaweh will do the fighting for you, you only have to keep still.” Exodus 14 : 14.

Fr Jozo was the parish priest of Medjugorje when the apparitions began in 1981. He was imprisoned by the Communists for supporting the visionaries. He believes that Medjugorje is a place of spiritual heart surgery. Just as we have to leave home and go to a very specialised environment for physical heart surgery, so we must do the same for spiritual heart surgery. When Fr Tom, our parish priest and spiritual director, prayed the Glorious Mysteries on the coach to Medjugorje and spoke about Our Lady with such love, I knew that everything was going to be alright.

With ages ranging from 17 to 90 it could have seemed to be an unpromising mix, but as friendships developed I felt the truth of the words, “Lord we have come to you through one another.” God’s attention to detail never fails to amaze me. It could be very lonely to be the only smoker of the group, so we had two. Ten of the 15 in the group were in Medjugorje for the first time, so I could really watch Our Lady at work.

On our second day we had the great blessing to be present when Mirjana had an apparition of Our Lady. On 2nd of each month Our Lady prays with Mirjana for ‘unbelievers’ or, as Our Lady says, “those who do not yet know God’s love.” The message given on the day began “Dear children, I love you, I love you all. All of you, all of my children, all of you are in my heart. All of you have my motherly love and I desire to lead all of you to come to know God’s joy...” She ended by asking us to love and be alongside our shepherds. She frequently asks for us, through Mirjana, to pray for our shepherds. The late Fr Slavko said that if we had prayed for our priests as much as we had criticised them, then our priests would be very different people today. Please let us take Our Lady seriously, because without good shepherds the sheep soon get lost.

Thank you Fr Tom, for feeling some things so deeply and being unafraid to allow us to witness this, so blessing the whole group.



ANGELA'S WITNESS

Angela Callan shares moments from her recent pilgrimage and taking her first ever group to Medjugorje...

When sharing some thoughts about Medjugorje with the group, Fr Tom said that he had experienced for himself that Medjugorje is a place of encounter with God, and that God wanted to renew him. When praying the Mysteries of Light Fr Tom had a beautiful insight in to Our Lady’s role. “Mary is the model pilgrim and she is the companion who walks alongside every pilgrim, showing us how to be with Jesus, how to be open on his presence, how to allow him to touch our hearts. And she knows the heart of her Son better than anyone else, so allow her to teach us to be open to him.

Because I’m not very good at fasting I hadn’t mentioned it during the week, but then Pope Francis asked for a day of prayer and fasting for Saturday, September 7. Our Lady is asking us to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and she says the best fast is on bread and water. As always, Our Lady works slowly and gently with us, asking first for one fast day, and then two. Also, she knows that not everyone will find this possible and she says that each person will know what he or she should do. She suggests giving up watching television as an alternative.

So we climbed the hills, participated in beautiful liturgies, ate and drank at Colombo’s, and all the time Our Lady and her Son were changing us, blessing us, healing us.

I experienced two great moments of pleasure. The first was the day the priest celebrating the English-speaking Mass asked at the start of his homily for the congregation, in their imagination, to go to a place where we felt really happy. Later Fr Tom told me that for him that place was exactly where he was at the present moment. Many people say they experience a feeling of “coming home” when they come to Medjugorje. In fact, when I sent a text to my daughter the night we arrived in

Medjugorje, my message was: “home safe – amazing”.

The second moment was when Lizzie, the youngest member of the group, asked at our get-together on the last night, “Can we come to Bromley for a reunion? We would like to come on December 1.”

On another occasion Lizzie asked me how one becomes a group leader. It’s very simple: you phone Noleen in Ireland (Marian Pilgrimages) and say: “I’d like to take a group to Medjugorje.” Group leaders are ordinary people who have been touched deeply by Medjugorje and want others to experience this great blessing. However, I did have a lot of people back home praying for the group, and many were the 54-day Rosary Novenas (a very powerful prayer) I prayed before the pilgrimage. My first visit to Medjugorje totally convinced me of the power of prayer, and I believe it is why our week was so blessed.

That is why Fr Tom is asking us to pray the Mission Prayer on every possible occasion. We prayed it at our lunch at the Toby Carvery yesterday! More and more I am convinced Fr Tom is a man who knows what he is about, an opinion I formed on his first day at Bromley parish. What he is about is leading us all to experience the love of Jesus so that we can bring this love to others. In Medjugorje Our Lady once said, “I give you my love so that you can bring it to others.” And where Our Lady’s love is, the love of the Lord is very near.

There was a prayer published in “Magnificat” a few months ago which I have been praying daily: “That our parish will be renewed in faith, hope and love through a deeper devotion to Our Lady and the Rosary.” I am convinced that Our Lady holds the key, and that she will lead us unerringly to Jesus.

The day before we left to go to Medjugorje I had this reading: “I have seen the way he went. But I will heal him and console him. I will comfort him to the full, both him and his afflicted fellows, bringing praise to their lips. Peace. Peace to far and near. I will indeed heal him says the Lord.” Isaiah 57 : 18-19.

Please God we have all experienced healing during our time in Medjugorje, and peace from the Queen of Peace, and can echo this prayer that came straight from Mary’s heart: “Lord, I love you and thank you for bringing me here.” From my own grateful heart I can say with the psalmist, “Yaweh, you have given more joy to my heart than others ever knew, for all their corn and wine.” Ps 4 : 7.

The final words must be given to those always on the lips of Douglas one of the pilgrims in the group: “THANK GOD!”

Medjugorje is a place of encounter with God...



And they began to celebrate...

● The colourful angel pictured above was a gift from my wife's sister and has been hanging in our bathroom for a number of years now – I think, ever since my sister-in-law experienced some kind of angelic manifestation at Medjugorje. But that's another story for another time.

I've not taken much notice of the glass angel before last week when I began taking photographs of various objects around the house. The angel caught my eye – along with a toothbrush left behind by one of my young grandchildren when they came to visit for the month of August. Maybe, also, because



it reminded me of occasions when the children's father would refer to them as 'angels'.

Last Sunday, angels appeared again. This time in the Gospel reading at Mass. There were a couple of mentions about the angels in heaven rejoicing over one repentant sinner. That set me off another train of thought, to the Angel-us address given by Pope Francis the same day when he said, "The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness."

But back to the Gospel reading of Sunday... When the father showed forgiveness to the returning son who had squandered his inheritance, he ordered a feast, and they began to celebrate. More rejoicing – on earth, as in heaven! It's God's will, as Pope Francis assures us, that repentance and reconciliation is a time of joy, and so a time to celebrate.

Yesterday lunchtime I went to confession. There were ten people in line waiting, and when the first person came out of the box absolved of his sins a thought entered my mind... Let's celebrate! The thought kept returning each time another penitent left the confessional. And then came my turn.

I can't speak for the other penitents but my own heart was joyful after receiving absolution, and I must admit I sang all the way home in the car.

Couldn't hear any of the heavenly angels singing, but I sensed my guardian angel was more than happy with the outcome. I've never given him much attention in the past. Maybe that's one of the changes I now need to make in my life. Spread a little more joy, so to speak.

• Bernard Gallagher
September 17, 2013



She covered his feet with kisses...

● It's a daily practice in Medjugorje for local people, men, women and children of all ages, to kiss Jesus. It happens all the time. It's not for show either. Children habitually go to the Cross to and from school and kiss Jesus. So also people going about their daily business in the village.

Why such a public witness of "kissing Jesus"? It can only be for the same reason the woman featured in Luke's Gospel (7 : 36-50) covered the feet of Jesus with kisses and anointed them with expensive ointment. Their many sins have been forgiven.

As Jesus says, "It is the man who has been forgiven little who shows little love."

There is much forgiveness in Medjugorje, described as the 'confessional of the world'. Many tears are shed; tears of gratitude for the merciful love and pardon shown to the 'children' humble enough to confess their sins and weaknesses.

● My daughter rang me recently. She had had a tough day with her two young children. The eldest was giving her a particularly hard time, refusing his meals, and generally making life difficult for his mother and baby brother all day. And when evening came he refused to settle and just kept getting in and out of his bed.

Eventually, exhausted, he began to quieten down. His final words to his mother that night were: "Mamma, I've been bad today!" And his mother kissed him with all the loving forgiveness her heart could muster.

The child is three years and four months old.

*I kiss the wounds that heal...
and heal the wounds I kiss.*



Hundreds of priests made themselves available to hear confessions at the Medjugorje Youth Festival in August.

Medjugorje... a feast of merciful forgiveness...



FRANCIS: DIALOGUE CAN WIN OVER WAR

● Pope Francis recently addressed participants of the International Meeting for Peace in the spirit of Assisi, organised by the Rome-based Community of Saint Egidio.

He said that there was little peace in the world because of a lack of dialogue, and added that peace needs a dialogue that is tenacious, patient, strong and intelligent. Dialogue, said Francis, can win over war.

These words will strike a chord with those who follow and try to live the messages of Our Lady given to the Medjugorje seers, principally to Marija and Mirjana.

No one can deny that Our Lady is tenacious in dialogue these past 32 years of her apparitions. So also are the six visionaries in their witness to the apparitions and the messages.

Prayer is dialogue... Dialogue with an

open heart is prayer, be it with each other or with anyone in Heaven. Prayer becomes a path to peace. Our Lady teaches that through prayer and fasting wars can be stopped, or as Francis puts it: Dialogue can win over war.

But prayer also requires us to be tenacious, patient, strong and intelligent.

Our Lady has patiently repeated her call to the world to pray, pray and pray more. She encourages prayer groups, especially family prayer; she wants, as Pope Francis says today, for dialogue to grow and spread among the people of every condition and conviction, like a network of peace that protects the world...

There are some who say Our Lady talks too much at Medjugorje, that her messages are repetitive, even banal.

Fr Jozo Zovko, the former parish priest of Medjugorje when the apparitions first began there in 1981, counters this claim with these words:

“Do not allow Satan to deceive you into thinking that you can repeat prayer. Prayer cannot be repeated. A mother cannot repeat her child. A spring cannot repeat its water. The sun cannot repeat its rays and the human heart cannot repeat prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who prays within us and each Hail Mary is always a new grace, a new gift and a new strength.”

● *In the world, in society there is little peace also because there is no dialogue, it is hard to look beyond the narrow horizon of one's own interests and be open to a true and sincere exchange. Peace needs a dialogue that is tenacious, patient, strong and intelligent. Dialogue can win over war. Thanks to dialogue people of different generations, who often ignore each other, can live together; just as citizens from different ethnic backgrounds and different beliefs can live together if there is dialogue. Dialogue is the way of peace. Because dialogue encourages understanding, harmony and peace. That's why dialogue must grow and spread among people of every condition and conviction, like a network of peace that protects the world and the most vulnerable.* • Pope Francis

My dear children! Satan is so strong and with all his might wants to disturb my plans which I have begun with you. You pray, just pray and don't stop for a minute! I will pray to my Son for the realization of all the plans I have begun. Be patient and constant in your prayers. And don't let Satan discourage you. He is working hard in the world. Be on your guard! Medjugorje message, January 14, 1985

Dialogue with an open heart is prayer...



If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, then come, follow me...

● The three newly-ordained Franciscan priests pictured above all have Medjugorje connections. Fr Stanko Cosic is currently serving as a chaplain in the parish and Fr Josip Serdjo Cavar and Fr Mario Ostojic were born in Medjugorje.

All three were main celebrants for the International Mass during the Medjugorje Youth Festival earlier this month. They also gave witness to their vocations to several thousand young people on the morning of the fourth day of the festival. This is the testimony given by Fr Mario Ostojic.

● **Praise Jesus and Mary! Dear brothers and sisters, thank God for the Church!**

It is very dear for me to be here today with you. Now, when I am 27 years old, I can be in front of you, to be together with you. This is very pleasing to me. I cannot describe to you how happy I am when I see you here so full of joy, song and dancing because that is what our Pope calls us to; that is what our Church is: young, joyful, full of song and so thank you for being witnesses of that.

I would like to say something briefly about my vocation. I was born in this parish of Medjugorje in the hamlet of Bijakovici – all of you know it well.

It is possible to say that I was an average young man. I had friends, company. I went to an elementary high school. I didn't really stand out anywhere. I was in company with others. I liked everything the young people like, I did everything the young people do. Nothing exceptionally different.

But I have always felt a longing in me which I think somehow is the source of my vocation, like all, and that was a longing not to be average, not normal, so to say, but

above normal, in that sense. I wanted more, I longed for more, I didn't want to be like the others. Because I could see that they were not happy, they were not content, they didn't have a meaning in their life. I want to be happy, and so little by little, for this longing, God showed me where I lived until I was 18 years old, where I didn't even notice it under my very nose, God showed me Our Lady, our Mother.

Little by little I felt this call, the desire to be a Franciscan, a priest. I felt this in the first place through the parish priest and the priests who served here in this parish in self denial and sacrificed everything, everything they had to be able to lead people and help them, to give them everything they could give them, to give them the most and what is most needed: to give them Jesus Christ.

At high school I felt the call I should be a Franciscan. It wasn't an immediate call that I should be a Franciscan. You hear the Lord speaking: "Someone needs to do this work." It doesn't say: "It has to be you, Mario, but somebody needs to do it. If you want to I give you an opportunity to do so, to do this." And then that starts to work inside, causing a little bit of discomfort: Can I? Do I want to respond to the call? But I decided, nonetheless, to be on God's side. There is no better side than God's side, there is no better way than God's way – and I decided for that.

So I registered at the parish office that I wanted to be a Franciscan. The only great fear I had was that I would be alone. I was always afraid to be alone. However, from the very beginning God showed me that I would not be alone. From my generation we also have three other Franciscans from this parish, so God gave me brothers so with them I would be able to walk more easily on this way.

At a given moment I had doubts when I was deciding whether to be a Franciscan or not: "My God, what can I do for you? Me... so woeful, so average? What can I give to you? What can I give to these people who need you? And then I understood, through prayer, that God does not ask for me to be perfect right away. He is not asking for me to come to him complete, ready, to say "Here I am Lord". No! God called me with all my imperfections and little by little he is shaping me into the person he needs, perhaps not the most perfect one but it is not a disaster for him.

Dear youth, God's call is often not spectacular. Do not expect that in your life. Many come to Medjugorje expecting they will see Our Lady, expecting to see who knows what, experience this or that. But Our Lady is with us, among us, here and now. I firmly believe that. Jesus is here among us now because he said when two or more of you are gathered in prayer then I am with you, and we are all here in his name. Some tens of thousands are also here in his name. How could he not be here with us now?

Dear youth, the Lord is here. Do not seek something spectacular in your lives, but look for spectacular things in little things. You will see how great God is in daily life. When I signed up at the monastery it was strange for me, my family, for everybody. A Franciscan came up to my parents and said something I shall never forget: "A Franciscan does not fall from heaven. He is born of a mother and father and lives in a family." – like all of you. That helped me so much, to accept myself, as a Franciscan, as a priest, and to live my religious vocation.

Dear youth, this is all I would like to say to you. Thank you for coming here to Medjugorje, for praying to our heavenly Mother. I, as one from this parish, can say this to you with all my heart. Again I say to you: welcome, and thank you.



• Fr Mario Ostojic, as main celebrant for an International Mass in Medjugorje, alongside Fr Petar Ljubic who was the homilist. The top photo shows the three newly ordained Franciscans: Josip Serdjo Cavar, Mario Ostojic and Stank Cosic, who gave testimony to their priestly vocation at the Medjugorje Youth Festival.

You hear the Lord speaking, "Someone needs to do this work."

Dial Seven for Heaven

From a talk on prayer presented (with humour) by the Medjugorje Franciscan priest, Fr Danko Perutina.

● Everyone is an expert on prayer; everyone has his or her own prayer. That person says prayer at a certain time, using the same words and no one is to disturb him at that time, otherwise that person will get annoyed.

There are millions of prayers to be said. I will just mention 500,000!

There is contemplative prayer, prayer of meditation, prayer with reason, prayer with words, prayer in silence and prayer with the heart. There are really millions of prayers! Prayers of thanksgiving, prayers of asking, prayers for healing, prayers for blessing, prayers for perseverance, prayers you say that your husband will be converted, or maybe that your wife will be converted. Really, we can pray for everything.

What is important when it comes to prayer? For me, the best prayer consists of few points. Some people compare this with how one uses a telephone, because you dial a number and then a person answers.

- The first step is to come close to God, in his presence.
- The second step is to admit your sins.
- The third step is to forgive everyone.
- The fourth step is to renounce all sins.
- The fifth step is to accept your cross.
- The sixth step is to accept the Holy Spirit because once we renounce sin, we are empty and have to be filled with something.
- The seventh step is to say to God, thank you.

You have dialled the numbers 1-7 and that's what we call telephone prayer. Try this prayer; you will be changed in a day. Really, you will be.

You know that at this retreat we have been saying the prayers already, but I didn't mention to you. Why is this prayer important? Because it contains all the important elements.

The most important part of this prayer is the presence of God. That is the most difficult thing. We say "where is God?" Then we start imagining Him. I always share this with pilgrims to Medjugorje, the way people imagine God.

When Jesus was crucified and buried he was 33 years old. We don't know how old the Holy Spirit is. If Jesus was 33 then the



Father must be around 70. He has a long white beard, and sits on a throne. He sees everything and knows everything. There is thunder and lightning below. Even if you do something in the dark he is able to see that. He can't really see everything, because there are six and a half billion people living here, so he gave a guardian angel to every person and that angel is working on a computer. Once you make a mistake he records that. When the last moment of your life comes he will just press the "enter" and "print" button and all your sins will be on one piece of paper. It is not going to be just one sheet.

But it's not going to be like that, because God is a God who forgives. There is nothing so beautiful as to know that someone loves you all the time, and that's the way God loves us, without any conditions.

Some people think in this way: if we are good then God must be good; if we commit sins, straightaway he gets angry. That is not God. That is the image of God we use, and that's often why people pray to images of God, the way they imagine Him. That is only an image, that is not God, God who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

The only way we can explain God, is Love. All the other images are wrong. And if you do not see God as Love you make problems for yourself because God is Love himself. He is not a judge; he is not the one who punishes, the one who is angry. That's not God, that's an image of our making.

That's why, when you start praying, those few seconds at the beginning are really important, and that's faith. Whenever I come to prayer I make the sign of the cross and say: "I know, Jesus, that you are here. Jesus, I know that you love me, and now I am going to speak to you of all that is in my heart."

I don't have to imagine him, if he is tall or

short, fat or thin; or wonder if he made windows or chairs as a carpenter.

Our Lady has been inviting us to prayer with the heart. It's the prayer of offering what is there in our heart and presenting it to God. It is not new. The more sincere we are, the deeper the prayer. We are purifying ourselves and so become more of what God want us to be, restored in his image, but not a photocopy. God created everyone special and unique.

Prayer is the law of life. The more we pray, the more God opens all the doors for us. But there may be times, if necessary, when the door will closed so that we are not able to enter, because in God's wisdom this is better for us. That's why we always have to look for the will of God.



I call all priests and religious brothers and sisters to pray the rosary and to teach others to pray. The rosary, little children, is especially dear to me. Through the rosary open your heart to me and I am able to help you. Thank you for having responded to my call.

August 25, 1997

"The Father has a long, white beard, and sits on a throne!"



The Rosary can work miracles in the world and in your lives...

Starting a Rosary prayer group

● Can you remember who taught you to pray the Rosary. Perhaps your mother or father? In my case, it was my mother, and in her case it was her father. Whoever, it's a gift to be passed on.

I can't remember exactly when I stopped praying the Rosary, probably in my early teens – and I didn't pick up the beads and start again until some 35 years later!

My return to the Rosary came about after I had listened to a priest preaching at Mass about Medjugorje and prayer

Dear children! Today I call you to open yourselves to prayer. May prayer become joy for you. Renew prayer in your families and form prayer groups. In this way, you will experience joy in prayer and togetherness. All those who pray and are members of prayer groups are open to God's will in their hearts and joyfully witness God's love. I am with you, I carry all of you in my heart and I bless you with my motherly blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call.

groups. I don't know what exactly prompted me but I remember approaching the priest after Mass and asking if he had any objection to me starting a Rosary prayer group in my home once a week and inviting other parishioners.

Of course, he had no objection. In fact he was delighted. So for the next couple of Sundays I began asking people after Mass if they would like to come to the prayer group to pray the Rosary. Around 15 responded.

And every Tuesday evening, during the past 20 years a group of us meet at my home to pray the Rosary. When we first started my idea was to encourage the group to go to different homes each week. But that didn't happen. The people were quite content to stay in one place.

Numbers have varied over the years, even diminished, but there is still a solid group of five of us who keep the prayer group alive.

The main prayer intention for the group has always been for "Peace in our homes". But for a few years now we have also been praying for those in need, especially the sick.

Why I should have wanted to start a prayer group in the first place, I'm still not sure. I hadn't even been to Medjugorje at the time. But seven years after starting the group I did make my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje, and was blessed with many graces.

But was it coincidence that the message of Our Lady for September 25, 2000, given on the final day of my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje, spoke of prayer groups?

I've looked at and read this message (left) several times in the past and have

always tried to see if there was any significance in the words that I could relate to my visit to Medjugorje in September 2000. I never could until now, thirteen years on, after writing this post about Rosary prayer groups!

If you run a prayer group or would like to be part of one, you may wish to contact the Medjugorje Calling Foundation.

In response to Our Lady's call to "Pray, pray, pray", Medjugorje Calling's mission is to promote Medjugorje prayer groups in homes and parishes and provide ongoing support and guidance through our website and our organisation.

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And if you would like your prayer group listed in the newsletter then email medjugorjeuk@gmail.com with details.r

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