

THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE



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

Dear children, sin is pulling you towards worldly things and I have come to lead you towards holiness and the things of God, but you are struggling and spending your energies in the battle with the good and the evil that are in you.

Therefore, little children, pray, pray, pray until prayer becomes a joy for you and your life will become a simple walk towards God.

Thank you for having responded to my call.

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED...

● It is anticipated that by the time this newsletter is published a new Pope will have been elected to take the place of Benedict XVI who surprisingly stepped down from the papacy on February 28. Included in this issue is his farewell speech given at his last General Audience the day before his retirement.

COMMISSION STILL AT WORK...

● With all the activity preparing for the departure from office of Pope Benedict XVI and organising the conclave of cardinals to elect his successor, it was interesting to learn that the work of the Commission studying the Medjugorje phenomenon continues. This was confirmed by the Archdiocese of Zagreb press office ten days after Benedict XVI's resignation, when it announced that Cardinal Josip Bozanić travelled to Rome on February 21 to participate in the work of the International Commission at the offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

● Hopefully for delivery around mid-April. Testimonies are always welcome. See back page for address to send to.

SEEING SIMON...

● *Lent is a time when we can rediscover Simon in our life, in others and in oneself. A helping hand is all that it takes, be it for pushing a wheelchair or for carrying a statue of the Blessed Mother to bring home to a loved one. Better still if it is all carried out with a smile.*



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

MEDJUGORJE... IT'S MY FAVOURITE PLACE ON EARTH SAYS FR TOWEY

● Fr Dominic Towey of St John the Baptist's parish in Uddingston has a long-standing and powerful connection to Medjugorje. He has been involved with pilgrimages to the small Hercegovina town for more than two decades. He explains why he is drawn back every year.

"It is somewhere where the Faith seems more alive," he said. "The Church is alive there and people are happy to express their faith and talk about it there in a way that seems hard here."

He first heard of Medjugorje through people in his own parish going there and his curiosity was piqued.

"People were coming back and they seemed changed," he added. "It seemed like there was something going on so I went with another priest in 1988 and the whole spiritual atmosphere was like nowhere else."

"There was a pilgrimage going later that year looking for chaplains and I went with them and I've kept going ever since."

As for what the pilgrimages entail he says it is quite straightforward.

"It's centred on celebration of the Eucharist, celebration of confession and we



meet the visionaries," he said. "There's nothing new taught there otherwise it wouldn't be Catholic."

Fr Towey said his many visits have convinced him of the power of the place.

"I've seen lives transformed there, people of no faith have gained it there," he said. "One girl came as a helper for a disabled person and she was quite anti-Catholic and used to go across to Belfast for Orange

walks and so on. After Medjugorje she's now a member of my parish and I know of several cases like that.

"A lot of people undergo a general deepening of faith," he continued. "One bishop said it is where Heaven and earth meet and when you go and see local people queuing up for confession at 7am it seems like that could be true."

The mixture of people there also adds to the joy of the place.

"The fact it's not just old people and the middle-aged but young people as well means it's really alive," he said. "I know some of the visionaries like Ivan and Maria and what strikes me is how simply they live in contrast to what some people say about them."

Despite the controversy over Medjugorje he is adamant that it is a Catholic place.

"The Church Commission was set up in its wisdom to look into Medjugorje and we will of course abide by whatever they say," he said.

But there is no doubting his devotion as he prepares to head back once again.

"I am going back there with 165 people in July – a plane load – and another group in October," he said. "It's my favourite place on earth."

• Adapted from the *Scottish Catholic Observer*

I DON'T DO DISHES

by Bernard Gallagher

● I have a habit, good or bad, I don't really know, of walking along *The Way of the Cross* and approaching the stations with my hands behind my back. Why I do this, I couldn't say. Maybe someone up on body language could offer an explanation or reason. But I never paid too much attention to this trait until one morning when I arrived at the sixth station and noticed one of the figures standing with his hands behind his back, and realised I was standing in the same way.

My initial observation was while Jesus was on the ground and two people were helping him up again, the man with his hands behind his back was not in any hurry to assist, but simply stood his ground and looked on, as if in a supervisory role. Clearly this man did not want to touch Jesus, or to be touched by him. Imagine Jesus possibly stretching out his hand for support and maybe even making a grab at the man to stop himself falling. Perhaps that's why the man made sure to keep his hands behind his back. He didn't want to be touched by Jesus.

Could the reason he didn't want to touch or be touched be because he considered

Jesus unclean, inside and out? Didn't want to get his hands dirty? Let others do the dirty work? Or was he simply displaying his authority to onlookers by the supervisory stance he adopted, and letting others do the heavy lifting, the labouring.

That's always a temptation for me, leaving it to others, especially the lifting. It can also be a temptation for anyone in a position of authority when boundaries are fixed to mark levels of responsibility and won't be crossed, no matter how necessary. I can't count the times I have said: "It's not up to me", pretending to myself and others that I'm not in a position to help when I really am but have drawn a line and become hard-hearted.

The two other men in the frame of the sixth station are seen raising the cross and pulling Jesus up from the ground. Be we paid servants or soldiers, or people in authority, each of us has our own particular station in life.

When we walk the Way of the Cross, we become blessed to recognise our station in life and if there is anything that is preventing us from serving others, especially when we choose to stand with our hands behind our back.



In a motherly way, I am calling you not to be of a hard heart..."

● In 1984 the *Scottish Catholic Observer* was kind enough to print an article by me and a friend (now husband) about our visit to Medjugorje. At that time the significance of this remote village in the midst of Yugoslavia was barely known as little had been written about it. When I re-read this article now I am struck by its sense of urgency. It captures the powerful impact Medjugorje had on us—and continues to have on millions.

Those of you who visited Medjugorje in those early days will recall it as a scattering of houses surrounded by vineyards and tobacco crops, set among rocky hills. In the centre the white, twin-towered church seemed over-large for the size of the village. There were no shops, no cafes and no hotels.

On that first visit a kind family took us – a motley group of ten young people – into their own modest home and amazed us with the warmth of their hospitality. Their three sons told us the story of Medjugorje as they had experienced it.

Their straightforward account of these extraordinary events, the Faith we could observe at every turn and the sense of otherness, left us in no doubt that Our Lady was appearing to six young people with a message for our times: “I am the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace. My Son sent me to show you the way to Peace. The world is in danger of destroying itself, and has lost the way to Peace.”

Brought up to love Lourdes and Fatima we assumed these apparitions would be short-lived and rushed home. “You must go now,” we instructed our parents. But 30 years later, Our Lady is still coming, still teaching us through messages given to the visionaries who have grown up, married and have families of their own. I marvel at how they have lived out this extraordinary grace in the full glare of the digital age. They have been investigated by doctors, psychologists, police, psychiatrists and journalists. They have stuck to their story, quietly and patiently answering questions and reporting what Our Lady has told them. This lengthy visitation raises questions in some minds. The sheer volume of words that flow from these apparitions must make it hard for those in the Church tasked with discerning this phenomenon.

In 2010 the Church set up a commission headed by Cardinal Camillo Ruini to study Medjugorje and report back to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. Meanwhile the Faithful are free to visit in a private capacity and they do so in their millions, amongst them Cardinal Christoph Schönborn from Austria. Those of us whose lives have been graced by Medjugorje took great heart from his words. When asked



FRUITS OF FAITH

by Ruth Black

why he had made this controversial visit he put it in the context of pastoral care and described Medjugorje as ‘a tree that bore many fruits.’ He wanted to understand the source better.

The fruits are indeed abundant; conversions, new ministries, renewed Faith and vocations. Medjugorje has been the wellspring for many good things. I feel very privileged to be living in this time of grace. The Mother I have got to know through Medjugorje all those years ago has influenced my whole life.

Our parents, Calum and Mary Anne MacFarlane-Barrow, did visit Medjugorje as we urged. At that time they ran, Craig Lodge, our home, as a guest house. They started to host ‘Medjugorje weekends’ in the off season for the increasing numbers of people who visited Medjugorje and who wanted to encourage each other in living the messages, and above all to pray together as Our Lady asked.

After a while they felt God was calling them to go further. They decided to turn the guest house into a retreat centre – Craig Lodge Family House of Prayer. Soon afterwards they invited a group of young people to form a community based on living the messages of Medjugorje. Today the community includes families and single people as well as young people who still come to live in community for a year. Some use their time to deepen a newly-found faith, some to establish a prayer life, some to discern a vocation.

The community is a response to Our Lady’s call to holiness at Medjugorje and from that foundation we try to serve and evangelise. One of the joys of this work is that we get to meet so many people and hear their Faith stories. Over and over again Medjugorje is a turning point in lives, a route back to the Church.

Another wonderful fruit that has its roots

in Medjugorje is of course, *Mary’s Meals*.

The brutal war that engulfed Yugoslavia in 1992 shocked and horrified the whole world. The messages of the Queen of Peace seemed even more necessary. My brothers, Magnus and Fergus, felt compelled to do something and so we launched an appeal for food and blankets for the refugees gathering round Medjugorje. We never intended this simple response to such terrible suffering to lead to a fully-fledged aid charity but that is what happened.

Today that charity is known as *Mary’s Meals* in honour of Our Lady and through it over 500,000 of the world’s poorest children can rely on a meal each school day.

After several visits, there was a long gap before I returned to Medjugorje. Once again I went as part of a group, this time with fellow community members and my own children. I realised with a shock that my eldest son was the same age I was when I had first visited. I had heard about the changes that had inevitably taken place to meet the needs of thousands of pilgrims. Part of me was afraid it wouldn’t live up to my memories, that my children would not encounter what we had been privileged to experience so early on. And, yes, it is a busy place now.

The vineyards are losing out to the new hotels and in a country as poor as Bosnia-Herzegovina who can blame people trying to make a living by setting up yet another Rosary stall.

Instead of feeling disappointed I felt moved and exhilarated to be among people from every corner of the earth, praying together; different languages, different cultures but sharing a Mother. And it is as simple as that. The source of the fruit as Cardinal Schönborn and others have found is a Mother who tells us: “If you knew how much I love you, you would cry with happiness,” and who is beseeching us to put God in the first place in our lives.

Her messages are really instructions on how we go about doing that. She warns us of the nature of the struggle we face and She reminds us of the ‘weapons’ we have at our disposal—Holy Mass, prayer, fasting, Scripture and monthly Confession. They are often called the five stones and like David we can use them to slay the Goliaths that surround us—our own sinfulness and our materialistic culture.

When I asked my children recently what Medjugorje meant to them one said: “It is part of my identity.” Another simply said: “I feel Medjugorje is home—even more than my real home.” Medjugorje makes Heaven, our true home, seem very close.

www.craiglodge.org

www.marysmeals.org

“Fruits are abundant... conversions, new ministries, renewed faith, vocations...”

● Benedict XVI celebrated his last general audience on February 27, 2013. In St Peter's Square, crowded with tens of thousands of people wishing to bid him farewell, the Pontiff said: "Thank you for coming in such large numbers to this, my last general audience. Thank you, I am truly moved! And I see the Church is alive! I think we also have to thank the Creator for the beautiful weather that He is giving us now, even in winter."

"Like the Apostle Paul in the Biblical text that we have heard, I feel in my heart that I have to especially thank God who guides and builds up the Church, who plants His Word and thus nourishes the faith in His People. At this moment my heart expands and embraces the whole Church throughout the world and I thank God for the 'news' that, in these years of my Petrine ministry, I have received about the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for the love that truly circulates in the Body of the Church, making it to live in the love and the hope that opens us to and guides us towards the fullness of life, towards our heavenly homeland."

"I feel that I am carrying everyone with me in prayer in this God-given moment when I am collecting every meeting, every trip, every pastoral visit. I am gathering everyone and everything in prayer to entrust it to the Lord: so that we may be filled with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding in order to live in a manner worthy of the Lord and His love, bearing fruit in every good work (cf. Col 1:9-10)."

"At this moment I have great confidence because I know, we all know, that the Gospel's Word of truth is the strength of the Church; it is her life. The Gospel purifies and renews, bearing fruit, wherever the community of believers hears it and welcomes God's grace in truth and in love. This is my confidence, this is my joy."

"When, on April 19 almost eight years ago I accepted to take on the Petrine ministry, I had the firm certainty that has always accompanied me: this certainty for the life of the Church from the Word of God. At that moment, as I have already expressed many times, the words that resounded in my heart were: Lord, what do You ask of me? It is a great weight that You are placing on my shoulders but, if You ask it of me, I will cast my nets at your command, confident that You will guide me, even with all my weaknesses. And eight years later I can say that the Lord has guided me. He has been close to me. I have felt His presence every day. It has been a stretch of the Church's path that has had moments of joy and light, but also difficult moments. I felt like St Peter and the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Lord has given us many days of sunshine and light



"I ASKED GOD TO ENLIGHTEN ME TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION, NOT FOR MY OWN GOOD, BUT FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH."

breezes, days when the fishing was plentiful, but also times when the water was rough and the winds against us, just as throughout the whole history of the Church, when the Lord seemed to be sleeping. But I always knew that the Lord is in that boat and I always knew that the boat of the Church is not mine, not ours, but is His. And the Lord will not let it sink. He is the one who steers her, of course also through those He has chosen because that is how He wanted it. This was and is a certainty that nothing can tarnish. And that is why my heart today is filled with gratitude to God, because He never left – the whole Church or me – without His consolation, His light, or His love."

"We are in the *Year of Faith*, which I desired precisely in order to strengthen our faith in God in a context that seems to relegate it more and more to the background. I would like to invite everyone to renew their firm trust in the Lord, to entrust ourselves like children to God's arms, certain that those arms always hold us up and are what allow us to walk forward each day, even when it is a struggle. I would like everyone to feel beloved of that God who gave His Son for us and who has shown us His boundless love. I would like everyone to feel the joy of being Christian. In a beautiful prayer, which can be recited every morning, say: 'I adore you, my God and I love

you with all my heart. Thank you for having created me, for having made me Christian...' Yes, we are happy for the gift of faith. It is the most precious thing, which no one can take from us! Let us thank the Lord for this every day, with prayer and with a coherent Christian life. God loves us, but awaits us to also love Him!"

"It is not only God who I wish to thank at this time. A pope is not alone in guiding Peter's barque, even if it is his primary responsibility. I have never felt alone in bearing the joy and the weight of the Petrine ministry. The Lord has placed at my side so many people who, with generosity and love for God and the Church, have helped me and been close to me. First of all, you, dear Brother Cardinals: your wisdom, your advice, and your friendship have been precious to me. My collaborators, starting with my secretary of state who has accompanied me faithfully over the years; the Secretariat of State and the whole of the Roman Curia, as well as all those who, in their various areas, serve the Holy See. There are many faces that are never seen, remaining in obscurity, but precisely in their silence, in their daily dedication in a spirit of faith and humility, they were a sure and reliable support to me. A special thought goes to the Church of Rome, my diocese! I cannot forget my Brothers in the episcopate and in the priesthood, consecrated persons, and the entire People of God. In my pastoral visits, meetings, audiences, and trips I always felt great care and deep affection, but I have also loved each and every one of you, without exception, with that pastoral love that is the heart of every pastor, especially the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of the Apostle Peter. Every day I held each of you in prayer, with a father's heart."

"I wish to send my greetings and my thanks to all: a pope's heart extends to the whole world. And I would like to express my gratitude to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, which makes the great family of Nations present here. Here I am also thinking of all those who work for good communication and I thank them for their important service."

"At this point I would also like to wholeheartedly thank all of the many people around the world who, in recent weeks, have sent me touching tokens of concern, friendship, and prayer. Yes, the Pope is never alone. I feel this again now in such a great way that it touches my heart. The Pope belongs to everyone and many people feel very close to him. It's true that I receive letters from the world's notables – from heads of states, from religious leaders, from representatives of the world of culture, etc. But I also receive many letters from ordinary people who write to me simply from their hearts and make me feel their affection, which is born of our being together with Christ

"I would like everyone to feel the joy of being Christian..."

Jesus, in the Church. These people do not write to me the way one would write, for example, to a prince or a dignitary that they don't know. They write to me as brothers and sisters or as sons and daughters, with the sense of a very affectionate family tie. In this you can touch what the Church is – not an organization, not an association for religious or humanitarian ends, but a living body, a communion of brothers and sisters in the Body of Jesus Christ who unites us all. Experiencing the Church in this way and being able to almost touch with our hands the strength of His truth and His love is a reason for joy at a time when many are speaking of its decline. See how the Church is alive today!"

"In these last months I have felt that my strength had diminished and I asked God

because he no longer belongs to himself but he belongs to all and all belong to him.

"*Always* is also *forever* – there is no return to private life. My decision to renounce the active exercise of the ministry does not revoke this. I am not returning to private life, to a life of trips, meetings, receptions, conferences, etc. I am not abandoning the cross, but am remaining beside the Crucified Lord in a new way. I no longer bear the power of the office for the governance of the Church, but I remain in the service of prayer, within St Peter's paddock, so to speak. St Benedict, whose name I bear as Pope, will be a great example to me in this. He has shown us the way for a life that, active or passive, belongs wholly to God's work."

"I also thank each and every one of you for



earnestly in prayer to enlighten me with His light to make me make the right decision, not for my own good, but for the good of the Church. I have taken this step in full awareness of its seriousness and also its newness, but with a profound peace of mind. Loving the Church also means having the courage to make difficult, agonised choices, always keeping in mind the good of the Church, not of oneself."

"Allow me here to return once again to April 19, 2005. The gravity of the decision lay precisely in the fact that, from that moment on, I was always and for always engaged by the Lord. Always – whoever assumes the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy. He belongs always and entirely to everyone, to the whole Church. His life, so to speak, is totally deprived of its private dimension. I experienced, and I am experiencing it precisely now, that one receives life precisely when they give it. Before I said that many people who love the Lord also love St Peter's Successor and are fond of him; that the Pope truly has brothers and sisters, sons and daughters all over the world and that he feels safe in the embrace of their communion;

the respect and understanding with which you have received this important decision. I will continue to accompany the Church's journey through prayer and reflection, with the dedication to the Lord and His Bride that I have tried to live every day up to now and that I want to always live. I ask you to remember me to God, and above all to pray for the Cardinals who are called to such an important task, and for the new Successor of the Apostle Peter. May the Lord accompany him with the light and strength of His Spirit."

"We call upon the maternal intercession of Mary, the Mother of God and of the Church, that she might accompany each of us and the entire ecclesial community. We entrust ourselves to her with deep confidence."

"Dear friends! God guides His Church, always sustaining her even and especially in difficult times. Let us never lose this vision of faith, which is the only true vision of the path of the Church and of the world. In our hearts, in the heart of each one of you, may there always be the joyous certainty that the Lord is beside us, that He does not abandon us, that He is near and embraces us with His love. Thank you."



PRAYER IS PRIMACY

by John Tandy

● The call to prayer is consistent through the many years of messages Our Lady has been giving to the world via the Medjugorje seer Marija.

Both her two messages to Marija this year – in January and February – have opened with the call to prayer. It's top of the list of all that Our Lady would want us to set out to do.

In his final Angelus address, Pope Benedict XVI said: "Meditating on this Gospel passage (Second Sunday of Lent, Luke 9 : 28-36), we can draw a very important teaching from it. First of all, the primacy of prayer, without which the entire commitment of ministry and charity is reduced to activism..."

He also added: "I hear this Word of God addressed to me in a special way at this moment of my life. The Lord has called me to 'scale the mountain', to dedicate myself still more to prayer and meditation... Let us call upon the intercession of the Virgin Mary: May she help all of us to always follow the Lord Jesus, in prayer and in works of charity."

And every time she speaks with us in her Medjugorje messages Our Lady always ends with the words: "Thank you for responding to my call."

Prayer is the most important response she seeks from each of us. As Benedict XVI says: "prayer is primacy."

Prayer leads to every other response. It's the key that opens hearts. It's a time of grace, a time for the soul, for the heart to open. It's a time to prepare, a time to repair; a time to repent, a time to relent; it's a time to reflect and a time to connect; it's a time to believe, to ask and receive; a time to rest in God's heart, to make a fresh start. Prayer is a time of grace.

'Always' is also 'forever'. There is no return to private life.

LONG FOR HEAVEN

Always be wanting peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the Lord. Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble; this can poison a whole community.

Hebrews 12 : 14-15

Dear children! I beseech you to take up the way of holiness beginning today.

I love you and, therefore, I want you to be holy.

I do not want satan to block you on that way.

Dear children, pray and accept all that God is offering you on a way which is bitter.

But at the same time, God will reveal every sweetness to whoever begins to go on that way, and he will gladly answer every call of God.

Do not attribute importance to petty things.

Long for Heaven.

Thank you for having responded to my call.

Medjugorje message, July 25, 1987

KNOWING GOD'S LOVE

Essentially, everything proceeds from Love and tends towards Love...

Everything begins from the humble acceptance of faith (knowing that one is loved by God), but has to arrive at the truth of charity (knowing how to love God and neighbour), which remains for ever, as the fulfilment of all the virtues. Pope Benedict XVI

Lenten message to the world, February 1, 2013

CALL TO PRIESTS

Priests resident in the UK, holding a UK or EU passport, who would like to attend the Medjugorje Youth Festival (July 31 to August 7) are invited to contact Bernard on 0121 429 8349 for details. All places are provided free of cost by many generous hearts. email: medjugorjeuk@gmail.com

MORE PILGRIMAGE DATES

● Any priests that would like to join other priests in a group for the **Medjugorje Youth Festival**, July 31 to August 7, can contact Bernard Gallagher on 0121 429 8349, or email medjugorjeuk@gmail.com for further details.

● Carol Wynn-Jones is leading a group to Medjugorje leaving from **GATWICK** on May 28 and returning on June 4. Sr Immaculata's group is travelling with Carol at this time. Carol can be contacted on 01932250925.

● Another **GATWICK** departure is on September 7, returning September 14. Contact Nikki Murrill on 01737210794 for details about this pilgrimage.

NEWSLETTER BACK ISSUES

● People regularly request back issues of the newsletter. If you would like back copies sent to you, here is a list of what's in stock: The issues months refer to the month of Our Lady's message.

2006: issues 51 August, 55 December.

2008: issue 74 July/August.

2011: issues 101 July, 102 August.

2012: issues 106 January, 107 February, 108 March, 109 May, 110 June, 111 July/August, 112 September/October, 113 November, 114 December.

Telephone Bernard on 0121 429 8349 or email medjugorjeuk@gmail.com, or write to the address at the foot of the back cover page with your request.

WAR MEMORIAL PROPOSAL

● There are plans to erect a memorial in Medjugorje to remember the dead and missing residents of past wars.

The proposal is to place the memorial in the vicinity of the old church, "a unifying space that connects us all and remembers the past," said the new pastor of Medjugorje Fr Marinko Šakota in a meeting with parishioners after celebrating Mass in memory of martyred friars from Medjugorje.

The memorial will be inscribed with the names of the 372 victims from the parish lost during the First and Second World Wars and more recent conflicts.

COUNCIL CHARGE FOR BUSES

● Tour bus traffic has increased greatly in and around Medjugorje over recent years, mainly from Italy, and now the local Municipal authority is seeking to impose a short-stay charge on buses using the roads and parking in and around Medjugorje and Bijakovici. Revenue raised will be used to finance new local roads and maintain current transport infrastructure.

The proposed fee payable to cover a seven-day period is 25KM for buses with 9-14 seats, 50KM for 15-33 seats and 100KM for buses with seats of 34 or more. Proof of payment will be required to be clearly displayed on the vehicle windscreen. It is also proposed that any breach of the regulation should be liable for a fine up to 5,000KM.

A final decision on implementation of the draft proposal will be made after a public hearing on February 12.

Ten Konvertible Marks equates to £4.50

SR EMMANUEL WRITES...

● On February 9th Mirjana was in Trieste, Italy, in Santa Maggiore Church. The Archbishop of Trieste, Msgr Giampaolo Crepaldi, was also present. During her testimony, Mirjana said, "As your sister, I beg you – as I know everything that the Blessed Mother is preparing for us – Love! Love your priests! Help them, pray for them, especially for our Holy Father! Especially for him who, in the times that we are living, greatly needs your help, our help, our prayers, our love, and not our judgments!"

"If tomorrow you are going to face God and he asks you, 'How could you judge? Who are you?' What will you answer? This is why, as a sister, I beg you: ask God for the gift of Love! When you have the gift of Love, you never judge, you never criticise, because you see Jesus in each person, and you always find justification. Even when they hurt you, you justify them, you find an excuse. If, for you, God comes first in your life, then everything else is secondary, only God remains. We need to be sure of only one thing: that we will all face God, and when we face Him, will we raise our heads or lower them?"

"I beg you, pray also for us, visionaries, so that we can do all that God wants us to do, but in a right way; it is so easy to make mistakes! As for me, I will pray for you with all my heart."

THE TRIUMPH

● There's a lot of interest in a new film about Medjugorje. I'm not going to give away any detail about *The Triumph*, except to say it is a production packed with hope for the future of mankind, and although its focus is directed to those on their journey to discovering the love of God, particularly young people, it is a film which will touch the hearts of everyone who watches it. It did mine. Further details from thetriumph.org



"My children, do not resist the love of my Son..."

RETREAT REPORT

by John Hanrahan

● The Medjugorje Apostolate Annual Retreat was held on 19-20th January 2013 at the church of St Augustine in Hammersmith.

Fr Danko Perutina OFM led the retreat which was non residential this year, a change from our usual venue, the Emmaus Residential Retreat Centre, at West Wickham in Kent.



St Augustine's is run by the Order of St Augustine (OSAs). Father Stefan Park the Apostolate's Spiritual Director readily agreed to making some of the large meeting rooms behind the Parish Church available to us. Retreatants brought their own lunches, and made use of the light refreshments hall. We also joined the parishioners for Mass in the Church.

The cold winter weather that weekend disrupted all forms of travel over the weekend. Croatia was cancelled on the Friday. They flew into Heathrow on Saturday with other delays finally arriving at St Augustine's at 11.15am. Fr Stefan Park had to step in to deliver the first talk.

The central location inevitably attracted

higher numbers compared with outside London. Many of those attending had arranged their own accommodation close by. We had many more young people than previously. There was also a more varied spread of nationalities as well as more men on their own than usual. Unfortunately the severe weather conditions on the roads outside London prevented many who had booked to attend from making their journeys. We also found that word had got round there was a Medjugorje retreat going on in Hammersmith, which led to some turning up at the last minute. The cost of attending was much lower than before, being non residential, which undoubtedly helped those who are cost-conscious to be able to afford to attend.

We were also fortunate in being able to book a group of very talented young Polish music teachers who were able to replicate the 'Medjugorje sound' during Adoration, reminiscent of how in Medjugorje heavenly sounds are created as we meditate on the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance.

By all accounts the retreat was a great success. Many felt that the low cost non-residential retreat over a weekend at Hammersmith, or elsewhere in a large city centre acting as hub, should be repeated. Its been shown there is a demand, let alone a need for this kind of Medjugorje programme.

VICKA SAVES THE DAY



● It was expected to be a director of Zagreb high school who would address a gathering of local Medjugorje parents and students for the first of a series of Lenten forums, but when the former Minister of Education Lilja Voki failed to turn up for the meeting because she was stuck in traffic, someone came up with a suggestion to call the Medjugorje visionary Vicka.

To everyone's surprise and delight Vicka agreed to address the meeting instead. Phones were buzzing with the news that Vicka was on her way and in the 15 minutes before the start of the meeting the number of attendees quadrupled.

It was a historic occasion for the group of parishioners. No one could remember Vicka ever previously addressing the local community as a group and wondered why in over 30 years such an arrangement to meet with parishioners in this way had not been considered before.

Needless to say, the evening proved a great success and will no doubt do much to boost numbers for the next meeting of the Lenten lecture series.

CROSS DEMANDS

by Bernard Gallagher

● I've been handing out a few crosses recently – also been on the receiving end as well. I can almost liken the exchanges to the games kids play – 'pass the parcel' and 'tit-for-tat'. Observers and those not close to the situation probably would.

But what I have found helpful in this struggle is praying the Way of the Cross each day. If I didn't, then I'm sure things could be a lot worse, for me and for others!

A short time in reflection at each station is, in my experience, the most powerful way of starting a conversation with Jesus. And when that happens, then the truth speaks loud and clear. There is no escaping the truth when I walk the Way of the Cross with Jesus. No kidology, no self delusion, no excuses. Just the plain, honest, home truth arrives in my heart at every station.

The walk is never the same and differs for each person. It's a journey of self-discovery where the heart is opened and exposed to all the healing Jesus desires to give. It's a time of being honest with

oneself and others, allowing Jesus to share our burden and help carry our cross. It's a time when Jesus teaches us how to carry our own cross and also be a Simon for others. More than anything else, the walk is a lesson in love – as Jesus loves.

It is said that when Jesus was nailed to the cross and then taunted by spectators to come down to prove he was the Son of Man, it was an impossible task for him because he loved, and to do so would be a denial of his love. So he chose to remain nailed and to bear all suffering before final death, not for his own salvation but for ours.

Sometimes we are invited to love in this way, to remain nailed on the cross for the sake of others, especially when "they know not what they do".

Very recently I imposed a 'demanding' cross on someone. In return the person made demands on me, for proof. And it went downhill from there.

Thank God, the Son of Man is strong and willing enough to bear the demands and crosses we impose on each other. But we have to walk with him and want to offer the burden, relinquish our

demands, as well as taking our turn to be Simon.

Then we rediscover and are blessed by the Truth we may have forgotten or closed our hearts to during those 'demanding' times.



"He chose to remain nailed and to bear all suffering..."

MESSAGE TO MIRJANA

March 2, 2013

Dear children; Anew, in a motherly way, I am calling you not to be of a hard heart.

Do not shut your eyes to the warnings which the Heavenly Father sends to you out of love.

Do you love him above all else?

Do you repent for having often forgotten that the Heavenly Father, out of his great love, sent his Son to redeem us by the Cross?

Do you repent for not having accepted the message?

My children, do not resist the love of my Son.

Do not resist hope and peace.

Along with your prayers and fasting, by his Cross, my Son will cast away the darkness that wants to surround you and come to rule over you.

He will give you the strength for a new life.

Living it according to my Son, you will be a blessing and a hope to all those sinners who wander in the darkness of sin.

My children, keep vigil. I, as a mother, am keeping vigil with you.

I am especially praying and watching over those whom my Son called to be light-bearers and carriers of hope for you – for your shepherds.

Thank you.

PRAYERS REQUESTS... Tea Susac, Ivana & family, Marie & Barry Authers, Teresa & Michael Griffith, Colm O'Donnell, Harkin family, Katherine Wall, Patricia McCarthy, Jagna, David Harwar, Pat Austin, Eileen Leavey, Pat Mulholland, Faloon family,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS... Marguerite O'Kane and St Martin's Prayer Group, Tony & Anne Penman, Renée Namih, North West London Medjugorje Centre, MCF, Cathleen Tobin, Bernadette Renfrey, Electa Almeida, Mary Lunney, C. Small, E. Brazier, Eileen Huck, Reggie Donnelley, Jill Nash, Cathy O'Donnell, BR, Roger Foster, Madeleine Scott, J & D Cavali, Morgan Campbell, Janet McDade, Joan Plant, Bill & Teresa Judd, John & Nicky Carroll, John Dickson, Noreen James, Sr Nowak prayer group, Sr Emmanuel, zenit.org, Scottish Catholic Observer, Fr Dominic Towey, Ruth Black, John Tandy, John Hanrahan, Paula E. Maloney, Medjugorje Information Centre.

PRAYER IS THE LIGHT OF THE SOUL

by St John Chrysostom

● There is nothing more worthwhile than to pray to God and to converse with him, for prayer unites us with God as his companions. As our bodily eyes are illuminated by seeing the light, so in contemplating God our soul is illuminated by him. Of course the prayer I have in mind is no matter of routine, it is deliberate and earnest. It is not tied down to a fixed timetable; rather it is a state which endures by night and day.

Our soul should be directed in God, not merely when we suddenly think of prayer, but even when we are concerned with something else. If we are looking after the poor, if we are busy in some other way, or if we are doing any type of good work, we should season our actions with the desire and the remembrance of God. Through this salt of the love of God we can all become a sweet dish for the Lord. If we are generous in giving time to prayer, we will experience its benefits throughout our life.

Prayer is the light of the soul, giving us true knowledge of God. It is a link mediating between God and man. By prayer the soul is borne up to heaven and in a marvellous way

embraces the Lord. This meeting is like that of an infant crying on its mother, and seeking the best of milk. The soul longs for its own needs and what it receives is better than anything to be seen in the world.

Prayer is a precious way of communicating with God, it gladdens the soul and gives repose to its affections. You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but the gift of God's grace. As Saint Paul says: we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Anyone who receives from the Lord the gift of this type of prayer possesses a richness that is not to be taken from him, a heavenly food filling up the soul. Once he has tasted this food, he is set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up his soul.

To set about this prayer, paint the house of your soul with modesty and lowliness and make it splendid with the light of justice. Adorn it with the beaten gold of good works and, for walls and stones, embellish it assiduously with faith and generosity. Above all, place prayer on top of this house as its roof so that the complete building may be ready for the Lord. Thus he will be received in a splendid royal house and by grace his image will already be settled in your soul.

**AYLESFORD
PILGRIMAGE DAY OF
PRAYER AND DEVOTIONS
June 29, 2013
11:00am to 5:00pm**

PRAYER GROUPS UPDATE

● **BIRMINGHAM:** St Francis Prayer Group meet every Tuesday evening at 8.00pm at St Francis Church, Handsworth, B19 1EF. This group was set up in 1992 to pray for Our Lady's intentions at Medjugorje.

visit... www.crownofstars.blogspot.com