

THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE



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

Dear children! Also today I call you to prayer. May your prayer be as strong as a living stone, until with your lives you become witnesses. Witness the beauty of your faith. I am with you and intercede before my Son for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.

LENT ARRIVES EARLY

● Lent is earlier this year, a week ahead of 2012 and three weeks ahead of the date for Ash Wednesday in 2011. So that means Easter 2013 will also arrive earlier in the year. Easter Sunday falls on March 31.

One unmoveable date as far as Medjugorje is concerned is that of the annual Youth Festival, August 1-6. The seven-day event attracts thousands of young people and their families from all over the world, and attendances grow by the year.

Anyone who may be interested in travelling to this year's Festival – and you don't have to be young – can contact Bernard Gallagher on 0121 429 8349 for further details.

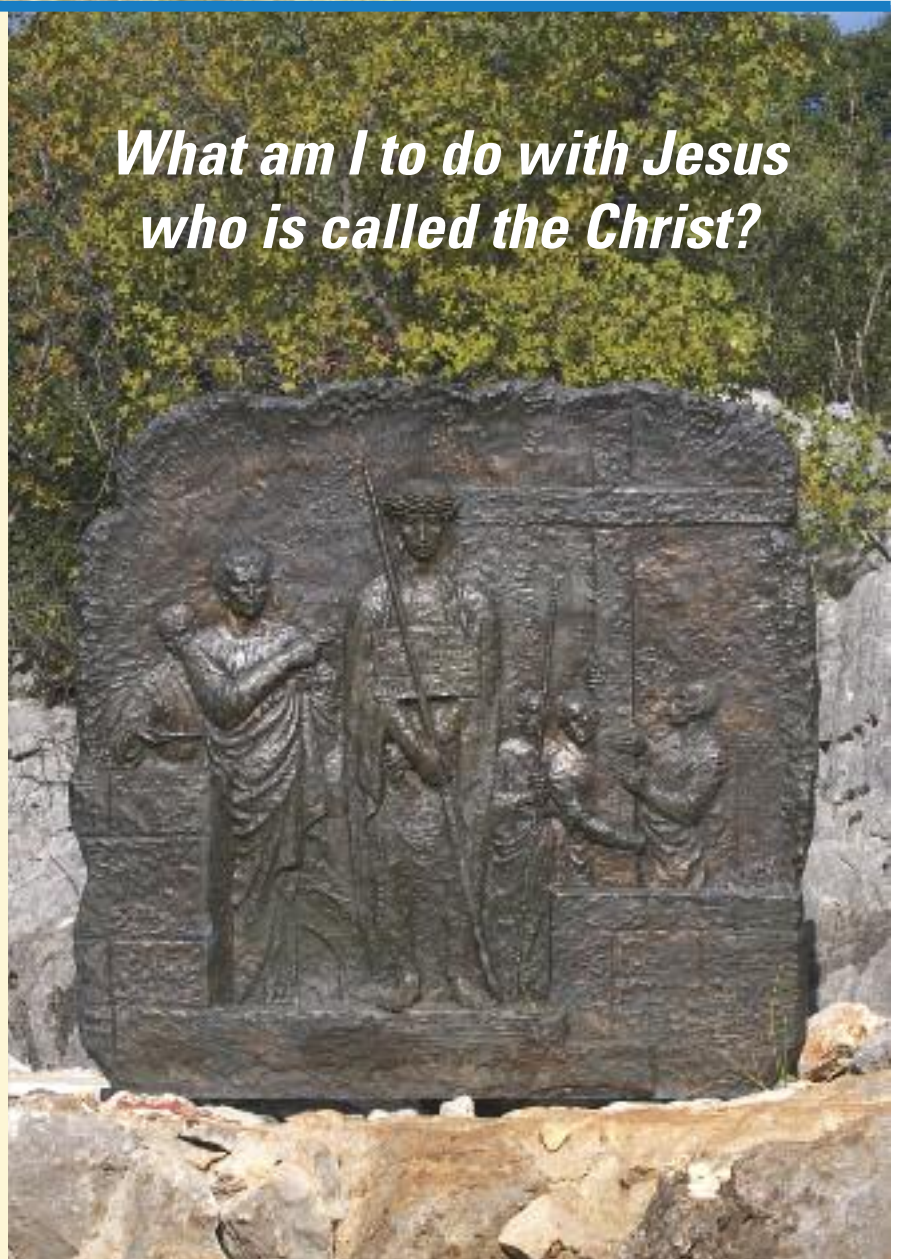


CROSS PURPOSES

● God seduces when we desire to carry our cross. Satan seduces when we desire to lay down our cross.

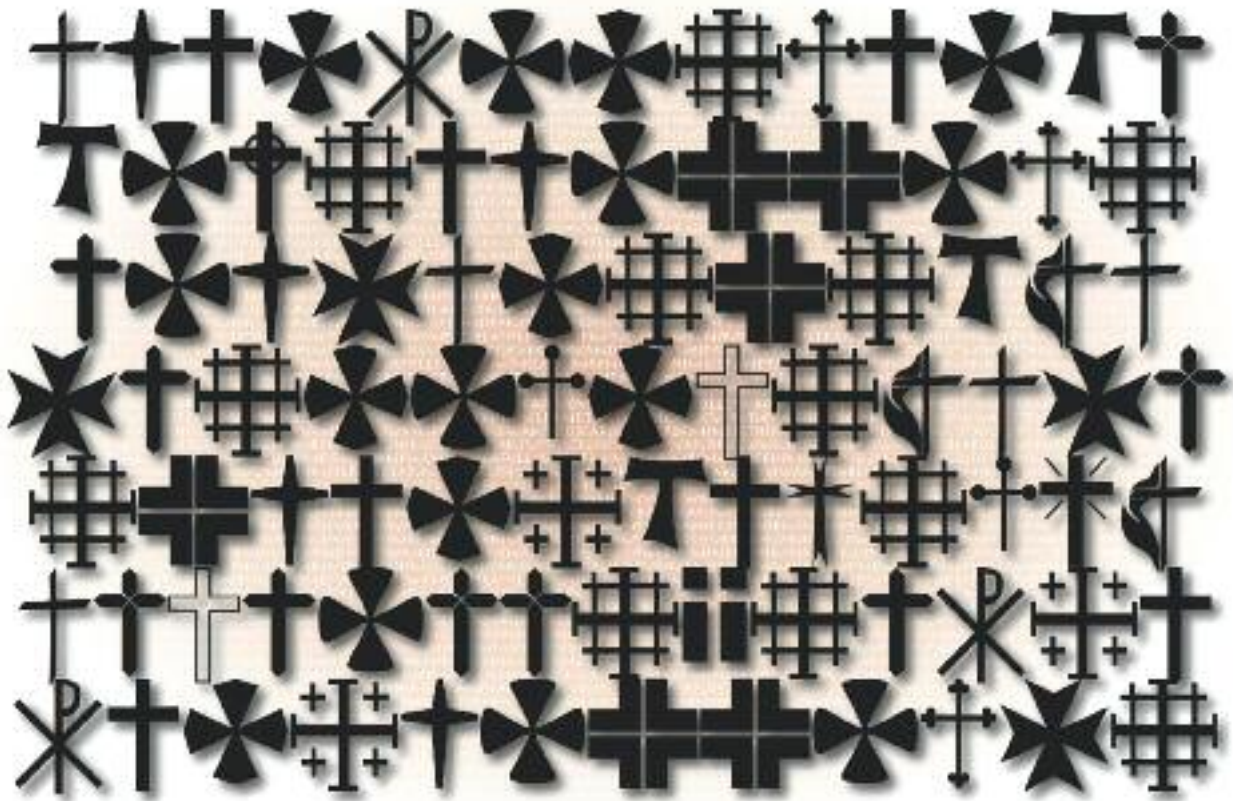
You have seduced me, Yaweh, and I have let myself be seduced. Jeremiah 20 : 7

Jesus turned and said to Peter: Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's. Matthew 16 : 23



What am I to do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

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



THE LANGUAGE OF THE CROSS

THE LANGUAGE OF THE CROSS...

● Elsewhere in this newsletter St Paul speaks about the 'language of the cross'. To some it's a language that just doesn't make sense. Some may find the above illustration doesn't make sense, a bunch of crosses arranged in a pattern. But there is a message in there for those who understand the 'language of the cross'.

In Medjugorje, the cross and the crucifix has an important role in the lives of the people who live there. I am always fascinated to see children coming home from school and approach and kiss the crucifix mounted on the railing that surrounds Our Lady's statue. And not just children. Accepting and venerating the Cross is a daily part of life in Medjugorje.

The cross is the greatest sign of God's love for humanity. It's a mystery to most of us. It doesn't square with the logic of the world that teaches life is designed for comforts and not for crosses and crucifixion. But there is no denying that the cross exists in everyone's life. There is no escape, even though the world would want the cross to be hidden and out of sight. But that is impossible because as Our Lady teaches: "By means of the cross God is glorified through every person."



"The cross is the greatest sign of God's love for humanity..."

SOME LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCES

● **JEAN AZAR** comes from Lebanon and he went to Medjugorje for the first time in 2002. Then it was a very difficult period of his life and he had made several suicide attempts. But he received grace to be healed in Medjugorje. "God touched my heart through Our Lady and ever since then I have been walking with her. Many things changed in my life, I became better person ever since I started to live Our Lady's messages and meditate on them every day. I was able to see my whole life in front of my eyes, from early childhood to adulthood and I feel God's grace close to me all the time. I was only one-year-old when I lost my father, and I was three-and-a-half when I saw my teacher being killed by the bomb that exploded in the front yard of our school. Those two events influenced me all of my life, but I can see now that the grace of our Lord is so great and is above all that. I thank the dear Lord for giving me the grace to come here every year. I can never thank Our Lady enough for leading me to her Son every day." Jean added that his sister encouraged him to visit after she read a lot about Medjugorje. "She saw that I was in difficulties and told me I should try to go to Medjugorje. I was saying to her that Our Lady is everywhere, why should I be going to Medjugorje to heal myself? But after I read some of the books about Medjugorje, I was really moved. I decided to come here, but before that I wrote a letter to Our Lady and I asked many questions of her. It was on that first pilgrimage that all of my questions were answered," said Jean.

● **MIRKO HRKA**, Director of the Zagreb foundation, *I hear, I believe, I see*, said he felt great desire to visit to Medjugorje during the quiet period, when there are not too many pilgrims around. Mirko's latest visit was in January. "Medjugorje is something special for me," said Mirko. "I live with Medjugorje, especially with Our Lady's messages. I made a promise ten years ago that I will distribute each of the messages that she gives to the parish and to the world. That is what I am still doing. I always forward those messages to my friends, to 300 addresses. The Foundation and its publications – the first was *The Audio Bible* – are fruits of one of the messages of Our Lady, the one she gave on October 18, 1984 when she invited us to put Holy Bible in a visible place for our families, to read it and to pray." Mirko lost his sight ten years ago. "It was really hard, but I found huge relief in praying the Rosary. I used to work as supervisor on construction sites and had quite normal life." After losing his sight, Mirko went to Medjugorje where he received encouragement to study theology. The Foundation Mirko directs – *"I hear, I believe, I see"* – publishes books in audio format. All of Fr Slavko's books have been published in the format as well. Marko says it would be hard for him to accept his blindness if it wasn't for his faith. "Our Lady has always been giving me strength, especially Our Lady at the foot of Jesus' cross. It is together with her, that I am able to rise from difficult situations. She understands pain and suffering and gives me strength to continue my life."

● A young Italian couple, **VINCENT** and **GIOVANNA GERBASE-MARINELLI** recently went to Medjugorje for their honeymoon. Vincenzo related how he had been far from Jesus and the Church until he encountered a particular priest. "It was that priest who told me: "If you open your heart to God you will see that goodness exists." He invited me to come to Assisi. I was among a group of young people who were all satisfied and happy. I told him that I wanted to experience that joy. And that is where my story began." Vincent met his wife Giovanna at a prayer seminar. His honeymoon visit is his fourth time in Medjugorje and it is the third time for Giovanna. "We would like all of our friends to come and to get to know this place, because we feel safe with Mary and Jesus. We can live heaven on earth in this life and we can in that way prepare for Heaven. Mary took us by our hand and invited us to prayer."



Pilate said to them: What am I to do with Jesus, who is called Christ? *Matthew 27 : 22*

And the Mother of Jesus Christ, responded:

- Glorify Jesus...
- Be united with Jesus...
- Rejoice with the little Jesus...
- Venerate the Heart of my Son, Jesus...
- Surrender to Jesus in prayer...
- Pray that Jesus conquers...
- Do something concrete for Jesus Christ...
- Open your hearts to Jesus...
- Offer your sacrifices to Jesus...
- Dedicate your time only to Jesus...
- Renew your love for Jesus...
- Be a joyful testimony for Jesus...
- Prepare for the coming of Jesus...
- Let little Jesus reign in your hearts...
- Witness Jesus' greatness in your life...
- Open the door of your heart to Jesus...
- Become witnesses to the love of Jesus...
- Adore Jesus...
- Meditate on the wounds of Jesus...
- Ask Jesus to heal your wounds...
- Extend your hands to Jesus...
- Come closer to Jesus...
- Witness that you live for Jesus...
- Remain with Jesus...
- Become friends of Jesus...
- Say your 'yes' to Jesus...
- Put Jesus in the first place...
- Ask Jesus for love...
- Decide for Jesus...
- Become a place of Jesus' birth...
- Be joyful carriers of the risen Jesus in this peaceful world...

"We can live heaven on earth and in that way prepare for Heaven.."

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S LENTEN MESSAGE

● We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us (1 John 4:16)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The celebration of Lent, in the context of the Year of Faith, offers us a valuable opportunity to meditate on the relationship between faith and charity: between believing in God – the God of Jesus Christ – and love, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and which guides us on the path of devotion to God and others.

1. Faith as a response to the love of God

In my first Encyclical, I offered some thoughts on the close relationship between the theological virtues of faith and charity. Setting out from Saint John's fundamental assertion: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16), I observed that "being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction... Since God has first loved us" (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere 'command'; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 1). Faith is this personal adherence – which involves all our faculties – to the revelation of God's gratuitous and "passionate" love for us, fully revealed in Jesus Christ. The encounter with God who is Love engages not only the heart but also the intellect: "Acknowledgement of the living God is one path towards love, and the 'yes' of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love. But this process is always open-ended; love is never 'finished' and complete" (ibid., 17). Hence, for all Christians, and especially for "charity workers", there is a need for faith, for "that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love" (ibid., 31a). Christians are people who have been conquered by Christ's love and accordingly, under the influence of that love – "*Caritas Christi urgens nos*" (2 Cor 5:14) – they are profoundly open to loving their neighbour in concrete ways (cf. ibid., 33). This attitude arises primarily from the consciousness of being loved, forgiven, and even served by the Lord, who bends down to wash the feet of the Apostles and offers himself on the Cross to draw humanity into God's love.



The Christian life consists in continuously scaling the mountain to meet God...

"Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love!... Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working" (ibid., 39). All this helps us to understand that the principal distinguishing mark of Christians is precisely "love grounded in and shaped by faith" (ibid., 7).

2. Charity as life in faith

The entire Christian life is a response to God's love. The first response is precisely faith as the acceptance, filled with wonder and gratitude, of the unprecedented divine initiative that precedes us and summons us. And the "yes" of faith marks the beginning of a radiant story of friendship with the Lord, which fills and gives full meaning to our whole life. But it is not enough for God that we simply accept his gratuitous love. Not only does he love us, but he wants to draw us to himself, to transform us in such a profound way as to bring us to say with Saint Paul: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (cf. Gal 2:20).

When we make room for the love of God, then we become like him, sharing in his own charity. If we open ourselves to his love, we allow him to live in us and to bring us to love with him, in him and like him; only then does our faith become truly "active through love" (Gal 5:6); only then does he abide in us (cf. 1 Jn 4:12).

Faith is knowing the truth and adhering to it (cf. 1 Tim 2:4); charity is "walking" in the truth (cf. Eph 4:15). Through faith we enter into

friendship with the Lord, through charity this friendship is lived and cultivated (cf. Jn 15:14ff). Faith causes us to embrace the commandment of our Lord and Master; charity gives us the happiness of putting it into practice (cf. Jn 13:13-17). In faith we are begotten as children of God (cf. Jn 1:12ff); charity causes us to persevere concretely in our divine sonship, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22). Faith enables us to recognize the gifts that the good and generous God has entrusted to us; charity makes them fruitful (cf. Mt 25:14-30).

3. The indissoluble interrelation of faith and charity

In light of the above, it is clear that we can never separate, let alone oppose, faith and charity. These two theological virtues are intimately linked, and it is misleading to posit a contrast or "dialectic" between them. On the one hand, it would be too one-sided to place a strong emphasis on the priority and decisiveness of faith and to undervalue and almost despise concrete works of charity, reducing them to a vague humanitarianism. On the other hand, though, it is equally unhelpful to overstate the primacy of charity and the activity it generates, as if works could take the place of faith. For a healthy spiritual life, it is necessary to avoid both fideism and moral activism.

The Christian life consists in continuously scaling the mountain to meet God and then coming back down, bearing the love and strength drawn from him, so as to serve our brothers and sisters with God's own love. In sacred Scripture, we see how the zeal of the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel and awaken people's faith is closely related to their charitable concern to be of service to the poor

"When we make room for the love of God then we become like him..."

(cf. Acts 6:1-4). In the Church, contemplation and action, symbolized in some way by the Gospel figures of Mary and Martha, have to coexist and complement each other (cf. Lk 10:38-42). The relationship with God must always be the priority, and any true sharing of goods, in the spirit of the Gospel, must be rooted in faith (cf. General Audience, 25 April 2012). Sometimes we tend, in fact, to reduce the term "charity" to solidarity or simply humanitarian aid. It is important, however, to remember that the greatest work of charity is evangelization, which is the "ministry of the word". There is no action more beneficial – and therefore more charitable – towards one's neighbour than to break the bread of the word of God, to share with him the Good News of the Gospel, to introduce him to a relationship with God: evangelization is the highest and the most integral promotion of the human person. As the Servant of God Pope Paul VI wrote in the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, the proclamation of Christ is the first and principal contributor to development (cf. n. 16). It is the primordial truth of the love of God for us, lived and proclaimed, that opens our lives to receive this love and makes possible the integral development of humanity and of every man (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 8).

Essentially, everything proceeds from Love and tends towards Love. God's gratuitous love is made known to us through the proclamation of the Gospel. If we welcome it with faith, we receive the first and indispensable contact with the Divine, capable of making us "fall in love with Love", and then we dwell within this Love, we grow in it and we joyfully communicate it to others.

Concerning the relationship between faith and works of charity, there is a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians which provides perhaps the best account of the link between the two: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not because of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (2:8-10). It can be seen here that the entire redemptive initiative comes from God, from his grace, from his forgiveness received in faith; but this initiative, far from limiting our freedom and our responsibility, is actually what makes them authentic and directs them towards works of charity. These are not primarily the result of human effort, in which to take pride, but they are born of faith and they flow from the grace that God gives in abundance. Faith without works is like a tree without fruit: the two virtues imply one another. Lent invites us, through the traditional practices of the Christian life, to nourish our faith by careful

and extended listening to the word of God and by receiving the sacraments, and at the same time to grow in charity and in love for God and neighbour, not least through the specific practices of fasting, penance and almsgiving.

4. Priority of faith, primacy of charity

Like any gift of God, faith and charity have their origin in the action of one and the same Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 13), the Spirit within us that cries out "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6), and makes us say: "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor 12:3) and "Maranatha!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20).

Faith, as gift and response, causes us to know the truth of Christ as Love incarnate and crucified, as full and perfect obedience to the Father's will and infinite divine mercy towards neighbour; faith implants in hearts and minds the firm conviction that only this Love is able to conquer evil and death. Faith invites us to look towards the future with the virtue of hope, in the confident expectation that the victory of Christ's love will come to its fullness. For its part, charity ushers us into the love of God manifested in Christ and joins us in a personal and existential way to the total and unconditional self-giving of Jesus to the Father and to his brothers and sisters. By filling our hearts with his love, the Holy Spirit makes us sharers in Jesus' filial devotion to God and fraternal devotion to every man (cf. Rom 5:5).

The relationship between these two virtues resembles that between the two fundamental sacraments of the Church: Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism (*sacramentum fidei*) precedes the Eucharist (*sacramentum caritatis*), but is ordered to it, the Eucharist being the fullness of the Christian journey. In a similar way, faith precedes charity, but faith is genuine only if crowned by charity. 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 (cf. 1 Cor 13:13).

Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Lent, as we prepare to celebrate the event of the Cross and Resurrection – in which the love of God redeemed the world and shone its light upon history – I express my wish that all of you may spend this precious time rekindling your faith in Jesus Christ, so as to enter with him into the dynamic of love for the Father and for every brother and sister that we encounter in our lives. For this intention, I raise my prayer to God, and I invoke the Lord's blessing upon each individual and upon every community!

• From the Vatican, 15 October 2012



THE POWER TO SAVE

1 Corinthians 1 : 17-25

● Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the Good News, and not to preach in terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed. The language of the cross may be illogical to those who are not on the way of salvation, but those of us who are on the way see it as God's power to save. As scripture says: I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing all the learning of the learned. Where are the philosophers now? Where are the scribes? Where are any of the thinkers of today? So you see now how God has shown up the foolishness of human wisdom? If it was God's wisdom that human wisdom should not know God, it was because God wanted to save those who have faith through the foolishness of the message that we preach. And so, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. 1 Corinthians 1 : 17-25

You parishioners have a great and heavy cross, but don't be afraid to carry it. My Son is here who will help you. Message of April 5, 1985 (Good Friday)

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

MESSAGE TO MIRJANA

February 2, 2013

Dear children; Love is bringing me to you – the love which I desire to teach you also – real love; the love which my Son showed you when he died on the Cross out of love for you; the love which is always ready to forgive and to ask for forgiveness.

How great is your love?

My motherly heart is sorrowful as it searches for love in your hearts.

You are not ready to submit your will to God's will out of love.

You cannot help me to have those who have not come to know God's love to come to know it, because you do not have real love.

Consecrate your hearts to me and I will lead you.

I will teach you to forgive, to love your enemies and to live according to my Son.

Do not be afraid for yourselves.

In afflictions my Son does not forget those who love.

I will be beside you.

I will implore the Heavenly Father for the light of eternal truth and love to illuminate you.

Pray for your shepherds so that through your fasting and prayer they can lead you in love.

Thank you.

ONE WAY TO PEACE

by Fr Jozo Zovko ofm

● Imagine if I were to break a petal off a rose. No one could make it whole again. No one human. Someone greater is needed. The One who created it. There is one way to come to peace and wholeness, one way to be healed and forgiven – the Sacrament of Confession.



PILGRIMAGES TO MEDJUGORJE

● Reggie Donnelley and Jean Reynolds are leading four pilgrimages to Medjugorje from **BELFAST** this year... May 12-19, June 6-23, August 18-25 and October 5-12. Contact Reggie on 02890300980, and Jean on 07729402311.

● Marguerite O'Kane is also organising a pilgrimage group to leave from **BELFAST** on June 2, returning June 9. Marguerite can be contacted on 02838326326.

● Roger Foster has two pilgrimage dates for anyone wishing to travel from **EDINBURGH**, June 19-26 (for the 32nd anniversary) and September 11-18. Roger can be reached at 01475793987.

● Mary Gillespie is also organising a group to be in Medjugorje for the anniversary of the apparitions. It leaves from **GATWICK** on June 22 and returns June 29. Contact Mary on 01582579120.

● **GATWICK** is a popular starting point for groups travelling to Medjugorje from the south of England. Cathleen Tobin's group leaves on May 15 and returns May 22. Contact Cathleen on 0208 5793217.

● Barry Henwood's group leaves from **GATWICK** on September 14 and returns September 21. He is also organising coach transport from Christchurch to Gatwick. Telephone Barry on 01202 398216 for details or email to: josephine.henwood@btinternet.com

● John Martin is leading a group from **MANCHESTER**, October 16-23. John has two numbers you can contact him on: 0161 6537284 and 07761706002.

● Another group heading out from **MANCHESTER** leaves on May 22 and returns May 29. Ann McKelvie is the group leader and her telephone number is 01514878690.

● For anyone wishing to travel from **EAST MIDLANDS** Margaret Oldacre is taking a group for the week September 4-11. Telephone 0121 7778291 for further details.

● John and Pat Oakshott are leading a group to Medjugorje for the week May 19-26. Departure is from **LEEDS/BRADFORD** airport. Contact number is 01482802483.

● **PLEASE NOTE...** *that publication of any pilgrimage dates in this newsletter is not intended as a recommendation or endorsement by the publisher for any particular group or organisation, but only to inform readers of scheduled pilgrimage dates already announced. Travellers are advised to verify all details with the pilgrimage organiser, travel agent, tour operator and airline of choice. For consumer information on travel please refer to:*

- Civil Aviation Authority
- ABTA
- Foreign & Commonwealth office
- Embassy of the Republic of Croatia (London)
- Embassy of Bosnia & Herzegovina (London)

● A list of upcoming pilgrimages dates from the UK to Medjugorje is published at: <http://crownofstars.blogspot.co.uk/p/medjugorje-uk-notice-board.html>

PRAYER GROUPS UPDATE

● For anyone living in the Bexley area... Our Lady and St Pio Prayer Group meets every Tuesday evening (7pm to 9pm) at St John Fisher church, Thanet Road, Old Bexley, DA5 1AP. There is a Eucharistic service, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and the Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy is recited. All are welcome.

If you would like your prayer group promoted in this newsletter, contact Bernard at medjugorjeuk@gmail.com or telephone 0121 429 8349

For more information and help on starting a prayer group go to medjugorjecalling.com

IVAN FOR LONDON?

● It seems the Medjugorje visionary Ivan Dragicevic could follow his recent visits to Dublin and Glasgow with a return to the British Isles and a stop-off at London later this year. More details when available.

NEW LINES FOR MEDJUGORJE

● We are used to seeing yellow lines painted on the roads to restrict parking and waiting time for vehicles, but Medjugorje council officials have taken the idea one step further by painting yellow lines on pavements to prevent shop owners from encroaching on pedestrian areas with displays of products and advertising signs.



The big increase in pilgrims numbers in recent years has seen crowded pavements and people are often forced to walk on the road and so become a danger to themselves and to traffic.

A couple of years ago the council introduced parking meters and restricted parking areas to deal with the town's traffic problem where vehicles often blocked public footpaths, forcing wheelchair pilgrims to take to the road. That, plus the shops extending their frontage onto the pavement was beginning to cause many difficulties for pedestrians.

"Dear Children, Love is bringing me to you..."

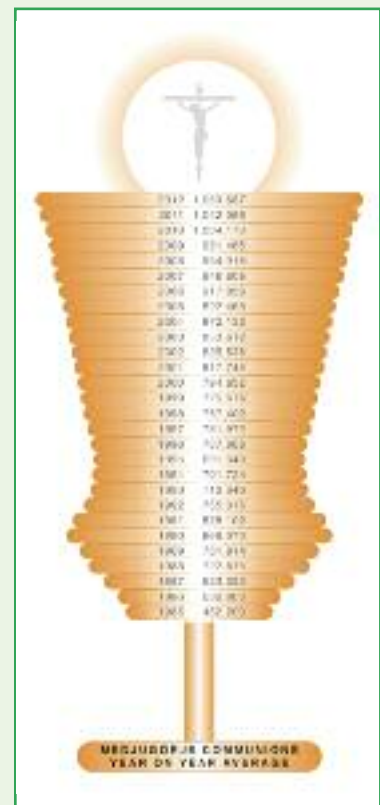
TREE KEEPS GROWING

● Although the number of Holy Communion distributed in Medjugorje last year fell by over 11% on the previous year of 2011, the year on year growth of pilgrim numbers to Medjugorje continues to rise. This could be a significant factor in the Holy See deciding on shrine status for Medjugorje when it's International Commission study is completed.

According to statistics published by the Medjugorje parish office, over two million communions were given in 2011 (the highest ever number recorded in a single year, and the year of the 30th anniversary). For some reason visits to Medjugorje always spike on anniversaries that end in zero! So it comes as no surprise, coupled with the current economic climate around the world, that the number of pilgrims measured by the number of communions were less last year.

However, the figure of 1,814,900 communions for 2012, and the second highest ever recorded, confirms that the overall trend in pilgrims visiting and accepting Medjugorje as a major pilgrimage destination is continuing to grow steadily.

Remarkably, when the year-on-year figures are averaged out and stacked, they provided this graphic image of a communion cup!



VISIONARIES ROLE

by Jakob Marschner

● The Medjugorje seers are only a means to communicate a message, and so they are no more important than the pilgrims who basically have the same role, says visionary Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo. The privileged people are the priests, adds the seer who says the key is opening the heart.

Ascribing too much importance to visionaries can prevent some people from seeing that they are just as important themselves, and have many opportunities in spite of not being seers, Medjugorje visionary Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo says in an interview with the Italian online magazine *lo Acqua e Sapone*.

"You do not need visionaries, all you need is an open heart, because the Blessed Virgin says: "Open your heart, and I will be with you." We seers are only a means, we must only say what God wants to say through our Mother, but you have the same importance, as apostles for our Mother and in bringing this with you into your homes and cities" Mirjana says.

The visionary tells she has plenty of examples, and these highlight the importance of opening the heart by means of prayer and fasting, and asking the Virgin Mary to help:

"After the apparitions on the second day of every month, I have seen many people who came to me to say they had been healed, and they had come to know the love of God. I did not know those people, I did not ask anything for them, but they had their hearts open and asked for their Mother's help, and she interceded for them with her Son. I tell you this to let you know how much you need our Mother" Mirjana says.

"When Our Lady asks us to fast and to pray the Rosary, it is not because she needs our rosaries or our fasting, but because we need this. Because in this way our heart opens more and more, and the more we see, and so we see the problems of our friend who is carrying a big cross, and we see who needs bread."

"But this is only when our heart is open. It is useless to pray and fast if you close your eyes when you see someone who needs help and do nothing" says the seer.

"So even if it is just a little, our prayer is good, because we are on a good road and Our Lady will help us. She opens up her heart, she teaches us how to pray stronger, and with the heart. You just have to go and ask the Virgin Mary to help you."

If the visionaries are not particularly privileged people, another group is actually set apart and special, says Mirjana:

"As I understand it by looking at the messages, if someone are privileged for our Mother, it is our priests. She says: "They do not need your judgment or your criticism, but your prayers and your love, for God will judge them for how they were as priests, but He will judge you for your behaviour with the priests." Our Lady wants for us that we are recognized for love, only God can judge" she says.

"I am sorry that I cannot tell you more about everything that Our Lady is preparing in all these years, but I can tell you one thing: there are the times we are living in now, and there will be the time of the Triumph of the Heart of our Mother."

"Between these two times, there is a bridge, and that bridge is our priests. That is why Our Lady insists so much on prayer for them, because that bridge must be very strong to ensure that everyone can pass. Our Lady said: "With them, I will triumph."

"You do not need visionaries... all you need is an open heart..."



Jesus was in one of the towns when a man appeared, covered with leprosy. Seeing Jesus he fell on his face and implored him. "Sir," he said "If you want to, you can cure me." Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said, "Of course I want to! Be cured!" And the leprosy left him at once. He ordered him to tell no one, "But to go show yourself to the priest and make the offering for your healing as Moses prescribed it, as evidence for them."
Luke 5 : 12-14

CONFESSION CRISIS

by Fr Slavko Barbaric ofm

● When I was in seminary, the simple question, "What makes something sinful?" haunted me. Although I did not speak out about this question for fear of appearing stupid or even godless, it continued to disturb me deeply throughout all the years of my studies.

When I became a priest, I took confession very seriously, yet this question continued to haunt me. After listening and sharing with many people, I began to grasp deep within my soul that most people did not really understand the meaning of sin. When they came to the Sacrament, their confessions were superficial and routine, and it was very difficult to determine if they were truly sorry for their sins.

As a young priest, I went through a further crisis. I asked myself, "Why do we have the sacrament of Confession?" From the pulpit we announce the Good News. We talk about sin, and we ask people to renounce sinful habits. Yet, in confession I rarely heard that someone was truly responding to the call of Christ or to the priest's sermon, or was convinced that he must stop sinning. Deep in my soul, I asked myself, "Then, why should we preach? Why should we confess?" I wanted to see the lives of penitents change a little from confession to confession. But I rarely saw much change and my questions regarding confession

Dear children! In this time of renunciation, prayer and penance, I call you anew: go and confess your sins so that grace may open your hearts, and permit it to change you. Convert little children, open yourselves to God and to his plan for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Medjugorje message, February 25, 2009

became stronger and more painful.

In retrospect, I realise that it is such questions that begin the tension in many priestly vocations, when priests do not discover the true purpose of their vocations, especially the call to reconciliation. I also realise that many Christians have a difficult time with confession, especially our youth. Then I have to ask again, "Why should we confess to the priest?" It happens repeatedly that many who come to confession only confess unimportant things and hide the truly important areas of their lives. This has happened to every young man, especially in his years of adolescence. At that time many stop going to confession. Then the priest discovers that those who really need confession are not coming to the Sacrament, and those who do come confess only superficially.

I remember one believer who asked to discuss this Sacrament with me. She made it clear that she did not want to confess her sins, but just to discuss things. Her first question was, "Why do I have to confess to the priest who is simply human like myself? I can confess directly to God."

I stood perfectly still for a moment. I felt trapped. I had the same question myself. I did not know how to respond. Finally I replied: "I have a similar difficulty with confession. I have also wondered why we should confess to a priest who is, after all, only human. Certainly, Confession does not exist to satisfy a priest's curiosity or desire to know the sins of others. I am convinced that no penitent says anything really new. The priest has heard all sins, all human acts. I have the same concern that you have."

She was quiet for a moment. Then suddenly we both realised that there must be something more. Surely, the purpose of confession is not simply to expose our sins. There is something much deeper that happens.

In confession a meeting takes place between the one who is wounded and the Doctor, between the one who is sinful and the One Who is holy, between the one who has been offended and the One Who gives

consolation, between the one who has been humiliated and the One Who elevates the humble, between the one who is hungry and the One Who satisfies the hungry, between the one who is lost and the One Who leaves the ninety-nine in order to find the lost one, between the one who is in darkness and the One Who is the Light, between the one who has lost the way and the One Who said, "I am the Way," between the one who is dead and the One Who is Life.

We talked for a long time, and all the while we were increasing our understanding of confession.

• Adapted from the book: *Give Me Your Wounded Heart* by Fr Slavko Barbaric

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Courage, little children! I decided to lead you on the way of holiness. Renounce sin and set out on the way of salvation, the way which my Son has chosen. Through each of your tribulations and sufferings God will find the way of joy for you. Therefore, little children, pray. We are close to you with our love. Thank you for having responded to my call. 25/2/2009

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