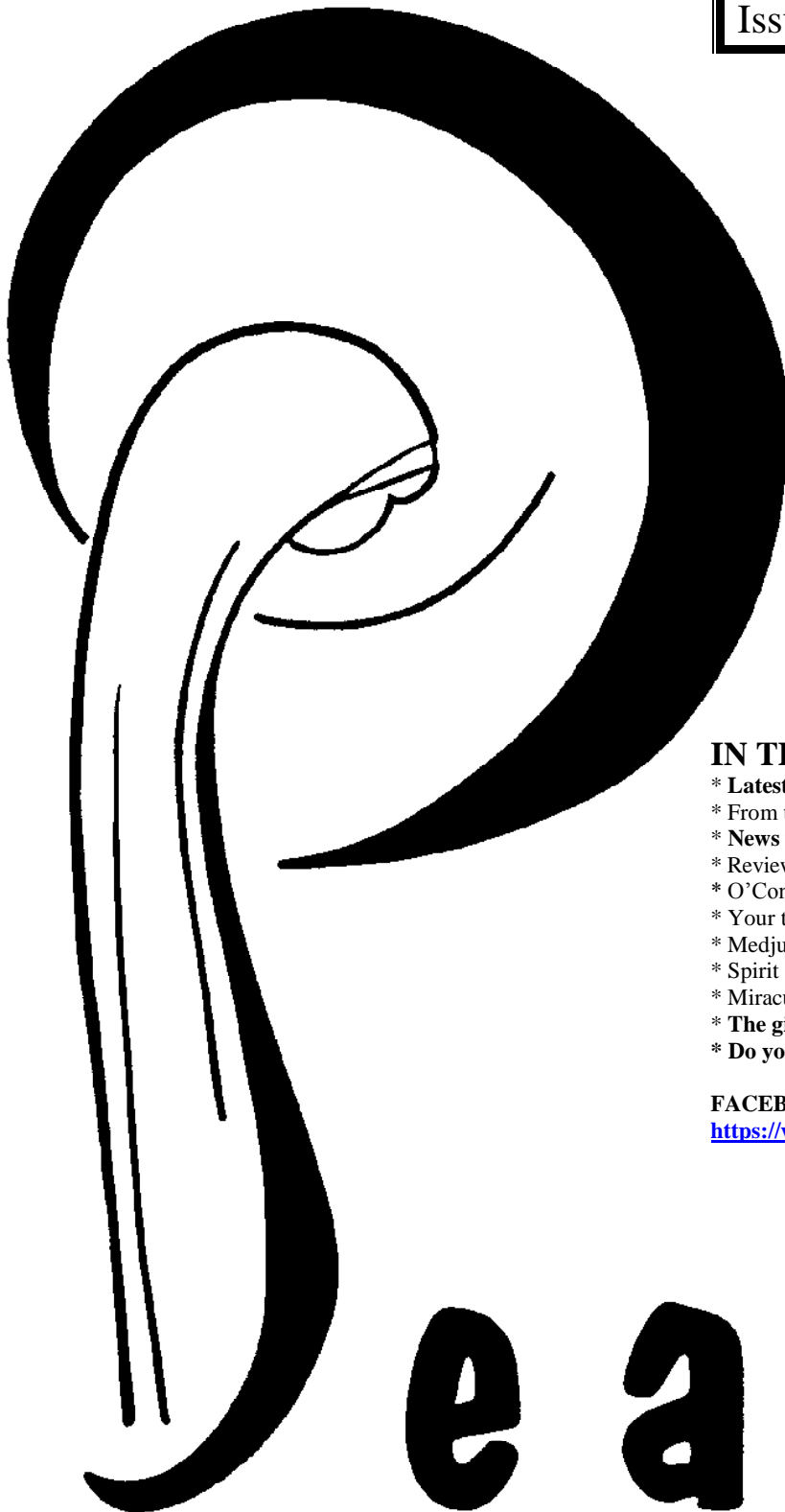


MEDJUGORJE NEWS

New Zealand

FREE

Issue no* - 84 June 2017



Review of
the 2017
Auckland
Eucharistic
Convention

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peace

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As its name implies, the aim of this newsletter is essentially **the spreading of the messages received by the visionaries** in Medjugorje, according to the wishes of Our Lady

The Medjugorje Story

On the evening of 24 June 1981, in the parish of St James in Medjugorje, six young people claimed to have seen the Blessed Virgin Mary on Podbrdo Hill. The next day four of the six alleged another meeting with Our Lady, and said they spoke with her. On this occasion, the four teenagers (three girls and a boy) were joined by another young boy and a teenage girl. These six became the definitive visionaries in Medjugorje; they are Ivanka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Vicka Ivankovic, Ivan Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic and Jakov Colo.

Since 1981, these six young people have been the centre of world attention, and medical and scientific studies. Their principal claim is that practically every day to the present time, our Blessed Lady has been appearing to one or more of them, and that from her they have received thousands of messages for the parish of Medjugorje and the world. All six still claim apparitions, though only three of them now on a daily basis, and each of the six says that he or she has received, or is in the process of receiving, ten secrets. The first of the secrets is to be revealed to the world through Mirjana Dragicevic, and the third is said to be concerned with a permanent sign that will authenticate the apparitions and be a help to conversion, and will be evident to all at Medjugorje. The visionaries say that Our Lady identifies herself to them as the Queen of Peace.

As a result of these claims, more than forty million people have visited Medjugorje from all over the world and there have been many assertions regarding remarkable signs and wonders, cures and spiritual healing. There is no doubt at all that those millions of people have found a pilgrimage to Medjugorje one of the most spiritually significant experiences of their lives.

News from Medjugorje can be found at the official website:

<http://www.medjugorje.hr/>

We acknowledge and accept that the authority regarding the authenticity of apparitions, locutions and related messages as well as all private revelations from **Our Lord, Our Lady or any Saint rests with the Holy See of Rome whose final judgement we will respect and obey.**

We also affirm our total allegiance to our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, our Priests and Bishops and our Holy Father, Pope Francis .

THE MEDJUGORJE MESSAGE

The Blessed Virgin Mary proposes a six-point programme:

1. **Faith** - Belief in God and in the supernatural. It is your true vision. Therefore live by it.
2. **Commitment to God** - Let Him direct your life. Begin by turning away from sin in true conversion and repentance.
3. **Prayer** - Regular Mass, monthly confession, daily rosary and dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
4. **Fasting** - Bread and water on Fridays (and Wednesdays) if you can. If not, at least cut back or practise some other form of self denial.
5. **Peace** - In your own heart, in your family and neighbourhood and workplace, in all your human relations and reaching out to the war-stricken world.
6. **The Holy Bible** - We should read part of the Holy Scripture every day.

The Messages of Mary are addressed not only to Catholics but to the whole human race, regardless of beliefs or religion.



Our Lady's Messages



25 January, 2017

"Dear children!

Today I am calling you to pray for peace: peace in human hearts, peace in the families and peace in the world. Satan is strong and wants to turn all of you against God, and to return you to everything that is human, and to destroy in the heart all feelings towards God and the things of God. You, little children, pray and fight against materialism, modernism and egoism, which the world offers to you. Little children, you decide for holiness and I, with my Son Jesus, intercede for you.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 February, 2017

"Dear children!

Today I am calling you to profoundly live your faith and to implore the Most High to strengthen it, so that winds and storms cannot break it. May the roots of your faith be prayer and hope in eternal life. Already now, little children, work on yourselves in this time of grace, wherein God is giving you the grace - through renunciation and the call to conversion - to be people of clear and persevering faith and hope.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 March, 2017

"Dear children!

In this time of grace, I am calling all of you to open your hearts to God's mercy, to begin a new life through prayer, penance and a decision for holiness. This time of spring moves you to a new life, to a renewal, in your thoughts and hearts. Therefore, little children, I am with you to help you to say 'yes' to God and to God's commandments with resoluteness. You are not alone; I am with you through the grace which the Most High gives me for you and your descendants.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 April, 2017

"Dear children!

Love, pray and witness my presence to all those who are far away. By your witness and example, you can draw closer the hearts that are far from God and His grace. I am with you and intercede for each of you so that, with love and resoluteness, you may witness and encourage all those who are far from my Immaculate Heart.

Thank you for having responded to my call."





From the Editor:

Dear Friends of Medjugorje News,

Another amazing Eucharistic Convention, a wonderful retreat weekend with amazing speakers and music. There is always something you go away with from each and every speaker, the Lord is good is us, providing such a place and weekend to spread His love. It was also great to catch up with the many readers of the Medjugorje News magazine, thank you to all who came up and said hello.

Well the weather is definitely changing, this is the time I hibernate with my spiritual books and readings. A time to snuggle into the arms of The Lord while it is raining outside, a time to feel the physical comfort of relaxing in the Lords arms and to let the holy spirit lead me. A time of listening.

“Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort me and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.”

-St. Patrick

We can now be found on facebook thanks to Bob and Judith Gill, our webmaster. :<https://www.facebook.com/medjugorjenews nz>.

May the Lords face shine on you and give you peace, and may the Lord bless you and keep you.

Sarah Moran

Visiting those in prison – by writing

Would you like to become involved in a very special work of mercy by writing to long-term prisoners in a foreign country?

Divine Mercy Publications have set up a team of letter writers to correspond with the inmates of a maximum security jail in Zambia, central Africa. Most of these are Catholics/Christians to whom we send reading and prayer literature as well as clothes and toiletries.

The requests for pen pals are growing; the prison we write to has over 400 inmates, most of whom are in desperate need of consolation and encouragement. They are served by an Irish Catholic priest, whom they see 2-3 times per month.

We wish to continue this important work of mercy and need helpers to ‘adopt’ a prisoner and write on a regular basis, usually once every 1-2 months. Can you help?

There will be absolutely no cost to you, Divine Mercy Publications/Trust will cover all expenses including sending funds via the prison Chaplain approximately twice per year to help the inmates purchase food, toiletries, medicines, clothes and in some case pay a portion of their children’s school fees to prevent them becoming ‘street kids’.

All you need give is your time and mercy to these needy souls.

If you would like to know more please contact us. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Divine Mercy Publications Trust Christchurch. PO Box 20266, Bishopdale, Christchurch 8543 –

Ph/Fax 03 3592087

“Love is the most necessary of all virtues. Love in the person who preaches the word of God is like fire in a musket. If a person were to throw a bullet with his hands, he would hardly make a dent in anything; but if the person takes the same bullet and ignites some gunpowder behind it, it can kill. It is much the same with the word of God. If it is spoken by someone who is filled with the fire of charity- the fire of love of God and neighbour- it will work wonders.”

-St. Anthony Mary Claret

Excerpts from

Children of Medjugorje

From Sister Emmanuel - <http://www.childrenofmedjugorje.com/>

On February 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition in the presence of a small number of people gathered in the living room of her guest house. After the apparition, Mirjana conveyed the following message: "**Dear children**, you who are striving to offer every day of your life to my Son, you who are trying to live with Him, you who are praying and sacrificing - you are hope in this peace less world. You are rays of the light of my Son, a living gospel, and you are my beloved apostles of love. My Son is with you. He is with those who think of Him - those who pray. But in the same way, He is patiently waiting for those who do not know Him. Therefore, you, apostles of my love, pray with the heart and with your works show the love of my Son. This is the only hope for you, and this is also the only way to eternal life. I, as a mother, I am here with you. Your prayers directed to me are the most beautiful roses of love for me. I cannot but be where I sense the scent of roses. There is hope! Thank you."

The Vatican Sending an Envoy to Medjugorje!: On February 11, 2017, on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Holy Father entrusted Archbishop Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., bishop of Warsaw-Prague (Poland), to come to Medjugorje as a Special Envoy of the Holy See.

The mission has the aim of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the pastoral situation in Medjugorje, and above all to assess the needs of the faithful who travel here on pilgrimage. Cardinal Burke, the press officer appointed to the Holy See, noted that Archbishop Hoser's mission is a matter of the "people's needs." He further explained that studying the "pastoral needs" of the people means the "pastoral life, liturgy, catechesis, sacraments and the experience of devotion they have there," but not the management of local parishes. He said: "This is more 'for' than 'against'. It's for the life of the pilgrims who go there." This study will certainly lead to suggestions for possible pastoral initiatives in the future. The mission will therefore have an exclusively pastoral character. Archbishop Hoser, who will continue to exercise his role as bishop of Warsaw-Praga, is expected to finish his mandate as Special Envoy by summer of this year.

Let us pray fervently and with confidence for this special envoy, and in the coming summer we will see what fruits this mission will have brought. I rely a great deal on these words that Vicka often repeats: "The Gospa will fulfil her plan!" Now, we can either delay or hasten this plan. Each month, Our Lady thanks those who respond to her call, she counts on them, the "Apostles of my love", to shorten the time of trials, and hasten the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.

Good news!

My latest book is finally out in French. The English will be out soon. The book is called "**Scandaleuse Misericorde**." Father Jacques Philippe, CdB, wrote the preface. Here I would like to give a snippet from the book and then quote a few excerpts from Fr. Jacques Philippe that shine a beautiful light on forgiveness. "How can I stand the rest of my life as an invalid in this wing?" he asked himself. A terrible heaviness came over him. The seeds of depression were planted. Night after night Father John felt increasingly distressed, and feelings of despair took hold of him. There he was, confined to his bed with nothing to do, with no hope of getting better. It was he, the tireless and active worker par excellence. What a contrast with his former life of activity and meeting acquaintances! Struggling with his solitude, and with a terrible feeling of powerlessness, he cried out to the Lord every day: "Help! Help!"...

...Suddenly, he heard the voice of Christ, who asked him: "My son, how old am I?" Father John replied, "Lord, You're 33 years old!"

"And you?" Jesus asked.

"I'm 50," Fr. John answered.

Then the Lord continued: "Why haven't you ever thanked Me? I gave you 18 more years to live. At 33 I had already died."

"Yes, Lord. I'm sorry. Forgive me for never having appreciated these extra 18 years of life You gave me."

"You have spoken well about me John, but you do not know me. Taste Me." (Father John reported that Jesus stressed the words 'Taste Me'.)

"Lord, what do You mean by telling me this?"

"My son, I didn't consecrate you to be a worker. I didn't consecrate you to be an administrator. I consecrated you to be ME. **Be Me!**"

Father John was dumbfounded when he heard the way Jesus said "Be Me!" Jesus added: "While I was suffering, I felt abandoned, rejected, condemned, and nailed. It was a very painful situation. Now, you know."

...Father John understood a reality that concerns all of us. Before, he was performing one thousand and one works for God, where prayer was dangerously missing. Through his dereliction of a handicapped person, the Lord

made him understand that He was expecting from His priest that he would perform the works OF God, rather than FOR God. That is to say, the works that God Himself had prepared for him to realize according to his Divine design.

From Fr. Jacques Philippe:

"This book gives us an opportunity, through a diversity of stories, to see mercy at work in a living and personal way. Mercy is not an abstract idea, it is a reality that has deeply changed and transformed the lives of so many people. The various chapters illustrate how God's benevolent and gratuitous love can burst forth in a human existence and, where sometimes all seemed lost, lead to true resurrections. The strength of this book does not come from speeches, but from living testimonies...

"We love freedom. And yet, somewhat surprisingly, our world does not fully understand the liberating force of forgiveness. We aspire to freedom, but don't always do what is necessary to achieve it! To be truly free, we must forgive. As long as I haven't forgiven someone who has hurt me, I will be stuck in my past, and will remain dependent on this enemy whom I blame and toward whom I feel anger and bitterness. The grudge will take a place in my heart which will prevent me from being free and living to the full. Forgiveness is sometimes difficult; it may seem impossible. Forgiveness is a grace that must be begged for humbly in prayer, and sometimes it takes a lot of time to get there. However, it is absolutely necessary. Whoever does not forgive will never heal completely from the wrong he has suffered and from the wounds that have been inflicted on him.

"In modern society, we take great care of people who have been victims, supporting them, enabling them to express their pain, to shed light on their suffering, to ensure that they also find the truth and justice to which they are entitled. This is a good thing. However, perhaps we sometimes forget to convey to the victims that they cannot completely recover from their past unless they decide, one day, to forgive. This is not a natural decision to make, it takes courage, but it is necessary in order to find peace, healing and freedom.

"The ultimate source of all forgiveness is in God, in the infinitely merciful heart of the Father."

Dearest Gospa, what patience you have with us. Do not get tired of us. Please continue to visit us! What would we do without you? Those who reject you would joyfully welcome you if only they knew you.

On March 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross. After the apparition, she shared with us the following message from Our Lady:

"Dear children, with motherly love I am coming to help you to have more love and that means more faith. I am coming to help you to live with love the words of my Son, so that the world would be different. Therefore, apostles of my love, I am gathering you around myself. Look at me with the heart, speak to me as to a mother about your pains, sufferings and your joys. Ask me to pray to my Son for you. My Son is merciful and just. My motherly heart would desire for you also to be like that. My motherly heart would desire that you, apostles of my love, speak of my Son and of me to all those around you with your life; so that the world would be different; that simplicity and purity would return; that faith and hope would return. Therefore, my children, pray, pray, pray with the heart, pray with love, pray with good works. Pray that everyone would come to know my Son, so that the world would change, that the world would be saved. With love live the words of my Son. Do not judge, instead love one another so that my heart could triumph. Thank you."

What I learned in Egypt: Last month I had the joy of being able to return to Egypt. Many had told me: "Don't go, it's dangerous!" But where is the danger these days? Isn't there just as much danger in Paris, Nice, or Brussels, where we had bombings lately? The real danger is not being where God calls us!

In her March 2nd message, Mary told us twice that she comes to help us. That reminds me of what I learned while visiting a small church hidden in the narrow, crowded streets, in the oldest part of Cairo. That Church is where one of the three icons, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, painted by the Apostle Luke, is kept. This icon of the Blessed Mother is called "El Ezbaweya". (Two other paintings of St. Luke are located in Rome, and Jerusalem.) This is a miraculous icon. Many Christians and non-Christians come here to honour the Mother of God who is shown with the child Jesus. Some spend hours in front of her, seated on the floor, mumbling a mix of praise and supplications. Among the many miracles that have occurred in this place, one of them, narrated by the Coptic priest in charge of this shrine, really touched me.

In the 1940s, during World War II, a woman of Greek nationality came to Cairo, and for 12 days she stood at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, tearfully praying and pleading with her. Every day, she would make a new offering. What happened was that her son had joined the British army and was then sent to Lebanon. He sent letters to his mother regularly, but in his latest letter he had told her that he was sick. After that...she received not one word from him! Complete silence! She was not receiving any more news, so that this poor mother was afraid that something bad had happened to her son, perhaps even that he had died. So she had come from very far to implore the assistance of El Ezbaweya, begging her to look after her son over there in Lebanon, to keep him healthy and bring him back.

One day, the priest found her very early in the morning standing in front of the door of the Church, radiant with

joy. She told him that she had received a letter from her son. He thanked his mother saying: "Mom, thank you for the lady you sent me! I was very sick, but this lady came to me and she brought me some medicine. She told me: 'Your mother sent me to you!' The medication she brought me is what healed me. I took it and I am healed!' I asked her to tell me her name, and she said: 'My name is El Ezbaweya'." (Her son did not know this name at all).

The priest concluded: "The Lady El Ezbaweya has replied to the prayers, the tears and the praises of a mother!"
Don't forget St. Joseph! On March 19th, we will joyfully celebrate him!

Those who have not yet started the Novena, and wish to, will have to "train-hop" so to speak. Meaning that you can still hop on the train of the novena and end it after St. Joseph's feast day. Following in the footsteps of the Holy Family in Egypt makes us realize how this man, chosen by God, was able to take care of his family under the worst possible conditions! As political refugees under constant threat from Herod's spies, despised by people because of their poverty, Joseph, Mary and Jesus owe their survival to Providence alone! Their unshakable confidence in God's purposes and their mutual love enabled them to undergo this trial and grow stronger because of it. What a magnificent example for us, whose families are bombarded as never before by the destroyer!

Indeed, though Satan is always eager to subvert and break what God created from the beginning, namely the holy nest of life that is the family, nevertheless the Creator is all the more present to pour out his special graces to all families that really trust in Him! The sacrament of marriage is incomparably rich, because it places the family under the blessing of God. In our day, who wouldn't want to be covered by the blessing of God? Of course, if you asked for such a blessing, you cannot at the same time act in a way that displeases Him. The world is pushing us to step on the Word of God, which is life because it is God, but St. Joseph will help us to keep it and treasure it!

Among the praises addressed to St. Joseph in his litany (see our site), there is one that we should mention now more than ever before, "Joseph most chaste." Just recently we have seen a horrible campaign to pervert children through pornography, cleverly imposed by the Ministry of Education and the media. The Lord Jesus, though He is so merciful, spoke clearly against those who would scandalize a child (see PS 1). Woe unto us! Destroying the innocence of children is criminal. Our entire future will be seriously disordered and our children's potential for affection very wounded, even deviated. God can repair everything with much prayer and care but so many intimate sufferings could be avoided if only we would see the violence of pornography. St. Joseph, please protect the children!

Saint Joseph, my tender father,

I place myself forever under your protection.

Consider me as your child and protect me from all sin.

I throw myself into your arms so that you may carry me on the way of holiness.

(A song composed in French, used for our morning prayer in Medjugorje)

Living Lent, Easter Is Next Month!

For the weeks of lent that we still have to live, here are three ideas to make them more fruitful:

- *Every time I am tempted to grab my cell phone to call someone, I will ask myself, "Is it really necessary?" If I can avoid this call, I will replace it with a short prayer calling for the blessing of God upon that person and the entire world. Decide to never judge.*

- *I will make the sign of the Cross over me - the right way - as Mary taught it to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, during the first apparition on February 11, 1858. On that day Bernadette just could not make the sign of the Cross. Then, Our Lady made, in front her, a VERY wide and slow movement from the forehead to the belly button across the chest from left to right. From that day on, Bernadette made the sign of the Cross over herself with great reverence and piety. Actually, by this sign, we invoke God three times holy. The exchange of love between the three persons of the Trinity begins working within us. The sign of the Cross well made, with the heart, has the power of exorcism! It reminds the enemy how and by whom he has been defeated forever: Jesus on the Cross. One of my assistants was converted just by making the sign of the Cross one day. In one moment, she believed in God and started changing her life. For her, it was like an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

- *Every day, at home, read some verses from the Bible, especially the text of the daily Mass, even if you went to daily Mass. Pick up one word that strikes you the most, repeat it, chew on it, ponder it, be nurtured by it throughout the day. Then share it with your family or friends or neighbours, helping others to learn from the Word of God, which is light unto our steps.*

On April 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross. After the apparition, she shared the following message from Our Lady: "Dear Children, apostles of my love, it is up to you to spread the love of my Son to all those who have not come to know it; you, the little lights of the world, whom I am teaching with motherly love to shine clearly with full brilliance. Prayer will help you, because prayer saves you, prayer saves the world. Therefore, my children pray with words, feelings, merciful love and sacrifice. My Son has shown you the way - He who became incarnate and made of me the first chalice, with His exalted sacrifice He has shown you how you

need to love. Therefore, my children do not be afraid to speak the truth. Do not be afraid to change yourself and the world by spreading love, by doing everything for my Son to be known and loved by loving others in Him. As a mother I am always with you. I am imploring of my Son to help you for love to reign in your life - love that lives, love that draws, love which gives life. I am teaching you such love - pure love. It is up to you, my apostles, to recognize it, live it and spread it. Pray with feeling for your shepherds so that they can witness my Son with love. Thank you."

Medjugorje in a state of shock:

Wednesday March 29th was a historic day for Medjugorje! For the first time in nearly 36 years of apparitions, a special papal envoy officially entered the parish church of Medjugorje. Msgr Hoser very quickly turned out to be a friend, a real friend. On Saturday April 1, 2017, he celebrated the international evening mass in the presence of a large crowd. Seeing him walk in the procession to the altar, wearing his Archbishop's miter, we thought: "This is Rome coming to Medjugorje!"

At first, we were wondering what he would say about Medjugorje in his homily. We were inspired and amazed by his words. They were those of His words were those of a pastor, a down to earth man with a kind-hearted spirit who, above all, is seeking the good of souls and does not hesitate to impart the truth of the Gospel. His homily, as well as the press conference he gave to journalists the next day, was filled with peace. Best of all, his joy at being with us was palpable. He exceeded our expectations! In fact, Mgr. Hoser encouraged us! Here are some of the things he said: "This worship, which is so intense here, is extremely important and necessary for the whole world... Let us pray for peace, because today the forces of destruction are enormous... We need an intervention from Heaven, and that is what the presence of the Blessed Virgin is! It is an initiative of God. And so I would like to encourage and comfort you as a special envoy of the Pope!" (This sentence triggered a round of applause. Many were overcome with emotion and crying with joy (so was I!). You can listen to his homily in English here: http://marytv.tv/?page_id=1647 Listen to his homily in French at: www.enfantsdemedjugorje.fr.)

These words are significant for an official envoy of the Pope! We are filled with immense joy. On Sunday, April 2nd, he privately visited my community of the Beatitudes, with the pastor, Fra Marinko Sakota. To the journalists, he said: "Tell the whole world that in Medjugorje we find light! I wish you the possibility of registering for a seminar here, to discover what you do not yet suspect."

Fatima, preparation at Medjugorje!

On the 13th of May, we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first apparition of Mary at Fatima, so we have a whole month to make this event a real celebration! But how?

First, by re-reading the messages given by the Mother of God to the 3 visionaries. This is a must if you want to be educated by Our Lady. Indeed, these apparitions are a divine initiative of prime importance, putting a special light on the final outcome of our struggle and filling us with hope. "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!" she said to the little shepherds Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, on July 13, 1917. What a wonderful prophecy!

To make the celebration complete, we can re-consecrate ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and take into account each of her requests which, if we had followed them earlier, would have saved us millions of deaths and many other troubles.

What is the connection with Medjugorje? According to Saint Jean-Paul II, "Medjugorje is the continuation and realization of Fatima." (See PS2). The 6 apparitions at Fatima gave the world a program to follow to end World War I, and to finally achieve a true time of peace for the world, an issue that is more relevant than ever today.

In Medjugorje, not only did Our Lady repeat the same requests to achieve peace (praying the Rosary, penance, consecration, etc.) but she also offered something exceptional: to train us daily over the years to make of us "Apostles of her love". In short, we can say that Medjugorje is the instruction manual for Fatima. Let us rejoice: the Queen of Peace is counting on each of us to help her carry out her plan, as she so often expressed it!

Here is a small personal testimony: in 1989, during my 2nd pilgrimage to Medjugorje, I was struck by a message: "Dear children, each of you is important to me, I need you! Without you I cannot help the world." I was deeply moved! I knew that we needed her, but I never thought she could need us. So I immediately replied: "Mother, here I am, if you need me!" As a result, she quickly hired me and it isn't over!

This very urgent appeal is addressed to all her children and to each one in particular, with no exception. Whether you are bed-ridden in a hospital or healthy, old or young, rich or poor, married or single, the Gospa hopes that we will say Yes with our whole being to make us her instruments, and better yet: her Apostles. Do not hesitate, because no one has ever regretted giving himself or herself unreservedly to Mary! With this Crown of Yes-ses, the deep desire of Mary, announced at Fatima, will be greatly hastened: the triumph of her Immaculate Heart over the darkness that surrounds us.

On May 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross in the midst of a big crowd. After the apparition, she shared the following message from Our Lady: "Dear Children, I am calling you to pray, not to ask for but to offer sacrifice - sacrificing yourselves. I am calling you to reveal the truth and merciful love. I am

praying to my Son for you, for your faith which is all the more diminishing in your hearts. I am imploring Him to help you with the divine spirit, as I also desire to help you with my motherly spirit. My children, you must be better. Only those who are pure, humble and filled with love sustain the world - they are saving themselves and the world. My children, my Son is the heart of the world. He should be loved and prayed to, and not always betrayed anew. Therefore, you, apostles of my love, spread the faith in the hearts of people by your example, your prayer and merciful love. I am beside you, I will help you. Pray for your shepherds to have all the more light, so as to be able to illuminate all those who live in darkness. Thank you."

Long life the Queen of the Rosary: It is so sad today to see that some religious communities have to close down because of the lack of vocations coming to its doors! Is there a solution to avoid such a catastrophic situation?

Let me give you an example of one that I just learned about while on mission in Israel. It happened in 1984 in Quito, Ecuador.

A Carmelite Convent named "Carmen Alto" was very poor, and was languishing because of a lack of vocations. All the sisters were old, and the novitiate had been closed for quite a long time. For many years there had not been a single vocation on the horizon! The Prioress, Mother Maria Helena Del Corazón de Jesus, heard about Medjugorje and began to hope again.

One day, an Italian nun of the Dorothea Community, Sister Luicela, visited "Carmen Alto" and mentioned to the Prioress that she was going to Medjugorje with a group of pilgrims. Mother Maria Helena seized the opportunity, and begged Sister Luicela to pray for vocations to their Carmel while she was there. (She was hoping that Sr. Luicela could speak to one of the visionaries and pass the intention on to the Blessed Mother. She heard that you could write letters to Mary and receive an answer from her in your heart during prayer, and that sometimes Mary even answered questions.) So the Carmelite Prioress entrusted a letter to Sr. Luicela with her intention. Such a problem was not new for Sister Luicela because the Dorothea Order also lacked vocations. She gladly accepted the job. Unfortunately, Sister Luicela was not able to meet with a visionary while in Medjugorje, but she was able to be present during an apparition. When the visionaries shared what the Gospa had said during the apparition, the Sister was amazed! In fact, Our Lady had answered her request before she even expressed it! This is the message Our Lady gave that day: "I will take care myself of the communities that will pray together the full Rosary (all 3 parts) every day for the intentions of my Immaculate Heart, and I will choose their vocations."

When Sr. Luicela returned to Quito, she delivered the message to the Prioress of the Carmel, who felt in the depths of her heart that this message was for her. At first, she was wondering what Our Lady meant by "the intentions of my Immaculate Heart," but then she realized: "It is clear! The intentions of the Blessed Mother are those of God! During the next community chapter meeting, the Prioress suggested to the sisters that they pray the 3 parts of the Rosary together every day. They gladly welcomed Mary's request. They changed their daily schedule in order to introduce this new feature, and they also prayed the Rosary while they worked. This initiated a period of great Marian fervour in the Carmel.

A few months later, the first vocation arrived, Sr. Maria de Los Angeles, followed by other vocations. So many postulants entered the monastery that the Prioress had to found another Carmel, the Carmel of Santo Domingo in Ecuador, 18 years ago.

As a rule, when a Carmelite Convent reaches a number of sisters greater than 21, they had to found another Carmel. This time in Panama. It goes without saying that in these new Carmelite communities, the tradition of praying daily the 3 parts of the Rosary together remained alive!

During my recent mission in Galilee, the young Carmelite sister who told me this story in Haifa said to me: "I am a fruit of this message and of these rosaries, because I joined the Carmel of Santo Domingo!"

A few years ago, Mother Maria Helena visited a monastery of Poor Clares. After hearing this testimony, the sisters decided to adopt this prayer as well, following Mary's message in order to obtain vocations. Needless to say that a little while later, new vocations of the Poor Clares started coming in!

This gives us a better understanding of why Our Lady so often says to us "Dear children, I invite you to live my messages!" Today, the issues of the Church and of the world are immense. Not a single path to victory is to be neglected! May this key given by Mary Queen of the Rosary inspire many of her children who are today burdened with problems and losing courage! Mary would never fail in her promises!

Blessed Francisco and Jacinta of Fatima will be canonized on May 13th at Fatima.

Blessed Jacinta and Francisco will be canonized at Fatima on May 13th. There will be great graces associated with this canonization, combined with the Centenary of Mary's apparitions to the 3 little shepherds. They were very innocent and enthusiastically willing to do everything the Virgin asked. Here is an example:

The Blessed Virgin told them to pray for "La Russia". She insisted to such a degree that the children believed that "La Russia" was a very great person who was a sinner doing many evil things. And so they prayed and made sacrifices for her. Only well after the apparitions did they find out that La Russia was a big country and not a

woman! Let us pray to Francisco and Jacinta to protect the innocence of children who are being so severely abused in our day! In order to welcome the graces of this Centenary and not let them go to waste, take some time to read and meditate on the beautiful messages that Mary gave at Fatima, and reaffirmed in Medjugorje. If they had been followed, it would have saved millions of lives in World War II, (not to mention many other disasters)! She said:

"Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war."

"Jesus wishes to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart in the world."

"Pray, pray very much and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls are going to hell because there is no one to sacrifice themselves or pray for them."

"When the time comes to say it, do not hide. Tell everyone -

+That God grants us His graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary;

+That we should ask her for them;

+That the Heart of Jesus wants us to venerate with Him the Immaculate Heart of Mary;

+And that we should ask the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace because God entrusted it to her.

"Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He might send you? For this would be an act of reparation for the sins that offend Him and also a plea for the conversion of sinners. "

"Oh," said one of the visionaries. "If only I could spread in everyone's heart the fire burning within me that makes me love the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary so much!"

Sister Emmanuel

Tailor-Made Medjugorje Pilgrimages

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“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

— Mother Teresa, A Simple Path: Mother Teresa

2017 Eucharistic Convention Features

'Alarming' Eucharistic Convention Ticks all the Spiritual Boxes!

The Holy Spirit's presence has always been very tangible at the Eucharistic Convention, but this year marked the first time it ever set off alarms.

On Sunday, just after Mariatu Kamara spoke, and just before Rosanne Romero took to the stage, the fire alarm went off, sending convention-goers scurrying into the car park.

But after a quick check by firemen, it was back to spiritual business as usual, and the 24th annual convention went from strength to strength – with brilliant speakers, beautiful Masses, inspiring music, and a spirit-filled ending provided by young people from the Mother of Divine Mercy Refuge.

"This was one of the hardest conventions to put together, by a long shot, but comments from convention-goers, and the speakers themselves, were all positive, setting the stage for next year's Convention XXV, which will be an absolute cracker," said Organiser John Porteous.

In past years, one speaker frequently proved to be the crowd favourite, but that was not the case this year. Each speaker brought something very personal, and much appreciated, to the event.

Great courage was a hallmark of speakers in 2017r, but perhaps that shown by **Rosanne Romero** should be mentioned first.

Living with Multiple Sclerosis for 31 years has taken a great toll on the Filipina, who has to use a cane or mobility scooter to get around. Her beauty and spirit keep observers from grasping the chronic pain and difficulty that she deals with every day. She courageously shared what it's like to live with MS, including very personal details, like MS robs a person of muscle control, even that of their sphincter muscle.

Imagine, flying halfway around the world, and then, propped up against the lectern so you can stand, presenting to 800 strangers while knowing that you could have a humiliating accident at any moment. Rosanne explained that MS had robbed her of much in life, but she is certain that it is a gift from God. "I used to say that nothing phases me, but this... It is not because God is mean. He did not give me MS to humiliate me, but that I could more resemble Him in His humility. Even though some people say, 'oh, you don't look so bad', they don't know. It is the mighty hand of God that sustains me."

That and the unwavering support of her husband, Omy, who always seems to offer exactly the right Scripture at the right time to get her and her family – "because we all suffer from MS" – through the toughest times.

The couple are steeped in Scripture, and the Lord has used key scriptures to guide and advise them over the years. Before Rosanne was diagnosed with MS, she and Omy were both give Scriptures that foretold their future battle.

She was given Isaiah 48:21: "And they thirsted not when He led them through the desert." Omy was given Hosea 2:14: "So I am going to bring her into the wilderness and there in her heart I will speak." "Desert and wilderness -- we grew certain that God was preparing us for a time of difficulty," Rosanne wrote in her book, *Amusing Grace*.

The Filipino community was thrilled that Rosanne and Omy were at the convention, and provided them with wonderful hospitality. Who knows, maybe Rosanne's third *Amusing Grace* book will feature inspirational stories about New Zealand!



In some ways, **Mariatu Kamara** had the most difficult job at the convention. Everyone already knew her story – as a 12 year old in Sierra Leone, her hands were savagely hacked off with machetes by child rebel soldiers, high on drugs and anger.

But Mariatu added painful, personal details in her talks, both on Saturday night at the fund-raising dinner, and on Sunday afternoon.

The year before rebel soldiers cut off her hands, she was raped and impregnated in her village. The next year, during the raid, many friends and family members were killed before her eyes, including the man who had raped her.

She has no earthly explanation for why she didn't bleed to death after the attack, as she received no help or medical care for the first 24 hours. She fell asleep in the jungle, then walked and walked to another village where she met a man who gave her a mango (hence the name of

her best-selling book, *The Bite of the Mango*).

Countless amputees like herself were placed in a special camp. Even so, she had to beg to sustain herself and her baby boy, Abdul, who, sadly, died at 10 months of age from malnutrition.

Mariatu was sponsored to Canada in 2002 by a Sierra Leonean family. This arrangement did not work out, but things gelled with a second family. Mariatu went to school for the first time at 15 – with no hands and no English! Very slowly, things got better, especially after she published her book in 2008.

She has studied at university to be a social worker and served as Unicef's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflicts, speaking to groups around the world about her experiences and the horrific effects war has on children.

Now, at age 30, and the mum of a five year old daughter, Mariatu says she has no hatred in her heart for the child soldiers who cut off her hands. She knows they are victims, too. But her forgiveness has taken years, and there is still a bit more to do, she admits. But it is in forgiveness that she has found laughter and joy, and the ability to tell her incredible story. She has also created a Foundation that is focussed on providing support to amputees in Sierra Leone. (Some copies of her books are still available (email John Porteous on ec_action@hotmail.com).

Dr Inge Auerbacher was even younger than Mariatu when her nightmare began and her lovely world in Germany was turned upside down by the Nazis.

She recalled how Jews were increasingly ostracised and publically humiliated, being forced to wear their yellow Star and prevented from working or even finding food. Inge remembers one kind German lady on a train as "one of my angels", giving her a large bag of bread, but sadly, she said most Germans just turned their heads the other way.

On November 10, 1938, her father – a decorated and disabled German war veteran – and her grandfather were arrested during the chaos of Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) and sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Although they were soon released, nothing was ever the same, and her grandfather soon died of a heart attack.

Inge spent three years, from age 7-10, in the horrific Terezin (Theresienstadt) concentration camp with her family. No child should have to see what she saw. Sadly, she remembers how the Red Cross were duped by the Nazis, who had put on a display of a few well-fed children to cover up the real horrors of the camp. It's believed that 88,000 people in the camp were sent primarily to the gas chambers in Auschwitz, and 35,000 died of malnutrition and disease. Just 1% of the 15,000 children in the camp survived.

The Red Army rescued Inge's family on May 8, 1945, and they immigrated to New York City in May 1946. Seven years later, she obtained US citizenship. She graduated from Queens College and spent 38 years working as a chemist.

At the convention, she showed people her yellow star, and offered copies of her book *I am a Star: Child of the Holocaust* to ensure that her story – and that of the 6 million Jews murdered by Nazis – is never lost to history.

Father Douglas Al-Bazi's presentation to the convention includes a documentary entitled, "Marked", and a short but powerful

The documentary captured the horrors of the persecution of Iraqi Chaldean Catholics by Islamic fundamentalists. Surprisingly, Father's comments in the doco stressed that there was nothing new about Christian persecution in Iraq, as it had been going on for millennia. In fact, he said the Christian church in Iraq had for centuries been called "the Church of Martyrs".

The USA's 2003 invasion of Iraq made the persecution exponentially worse. In 2010, there was a major suicide bombing "to send you Christians incomprehensible 120,000 Christians were families forced to flee with only the clothes on their backs. His parish was tasked with caring for 80,000 refugees!

Father Douglas, who was kidnapped and brutally tortured by Isis for three days, pulled no punches in his comments about Islam. He said there certainly were good people who were Muslims, but no one in their



talk.

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of Iraq made the persecution exponentially a major suicide bombing "to send you Christians incomprehensible 120,000 Christians were families forced to flee with only the clothes on tasked with caring for 80,000 refugees!

was kidnapped and brutally tortured by Isis for punches in his comments about Islam. He said people who were Muslims, but no one in their

right mind could look at the evil done in the name of Islam and ever believe it was a “religion of peace.”

“Wake up. Islam is not nice. They are just pretending to be,” he said. “My nose is broken in six places. And I still have a bullet in my head. This is what they did.”

Father quoted Scripture to help explain the atrocities, in particular John 16:2: “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.”

It's not often that a singer comes to the Convention and spends her Saturday session talking instead of singing, but that's exactly what **Alanna Boudreau** did. And because she's such an interesting young lady, it worked well and made her Sunday musical set all the more appreciated.

Being home-schooled and raised in an artistic home in the countryside, where there was “room to be bored”, created a sensitive child who had an “existential awakening” at age 6 and realised that her heart was seeking God.

But somewhere along the line, she came to believe that she had to be perfect to be loved; that she could never fail. Pensive as a child, she thought a lot, cried in joy, and was overwhelmed by beauty. When her Dad took her to the symphony, she found herself speechless, “overwhelmed by the nobility of the human person.” For years she was “cripplingly shy”. But in music, she found “what I was made to do.”



The music she shared – just her guitar and her remarkable voice -- was as unique as her soul. Her Sunday morning set, “Songs for Prayer”, was so successful that, after initial applause, the huge auditorium became still and at peace. When she softly sang “Give Me Jesus,” more than a few people got prayerful goosebumps.

On Sunday afternoon, the Mother of Divine Mercy Refuge Choir provided a deeply moving Divine Mercy segment. The choir also provided lovely music in Masses, and the group offered a powerful singing and dancing ending to the weekend retreat.



As has been the tradition, **Bishop Patrick Dunn** served as Homilist/Celebrant at the opening Friday night Mass. **Father Neil Vaney**, who is now part-time Chaplain at Catholic Enquiry Centre, celebrated the Saturday Mass. And **Father Paul Glynn, SM**, who once again flew from Aussie, spent the entire convention hearing confessions, and also celebrated the closing Mass on Sunday.

FLI's **Michelle Kaufman** provided an update on what's happening on the pro-life front, including worrying trends in the school system. And **Christine Bell** advised that St Philomena House is ready to open “for men who are not thriving”, and they are in need of “everything

and anything.” Anyone who can help the community can contact Christine on 021 234 4765 or email her on contact@stphilomenahouse.co.nz.

Brendan and Elly Roberts gave a talk “Worth the Chase: Finding Love God's Way” (which is also the title of their book). And **Loren O'Sullivan**, Director of NPH New Zealand (Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos ... Spanish for "Our Little Brothers and Sisters,") was kind enough to serve as MC for this year's event.

Already confirmed for the Eucharistic Convention XXV (6-8 April 2018) are New Orleans' Fr Tony Ricard, a dynamic preacher who wowed us in 2014, and Brooklyn born Catholic rapper Rabelz, with much, much more to come! The most up-to-date information about the Eucharistic Convention is available at the website – auckland.eucharist.nz – and on Facebook at Eucharistic Convention – Auckland NZ). **Bill Moore, Convention PR**

The Heart of the Eucharistic Convention, and the Main Fruits

By John Porteous

Having just concluded our 24th annual Eucharistic Convention, the entire journey can be summed up in the contribution that one man made this year, that person being Father Paul Glynn, SM, from Australia. "Pope Francis said we priests need to make ourselves available to hear confessions" said Father Paul, "I know you need priests, so I am happy to make myself available to help you in whatever way I can".



For the past two years, Father Paul came from Australia so he could hear confessions at the convention over the entire weekend. I know he was exhausted after such a mission; such is the generosity of the man. Following the convention, he sent these comments to us in an email: "Once again, a

hall-full of enthusiastic Catholics. Oh, McKain, you've done it again. I was very impressed by the sincerity and openness of the many who came for Reconciliation, and by the energy and helpfulness of the volunteer helpers and the Knights. I have received so much from the beautiful conventions I've attended, and thank you for inviting me in the past," said Fr Paul.

Our late spiritual director Monsignor Paul Cronin summed up the convention citing the number of confessions that he heard and the obvious converting action of the Holy Spirit that was evident at the event as the prime fruit of the Eucharistic Convention.

While we celebrate many and varied individual devotions over the weekend, including Our Lady of Guadalupe, Divine Mercy, Legion of Mary and others, the central focus of the convention is Eucharistic. We are reliant on our good priests to make themselves available as and when they can so we are able to do justice to the Eucharistic element of the weekend. This year we had the privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the vesting room where attendees could take time out for quiet prayer and reflection. Many took advantage of this.

As Bishop Denis Brown advised back in 1994 when he gave his blessing for us to organise these events, "concentrate on the Eucharist and you can't go wrong". This is a truism that had held us in good stead over the past 24 years and will sustain us into the future.

We look forward to our 25th anniversary event over the weekend 6th to 8th April 2018 with all the hope of the previous 24 years and more besides.

(John Porteous is the Organiser of the Eucharistic Convention)



Special Pilgrimages for 2017



THE CENTENNIAL OF THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA 29 April 2017 (21 days)

Visit Barcelona (Gaudi's La Sagrada Famiglia), Montserrat (Black Madonna), Zaragoza (Our Lady of the Pilar), Lourdes, Garabandal, Santiago de Compostela (St. James), Fatima (for the feast of Our Lady of Fatima 13 May), Lisbon and other interesting sights.

Cost per person, share twin [Ex Australia]: AUD \$7,890.00*

Chaplain: Fr. Aurelio Fragapane

FULLY BOOKED!

PILGRIMAGE TO THE SACRED SHRINES OF ITALY 08 September 2017 (22 days)

Visit Milan, Venice, Padua (St Anthony), Florence, Siena (St Catherine), Assisi (Sts Francis and Clare), Loreto (Holy House), Lanciaio (Miracle of the Eucharist), San Giovanni Rotondo (St Padre Pio), Monte Sant'Angelo (St Michael) and Rome in this very special spiritual journey.

Cost per person, share twin: AUD \$7,965.00*

Chaplain: Fr Nicholas Dillon PP, St Philip's Parish, North Blackburn Victoria

HOLY LAND AND JORDAN PILGRIMAGE 09 October 2017 (15 days)

Please come and join us on this extremely special Spiritual Journey and walk in the footsteps of our dear Lord in the Holy Land, and also visit Petra and Amman in Jordan.

Cost per person, share twin: AUD \$5,650.00*

Chaplain: Very Rev Fr. Anthony Shallue, Administrator, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo, Vic.

ALL SAINTS & ALL SOULS PILGRIMAGE 29 October 2017 (12 days)

Join us on this very special pilgrimage staying in Medjugorje for 8 nights and celebrating the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls. We fly into and out of Zagreb, Croatia and stay for one night in Šibenik on the beautiful Dalmatian Coast en route to Medjugorje and then one night in another beautiful Coastal town, Zadar on our return to Zagreb to fly home.

Cost per person, share twin: AUD \$3,330.00*

Ex Auckland: AUD \$3,695.00

Chaplain: Fr. Peter Ferwerda, Parish Priest, St Mary's Parish, Heathcote, VIC

* Airline/airport taxes & fuel surcharges are included in costs. Note that all costs are ex Australia and are current but are subject to change at the discretion of the airlines and/or operators and due to currency fluctuations.

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The Gift of Faith

YOUR TASKS AS A CATHOLIC

Your tasks as a Catholic, no matter what your age, are three:

Know your Catholic faith.

You cannot live your faith if you do not know it, and you cannot share with others what you do not first make your own (CCC 429). Learning your Catholic faith takes some effort, but it is effort well spent because the study is, quite literally, infinitely rewarding.

Live your Catholic faith.

Your Catholic faith is a public thing. It is not meant to be left behind when you leave home (CCC 2472). But be forewarned: Being a public Catholic involves risk and loss. You will find some doors closed to you. You will lose some friends. You will be considered an outsider. But, as a consolation, remember our Lord's words to the persecuted: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matt. 5:12).

Spread your Catholic faith.

Jesus Christ wants us to bring the whole world into captivity to the truth, and the truth is Jesus himself, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Spreading the faith is a task not only for bishops, priests, and religious—it is a task for all Catholics (CCC 905).

Just before his Ascension, our Lord told his apostles, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20).

If we want to observe all that Jesus commanded, if we want to believe all he taught, we must follow him through his Church. This is our great challenge—and our great privilege.

(Taken from: Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth Catholic Answers).

Since the last magazine, I have had a desire to learn more about my faith, mainly because I get challenged about my beliefs and I don't know what to answer. I get challenged about my love of Mary and the Rosary, and also can't quite come to grips with Sacred Traditions and customs and disciplines. Then I found in Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth, Catholic Answers. What a revelation.

(Taken from Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth)

HOW GOD SPEAKS TO US

As from the first, God speaks to his Church through the Bible and through sacred Tradition. To make sure we understand him, he guides the Church's teaching authority—the magisterium—so it always interprets the Bible and Tradition accurately. This is the gift of infallibility.

Like the three legs on a stool, the Bible, Tradition, and the magisterium are all necessary for the stability of the Church and to guarantee sound doctrine.

Sacred Tradition (CCC 75–83)

Sacred Tradition should not be confused with mere traditions of men, which are more commonly called customs or disciplines. Jesus sometimes condemned customs or disciplines, but only if they were contrary to God's commands (Mark 7:8). He never condemned sacred Tradition, and he didn't even condemn all human tradition.

Sacred Tradition and the Bible are not different or competing revelations. They are two ways that the Church hands on the gospel. Apostolic teachings such as the Trinity, infant baptism, the inerrancy of the Bible, purgatory, and Mary's perpetual virginity have been most clearly taught through Tradition, although they are also implicitly present in (and not contrary to) the Bible. The Bible itself tells us to hold fast to Tradition, whether it comes to us in written or oral form (2 Thess. 2:15, 1 Cor. 11:2).

Sacred Tradition should not be confused with customs and disciplines, such as the rosary,

priestly celibacy, and not eating meat on Fridays in Lent. These are good and helpful things, but they are not doctrines. Sacred Tradition preserves doctrines first taught by Jesus to the apostles and later passed down to us through the apostles' successors, the bishops.

Scripture (CCC 101-141)

Scripture, by which we mean the Old and New Testaments, was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). The Holy Spirit guided the biblical authors to write what he wanted them to write. Since God is the principal author of the Bible, and since God is truth itself (John 14:6) and cannot teach anything untrue, the Bible is free from all error in everything it asserts to be true.

Some Christians claim, "The Bible is all I need," but this notion is not taught in the Bible itself. In fact, the Bible teaches the contrary idea (2 Pet. 1:20-21, 3:15-16). The "Bible alone" theory was not believed by anyone in the early Church.

It is new, having arisen only in the 1500s during the Protestant Reformation. The theory is a "tradition of men" that nullifies the Word of God, distorts the true role of the Bible, and undermines the authority of the Church Jesus established (Mark 7:1-8).

Although popular with many "Bible Christian" churches, the "Bible alone" theory simply does not work in practice. Historical experience disproves it. Each year we see additional splintering among "Bible-believing" religions.

Today there are tens of thousands of competing denominations, each insisting its interpretation of the Bible is the correct one. The resulting divisions have caused untold confusion among millions of sincere but misled Christians.

Just open up the Yellow Pages of your telephone book and see how many different denominations are listed, each claiming to go by the "Bible alone," but no two of them agreeing on exactly what the Bible means.

We know this for sure: The Holy Spirit cannot be the author of this confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). God cannot lead people to contradictory beliefs because his truth is one. The conclusion? The "Bible alone" theory must be false.

The Magisterium (CCC 85-87, 888-892)

Together the pope and the bishops form the teaching authority of the Church, which is called the magisterium (from the Latin for "teacher"). The magisterium, guided and protected from error by the Holy Spirit, gives us certainty in matters of doctrine. The Church is the custodian of the Bible and faithfully and accurately proclaims its message, a task which God has empowered it to do.

Keep in mind that the Church came before the New Testament, not the New Testament before the Church. Divinely-inspired members of the Church wrote the books of the New Testament, just as divinely-inspired writers had written the Old Testament, and the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit to guard and interpret the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments.

Such an official interpreter is absolutely necessary if we are to understand the Bible properly. (We all know what the Constitution says, but we still need a Supreme Court to interpret what it means.)

The magisterium is infallible when it teaches officially because Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles and their successors "into all truth" (John 16:12-13).

Pioneer

The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was founded by Fr James A. Callan S.J. in Dublin on 28 December 1898.

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My Medjugorje made my blue eyes finally shine

By Emily A.

I grew up in a good and loving Catholic family and from a very young age, I always just knew that God is love. However, when I was just ten years old, it felt as if all of my childhood joy and innocence was just harshly snatched away from me.

I lived and grew up with a sister who has cerebral palsy and autism. She would often scream and cry, lash out and make threats to hurt me. I didn't understand her behaviour and I felt frightened, hurt, rejected and confused. Around the same time that my sister's behaviour became increasingly complex, my grandmother suddenly walked out on my grandfather after fifty years of marriage because she no longer could tolerate living with his aggression. Even though I didn't understand then why she left my grandfather, I still noticed the very unpleasant and tangible feeling of angst that was slowly and insidiously spreading throughout my family.

Meanwhile, my father was in a car accident. He was driving home late one night when he simply just lost his concentration and collided with another vehicle. He was banned from driving for eighteen months and was to spend this time doing community service. He was told that he was actually very fortunate that he hadn't been sent to prison. This was just an innocent mistake and so as a child, I didn't understand his anger or shame but I did know that he was just no longer his usual self anymore.

But soon there were some things that I did grow to understand – the sharp pang of hunger, the warped mathematical world of calorie content, how to push your body to the absolute limit and what it feels like to hate yourself so much that when you go to bed at night, you hope that you won't wake up again in the morning.

During this time, my teenage brother went on a diet and I soon started to become absolutely fascinated by food, health, exercise and weight loss. Whilst I couldn't control what was happening all around me in my life, I could however control what I ate, how much I compulsively exercised and how desperately thin I became.

Just before my eleventh birthday, I was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and was hospitalised for eight weeks. For nine months, I was fed completely through a tube and I allowed no physical food or drink to pass my lips – not even a single crumb or a simple sip of water. However, I would always receive the Holy Eucharist because I just had an innate understanding that this was much more than physical food. It was and it is truly and fully Jesus, and He was giving me everything that I needed to persevere and to live. He was giving me His love, His strength and His life when I felt completely worthless, weak and physically and emotionally dead.

I remember that when I would often feel frightened, confused and alone during the long nights in the hospital, I would just tightly hold onto my Rosary beads for comfort. It felt as if Our Lady was somehow gently holding onto my hand and that She was answering my prayers when I didn't even know what to say to Her.

A few months later, my grandmother went on her first of many pilgrimages to Medjugorje in Bosnia and Hercegovina where she prayed very much for me. She asked her fellow pilgrims to pray for me too and she put my name in the prayer intention pages of the Medjugorje newsletter that she would receive back home each month.

In the years ahead, I frequently relapsed into brief spells of sudden weight loss and when I was sixteen, I relapsed so seriously that the Head Child Psychiatrist at my local hospital told me that if I continued living as I was, I would be dead within six months because my heart would just stop beating.

Around this time, I decided that I would just give up on Jesus. I now rejected the love and the strength that He wanted so much to pour into me and instead this time I blamed Him for all of my suffering. I went on to try and find joy in superficial things but I was never able to feel fulfilled.

When I was nineteen years old, I was discharged from the mental health services because I had finally fully recovered from anorexia. I then gained a place on a very prestigious college course away from home and now believed that the future was to finally hold true happiness, new exciting friendships and much career success for me. However, at college I soon became surrounded by sexual immorality, bullying, backstabbing and alcohol abuse, and I quickly felt rejected by my classmates simply because I did not want to partake in this lifestyle with them.

Receiving a Mass card one morning at college from my grandmother who had again returned from Medjugorje and uncontrollably crying at a Mass that I actually reluctantly attended with my mother when she came to visit me there, now shows me God's gentle presence in my life at this time and how much love He had for me because even when I didn't know He was close or honestly didn't even want Him to be close to me, He always undoubtedly was.

I shortly after left college feeling a failure and when I returned home I soon fell into a deep depression. For several months, I flitted between many unfulfilling jobs and sometimes would choose to spend days lying in bed and weeks without even leaving the house.

I became so consumed by my own selfish misery that I didn't even go to Mass with my family on Christmas Day. However, at Easter time I found myself reluctantly at the Good Friday service. My mother was taking my sister there and the only reason that I went along too was because if I hadn't, it would have upset my sister, which was something that I always wanted to avoid.

But it was when I looked at the outstretched arms of our loving Saviour on the Cross – the Saviour who had been humiliated, beaten, spat at, screamed at, utterly despised and brutally nailed to a wooden Cross for our sake – that I realised just how far I had drifted away from God. Jesus gave us everything on the Cross and now it was as if He was giving me even more than everything by calling me back to Him and He still continues to give us everything that He is every single day in the Eucharist. The next morning, I made the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time in three years.

Over the next few months, I started to go to Mass again, but sometimes I unfortunately would still lethargically slip into my old ways of misery and self-pity and would skip the Sunday service.

At the beginning of June that year, I spent a weekend with my seventy nine year old grandmother, shortly before her imminent twenty-second pilgrimage to Medjugorje. We had such a beautiful weekend together and I went home feeling the happiest I'd felt in a long time, but then just two days later my grandmother died very suddenly as her heart just stopped and she collapsed.

My mother then felt that it was very fitting for her to take my grandmother's place and to go to Medjugorje on the pilgrimage that she was due to take just two weeks later, but only if I went along with her too. I honestly never wanted to go to Medjugorje this first time but on the morning we departed, all of my apprehension and reluctance just disappeared.

The overwhelming feeling that I experienced in Medjugorje was peace. For the first time in my whole life, I felt as if I now truly belonged to something incredibly special which I now know is the body of Christ. Not much sooner than I returned home to Wales did I feel a gentle tug in my heart to return to Medjugorje and so within just seven weeks I found myself there again having what then was the best week of my life so far.

On returning home again, my life changed completely. My heart now yearned for the daily Eucharist, I took my Rosary with me and prayed it wherever I went and I had a desire within me to pray and read the Bible each day, to fast twice a week and to go to Confessional regularly. My life was no longer about what I wanted but about what Jesus wanted of me. I started loving and serving Him in the homeless, in those addicted to drugs and alcohol and in those who were in prison. I started fundraising for charity, street evangelising and spending more time in Adoration and I went on several different Catholic retreats throughout the U.K. I just felt as if I couldn't get enough of God!

One year later, I returned to Medjugorje for two months just before I turned twenty one and at that time those two months were the best two months of my life thus far.

In Medjugorje, I learned how to love others and how to express this love openly and without reserve and without the fear of rejection. My eyes were finally opened so that I could see and accept the love that God, everyone around me and everyone back home had for me. I was now able to finally love myself for who I was for the first time in my life since I was just nine years old. I also learnt how to forgive all those who had ever hurt me and to finally forgive myself.

I would thus describe my time in Medjugorje as this. Never before in my whole life have I ever been so completely open to the will of God and to whatever He wanted to do in my life. I felt as if my heart had been opened for one reason only – to be filled completely with the love of Christ. I knew exactly when it was the right time to step down from the mountain and to go home because I felt so excited about sharing all of this love that I had been given with everyone back home. I often felt that otherwise I was just going to completely explode with all of this immense love, joy and peace within me which thus draws me to the beautiful words of Jesus Himself in John 15:11 when He says "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Thank you Jesus.

Medjugorje WebSite www.medjugorje.WS

“All the good works in the world are not equal to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because they are the works of men; but the Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison for it is but the sacrifice of man to God; but the Mass is the sacrifice of God for man.”

St John Vianney quotes

Featured article from May's Spirit of Medjugorje God's Language of Love

By Dianne Yochim

Recently someone gave me several audiotapes from Medjugorje conferences held in the U.S. in the 1990s. Even though I had attended a couple of the conferences, I found it inspiring to listen once again to the stories of the various speakers. Some knew nothing about Medjugorje before they went, some didn't believe in the apparitions, and some were leading lives far from God. Nevertheless, through the intercession of Our Lady of Medjugorje, God had miraculously changed their lives forever. And now they were able to share their stories with hundreds of people at these conferences. Amazing!

One priest's experience particularly touched me. He unabashedly admitted he didn't want to go to Medjugorje. He refused to watch videos people had given him. He even burned a stack of Wayne Weible's newsletters he was supposed to hand out to his parishioners. But when some of his teenagers came back from Medjugorje, they wanted to go into the church after school and pray the Rosary. They also were sharing the message of Medjugorje with other teens. This disturbed him so much that he decided he needed to learn about this "cult" that was brainwashing his teenagers in faraway Yugoslavia. So he went.

The first evening his group attended a Croatian Mass. He went as a lay person, not as a priest. And since he didn't know Croatian, he sat outside the church on a bench, reading a book by Thomas Merton. He could hear the readings for the Mass as they were being piped outside on loudspeakers. He could also hear the priest when he began his homily. He found him to be so dynamic and sincere that he closed his book and began to listen to the Croatian homily. As he listened, he realized he was understanding every word of the entire length of the homily. He kept saying to himself, "This can't be happening." And then he realized this was what happened at Pentecost. With the gift of tongues, Peter spoke in Aramaic, and people from all different countries understood what he was saying in their own languages. Then it dawned on the priest what Medjugorje was about – people from all over the world coming to understand God's language of love.

This priest's story brought back memories of a similar experience I had in 1984 in Fatima, Portugal. My husband had surprised me with a trip there for our 10th anniversary. We went with Fr. Luke Zimmer, who had given missions at our parish church. We spent 12 days at the shrine in Fatima where Our Lady had appeared in 1917 to three small shepherd children: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. She appeared on the 13th day of each month from May through October [except in August when it was on the 19th] requesting them to pray the Rosary and offer sacrifices to end the war (World War I) and for the conversion of sinners. These small children fulfilled Our Lady's requests to a heroic degree. In fact, on March 23, 2017, Pope Francis approved the final miracle needed to canonize Francisco and Jacinta.

Millions of pilgrims come each year to pray at the Fatima shrine. On the 13th of each month, people from a different region in Portugal come to thank Our Lady for appearing in their country. But on May 13, people from the whole country of Portugal come, to honor Our Lady. Some walk 100 miles or more with just the clothes on their backs and carrying the food they will eat. As they enter Fatima, some fall to their knees and walk the rest of the way on their knees. The Army sets up huge tents for them, and some sleep in the open fields. My husband and I witnessed this. On May 13, 1984, a three-hour Mass was celebrated outside the Basilica. We found ourselves in the middle of a million people packed into the square. An elderly Portuguese couple standing behind us offered us their folding stools to sit on. Thinking of the many miles they must have traveled, we declined, but a friend who spoke Portuguese said we would insult them if we didn't accept their offer. It was an honor for them to share their seats with Americans. Humbly we thanked them and sat down. I will always remember their gracious smiles.

At Communion time, I wondered if there would be enough Sacred Hosts for that many people. There was! In later years, I came to learn that all year the Portuguese bring sacks of grain to the shrine that they have grown themselves to be made into hosts just for this special Mass! After Communion, I joined in the songs of thanksgiving. To my amazement, I realized I was singing the tune and the words in Portuguese. How could this be coming out of my mouth when I didn't know the language or the songs? It seemed impossible, but it was happening. I felt such a love and oneness with those people! A million people and all were one in song and Spirit.

The next morning, I related all this to Fr. Luke. He told me that's what it is to be one in the Mystical Body of Christ. In God's eyes, we are all one in Christ – and not just with those at Mass, but with all the saints, the angels, the souls in Purgatory, the Church on earth, the entire body of Christ and family of God. No wonder the Mass is the most powerful prayer!

In 1990, my husband and I and our two children went on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje. While there, I was impressed again by the people coming together as one, to honor Our Lady. They were from different countries, speaking different languages. Nevertheless, they were one Body in Christ as they came to pray together as the children of the Mother of God and to be in Her holy presence. This was evident at the Masses, during the Rosaries, and on Mt. Podbrdo [Apparition Hill] and Mt. Krizevac [Cross Mountain].

I personally experienced this oneness with a complete stranger the day our pilgrim group climbed Mt. Krizevac. The mountain was steep. The climb was slow and arduous. The path was filled with large and small sharp rocks. One had to be careful not to slip and fall. I was having a bad day. I was not experiencing the peace and joy that everyone else seemed to have. I was hot, tired from not sleeping the night before, and frustrated. I couldn't seem to pray at all; I just couldn't get past the words, "Hail Mary." And yet, I heard several pilgrims saying, "I wish I could pray this easily back home." When we got to the top of the mountain, I had had it. My husband asked me if I wanted to say the family Rosary. I snapped at him, "No!" My son said he had already said several Rosaries that day. Really??? And I couldn't even say one Hail Mary! I finally sat down on a rock alone and cried. Eventually I decided to forget myself and talk to God about it. What did He want? My answer was "Penance." I felt He wanted me to take off my shoes and socks and walk down the mountain barefoot as a penance. My husband thought it was too dangerous. But I didn't think twice about it; I just knew I had to do it if it was what God wanted. The group of pilgrims went ahead down the mountain. I had to pick my way much more slowly because it seemed even more treacherous going down than it had been going up. I got about halfway down and I didn't think I could go any farther. Out of nowhere, a young woman appeared who was making her way slowly, wearing only socks on her feet. She sat down on a rock opposite me. She didn't speak English, but we communicated with each other by using our hands and by facial expressions. She confirmed that it was easier to go up the mountain in your bare feet or socks, but to come down was much more difficult. I wondered how often she had done it. I was ready to put my shoes on, but she persuaded me not to. She took my hand and started helping me descend once again. When I would stop, she would encourage me to continue on. We made it to the bottom of the mountain together. We smiled at one another and hugged. Then she walked away. I never knew her name or where she was from, but it didn't matter. She spoke God's language of love by her kindness to me. I knew I'd never see her again, but in the time we spent climbing down the mountain we were one in heart and Spirit

Thinking back on these experiences, I can only marvel at the power and goodness of God in bringing together people from all over the world to understand His language of love. May we all continue to strive ever more earnestly to be one in mind and heart and Spirit as we respond to Our Lady's call. For we are one Body in Christ. Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us. Our Lady of Medjugorje, pray for us.

Editor's note: Dianne lives in Erie, PA and is a faithful member of our mailing crew.

Featured article from September's Spirit of Medjugorje Miraculous Mary By Stephen Galdo

One Wednesday morning, on what I believe to be June 4th, I sat in my bed reading a book a friend had lent me called Padre Pio: A Man of Hope by Renzo Allegri. I definitely recommend this book to anyone; Pio is one of the most inspiring saints that ever walked the earth. I was reading that morning one of the miracles attributed to Pio that involved an agnostic man who was so sick he could barely walk. The man heard of Padre Pio and his miraculous healings and one day muttered out loud: "If you heal me, Padre Pio, I will go to San Giovanni Rotondo." San Giovanni Rotondo was the city where Padre Pio hailed and the monastery of the Capuchins was located. Almost instantly, the man was healed and, against his will, was forced to go to San Giovanni Rotondo. It was there that the formerly agnostic man had an intense conversion experience, coming to know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and becoming Catholic.

This story was so inspiring to me! I could feel the Holy Spirit stirring within me to ask for something big, just like this man who had no faith. At that time I was still fundraising with the Laboure Society so I could enter my first year (postulancy) with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal this fall. On my mind was the \$5000 I still needed to raise. How was the Lord going to do this? Instantly, I went to the Blessed Mother: "Blessed Mother, if you get me a \$5000 donation today, I will make a pilgrimage to Medjugorje."

The Spirit was strong within me that day. I knew my prayer was going to be answered! I waited until 2:30 p.m. to check my email, awaiting the good news. And yes, there it was! A couple I had previously met with had decided to donate a little over \$5000! Praise the living God! Is not our Mother miraculous?

Perhaps even more spectacular was the information I found out the next week from my mom. Turns out, an aunt on my mom's side had traveled to Medjugorje in the late '90s. While she was there, she prayed for me (I was 4 years old), and had a Franciscan priest bless a rosary for my mother. Is that not incredible? Tears flooded my eyes. Our Lady loves us so much! We need to approach Her humbly, but with total confidence in Her Son's power and Her intercession. So, next time you think your prayers do not matter for your family members, think again!

I'm not sure when I'm going to Medjugorje, but I'm excited to see what Mary has in store! Also, more exciting news – I

have been accepted by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal to enter formation this fall! Something you may be surprised to know is that many of the brothers received their calling, or had a conversion experience, in Medjugorje! I learned this last time I was with the brothers. Thank you all for your prayers, sacrifices, and support.

Editor's note: Stephen lives in Plum, PA. His vocation story is in our March, 2014 issue. Spirit of Medjugorje

The gift of faith

WE go where we are called. I am off to Portugal and Medjugorje late August, early September this year. The Lord and Our Lady have answered my prayers and I am off on my first pilgrimage to Fatima and Medjugorje. I am excited but trying to hold it in because it is still a few months away but yes I am going.

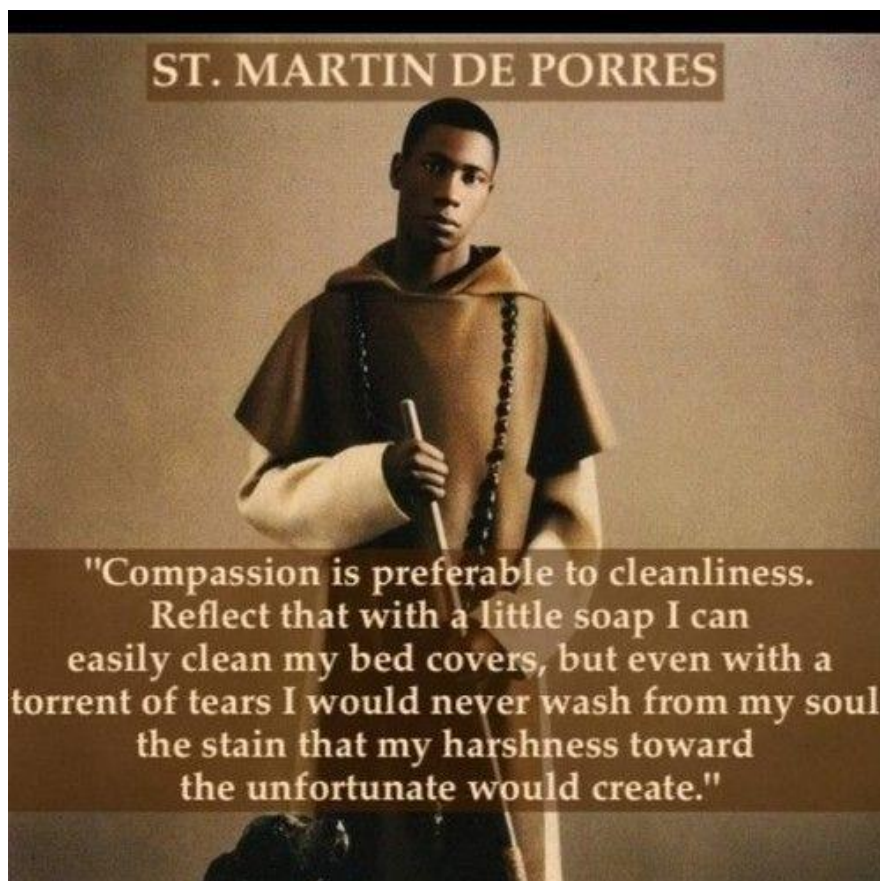
We go to Fatima for four nights and Medjugorje for 7 nights, an experience that many have undertaken. I will be keeping a diary so that I can give you all a moment by moment insight to my experiences, that is if I can stop floating, and hopefully I won't keep breaking down because of my joy at being there.

It has been an interesting few months since the last magazine, we have had births, deaths and marriages. Each one brings out different feelings, joy, sadness, excitement, loss, grief. The birth brings excitement for the young couple, the amazing experience of the birth of a child, the joy of when Noel and I had our children, and how quickly that time goes, although you feel so overwhelmed with the busyness of it all that sometimes you don't just enjoy the moment.

Marriage, the excitement for the young couple, that their commitment has gone beyond "just living together", and "What therefore God hath joined, Let not man put asunder". We have been to weddings, where one or other of the parents of the bride and groom have split and you can feel the tension. A time of coming together, is torn apart by all the emotional baggage, whether real or imagined. We live in a time of war, and satan is trying to destroy the family.

Death of a young man of cancer, 26 years old with a wife and two children, suffering for 18 months before his life has been taken away. At the funeral service, listening to the eulogies from friends and family, living the last few months together as Ben's life deteriorated and how it affected them. It was interesting how some could cope with visiting while others couldn't go and see him, they didn't know what to say and hadn't come to terms with death. And the other end, where you see someone at Mass on Sunday and they have died that afternoon. You don't know when or where.

What we do know is that we have to Live For The Lord, every moment, every day, to be closer to Him. To turn to him in prayer and all that we do. Many blessings. *Sarah Moran*



MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, OH LORD - Volume II

By Willy Vermeulen available for \$5.plus \$1.40 postage, 4/8 Elizabeth St, Tauranga 3110 or e-mail willyv@kinect.co.nz

Do you believe?

The Gospel confronts each one of us with the question: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" "Lord, I believe!" (Jn 9:35; 38), the man born blind joyfully exclaims, giving voice to all believers. The miracle of this healing is a sign that Christ wants not only to give us sight, but also open our interior vision, so that our faith may become ever deeper and we may recognize him as our only Savior. He illuminates all that is dark in life and leads men and women to live as "children of the light".

Pope Benedict

Questionnaire

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