

MEDJUGORJE NEWS

New Zealand

FREE

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Merry Christmas
And a
Happy
New
Year

Many blessings to you
and your family



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EDITOR: **Sarah Moran, Medjugorje News**
PO. Box 287
DARGAVILLE 0340 PHONE 09 439 6151
- Email: Sarah.medjugorjenews@gmail.com Web site: www.medjugorjenews-nz.org
FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/medjugorjenews nz>

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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 July, 2017

"Dear children!

Be prayer and a reflection of God's love for all those who are far from God and God's commandments. Little children, be faithful and determined in conversion and work on yourselves so that, for you, holiness of life may be truth; and encourage each other in the good through prayer, so that your life on earth may be more pleasant.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 August, 2017

"Dear children!

Today I am calling you to be people of prayer. Pray until prayer becomes a joy for you and a meeting with the Most High. He will transform your hearts and you will become people of love and peace. Do not forget, little children, that Satan is strong and wants to draw you away from prayer. You, do not forget that prayer is the secret key of meeting with God. That is why I am with you to lead you. Do not give up on prayer.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 September, 2017

"Dear children!

I am calling you to be generous in renunciation, fasting and prayer for all those who are in temptation, and are your brothers and sisters. In a special way I am imploring you to pray for priests and for all the consecrated, that they may love Jesus still more fervently; that the Holy Spirit may fill their hearts with joy; that they may witness Heaven and Heavenly mysteries. Many souls are in sin, because there are not those who sacrifice themselves and pray for their conversion. I am with you and am praying that your hearts may be filled with joy.

Thank you for having responded to my call."

25 October, 2017

"Dear children!

I am calling you to be prayer in this time of grace. You all have problems, afflictions, sufferings and lack of peace. May saints be models to you and an encouragement for holiness; God will be near you and you will be renewed in seeking through your personal conversion. Faith will be hope to you and joy will begin to reign in your hearts.

Thank you for having responded to my call."





From the Editor:

Dear Friends of Medjugorje News,

What an amazing pilgrimage I had and you can read all about it on pages 16 – 18. I am pleased to be home, there is no place like home.

However, we are facing a financial crisis, this could be the last issue of our magazine. We have been living off the smell of an oily rag, as they say, but unless we get some donations in soon, it is not going to be enough to keep us going. I leave it in Mary's hands, if Our Lady and Our Lord want the magazine to continue, you will hear the Holy Spirit talking to you.

Our daughter is due to have her baby on the 1st January, Mary Our mother of God's day, what a wonderful day to be expecting a child. A great reason to celebrate the year 2018, so with this in mind, I wish everyone a special and joy filled Christmas as well as a

wonderful 2018 year. May you be blessed with many graces and may everyone you meet remind you of and fill you with God's love.

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

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

“I love You, O my God, and my only desire is to love You until the last breath of my life. I love You, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving You, than live without loving You. I love You, Lord and the only grace I ask is to love You eternally....My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love You, I want my heart to repeat it to You as often as I draw breath.”

St. John Vianney

Excerpts from

Children of Medjugorje

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

On August 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross in the midst of a very large crowd of young people. After the apparition, she shared the following message from Our Lady:

"Dear children! Thank you for continuing to respond to my invitations and for gathering here around me, your heavenly mother. I know that you are thinking of me with love and hope. I, too, feel love for all of you, just as my most beloved Son also feels it: He who, through his merciful love, is always sending me to you anew; He who was man; He who was and is God - one and triune; He who suffered in body and soul for your sake; He who made Himself bread to feed your souls and thus to save them. My children, I am teaching you how to be worthy of His love, to direct your thoughts to Him, to live my Son.

Apostles of my love, I am covering you with my mantle, because as a mother I desire to protect you. I am imploring you to pray for the whole world. My heart is suffering. Sins are multiplying, they are too numerous. But with the help of those of you who are humble, modest, filled with love, hidden and holy, my heart will triumph. Love my Son above all and the whole world through Him. Never forget that each of your brothers, within himself, carries something precious - the soul. Therefore, my children, love all those who do not know my Son, so that through prayer and the love which comes through prayer, they may become better; that the goodness in them could win; that souls could be saved and have eternal life.

My apostles, my children, my Son told you to love one another. May this be inscribed in your hearts and with prayer, try to live that love. Thank you."

The horrible crime - Katia told me her story, and if I had not met her, I would never have believed the nightmare she went through.

When she met Claudio, her husband, he was a "good guy", although he had bouts of depression, with some ups and downs. But Katia didn't worry about it. He didn't want children (Katia didn't know that, in the eyes of the Church, this is a cause of nullity of marriage), but she wanted at least four. Claudio soon became very harsh and increasingly depressed, especially when their daughter was born. He loved her very much, and although he was never violent, he was very bossy with her. Katia saw her life become more and more restricted, limited by Claudio's depression and his authoritarianism. Furthermore, he blamed his wife for everything; she was the reason for anything that went wrong. He was taking medication to control his depression, but in vain.

In 2008, on her way home one day, Katia found her 7 year-old daughter stabbed with seven deadly wounds and Claudio lying dead in his own blood. Had he had a raptus - a pathological paroxysm giving vent to impulse, even violence? Only God knows! Here is what Katia said:

"To say that I was desperate is too weak a word. My life was broken forever; I thought I couldn't go on living. The pain was excruciating, impossible to bear. My gut was torn to shreds. I wanted to die. Only my faith in God prevented me from doing something terrible. Three days after the tragedy, a friend saw my daughter in a dream, in the arms of the Mother of God. That comforted me a great deal! Then, one morning, I opened my eyes and saw my daughter at the foot of my bed. She didn't talk to me, but she looked at me with great tenderness. Her eyes told me so much! I knew then that I had to choose to live, since my little one was with me. The fever immediately left me; I was able to stop taking medication and go back to work. But the pain remained and there was this resentment in me that blocked any possibility of serenity. It was like a stone that crushed my heart. I was angry at everyone.

The Krizevac effect - "I was able to go to Medjugorje last year, my heart full of hope, knowing that my daughter is happy with Jesus and Mary. On Mount Krizevac, the cross mountain, at the 4th station of the Cross where Jesus met his mother, my gaze was drawn to the brilliant reflection from a stone and I clearly saw in this reflection my little baby girl, smiling as always. I burst into tears. I sobbed for a very long time. When I pulled myself together, I found peace and serenity at the depth of my heart. The pain had left me! I was able to forgive my husband and those who did me wrong. I was healed!

Now, I praise and thank Jesus and Mary every day. I live alone and I work. I take care of my parents. My strength is renewed by the Sunday Eucharist and Thursday adoration in my parish."

How was Katia able to come out happy from this awful nightmare? I was able to personally sense her deep serenity when I met her. Once again, the miracle of peace that is granted in Medjugorje is proven real, the Mother of Mercy and her Son Jesus beautifully restored the heart and life of this broken mom, who trusted them!

A Splendid Consecration! On August 14th, we celebrated St Maximilian Kolbe, who died as a saint in the

Auschwitz camp in 1941. His passion was to make known the Immaculate Mother of God and for people to learn to love her. He left us with a beautiful prayer! I noticed that many people wonder how they can devote themselves to Mary so as to really belong to her. Therefore I wish to mention here the prayer of consecration of Fr. Kolbe, which he experienced himself until his death of love:

O Immaculate, Queen of heaven and earth, Refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to You. I... an unworthy sinner, cast myself at Your feet, humbly imploring You to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to Yourself as Your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death, and eternity, whatever pleases You. If it pleases You, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what has been said of You: "She will crush your head", and "You alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world." Let me be a fit instrument in Your immaculate and most merciful hands for introducing and increasing Your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls, and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed Kingdom of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For, wherever You enter, You obtain the grace of conversion and sanctification, since it is through Your hands that all graces come to us from the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Do not abandon Medjugorje! Since the negative note expressed by the Pope in his interview in Lisbon on May 13 (that the Virgin is not a post-office employee, etc.) some pilgrimages were cancelled. What a pity! We must above all be aware of the huge step forward for Medjugorje, as expressed by the Pope that same day: that the apparitions of the 7 first days will be recognized as authentic (Fatima had 6...!). The positive conclusions of Cardinal Ruini's Commission were accepted, even praised by the Pope! This will make the shrine of Medjugorje a genuine place of Marian apparitions. Even a single day would have sufficed to place Medjugorje on the list of apparitions recognized by the Church. So, please, without fear, answer Our Lady's call and come in large numbers! This will hasten the fulfilment of Mary's plans for all of us and the coming of the Great Sign on Podbrdo that she foretold!

On September 2, 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross in the presence of a very large crowd. After the apparition, she conveyed the message that Mary gave us:

"Dear children, who could speak to you about the love and the pain of my Son better than I? I lived with Him; I suffered with Him. Living the earthly life I felt pain because I was a mother. My Son loved the thoughts and the works of the Heavenly Father, the true God. And, as He said to me, He came to redeem you. I hid my pain through love, but you, my children, you have numerous questions. You do not comprehend pain. You do not comprehend that through the love of God you need to accept pain and endure it. Every human being will experience it to a lesser or greater measure. But with peace in the soul and in a state of grace, hope exists; this is my Son, God, born of God. His words are the seed of eternal life. Sown in good souls they bring numerous fruits. My Son bore the pain because He took your sins upon Himself. Therefore, you, my children, apostles of my love, you who suffer, know that your pain will become light and glory. My children, while you are enduring pain, while you are suffering, Heaven enters in you and you give a piece of Heaven and much hope to all those around you. Thank you."

Strange events! During this apparition, a rather common phenomenon occurred once again. But on this day, it was on a scale I had never seen before. People in large numbers began to howl blasphemies and yell like animals as soon as the Blessed Mother appeared. This went on for some time, and then everything gradually calmed down. When people who are tormented by demons are in the presence of Our Lady these demons sometimes manifest their anger in this way.

A priest who was there with us told me at the end of the apparition that he had perceived the coming of the Mother of God within his soul, and the luminous cloud on which she stands. This cloud slowly moved downward, pushing the demons down into the abyss, which unleashed their revolt and even prompted them to fight against each other. This priest belongs to a team that works with an exorcist every week, and he has the gift of seeing in spirit what is happening in the invisible realm. These realities are not new; the Gospel reveals a number of them to us. However in our days, with the growing number of harmful practices and the serious sins that are being committed, many people are opening their doors to Satan and his angels without being aware of it. Let us therefore pray a great deal to the Mother of God, because she was chosen by God to crush the head of the serpent. She is the best exorcist after Jesus! The Rosary prayer is a very powerful weapon against the forces of evil.

An exorcist from the diocese of Milano, Don Ambrogio Villa, reported what Satan said during a recent exorcism. Summoned to answer the questions which the priest asked him, Satan said: "For us (demons), Medjugorje is our hell on earth!". No surprise there! Given the intensity of prayers surrounding the daily visits of Our Lady, given the evenings of adoration with people in their thousands, given the many sincere confessions, conversions and reconciliations, it isn't surprising that the enemy of humankind feels awful there. But we must

keep watch! He is doing everything he can to oppose the plan of the Mother of God and to destroy it. This is why our Heavenly Mother is counting on us today more than ever. She asked us again this month at the Blue Cross with Ivan, to pray for the plans she has for Medjugorje and for her projects. "I need your prayers to help the world," she said at the very beginning of the apparitions. Let's not let her down, because a lot of what will happen depends on our prayers and our fasting! It actually depends on our good will to live her messages or to ignore them.

With whom are you suffering? The Blessed Mother has given us an extraordinary message! Let me try to explain. When we are seized by suffering, a wound opens up within us, and this wound makes us very sensitive and vulnerable. Delighted to see us so vulnerable, Satan takes advantage of this and tries to infect this open wound by injecting his own poisons, his own thoughts. He will make subtle suggestions to our consciences, with twisted words, using the weakness of our nature damaged by sin. He tries to make us believe that these suggestions come from us.

For instance, despair: "Considering everything you've already suffered, you just cannot endure this new blow, it's better to kill yourself!"

Doubting God's love: "You think God loves you? Not at all! Look at what he's doing to you! Don't bother going to mass or praying anymore, you're wasting your time, this God couldn't care less!"

Revolt: "Why did this happen to you? Why did God take away your young husband, while my unbelieving neighbour still has hers? How unfair!"

Bitterness: "Well now it's over, I'm shutting myself down, locking myself in. Leave me alone! My life is now meaningless,"

Hatred: "These people who hurt you so badly, they deserve your hate! Take revenge! They're going to pay for what they did, and it's going to be bloody!"

Guilt: "This trial fell on me because I deserved it! It is God's punishment, because I am no good."

The list could go on and on... Do not ever listen to any of these suggestions, even if they violently invade your mind! Satan always makes a lot of noise. If we listen to him, we suffer even more and lose peace completely. How can we discern this? By comparing these suggestions with the words of Jesus in the Gospel. Would Jesus say "You need to take revenge?" Or "You need to hate this person"? "You should shut yourself in"? "Kill yourself"? "Doubt the love of the Father"? Of course not! So we need to disconnect with those thoughts and tell Jesus "I don't want these thoughts, they are not mine. The enemy is after me, but I chose to be with you!"

Jesus himself comes into our wounds, but in a completely different way. In the silence of our heart he whispers "Don't be afraid! I am with you! Your suffering is also mine. Look at my hands, my feet and my side. I too have suffered. Together, you and I, we will make it."

And then Jesus asks us for a favour: "Give me your wound. Offer up your pain!" If we offer up our suffering to Jesus, he receives it with deep gratitude. And then what does he do with it? He puts it onto his own wounds and makes it his own! And what came out of the wounds of Christ? Bitterness, hatred, despair? Definitely not! From his wounds came healing, consolation, peace, forgiveness, all the graces and even the sacraments. His suffering is redemptive. "By his wounds we are healed" says St Paul. Therefore our suffering, when bound to His suffering, becomes co-redemptive, and we take part in the work of Redemption accomplished by Christ. There is only one Redeemer and that is Jesus Christ. But having hidden our sufferings in the wounds of Christ, we help Him to extend the grace of salvation further still! Through Baptism, we really became the body of Christ. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the Church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions", says St. Paul (Col 1:24). We then become co-redeemers, just as the Mother of God is the co-redemptrix. That is when joy flows through us, not because of a love of suffering (which would be a perversion), but for the love of Christ, seeing the fruits of salvation achieved through our offering. The soul experiences its greatest joy when it is in deep intimate love with Christ and in our participation in His work. All the joys of the world are nothing compared to this joy. Because then indeed, "Heaven enters us!"

"Apostles of my love, you who are suffering, be aware that your pain will become light and glory. My children, while you are enduring pain, while you are suffering, heaven is coming into your being, and you are giving a piece of that heaven, as well as a great deal of hope to all those who surround you."

This is the real question: when I am suffering, whose voice shall I choose to listen to? Will I suffer with the evil one who wants to destroy me, or with Jesus who wants to save me?

On 8 September, for the Nativity of Our Lady, Ivan received an apparition at the Blue Cross and Mary again invited us to pray for families, for young people and for holiness in families. "Dear Children, even today I would like to invite you to pray for families. Pray for holiness in families, pray for young people! My children have gone away. They have moved away from my Son Jesus. Pray, dear children! Know that I pray for all of you and intercede for you before my Son."

This month, just before the feast of St Padre Pio, I will be moving up from my 60s to my 70s. On this occasion, I thank my Creator for the gift of life, and for having called me to be consecrated to Him. The Spouse he gave me is my every joy. I ask Him for the ability to serve you, my dear friends, for a long time to come, if that is His will. May I ask you for a wonderful birthday present? Ask a priest to celebrate a mass for Mary's plan to be fully accomplished. May her dream come true: may Medjugorje experience again the fervour of the early days of the apparitions! THANK YOU with all my heart.

On October 2nd 2017, Mirjana received her monthly apparition at the Blue Cross in the midst of a very large crowd. After the apparition, she shared the following message from Our Lady:

"Dear children, I am speaking to you as a mother - with simple words, but words filled with much love and concern for my children who, through my Son, are entrusted to me. And my Son, who is of the eternal now, He is speaking to you with words of life and is sowing love in open hearts. Therefore, I am imploring you, apostles of my love, have open hearts always ready for mercy and forgiveness. According to my Son, always forgive your neighbours, because in that way peace will be in you. My children, care for your soul, because it alone is what truly belongs to you. You are forgetting the importance of family. A family does not need to be a place of suffering and pain, but a place of understanding and tenderness. Families who strive to live according to my Son live in mutual love. While He was still little, my Son would say to me that all people are His brothers. Therefore, remember, apostles of my love, that all people whom you meet are family to you - brothers according to my Son. My children, do not waste time thinking about the future, worrying. May your only concern be how to live well every moment according to my Son. And there it is - peace for you! My children, do not ever forget to pray for your shepherds. Pray that they can accept all people as their children; that, according to my Son, they may be spiritual fathers to them. Thank you!"

The tears of a deaf man! Fr. Leonardo, young Spanish priest, was invited to a pilgrimage in Medjugorje. His mother being a widow, he feels very strongly about taking good care of her. Having studied nearly everything there is to know about Medjugorje, he managed to convince her to come with him and to participate in the program offered by the parish.

Like many other priests, he took up his position in a confessional and began to hear the confession of the pilgrims. As for his mother, she prayed the Rosary, sitting on a bench near the confessionals and discreetly managed to keep an eye on the one where her son was.

One day, shortly after evening mass, she saw a man of a certain age coming out of her son's confessional, crying bitter tears. She was deeply saddened and wondered what her son could possibly have said to this man to put him in such a state. She shared her concern with the pilgrimage guide. Late that evening, over dinner, her son seemed tired by so many confessions, but nevertheless happy and at peace. Then he came over to his mother and to the guide and began to tell them what he had experienced during one of the confessions that day: he had received in his confessional a man weeping bitter tears, but tears of joy. It should be added that this pilgrim was so deaf that even the best hearing aids were ineffective for him. However, during mass, when the Gospel was proclaimed, he became aware that he could hear the reading perfectly! In addition, this mass was in Croatian and he understood every word! That's how he realized that he was cured of his deafness. Overwhelmed by this miracle, he ran to confession to thank God and the Blessed Mother.

Upon hearing this, his mother sighed with relief, took a deep breath and rejoiced with her son and all the pilgrims for the gifts that God gives His children through the intercession of His Mother.

Vicka has come back to her station at the Blue House! After more than a year of absence due to her bad health, in late September she was strong enough to share the messages of the Gospa with her dear pilgrims. She was clearly jubilant as she sent kisses to everyone from her staircase! During these meetings, she prays a great deal in silence, some prayers the Mother of God taught her, and that she cannot reveal now. Only Mirjana knows them, too. These prayers attract great blessings on the crowd. This teaches us that to change hearts, prayer is infinitely more important than words!

Last September, during my mission in Spain, I experienced great joy at finding very good priests in each of the 12 parishes we visited, true shepherds for souls. In a word, the living Church of Christ! No confusion, the true Catholic faith! Our faith is so beautiful! Like cherry on the cake, the Blessed Mother gave us this message on October 2nd: "My children, do not ever forget to pray for your shepherds. Pray that they can accept all people as their children; that, according to my Son, they may be spiritual fathers to them."

These priests can be found in many places! Well, their number is small, but it is up to us to increase those numbers! I'm always impressed to see so many fervent lay people welcoming us and giving so much of themselves to make sure that the mission is fruitful. I am discovering a great deal of holiness hidden here and there. For instance, a member of our team, for the past 20 years, gets up every morning at 4:00 a.m. and prays for 3 hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament, before taking on his job at 8 a.m. It is encouraging to see that Our Lady also has her fans, and what fans!

Sister Emmanuel+

The Candle-lit Room

There were two candles
and there were two eyes
and the candles were lit behind the eyes
and the days these eyes saw were bright,
because of the candles.
(Were it not for the candles, the eyes would not see)

And the candles were lit by God
and God's flame is for Spiritual Warfare
and the devil did not like the light
therefore he kept away.
Now God was pleased with the eyes
with candles behind them
and He blessed them...

Now there was a dim room
with a little light.
This dim room was all of us
Before God came with His Light
And God had pity on the flesh of man
Because it was dimly lit.
So He came and set a fire for us,
And the Fire's Name was Jesus

And He came to give us His Light
for us to see by,
what was good and pleasing to Him and what was not.
No man-made, artificial torch could match
This burning, all consuming Fire,
and this Fire had a Name,
and it was called Love.... God's Love
and it burns still in us!

And Jesus came and said:
"I have come to set this fire alight in this world,
and oh how I wish it were already burning"

James W

Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless until
they rest in you.”

-St. Augustine of Hippo

GODCIDENCE

Some things are just too well planned to be a mere co-incidence.

My brother Barry who would call himself a plain kiwi bloke, felt a bit crook, but as he had no visible signs of illness he went off on Saturday to play his bowls as usual. He collapsed on the green and was taken to Blenheim hospital. Barry was diagnosed with a tumour in his stomach and usually that would mean a bit of local TLC, then being sent home to await a space and time in the next few months in the bigger Christchurch hospital.

Blenheim hospital has a roster of doctors who travel from Wellington to cover emergencies each weekend. This week it was the turn of a doctor who specialises in this condition. So Barry had the tumour and two thirds of his stomach removed on Sunday morning and is now on the way to recovery.

Barry could have collapsed on Sunday night when there would have been no time for this doctor to operate. Or any other day. Or on a weekend when it was the ENT surgeon's roster day.

My sister, a Brigidine nun celebrating her diamond jubilee this month, and I a great gran of many, looked at all the co-incidences that led to his prompt and expert care and coined the word Godcidence.

If every reader of this little story looked around their own life at all the co-incidences and see how often things are just about too good to be true, you too could use our lovely new word, Godcidence. It is our gift to you.

Sylvia Bryan. Kaitaia

When Satan Disrupts Our Lives

When Satan disrupts our lives, sending us anxious or confused thoughts, we must immediately halt what we are doing and pray until the evil attack is stopped. We must pray until peace returns to our spirits. We must nip obnoxious diversions in the bud. He sends many people — good and bad — our way. He can use the devout as well as the sinful. He is relentless, but when we approach his attempts with humility and peace of heart, we stifle him. He is afraid of humility. And he flees the Holy Spirit, Who especially comes when we praise Jesus and thank the Eternal Father, over and again. He flees when we thank and love God.

This is also how we come to the truth: only through love, for God is Truth but also God is Love. If we're confused by someone, we can discern why — we can have full insight into them, perhaps into their wrongful words or actions — only by loving them first. Love makes all clear. Love gives us the grace of vision. Hatred is blind. If the devil predominates in our time, it is because there is such rampant pride, which he feeds off — for he is the Prince of Pride, and also the prince of this world. Jesus said that.

Don't be deceived into thinking you can have it both ways, the "best of both worlds." That is a compromise with darkness. Seek advancement in God's kingdom, not the passing one of life on earth. There are many who misuse the cliché "doom and gloom." It is not gloom and doom to expose evil. The true gloom is to continue wallowing in Satan's work. To pretend matters are better than they are is to conveniently disregard the work we must hurriedly tend to. Evil may be far more pervasive than what most people believe. But it's nothing compared to the power of Christ — a grain of sand (or less: an atom) next to the Empire State Building. To expose it is to move toward a remedy. Quickly vanquished, can be demons! But they like operating unnoticed, in the dark. We look up — we keep our eyes focused on Heaven.

When evil rises in our lives, our families, or society at large, when we see it as New Age or immorality, or religious judgment and pride, when demons come to harass in their final pathetic assault, we remain in a heavenly gaze while lifting up our collective hands and commanding the devil in the Name of Jesus to vanish, as then he must.

📖 *Adapted from Prayer of the Warrior (Spirit Daily) Thanks to Medjugorje Chronicle Zambia for bringing it to my attention.*

Fasting Tip

I would like to share something I have found both practical and helpful with fasting (which can be difficult). After each bite of bread, after it is swallowed, pray, "Jesus, Mary, I love you. Save souls," before taking the next bite. Do the same with the water. In this way we can focus on why we are fasting (with love and cooperation for our Mother). It is also a wonderful way to practice the presence of God when eating normally.

Editor's note: This tip was shared by one of our international subscribers, who prefers to remain anonymous. We thank her for sharing this wonderful tip.

(The Spirit of Medjugorje)

Whatever became of Advent Fasting and Penance?

By Msgr Charles Pope

I was explaining to a new Catholic recently that the reason the colour purple (violet) is used during Advent is that Advent, like Lent, is considered a penitential season. During these times we are to give special attention to our sins and our need for salvation. Traditionally, Advent was a time when would take part in penitential practices such as fasting and abstinence, just as is done during Lent.

In recent times, though, Advent has become almost devoid of any real penitential practices. Neither fasting nor abstinence is required; they are not really even mentioned. There is nothing in the Missal or other liturgical sources that refers to Advent as a penitential season. While confession is encouraged and the readings of early Advent still retain a focus on repentance and the Last Judgment, the era of the forty-day fast beginning on November 12th is long gone.

During the Middle Ages, Advent observances were every bit as strict as those of Lent. St. Martin's Feast Day was a day of carnival (meaning "farewell to meat" (*carnis + vale*)). In those days, the rose vestments of *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday were a real indication of something to celebrate: the fast was relaxed for a day. Then it was back to fasting until Christmas. Lent began with Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), when the last of the fat was used up before the Lenten fast would begin the next day.

The fasting and abstinence practiced in those days were far more strict than the token observances we have today. There were regional differences in the details. In many places all meat was strictly forbidden during both Advent and Lent, but some areas permitted fowl. Most regions allowed the consumption of fish. Some areas prohibited fruit and eggs. In monasteries, little more than bread was consumed. On the Fridays of Lent and Advent, some believers abstained from food for the entire day; others ate only one meal. In most places, however, the Friday practice was to refrain from eating until the evening, when a small meal without vegetables or alcohol was eaten.

Yes, those were the days of the giants, when fasting and abstinence were real sacrifices.

Today's token fast (required only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday) isn't much of a burden: one full meal and two smaller meals. Is that really a fast at all? And we are only obligated to abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent rather than the entire forty days.

What is most remarkable to me is that such fasts of old were undertaken by people who had a lot less to eat than we do today. Not only was there less food overall, but it was far more seasonal and its supply less predictable. Further, famines and food shortages were relatively common. Yet despite all this, they were able to fast twice a year for forty days at a stretch, eighty days in total. There were also "ember days" sporadically throughout the year at the change of seasons, when a daylong fast was enjoined.

Frankly, I doubt that we moderns could pull off the fast of the ancients, or even the elders of more recent centuries. Can you imagine all the belly-aching (pun intended) that would ensue if the Church called us to follow the strict norms of even 200 years ago? We would hear complaints that such demands were unrealistic and even unhealthy.

Perhaps this is a good illustration of how enslaved we are by our abundance. The more we have, the more we want; and the more we want, the more we think we can't survive without. We are so easily owned by what we claim to own, enslaved by our abundance.

When I ponder the Catholics of 100+ years ago, they seem like giants compared to us. They had so much less than we do today, yet they seem to have been so much freer. *They* were able to fast. Though poor, they built grand Churches and had large families. They fit so many more people into their homes. They lived and worked in conditions few of us would be able to tolerate. Sacrifice seemed more "normal" to them. I have not read that there were any huge outcries during those times, complaints that the "mean, nasty Church" imposed fasting and abstinence during Advent and Lent. (There have always been exceptions for the very young, the elderly, the sick, and pregnant women.) Neither have I read that fasting from midnight until receiving Communion the next day was considered too onerous. Somehow they accepted these sacrifices and were able to undertake them. They had a freedom that I think many of us lack.

Imagine the joy when, for a brief time, the fast was lifted: the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, *Gaudete* Sunday, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Feast of St. Joseph, and *Laetare* Sunday. For us, *Gaudete* Sunday just means a pink candle, and wondering what we are rejoicing about. For Catholics of old, these were literally *feast* days.

I fully admit to being a modern man. I find the fasting and abstinence described above nearly "impossible." I did give up wine this Advent, and during Lent, I swore off radio and television. But something makes me look back to the giants of old, who, though having far less than I, did such things as a matter of course.

There were giants in those days!

Taken from "Community in Mission". Thanks to Medjugorje Chronicle Zambia.

Child of Promise: A Prayer for Christmas Morning

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

Who are you little baby? Who are you little Christchild, lying so quietly in manger straw? Who are you that angels should herald your presence and stars announce your birth? That wise men and shepherds — the high and the low — should bow before you? Who are you, child of Bethlehem, son of David? What is your future? What is your promise?

Seven centuries before your birth the ancient Scriptures speak of you♦.

For to us a child is born,
To us a son is given,
And the government will be on his shoulders,
And his name will be called
Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
There will be no end.*

What is this government? What is this peace, O Christmas baby? Are you a warrior-to-be? Are you a king? What promise do you hold?

How can you be the Mighty God while flecks of straw, blown from the stable floor, dot your fine hair?
How is this?

How can you be the Everlasting Father while not yet an hour old? How is it?

How can you be a Wonderful Counsellor before you've learned? A teacher before you've been taught?
What is the wellspring of your wisdom?

What is this mystery set before us, enigmatic newborn lying in a stable manger, born of parents poor, yet destined for this greatness? You must be the One we've hoped for, longed for all our lives. The One who will set us free from our depressions and oppressions, within and without.

Little wonder angels cannot contain their Good News of Great Joy. Little wonder heavenly host sing in chorus,

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men....**

Be my peace, O Prince of Peace. Let its gentle, joyful blanket comfort my nervous soul, and still the warring of your earth.

Be my government, O Christ. Govern not my own heart only, but also this desperate world in which I live.

Be my Everlasting Father and my Counsellor. By your counsel guide me out of confusion and turmoil into the sunlight that always shines above my low-lying clouds.

Welcome, Christchild. All my life I have needed you. O Child of Promise, this Christmas morning I give to you my heart. Amen.

Excerpt from JOYFUL HEART RENEWAL MINISTRIES



Showing Us The Way

source unknown

excerpt from Domestic-Church.com

There was once a man who didn't believe in the incarnation or the spiritual meaning of Christmas, and was skeptical about God. He and his family lived in a farm community. His wife was a devout believer and diligently raised her children in her faith. He sometimes gave her a hard time about her faith and mocked her religious observance of Christmas. One snowy Christmas eve she was taking the kids to the Christmas eve service at church. She pleaded with him to come, but he firmly refused. He ridiculed the idea of the incarnation of Christ and dismissed it as nonsense. "Why would God lower himself and become a human like us?! It's such a ridiculous story!" he said. So she and the children left for church while he stayed home.

After they left, the winds grew stronger and the snow turned into a blizzard. As he looked out the window, all he saw was a blinding snowstorm. He sat down to relax before the fire for the evening. Then he heard a loud thump, something hitting against the window. And another thump. He looked outside but couldn't see. So he ventured outside to see. In the field near his house he saw, of all the strangest things, a flock of geese! They were apparently flying to look for a warmer area down south, but got caught in the snow storm. The snow had become too blinding and violent for the geese to fly or see their way. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter. They just fluttered their wings and flew around in circles around the field blindly and aimlessly.

He had compassion for them and wanted to help them. He thought to himself, "The barn would be a great place for them to stay! It's warm and safe; surely they could spend the night and wait out the storm." So he walked over to the barn and opened the barn doors for them. He waited, watching them, hoping they would notice the open barn and go inside. But they just fluttered around aimlessly and didn't notice the barn or realize what it could mean for them. So he started whistling and calling to them. Nothing. He shouted, jumped up and down, waved his arms. They didn't pay attention. He moved closer toward them to get their attention, but they just moved away from him out of fear. He went into the house and came back out with some bread, broke it up, and made a bread trail leading to the barn. They still didn't catch on. Starting to get frustrated, he went over and tried to shoo them, run after them, and chase them toward the barn. They only got scared and scattered into every direction except toward the barn. None of his attempts to get them into the barn succeeded. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where there was warmth, safety, and shelter; nothing he did could make them enter the one place where they could survive.

Feeling totally frustrated, he exclaimed, "Why don't they listen to me! Why don't they follow me! What's wrong with them! Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm! How can I possibly get them into the one place to save them!" He thought for a moment and realized that they just won't follow a human. He said to himself, "How can I possibly save them? The only way would be for me to become like those geese. If only I could become like one of them! Then I could show them the way! Then I could save them! They would follow me, not fear me. They would trust me, and I would lead them to safety."

He stood silently for a moment as the words that he just said reverberated back to himself in his mind: "If only I could become like one of them--then I could show them the way--then I could save them." He thought about his words, and remembered what he said to his wife: "Why would God want to be like us? That's so ridiculous!" Something clicked in his mind as he put these two together. It was like a revelation, and he began to understand the incarnation. We were like the geese--blind, gone astray, perishing. God became like us so He could show us the way and make a way available to save us. That is the meaning of Christmas, he realized in his heart.

As the winds and blinding snow abated, his heart became quiet and pondered this epiphany. He understood what Christmas was all about. He knew why Christ had come. Suddenly years of doubt and disbelief were shattered, as he humbly and tearfully bowed down in the snow, and embraced the true meaning of Christmas.

In New Zealand and Australia

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I've Learned...

by H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

excerpted from his very popular books titled **Live & Learn & Pass It On** Volumes I, II, or III published by Rutledge Hill Press USA.

Excerpt from Domestic-Church.com

I've Learned...



I've learned that you can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk... Age 6

I've learned that I like my teacher because she cries when we sing "Silent Night". Age 7

I've learned that when I wave to people in the country, they stop what they are doing and wave back. Age 9

I've learned that just when I get my room the way I like it, Mom makes me clean it up. Age 12

I've learned that if you want to cheer yourself up, you should try cheering someone else up. Age 13

I've learned that although it's hard to admit it, I'm secretly glad my parents are strict. with me. Age 15

I've Learned...



I've learned that silent company is often more healing than words of advice. Age 24

I've learned that brushing my child's hair is one of life's great pleasures. Age 25

I've learned that wherever I go, the worlds worst drivers have followed me there. Age 29

I've learned...that if someone says something unkind about me, I must live so that no one will believe it. Age 39

I've learned that there are people who love you dearly but just don't know how to show it. Age 41

I've learned that you can make someone's day by simply sending them a little card. Age 44

I've learned that the greater a person's sense of guilt, the greater his need to cast blame on others. Age 45

I've Learned...



I've learned that children and grandparents are natural allies. Age 46

I've learned that singing "Amazing Grace" can lift my spirits for hours.. Age 49

I've learned that motel mattresses are better on the side away from the phone. Age 50

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a man by the way he handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights. Age 52



I've Learned...

I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you miss them terribly after they die. Age 53

I've learned that making a living is not the same thing as making a life. Age 58

I've learned that if you want to do something positive for your children, try to improve your marriage. Age 61

I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance. Age 62

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catchers mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back. Age 64

I've learned that if you pursue happiness, it will elude you. But if you focus on your family, the needs of others, your work, meeting new people, and doing the very best you can, happiness will find you. Age 65

I've learned that whenever I decide something with kindness, I usually make the right decision. Age 66

I've Learned...



I've learned that everyone can use a prayer. Age 72

I've learned that it pays to believe in miracles. And to tell the truth, I've seen several. Age 73

I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one. Age 82

I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone.. People love that human touch-- holding hands, a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back. Age 85

I've learned that I still have a lot to learn. Age 92



My merit comes from His mercy; for I do not lack merit so long as he does not lack pity. And if the Lord's mercies are many, then I am rich in merits.

For even if I am aware of many sins, what does it matter? Where sin abounded grace has overflowed.

- Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Doctor of the Church

Pioneer

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The gift of faith

I have been home for about 6 weeks now, and I still have the “gift of pilgrimage” whenever I attend Mass and also when I sit in front of the tabernacle. What an amazing gift He gave me when I was away.

We started in Dublin Ireland, which is an amazing city. I must have been wondering around the streets with my mouth open in wonderment, a) that I was finally here, and b) that I was finally here. I did a lot of the touristy spots, hoping off the buses that run the streets of Dublin pointing out the castles, monuments and who’s who of the city. But the most amazing thing of all was the Churches we went to each day, mainly the church round the corner from the guest house we were staying at in Egan House, Iona Church. The people were so friendly, the priest was lovely and introduced himself to us. The parishioners would talk to us and ask what we were doing and where we were going. It was so lovely, it definitely felt like God’s worldwide community, all made to feel welcome. It was an eye opened as how strangers go into a new place and the opposite could happen, that they are not recognised as God’s children. This was the first of GOD’s lesson for me. The second was that we are a worldwide church, it doesn’t matter where you are you can follow the Mass, it is all the same, whether in NZ, Ireland, Portugal or Bosnia.

We flew out to Portugal for our five day pilgrimage to Fatima. At the airport early in the morning for our flight and experience of a lifetime with about 30 Irish pilgrims in the plane. I must admit, I thought the Tour guide was amazing, trying to keep 30 sheep together!!! She needed a medal. Anyhow we finally arrived in Portugal, all made it to the bus that was to deliver us to Fatima and our accommodation, minus our Priests bags that were lost during the flight over. I love the Irish accent, I know they were speaking English, but sometimes I couldn’t understand a word they were saying.!!! Some of the slang they used, which is exactly how they must feel when they hear ours, took a lot of deciphering and must have been the look of PARDON on my face that they explained what they were saying. “The crack was good last night”, what?? did I miss something. Turned out to be, they had a great time and fun. But they were wonderful God loving people, otherwise WHY would you go on a pilgrimage to Fatima.

I must admit, that when I got to Fatima, I was LOST spiritually. I felt LOST emotionally, I didn’t know why I was here, half round the world WHY. WHY did you bring me here? Now this was confusing to me, as I had wanted to go to Fatima and Medjugorje for so long now that I couldn’t understand my emotions. Get a grip Sarah, so whenever in doubt, go to reconciliation and see the Priest. Off I went and He was lovely, He showed me that I needed to be like a little child and listen, accept what The Lord was showing me. Be open, no more and no less. Well those, of course, were the right words to say, so it was with childlike wonder that I absorbed the wonderment of God’s grace and followed like a little sheep. The newness of visiting all the churches around where the three seers lived, there houses, where they trod, the Hungarian stations of the cross, all came alive. The Hungarian stations of the Cross is so peace filled, it winds its way through olive groves on paved stones, and we did the stations with Mary the Mother of Jesus, by Richard Furey. Of course, when anything is written with a mother in mind, it generates strong emotions in me. Anyhow, I thought, I would participate in a station of cross by reading one of the stations, being finally brave enough to go to the front to ask Father if I could do the next one, Yes was his reply. Well I new THE LORD had a sense of humour, and I guess I was there to learn. This was my station. **JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS.** *“With my son finally relieved of the weight of the cross, I thought he would have a chance to rest. But the guards immediately started to rip his clothes off his blood-clotted skin. The sight of my son in such pain was unbearable.*

Yet, since I knew this had to be, I stood by and cried silently.” As if that was not enough, I then read on further. **Lord, in my own way I too have stripped you. I have taken away the good name of another by**

foolish talk, and have stripped people of human dignity by my prejudice. Jesus, there are so many ways I have offended you through the hurt I have caused others. Help me to see you in all people. Lesson number 3, now that was a hard lesson. But The Lord is full of mercy, THANKS BE TO GOD.

In Fatima they produced a pamphlet with the Itinerary Jubilee. "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God." A consecration prayer:

**Hail, Mother of the Lord,
Virgin Mary, Queen of the Rosary of Fatima!
Blessed among all women,
You are the image of the Church dressed in the Paschal light,
You are the honour of our people,
You are the triumph over the mark of evil.**

**Prophecy of the merciful Love of the Father,
Teacher of the Annunciation of the Good news of the Son,
Sign of the burning Fire of the Holy Spirit,
Teach us, in this valley of joys and sorrows,
The eternal truths that the Father reveals to the little ones.**

**Show us the strength of your mantle of protection.
In your Immaculate Heart,
Be the refuge of sinners and the way that leads to God.**

**In unity with my brethren,
In Faith, Hope and Love,
I surrender myself to you.
In unity with my brethren, through you, I consecrate
Myself to God,
O Virgin of the Rosary of Fatima.**

**And thus surrounded by the Light that comes from your hands,
I will give Glory to the Lord forever and ever. AMEN**

Every night at around 9.30, they pray the rosary beside the Chapel of apparitions. When the rosary is finished they do a procession around the prayer area which would be about the size of four football fields. It is massive, everyone has a candle and they follow the statue of Our Lord. What a sight, very moving, all these followers of Christ. We were in Fatima from the 4 – 8 September, not the big date of the 13th, and the crowds were still there. It would have been incredible to see the crowds on the 13th of each month. Very powerful, all together showing the strength of faith and the love for our Lord.

The other amazing thing about a pilgrimage, is the people from all parts of the world, all languages, all together sharing the one bread, one body of Christ, made up of different parts, many gifts.

All too soon the trip was over and we were on our way back to Dublin, many stories from fellow travellers of their love for Our Lord and the many reasons for travelling to Fatima. The many stories of gratitude for Our Lord who has helped, healed them on their journey, not just seeking His face, but saying thank you to His face. Always the Lord could be found at Mass and in the tabernacle of every Church. Lesson number four.

We travelled again, early in the morning for Split, and then bused onto Medjugorje. At last, I was on my way to more spiritual enlightenment, this time not confused like I was in Fatima, but ready to soak up all that The Lord was putting in front of me.

We had Mass every day, what a crowd, joy filled, the singing was fantastic and lifted the roof off, their were people everywhere. It was wonderful. There were about 25 priests concelebrating, the band was a guitar and fiddle which was incredible to listen to. The Priest, Father Leon, who looks after the English speaking pilgrims gives a talk about his journey to Medjugorje, it is in the following pages. Very interesting.

Medjugorje, it is very hard to describe the feeling of peace, no one is in a hurry, everyone is friendly, it feels like a living place as in active and helping others in need. Nothing is too much trouble, there is a hive of activity, with the street sellers, the taxi drivers and all activities are geared around the tourist and the St James Church. There are buses coming and going all the time, trips to different parts of Boznia with the sights, trip to the Mother Village

and also to the addiction centre where two young men gave their testimony. Everywhere you go in Medjugorje, it is set up for the glory of Our Lord and Our Lady. I can't imagine anyone being mistaken for what the place is all about, because everything is focused on the St James Church.

I must admit, I hadn't anticipated the ruggedness of the country side, the rocky ground and especially the rocks around Apparition Hill and Mt Krizevac which is 520m above Medjugorje. Mt Krizevac is where the stations of the cross lead up to the cross on top of the hill which can be seen all over Medjugorje and the surrounding district. I don't know what it is about the Stations of the Cross, but this is where I received another of my lessons. It took me 3 and a half hours to climb and descend the mountain with about 30 or 40 others in our group. Now no one can prepare you for that climb, I should have guessed when I looked up towards the cross at the top and the shrubs that surround the mountain that it wasn't going to be easy. But if you have ever read the poem called "Footprints in the sand", you will understand that, that was when the Lord carried me. On climbing that mountain, I realised how unfit I was and that there was no way I climbed that mountain on my own. It was amazing to watch a woman with MS being helped up by her husband and others taking turns to help. The sweat was just pouring off them, but they reached the top. There were people of all ages, young children through to people in their 80's. What an amazing feeling of accomplishment when you stand at the top and look at the view from on high, and then to be able to pray in front of the cross.

On March 15, 1934, the parishioners constructed a concrete cross 8.56 m high, built in remembrance of the 1900 years since the death of Jesus. On the cross is written: **"To Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the human race, as a sign of their faith, love and hope, in remembrance of the 1900 years since the death of Jesus".**

Relics received from Rome for the occasion are embedded in the cross bar itself. Since then, the custom was established of celebrating Holy Mass at the foot of the cross in commemoration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on the 1st Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to the visionaries, in the message of August 30, 1984, Our Lady said: **"The cross was also in God's plan when you built it."**

It is impossible to come away from Medjugorje and not feel the love of The Lord and Our Lady, it is everywhere both spoken and unspoken, everyone lives their faith. I came away thinking that everything is in God's plan. I look at what is happening in the world today, he is not pacing up the halls of heaven wondering what to do with his children here on earth, but he is asking us to live our faith, to trust in Him.

I did meet one of the visionaries, Jakov, he gave a talk on his work with the poor. This is part of his intro. **Mary's Hands** Three years ago the idea for a charity to help the poor and needy was conceived in the heart of Medjugorje visionary, Jakov Čolo. Jakov approached Fra. Marinko Šakota, the parish Priest in Medjugorje, who listened and he told Jakov to wait a few days and to pray. Jakov was accustomed to witnessing and giving his testimony, but he sensed the time had come to do something to be 'active in his spirit'. Fra. Marinko, after a few days, offered the old parish office to Jakov as an office for the poor and needy. At first, Jakov was afraid, but then he realised that this could be his calling. He found it difficult in the beginning to go to someone's home and ask them what their needs were, but then he came to the realisation in his heart, that through his actions, he was able to be a true Christian.

In June of this year (2016) the office was registered as a Humanitarian Organisation and Jakov asked Fra. Marinko by which name should the charity be called and he immediately said "MARY'S HANDS". ('Marijine Ruke' in Croatian) On the 25th February 1997, Our Lady gave this message and truly it sums up what the charism of this organisation is.

"Dear children! Today I invite you in a special way to open yourselves to God the Creator and to become active. I invite you, little children, to see at this time who needs your spiritual or material help. By your example, little children, you will be the extended hands of God, which humanity is seeking. Only in this way will you understand, that you are called to witness and to become joyful carriers of God's word and of His love. Thank you for having responded to my call. "

In a recent talk, Jakov said, that we take everything for granted in our lives, we think we need to have the latest gadget, we have a mobile phone, a Tv, we can make coffee whenever we want, but there are many families that don't have those luxuries.

'The first help for every human being, and I always try to say this to the volunteers, is not the items we bring, but our encounter with them, our smile, our embrace, our conversation with them, our prayer with them, that they may feel loved. Unfortunately in this materialistic world people are lacking in love, they feel rejected. A smile is free, an embrace is free, there is no cost for a Hail Mary.'

Back in Dargaville, it has been wonderful looking at the things that happened on pilgrimage. Relaying the happenings to Noel and my friends, and trying to create a pilgrimage feeling at home. Talking to those who have been to Medjugorje and Fatima, and explaining to those who haven't been, what it is like. And as Jakov said, "A smile is free, an embrace is free, there is no cost for a Hail Mary". MANY BLESSINGS

Sarah Moran

2018 Calendars



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(Sample of the inside of the calendar)

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This is the testimony of Fr Leon Pereira OP, given at Medjugorje, August 29, 2016.



I first heard about Medjugorje in 1983, it was in a book about extraordinary things – paranormal things. So in between a chapter on UFOs and poltergeists there was a chapter on Medjugorje. I was brought up in Singapore, and for Confirmation classes we had to write an essay. I chose to write about Medjugorje, only I couldn't pronounce it so I called it Citluk – *Our Lady of Citluk*.

I credit Medjugorje with bringing me back to the Catholic faith. When I was 17 I fell in with a group of Evangelicals. I came to Medjugorje first in 1991. In Singapore we still had National Service. We had to do two and a half years, and I was in the Infantry. I came here when I was in the army, and I had broken my spine in two places during military training. It took me 14 months to recuperate.

I came here with my mother and a group from Singapore in 1991. At the beginning, even before we got off the coach they were all looking at the miracle of the sun. I refused to look because I thought, "This is putting the Lord to the test, and *'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'*" Was I smug or righteous? I think I was righteous – now I'm smug! I did all the right things you are meant to do on Medjugorje: pray in the church; pray on Podbrodo, the Apparition Hill; pray on Krizevac, Cross Mountain; and I spent some time in Adoration. I did not look for signs and wonders. I admit now, the miracle of the sun, I see it all the time, so much so that I have stopped looking.

I tell pilgrims, "do not go looking for signs and wonders. A sign has to point to something. If you see a sign, "Killarney," it means, "This way to Killarney." If you see the miracle of the sun and it looks like a host, it could be saying, "Go to Mass and stop looking at the sun." If the links of your Rosary turn gold it could be saying, "Pray the Rosary until you wear out the metal links, or, the Rosary is worth more than gold."

On the second to last day my friend, Kevin, who was a year younger than me wanted to go up Krizevac early in the morning to take photos of the sunrise, so we had to leave at 4.00 in the morning. From a long distance away we saw a round orange/gold light on the mountain. We were saying the Rosary as we walked along and after a while the light disappeared and then it re-appeared. At the kink in the road the light came back with a vengeance. It was bigger and brighter and we were so close that we could see what it was. It stunned us into silence.

For years we did not talk about it, except to each other. So when we were home, back in Singapore, I was on the phone to Kevin and I said, "Do you remember that morning?" He said, "How could I forget it?" So I said, "You take a piece of paper and write down what you thought you saw and I will do the same." In that way we would not influence one another. We both described the same thing: the light was in the shape of a young girl. She had a veil on her head which went straight down. She had narrow but square shoulders, because I remember looking at her and thinking, "Oh, you work out." She wore a simple dress and all this was bathed in this gold light and was very bright and gleaming.

Watching her, what she communicated to you was an **immense love**, a very personal, direct love. She looked at me as if I were the only person in the whole universe, and she loves me powerfully. It was overwhelming. I think at that time I would not have known who I was or where I came from, or anything. I just knew that I was looking at the most beautiful young girl I had ever seen. She looked about 16. She did not look like any picture or statue of Our Lady, a young girl, I can't emphasise that enough. I would never describe her as a woman.

We made the decision to climb Krizevac and somewhere about the Stations 10-12 we looked down at Podbrodo and she was there, with her hands in the Immaculate Conception position. At the top of Krizevac there was a couple from Florida, in their 60s. They had seen nothing. We did not tell them what we had seen, apart from very vaguely saying that there was a light. We did not want to tell a soul what we had seen because it was so personal.

We came down the mountain and went to the church where the Croatian Mass had just finished and the church was empty. Kevin went around taking photos. I went to the statue of Our Lady, thinking and praying – thinking I'd lost my mind. The children of Fatima see Our Lady, St. Bernadette sees Our Lady, but not people like me. I thought, "I can never tell anyone. What does it all mean?" I was very disturbed by it.

That is when the second part happened. I can swear on the Gospel that I saw a young girl made of orange/gold light, standing on the mountain. The second part I can't swear to because it was a voice in my head. St. Teresa of Avila said that voices in your head come from God, the devil or your imagination. Then there is schizophrenia!

It was a beautiful voice, a woman's voice. She said, "You are happy because you have seen me." I said, "Yes, I am very happy." I was a bit shy and said, "Who are you?" She said, "I am your mother, and I want you to tell everyone you meet that I am their mother and that I love them." Everything she said in this conversation was instantaneous, but she also made you feel the accompanying feelings. I would not call it possessiveness. The conversation is very difficult to describe. When she said, "I am their mother," she made me understand that as though she had given birth physically to each one of you. It was as if she said, "This one is mine, this one is mine, this one is mine..." very much a strong claim. And when she said, "And that I love them, she crushed me with this love to show me how – it was like a banana slipping out of its skin. It was like being outside myself in joy, literally being ecstatic. It was the same powerful love, very, very powerful. She loves every single one of you like you are her only child, and there is no one else, and she is looking just at you. I don't know how she does it, it is very

overwhelming. I was in tears, seeing her and listening to her.

I was thinking, "I need to see her again, how can I arrange to see her again?" So I said to her, "Blessed Mother, I would very much like to die now, please." She said, "Would you not like to live a bit longer to help me?" I knew she meant anything from nine days to 90 years and I was thinking, "Oh dear, how boring. I don't want to hang around and waste time, I want to go with her now because she is so beautiful." Now, I don't think she was giving me a choice, but I thought she was, and I said, "All right then, but you had better make it worth my while." I wasn't being cheeky, I was just disappointed I couldn't die there and then. She laughed, but that was the only time she let me say what I wanted to, after that she controlled the conversation.

Then she said, "You will forget much of what I am telling you." I said, "No, this is the best day of my life, I am not going to forget a single thing." And as soon as the conversation finished I promptly forgot. There is a big chunk in the middle I can't remember. I have a feeling about what it concerns. It is like when you have had a general anesthetic – there is part of your life missing and you just can't remember it. Then she said, "Do not begin to imagine that you deserve to see me. God gives grace as he chooses." She said, "The day will come when you will regret ever seeing me." I said, "How can you say that, Blessed Mother? This is the best day of my life." She said, "The day will come when you will deny ever having seen me." I thought of St. Peter and I didn't protest, I was too happy talking to her. When I think about it, I saw Our Lady and she talked to me and she told me how rubbish I am – that I didn't deserve to see her and that I was going to be rubbish in the future.

All that came true because within five years I was at Medical School in England and I remember saying to her very clearly, "I wish I had never seen you." It is very complicated but I thought I had let her down. Later a lot of people made fun of Medjugorje and called it "Megaforgery." I used to do that as well and I used to laugh. A priest I knew used to look at the messages of Our Lady and I would go to his room and mock him. "What has she said now, 'pray, pray, pray? Thank you for your response to my call?'" He used to say, "You're terrible, Leon, Our Lady will get you." And now he thinks it is hilarious: that I'm here doing this. (Fr Leon is based at Medjugorje as a pastor to english-speaking pilgrims).

There is a reason that all this has happened as well. It happened through my fault: I regretted it and I denied it. It is all freely chosen by me through my free will. But I think my life is like a living parable of what is going to happen in the whole Church. I don't remember her words about that, there is this confusion that I felt. If someone had asked me, "Did you see Our Lady?" I would have said, "Yes." If he then said, "Why are you mocking Medjugorje?" I would say, "I don't know, I don't understand why I am doing that." I have a strong feeling that the whole Church is going to do this very soon, somehow forget, somehow get confused. When I say the whole Church I mean most of the Church, but I don't remember what Our Lady said as such. She never talked to me about the future. She didn't tell me to be a priest, she never talked about vocations.

I told her all my problems at that time which were quite significant. It was one of the worst periods of my life because I had broken my spine, but that was nothing compared to the emotional pain I was going through. My sister had run away from home, everyone was fighting, no one in my family spoke to me for a long period. So I told her all my problems and she ignored me. After all this she told me to give my life to Jesus; to pray with a firm faith and to surrender my life to Jesus. At the time it felt like a slap in the face. I thought, "Why are you ignoring me?" But I could not object, she was controlling the conversation at this stage. I can see now that when she answered me she told me what I needed to do to do the right thing: to give my heart to Jesus, to pray with a firm faith and to surrender my life to Jesus.

So those of you who have come to Medjugorje to pray for some special need and you come to me for some wisdom, I have no wisdom to give you except what Our Lady has given me – if it's good enough for me it's good enough for you: "Give your heart to Jesus, pray with a firm faith and surrender your life to Jesus." That is what she told me. She told me that I must not go looking for her, that I would not see her again, except she would come for me when I died. There are a few other things that she said that I don't think are relevant.

So that's what happened. After that I kept quiet about it for years. I did not tell a soul until more recently. Those of you who are more observant will realize that I am actually being obedient to Our Lady. She said, "Tell everyone you meet that I am their mother and that I love them."

Honestly, I don't care if you don't believe me. I try to imagine if I were sitting in your seat there was this little brown priest on the stage telling me this story about Medjugorje, about seeing Our Lady, would I think he was mad? I don't care if you don't believe me, I really don't care, but what I want you to believe is that **Our Lady loves you and she looks at you like you are the only child in the universe, and that she loves you so powerfully, so deeply.** I want you to believe that at least. You don't have to believe the rest of it, it's not important.

Having seen Our Lady just once has had two side effects: first, everything in life is a bit boring. The most exciting things in life are boring and it is a bit difficult sometimes. The second one is that it has left me without a fear of death. When people tell me they have cancer and have only a few months to live, I say all the right things to them, but inside me I'm always thinking, "Oh you lucky thing, you are going to see her." Then I try to imagine it from their perspective – it must be terrifying. But I still think, "No, you lucky thing, you are going to see her and she is so beautiful." Why would you not want to go? I would go now if given the choice. She is so beautiful.

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“If we—all of us—accept the grace of Jesus Christ, he changes our heart and from sinners makes us saints. To become holy we do not need to turn our eyes away and look somewhere else, or have as it were the face on a holy card! No, no, that is not necessary. To become saints only one thing is necessary: to accept the grace that the Father gives us in Jesus Christ. There, this grace changes our heart. We continue to be sinners

for we are weak, but with this grace which makes us feel that the Lord is good, that the Lord is merciful, that the Lord waits for us, that the Lord pardons us—this immense grace that changes our heart.”

— Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy

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