



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
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If this is the first time you have received this newsletter, and you would like a "Beginner's Guide," please contact us for one.



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CURRENT MONTHLY MESSAGE OF MARCH 25, 2018

ON THE 25TH DAY OF EACH MONTH, THE BLESSED VIRGIN GIVES A MESSAGE TO THE VISIONARY, MARIJA, THAT IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WORLD.

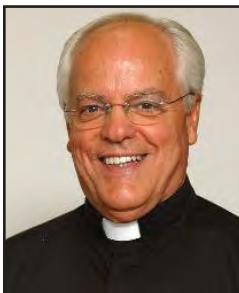


This painting of Divine Mercy is the work of Croatian artist, Petar Šibenik, who graciously gave us permission to use it. Divine Mercy Sunday this year is on April 8. You can read about it on page 2. "Open your heart to God's mercy ... The heavenly Father desires to deliver each of you from the slavery of sin. Therefore, little children, make good use of this time, and through meeting with God in confession, leave sin and decide for holiness." (Our Lady, 2/25/07)

"Dear children! I am calling you to be with me in prayer in this time of grace when darkness is fighting against the light. Pray, little children, confess and begin a new life in grace. Decide for God and He will lead you towards holiness; and the cross will be a sign of victory and hope for you. Be proud that you are baptized and grateful in your heart that you are a part of God's plan. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Mercy, Love, Forgiveness, Trust

By Fr. Bill Kiel



Fr. Bill Kiel

In the Catholic faith, the sacrament of Penance/Confession is the sacrament of mercy, forgiveness and love. In Her messages, our Blessed Mother reminds us of the importance of confession: "Jesus desires to fill your hearts with peace and joy. You cannot realize peace if you are not at peace with Jesus. Therefore, I invite you to confession so Jesus may be your truth and peace." (1/25/95) Also,

"I come today to lead you on the way of humility and meekness. The first station on the way, my children, is confession... The only thing that is yours and what you possess is sin. Be cleansed and accept meekness and humility." (7/2/07)

Jesus also gave beautiful messages through St. Faustina—words for each of us to try to live out in everyday life. At the Mass of canonization of St. Faustina, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the Second Sunday of Easter would be called Divine Mercy Sunday. The question of how we should celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday often arises in Catholic groups. Participate in the Mass and note the beautiful readings of the day which deal with love, trust, mercy and forgiveness; repent of all sins, go to Confession and receive Holy Communion (see below); place complete trust in Jesus; venerate the image of Divine Mercy and be merciful to all people.

Attached to the Divine Mercy feast there is a plenary

indulgence that was issued in 2002. The plenary indulgence does not change the promises Jesus gave to Saint Faustina; it endorses the messages, through the Church, and provides souls more time to go to Confession. To obtain the plenary indulgence one must go to Confession "within about 20 days" of the Feast, receive Communion on the Feast, pray for the intentions of the Pope, be detached from all sin (even venial sin), pray the Our Father and the Creed, along with a devout prayer such as, "Merciful Jesus, I trust in You." A plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day, and can be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

Our Blessed Mother reminds us: "*I desire for you to learn to boundlessly trust in His mercy and His love, as I always trusted.*" (3/18/16) This time of the year—at Easter—is a period of new growth, as we observe the blooming spring flowers and shrubs, and Our Lady gives us these words: "*I am calling 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.*" (3/25/17)

As we reflect on words given to us by Our Lady, we can understand Her help in bringing us closer to Her Son and all the graces, joy, peace and love Jesus has for each one of us. Both Jesus and His Mother encourage us to receive His mercy and love. Ask yourself, "Am I attempting to trust and love as requested?"

Mary Queen of Peace, pray for us.

Our Lady's Message to Mirjana Soldo on March 2, 2018

Dear children, great are the works that the Heavenly Father has done in me, as He does in all those who love Him tenderly and who faithfully and devoutly serve Him. My children, the Heavenly Father loves you, and it is through His love that I am here with you. He is speaking to you. Why do you not desire to see the signs? Everything is easier alongside Him. Also, pain lived with Him is easier because faith exists. Faith helps in the pain, and pain without faith leads to despair. Pain lived and offered to God raises up. Did my Son not redeem the world through His painful sacrifice? As His mother I was with Him in the pain and suffering, as I am with all of you. My children, I am with you



Mirjana during an apparition

in life, in suffering, in pain, in joy and in love. Therefore, have hope. It is hope that makes you comprehend that life is there. My children, I am speaking to you, my voice is speaking to your soul, my heart is speaking to your heart. Oh, apostles of my love, how much my motherly heart loves you. How many things I desire to teach you. How my motherly heart desires that you be complete, and you can be complete only when your soul, body and love are united within you. I implore you as my

children, pray much for the Church and her servants – your shepherds; that the Church may be such as my Son desires – clear as spring water and full of love. Thank you!

Our thanks to Mary Jo Jaglowski, Sue Taccone, Joanne Warren, Diane Niebauer, Cassandra Dragone, Chris Falk, Joan Peterson, Marge Burchard, Julie Hansen, Marge Spase, Kathy Luschini, Rose Heintzel, Dianne Yochim, Barb Cesare, Georgia Chludzinski, Peggy Chludzinski, Vickie DeCoursey, Estrella Igras, Louise Lotze, Barb Sirianni, and those who want to remain anonymous for their help with the March mailing. We thank Dorothy Cavanaugh and Mary Stumpp for making more prayer cloths. We also thank our proofreader, Pat Berrier, our webmaster, Jason Klins, and our prayer group administrator, Patti Millar.

As of March 25, 2018, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 23,406.

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for April
For those who have
Responsibility in Economic Matters: That economists may have the courage to reject any economy of exclusion and know how to open new paths.



Confession is a Gift

The following is an excerpt from a reflection written by Fr. Jozo Zovko in February of 2009.

We are called to confession, to give up our sin forever. Once I visited one of the largest Buddhist temples. There are twelve thousand Buddha statues in it. At the temple entrance there is a dragon. Its paw is so bright that the question poses itself: "Why?" A teacher of Buddhism explained to me that Buddhists leave their sins under the paws of the dragon for it to keep them while they are in the temple. And when they leave the temple their sins again follow them like a shadow. That dragon is some kind of a cloakroom for sins. But only for a short while the dragon keeps the sins lest they disturb one while he is in the temple.



Window in St. James in Medjugorje

needs, how He redeems our sins. No man can take sins upon himself. Nobody can destroy them, to burn them like paper. Neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist can say to you: "Have no fear! You have confessed your sin and it is no more in your conscience, in your life." A thing like that surpasses human power. Only God forgives sins. In Jesus and through Jesus, He forgives our sins. Jesus left this gift and this grace to the Church through His priests. Our sin has not been deposited in some darkness, in a space of oblivion. No! Our sin has been forgiven in a sacramental Confession. In the Confession it disappeared in the ocean of God's mercy and love. Have no fear. After Confession your sin will no longer weigh down upon you. Therefore the man whose sins have been forgiven knows to whom he should go and to thank for the immense and divine peace in his heart, conscience and soul. Confession is medicine. Confession is a gift that only God gives to His children. This grace, this sacramental grace opens my heart and changes it, and I wish only one thing: never more to offend my God and spurn His love!

A Pearl in the Mud

In her book, *My Heart Will Triumph*, visionary Mirjana Soldo wrote about the Sacrament of Confession.

Our Lady asks us to confess our sins at least once a month, and as Catholics, of course, she means through the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a priest.

"*My children, only a pure heart, unburdened by sin, can open itself and only honest eyes can see the way by which I desire to lead you.*" (December 2, 2011)

"*Dear children! In the great love of God, I come to you today to lead you on the way of humility and meekness. The first station on that way, my children, is confession. Reject your arrogance and kneel down before my Son.*" (July 2, 2007)

"*... I desire to help you to be free of the dirtiness of the past and to begin to live anew and differently. I am calling you to resurrect in my Son. Along with confession of sins, renounce everything that has distanced you from my Son and that has made your life empty and unsuccessful.*" (May 2, 2011)

Our Lady said that there isn't a man in the world who doesn't need to go to confession at least once a month. When I relate this to pilgrims, I always smile and add, "Notice that she didn't mention women. Our Lady knows that we have enough crosses to bear!" When Jakov hears me say that, he says, "Yes, it's true that men should go to confession monthly, but women need to go every day!"

A heartfelt confession cleanses you from past transgressions, lifts the weight of sin from your shoulders, and allows God to fill you with His peace.

"A pearl that falls in the mud is still a pearl," says Fr. Stanko Čosić, "but you can only see its beauty after you clean it off. So it is with our souls in confession."

Message to Mirjana on March 18, 2018

Mirjana Soldo had daily apparitions from June 24, 1981 to December 25, 1982. During the last daily apparition, Our Lady gave her the 10th secret, and told her

that She would appear to her every year on March 18. (Mirjana's birthday is on March 18, but she states that is not why Our Lady appears to her on that day.)

Dear children! My earthly life was simple. I loved and I rejoiced in small things. I loved life – the gift from God – even though pain and sufferings pierced my heart. My children, I had the strength of faith and boundless trust in God's love. All those who have the strength of faith are stronger. Faith makes you live according to what is good and then the light of God's love always comes at the desired moment. That is the strength which sustains in pain and suffering. My children, pray for the strength of faith, trust in the Heavenly Father, and do not be afraid. Know that not a single creature who belongs to God will be lost but will live forever. Every pain has its end and then life in freedom begins there where all of my children come – where everything is returned. My children, your battle is difficult. It will be even more difficult, but you follow my example. Pray for the strength of faith; trust in the love of the Heavenly Father. I am with you. I am manifesting myself to you. I am encouraging you. With immeasurable motherly love I am caressing your souls. Thank you.

I Did Not Believe...

By Fr. Eugenio La Barbera

This testimony is part of a homily given at Medjugorje in January 2008, by Fr. Eugenio La Barbera.

Every time I come to Medjugorje, I feel it is my duty to give my testimony about the way Our Lady called me to form a monastic community in Brazil. Now we have three monasteries in Brazil.

I did not believe in Medjugorje, and in May 1987, I was in a deep existential crisis when a priest, Don Valdemaro Boggiano Pico, a dear friend of mine, kind of forced me to come to Medjugorje. And so I came here with two friends of mine. They believed in these apparitions. I did not... not at all.

When we arrived in Medjugorje, it was raining, and there should have been an apparition to Ivan, but on that day they told us – we had just arrived and were still on the coach – that the apparition was only for Ivan's prayer group and so we were excluded. All the people on the coach became very sad because they could not be there. On the contrary, I became very happy and started making fun of everybody saying, "You see, you came here and Our Lady does not even want you!"

At that time there were no hotels, no shops, nothing. We were staying in the house of some local people. I remember that we had to keep the window closed because downstairs there were the stables and the smell rose up... and we kept the door open and the door was opening up on Krizevac.

At a certain point, one of my friends – we were lodged all in this same room – said to me, "Eugenio, shall we go and pray and make the Stations of the Cross?" I replied "What Stations of the Cross? It's raining, and in any case, Our Lady said that we cannot go up there because there is the prayer group up on the mountain. What are we going to do up there? Rest assured, Our Lady is not here!"

Later on, our hosts brought us a watery soup. I don't know what it was, and while we were eating my other friend said to me, "Look, Eugenio, there is a star on the cross on Krizevac; you see, that's the sign that you wanted; Our Lady is calling us." But like a good philosopher and with an iron logic, I replied, "Dear friend, a star does not indicate Our Lady's presence; there are so many stars in the sky!" He became offended and so I said, "All right, you want to go and make the Stations of the Cross, let's go!" Inside myself I was thinking, "Tonight I will make them die, I will preach for such a long time, each preaching longer than the last one!" And so I started.

Everybody was kneeling down – I was standing – and I started to preach for quite a long time... "Your knees will bleed tonight." But then, at a certain point, I realized that my anorak [jacket] was dry; it was raining, and so I was overcome by a terrible fear; I didn't know anything. Before, I thought I knew theology, I thought I knew everything, and now I was confronted with a phenomenon that I could not control. So I started touching the soil and obviously it was wet because it was raining, and so at a certain point I said to my friends, "Well, let's go to the next Station." I touched

them. They were wet. I touched my anorak – it was dry!

I remember that it was a very quick Via Crucis [Way of the Cross], because I was scared, and when we arrived on Krizevac, from that one star many circles of stars were formed, and where we stood, it had stopped raining; but outside this circle it was still raining. I had no courage to say anything to them, and they did not say anything to me. So I said, "Well, let's pray silently."

I remember that on that night I unburdened all my bitterness to Our Lady: I told Her, "Look, I don't know if you exist, if you are appearing here, but I want to tell you something: first of all that I am not just a good priest, I am an excellent priest, because I say the Rosary, because I read my Breviary, because I listen to confessions." I told Her all the good things I was doing, but I did not tell Her my sins, only the good things! I said to Our Lady, "And what has been my reward? Listen, my father died of bone cancer, my brother's business partner is in jail, my brother is in jail and I am here... and in my community they think badly of

me." What can I say? I gave vent to everything I had inside my heart, and I said, "Well, if you give everybody signs, you could give one to Fr. Eugenio, a sign of your presence."

The next day, this friend of mine, Don Valdemaro Boggiano Pico, who at the time was writing a book on Medjugorje, asked me to lead the Rosary on the Hill of Apparitions, so we went up the hill, we said the Rosary, and then I sat there. Once there were no plaques commemorating the mysteries of the Rosary, there was nothing, but the faithful would put small wooden crosses there as a sign of their faith. I was sitting there, thinking of nothing, just looking down the hill when, at a certain point, a man approached. This gentleman, that I did not know, very well dressed, with a tie, asked me, "Are you Fr. Eugenio La Barbera?" Name and surname!

Because we were in a communist country at that time in 1987, I thought he was a guard and that he had come to take me to jail, and so I said to myself, "At least my brother is in an Italian jail, I'll end up in a communist jail!" So I replied, "Yes, it's me."

"I have something to tell you," he replied, "regarding the questions that you asked Our Lady last night on Krizevac. Do you want to hear it?" And I realized that it is not only women who are curious, but men too, because I was curious to know. Even worse, I looked around me to see that nobody was listening and then I said to the man, "You can tell me." He said, "First of all, Our Lady wants you to know that you are a good priest, an excellent priest." (At that moment I felt so ashamed!) "Your father is in Paradise with your mother, and your brother will come out of prison very soon, but because you do not believe, Our Lady will give you a sign before you leave Medjugorje."

I remember that I ran away from that place, I did not even let him finish speaking, and I ran down the hill. There I met Don Valdemaro Boggiano Pico and I said to him, "I want to go to confession because I think I am going to die." And I made a General Confession of my whole life, and poor



Fr. Eugenio

Don Valdemaro, he was telling me, "No, no, you did not believe and She wanted to give you a sign." "Yes, yes," I said, "look, I have had enough signs." And I told him about my dry anorak. "Listen, I believe you, I believe, but another sign and I will die of a heart attack. Therefore I believe, full stop."

A pilgrim group arrived from Emilia Romagna and did not have a priest, so I was asked to help them with the Stations of the Cross. I remember that I prepared myself well and when they arrived, we introduced ourselves and then we went to make the Stations of the Cross. At the Third Station, when Jesus falls for the first time, a young man between 18 and 20 years of age started to cry, and he cried so loud, so loud, and I could not speak because all the pilgrims were looking at him. On the other hand, I did not have the courage to tell him to stop because, I said to myself, it is possible that Our Lady could appear and I did not want Her to appear to me and so even that time the Via Crucis was very quick.

When we arrived on Krizevac, I stopped speaking and this young man stopped crying, and I became so exasperated because now he could have cried as much as he liked, and instead he had stopped! But this young man came near me and said, "Father, I am very sorry but something happened to me." "What happened? It's true that I am a good preacher, but not so good that you have to cry so much!" He said, "Look, I have seen all my sins, like in a film, and I cried and repented and more sins were coming up and I cried and repented and I could see more sins..."

As a priest, I was thinking, "How many sins has he got? From the Third to the Fifteenth Station!" Then he said, "When you stopped talking, I heard a very clear voice saying to me, 'Your sins are forgiven, but you need the forgiveness of the Church. Go and confess your sins to Fr. Eugenio', and here I am, I want to go to Confession." And so I listened to his confession...

At a certain point, this young man rolled up his sleeves and his arms were all black. He was a drug addict. Then he took some vials that he had in his pocket and broke them on the mountain stones and so I said to him, "Listen, my young man, it is true that Our Lady blessed you. It is true that your sins are forgiven, but you are an addict. You inject yourself with this drug. You cannot stop from one moment to the next."

Opening his arms, he said to me, "Fr. Eugenio, I have been healed, I am that sign that Our Lady promised to give you



Third Station on Mt. Krizevac

before you left Medjugorje..."

And from that year, I have always come to Medjugorje to thank Our Lady.

Years later, several years later, again here in Medjugorje, Our Lady called me through Vicka the visionary to form a religious community. I did not want to, and I was very rude with Vicka. With a certain irony I said to her, "Our Lady told you so? Don't tell me, tell Our Lady to which Swiss bank I should go to get the money!" A lot of money was needed to form a congregation, and I remember that Vicka, always smiling, didn't get offended. She said me, "Okay, I will ask Her." "Okay, ask Her!" I replied.

The next day, I was passing where Vicka used to give her talk – I don't know if she still does it – but she was speaking in front of her grandmother's house. I passed in front of her and she called me, "Our Lady said that the inheritance that you have received from your family is not yours; it belongs to God. So Our Lady said spend your inheritance and then She will help you." I wasn't totally convinced of this, because Medjugorje had not been recognized, and so I went to see the Pope [now St. John Paul II] and I explained to him, "Your Holiness, that's what happened, you know... I am a missionary, I live in Brazil, I have so many things to do..." (At that time I was the director of the Charismatic Renewal.)

The Pope said to me, "Okay, the fact that the apparitions have not been recognized yet does not mean that you cannot form a congregation." And so we went ahead, and today we are a monastery "sui juris", that is a monastery officially recognized by the Church, and I am the Abbot. And so let's thank the Lord because, you see, with so many signs, so many things... the Church tells us that when we search for Truth, then the Lord will make us realize that there is nothing that could prevent God's will to be realized in everything.

I remember that when the constitution was approved (naturally it was sent to the Congregation for Religious Orders) – I don't know why, but our constitution ended up on Cardinal Ratzinger's desk and he stamped it "Approved". I still remember that the chancellor of my diocese said to me: "Look, either Cardinal Ratzinger was drunk, and I don't think so, or he did not read it, because we are a Third World country – Brazil... or Our Lady closed both his eyes, because your community has been approved."

And so, with you, I praise the Lord. Let's thank the Lord! And I thank Our Lady who called me to this new mission. Today we have three monasteries in Brazil and we live a Benedictine-Marian spirituality, according to all Our Lady asked us to do and to put into practice. Amen.

The Medjugorje Message, UK, February 2008 issue

A Healing in the Confessional

The following testimony was written in May of 2000 by Ante Muzic, who gave us permission to print it.

Last Monday, at the apparition on the Blue Cross, among lots of pilgrims that were there, there was also an older man from Italy. His wife is alcoholic, and he was here [in Medjugorje] to pray for her healing. Also, he had a car crash several years ago, and from that day, he can walk only with the crutches. He had several operations, but his problem was getting worse. During the apparition, at the time when Our Lady came, he saw a light... This man, during the apparition, felt a very strong desire to go to Confession. There had been several years since he had been to Confession. The next day, after the Mass, he found a priest, and he did confess his sins. When he left the confession box, after a few steps, he realized that he could walk perfectly!

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he then said to the paralytic, 'Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home'" (Mt 9:6).

Jim Caviezel Speaks about Medjugorje

Translated from Croatian on the official Medjugorje website, Mir Medjugorje, www.medjugorje.hr

Jim Caviezel, actor from Hollywood, spent some time in Medjugorje this summer [2016] and also paid a visit to Radio Mir Medjugorje. He became a world-wide famous person after he played leading role in Mel Gibson's movie *Passion*. He said that if he had not received Medjugorje experiences prior to the movie, he would have never accepted that role, since it was in Medjugorje that he experienced completely new dimension of the faith. He also announced filming of [a] movie *Resurrection* and invited faithful and priests to pray for that intention.

"Medjugorje is a place of hope for me. Everyone who comes here can have that profound encounter with Heaven. I found out about Medjugorje while I was in Ireland during making of [the] movie *The Count of Monte Cristo*. We had major problems with the script and I could feel something bad was going to happen. When you are a part of movie world, the whole career can go downhill if you happen to have only one bad movie. At the same time, my wife was in Medjugorje on her first pilgrimage there. When we spoke on the phone, I could hear a change in her voice. She told me that visionary Ivan Dragićević was going to come to Ireland. I had a free day and I was able to come for one apparition. I stood at the very back of the packed church and I did not really understand what was happening. I was in the section where disabled persons were. When the moment of apparitions began, I was sitting while people who were in wheelchairs were trying to kneel down. I was moved by that, as I did not feel like doing something similar."

"The apparition was finished and Ivan looked at me, came close to me and, in poor English, said that he wished to see me on following Sunday for the apparition. I really did not know if that would be possible or not, as my schedule was really full. However, I went to the home of one man who was bringing groups from Ireland to Medjugorje. We became friends and Ivan was there also. I believed in the apparitions in Lourdes and Fatima, but it was as if I did not believe in the apparitions in Medjugorje. Everything was strange to me. In the moment when the apparition began, I looked at Ivan's face. I could see [his] smile and gaze of ecstasy. I looked at him as [an] actor and I thought [to] myself that he really needed to be [a] great actor to play out those impressions. I started to question that and to question Gospa too. I said – You need to tell me what is this. Is this the truth or not, is he faking this or not?! I prayed, I prayed that She would do a miracle in the movie we were making. 'I need your help,' I said. Suddenly, it was as if I could feel a smile on my soul. It was as if the part of Heaven touched me. Tears were falling down my face. I became aware how many times I threw God out of my life."

"Ivan said how Gospa was there to bring me to Her Son. That is how I continued to film [the] movie and we went to Malta. [The] movie director was agnostic and he had

his personal doubts about the faith. We were filming in one huge castle full of paintings and art work and none of those images had any connection to religion. My character in the movie was to decide whether he would follow the love of his life. Then, among many such paintings they needed to decide which painting is going to be on the ceiling during shooting of that scene. Somehow we continued filming in a room that used to be room for a child and Our Lady's image was on the ceiling. [The] director, who knew that was Our Lady, but did not know [the] meaning of Her, brought that painting on the set. The painting was put up and the scene with it was miraculously filmed at that time."

"For me, that was a sign that Our Lady was there and that She was watching over this project. At the end of filming, I told my wife that I wanted to go to Medjugorje straight afterwards. I felt that something huge was going to happen. Soon, I had a phone call from Mel Gibson. He told me that he wanted me to play Jesus in his new movie, and that most likely, if I accept, I would not have any more business in this movie city. He also told me that he did not want to be responsible for the breakdown of my movie career," said Jim and added that [the] movie *Passion* even after years is one of the most popular movies ever.

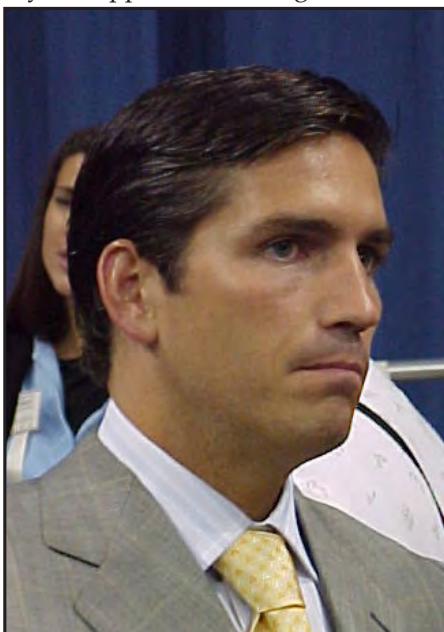
When asked about messages of Gospa, this American actor said: "When I read one [of] Gospa's messages, I immediately recognize the voice of my Shepherd and my Mother who speak to me. The gift we have when we read Our Lady's messages is more than anything else we can perceive or imagine in this world. We have a gift that God speaks to us now, but many people reject that. I am sure that movie *Passion* would have never been filmed if it wasn't for Medjugorje. This

world would have been a wreck without Gospa and Her apparitions. This is a blessed time; we live in the time of many graces and hope. Prior to my meeting with Ivan and Medjugorje, I did not have anything I could give. Now, I have something thanks to Medjugorje. Huge responsibility lies on each one of us; however, you who live here have much bigger responsibility since you can receive so many spiritual blessings and joys."

"It is not difficult for me to live my faith. I know now well in which direction the future is heading. I do not place my beliefs or trust on material things, as I know soon all will be taken away from me. Indeed, it was much harder while I was spiritually empty. Back then, my life was completely turned to meaninglessness."

Mir Medjugorje, www.medjugorje.hr

*Editor's note: I have been saving this article for over a year, and have not felt prompted to use it until now. But this was Our Lady's timing as Jim is now part of a new movie called, *Paul, Apostle of Christ*, which premieres on March 23.*



Jim Caviezel at the Notre Dame Conference in 2002

Confessions at Walmart

By June Klins

When I was in grade school, the nuns told us that the Pope went to Confession every day. I wondered, "What could the Pope do wrong that he had to go to Confession so often?" Fr. Will, a missionary priest, answered this question at a novena I attended years ago. He said that we should go to Confession even if we have no serious sins because every time we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation we obtain graces to strengthen us to fight temptation.

Chances are, however, that most people have something that needs to be confessed. Once the visionaries told about a time when Our Lady said that the people who were with them were allowed to touch Her, even though they could not see Her. Before long, Our Lady's gown became blackened, and She explained that the darkening of Her gown had been caused by the sins that had accumulated on the souls of the people touching Her, and She recommended that they go to Confession.

Fr. Will said that often people say they do not need to go to a priest to confess.

But Father explained that in the other sacrament which takes away sin – Baptism – we need someone to baptize us. We cannot baptize ourselves, and it is the same with Confession. The grace of forgiveness is a "ministered" grace. It comes through a minister. We cannot do it ourselves. Isn't it such a relief to hear those words, "I absolve you...?"

Father Will said that when we repent of our sins, it is like putting the garbage out for the garbage collector. Likewise, he said that when we hold back on certain sins and do not repent, it is like keeping the garbage in the house. After a while it is going to stink!

Father recommended that a good way to examine our consciences is to go through the seven capital sins. To find our main faults, he said that we should ask our families and the people at work. That is where our main faults show up – with family and at work. He cautioned to be careful about watching TV and looking at the internet – "Garbage in; garbage out."

Father Will said that sometimes people are afraid to go to Confession because they think the priest will think less of them for what they did, but that it is actually quite the opposite. Priests have respect for a person who humbles himself like this and in fact, it often "makes their day," especially if it has been a long time between confessions.

The fact that the Lord will go to any length to bring someone to Confession is illustrated by the following story (The name of the priest involved has been changed for privacy): Fr. Tom said that one time he was in Walmart on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and a lady he did

not know approached him. She said that her husband was very ill and she was worried because he had not been to Confession in 30 or 40 years, although he went to Mass every Sunday. She said he NEEDED to go to Confession and that they always argued about this. On the way there, they passed a house that had a big picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the window. The lady remembered that the following day was the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and that particular day was the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So she prayed to the Immaculate Heart and the Sacred Heart that her husband would go to Confession. As they argued in the car about this, her husband blurted, "If Walmart is having confessions today, then I will go." So when she saw Father Tom dressed in his clerics in Walmart, she approached him and asked him to hear her husband's confession! Father was a little apprehensive, but looked at his watch and saw that it was a few minutes before 3:00, the Hour of Mercy, and being that it was the feast of the Sacred Heart, a favorite devotion of his, he agreed. He went out to the car where the man had been waiting for his wife and knocked on the window and told the man what his wife had said about Walmart having confessions. How could the man resist???

Father said he shared this story to show the great love of the Sacred Heart for us, and also to impress upon us to never give up praying for our loved ones to come back to Confession. You never know when that moment of grace will come.

When I spoke with Fr. Tom about this story I mentioned that it was good that he was wearing his clerics. Otherwise the woman would not have known he was a priest. He said he had just come from mowing his mother's lawn and just stopped into Walmart to get one thing and normally would not have been wearing his clerics after mowing the lawn. Who but God could orchestrate this scenario? What lengths He goes to for one lost sheep!

Editor's note: This story may sound familiar. It was adapted from the original story in our September 2005 issue, and also in our Volume III book, I Have Come to Tell the World that God Exists. I felt prompted to print it again and add the following additional details: Fr. Tom told me months later that someone had left a copy of our September 2005 issue with this story at one of our hospitals and a lady who read it felt driven to go to Confession after a lapse of many years. She went to Fr. Tom and told him about this. She had no idea that Fr. Tom was the priest in the story because I had changed his name! Also I later found out that the lady who had the Immaculate Heart of Mary in her window, which inspired this story, is a member of our mailing crew!!! What are the odds of that?!



"The first and essential weapon against the devil is truthfulness; every word of truth you say is an arrow you shoot into the heart of the evil one; and every honest confession of sin is a spear with which you pierce his heart." ~St. Charbel (our patron saint this year)

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MARY IS CALLING YOU

On June 24, 1981 in Medjugorje, Our Lady appeared to six children. She identified Herself as the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Peace, and has continued to appear daily. Her message is PEACE, peace with God and man. Her words to the visionaries, "I have come to tell the world that God exists. He is the fullness of life, and to enjoy this fullness and obtain peace, you must return to God."

Today, all but three of the visionaries have daily apparitions of the Blessed Mother. During the apparitions, the visionaries do not react to light, don't hear any sound or react to being touched. They feel that they are outside of time and space. All the visionaries declare to see the Blessed Virgin as they see other people - in three dimension. They pray and speak with Her.

The Blessed Mother is confiding ten secrets to each visionary (some are chastisements for the world) and promises to leave a visible sign at the place of the apparitions in Medjugorje for all humanity. This time, this period of grace, is for CONVERSION

and a DEEPENING OF FAITH. After the visible sign, those still living will have little time for conversion.

Father Jozo Zovko, who was the pastor of St. James when the apparitions began, has spoken about what he calls "the weapons" or the "five stones" of Our Lady. They are: prayer with the heart, especially the Rosary; Eucharist; Holy Bible; monthly Confession; and fasting.

The publisher recognizes and accepts that the final authority regarding the apparitions at Medjugorje rest with the Holy See in Rome.

To borrow an original prayer cloth from Medjugorje for a week, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the address below. You must include your phone number. If you want a prayer cloth we made to keep, send a self-addressed stamped business size (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") envelope with \$.71 postage on it.



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