

THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE

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www.spiritofmedjugorje.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATE - FREE WILL OFFERING - PLEASE SEE PAGE 8

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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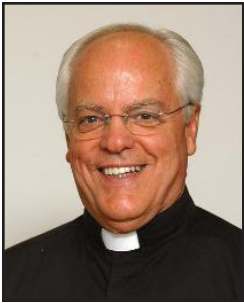
CURRENT MONTHLY MESSAGE OF DECEMBER 25, 2016

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.



On January 1, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This beautiful picture above was taken in the waiting room of a dentist's office in Medjugorje in 1999.

“Dear children! With great joy, today I am carrying my Son Jesus to you, for Him to give you His peace. Open your hearts, little children, and be joyful that you can receive it. Heaven is with you and is fighting for peace in your hearts, in the families and in the world; and you, little children, help with your prayers for it to be so. I bless you with my Son Jesus and call you not to lose hope; and for your gaze and heart to always be directed towards Heaven and eternity. In this way, you will be open to God and to His plans. Thank you for having responded to my call.”



Fr. Bill Kiel

What are the Fruits?

By Fr. Bill Kiel

Although the alleged apparitions have not yet been approved by the Church, many spiritually life-changing incidents have taken place. Those who have traveled to this small Bosnian village talk freely about the indescribable peace that pervades the area and the people — both natives and pilgrims. Prayer often becomes an integral part of daily life for pilgrims after having participated in so many Masses, the Sacrament of Penance, Stations of the Cross, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, discussions of the Catholic faith, in praying the Rosary, and visiting and attending Masses in a number of different churches in nearby villages.

Pilgrims who have visited places for homeless children, unwed mothers, and young adults in transition to independent living, often return to offer ongoing help. Usually, these activities happen during seven or eight-day visits, when there is more time to spend enhancing the spiritual life through prayer along with works of mercy.

We take to heart words such as ... *He breaks the bread with you and gives you the words of love so that you may transform them into merciful acts and be witnesses of truth. He will make use of you to care for the wounded and to convert lost souls. ... Pray it (Rosary) with feelings of goodness, sacrifice and mercy. Pray, not only with words, but with merciful acts (12/2/16).* [See page 3.]

After experiencing Medjugorje, lives are often transformed into being more like Jesus and less into being

of this world. Pilgrims have organized help for many poor and disadvantaged in the Medjugorje area. Most people in the United States could not imagine the living conditions of the poor in the countryside of Medjugorje; but our pilgrims have become increasingly aware of the need for those living without running water, daily food rations, warm clothing and substantial housing. As pilgrims, we pray for ourselves and the intentions we carry from others, but also we pray for those living in the wider Medjugorje countryside. Any help given to these people is very greatly appreciated; they recognize merciful acts of prayer and goodness.

Our visit in November [2016] included a home for unwed mothers. Usually, the unwed mother is not supported by any organization or family. The home we visited was organized and administered by nuns. It was an example of true trust in Divine Providence — ALL their needs are dependent on what God sends them through donations from people. Everything they receive is used in some way; many times “discarded” materials are used to make craft items that are offered for sale to visitors or shops in the village. These women who are given shelter and support are very grateful for what Divine Providence supplies.

Indeed, Medjugorje pilgrims often return home transformed with a deeper appreciation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance, and the importance of prayer and living a Christ-like life. I have witnessed these changes over the 40 pilgrimages I have made with non-Catholics, “lukewarm” Catholics, and “fervent” Catholics. The fruits of the pilgrimages are evident!

Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us.

About this issue...

On the day we mailed the December issue, my Uncle Bernie fell and broke his hip. He died two days later, during surgery. The day of his funeral, my father got word that his stress test the week before showed a blockage, and of course he needed to have that taken care of. In the midst of all this, and attempting to prepare for Christmas, I had to put the January issue together. To say this was a challenge is an understatement. But on the day of the funeral, I received the story on page 4 in the mail. It was just what I needed to read that day. I hope it inspires you as well. Please pray for the soul of my uncle, who was also my godfather. He loved reading this newsletter and would read and re-read it every month.



Statue in Medjugorje of Our Lady of Fatima in 2011

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. Our Lady has said that what She started in Fatima will be fulfilled in Medjugorje. We hope to highlight the main messages of Fatima – prayer, sacrifice, and reparation – throughout the coming year.

This is also our 30th year of publishing! We thank Our Lady that we have been able to spread Her messages for 30 years without ever having to charge a subscription rate. We have worked out of our homes, and have never taken a salary, so that we can spread Our Lady’s messages to anyone who wants to read them. We are more than happy to do this, and we thank Our Lady and Our Lord for the honor and privilege of being a part of this important event for the world.

Our thanks to Susannah Klins, Sue Taccone, Diane Niebauer, Marge Spase, Julie Hansen, Sue Kirby, Mary Tirak, Cindy Bielamin, Georgia Chludzinski, Dianne Yochim, Kathy Luschini, Peggy Chludzinski, Louise Lotze, Diana Englund, and those who want to remain anonymous for their help with the December mailing. We thank Helen Bell and Mike Golovich for their photos. We also thank our proofreader, Pat Berrier, and our webmaster, Jason Klins.

Prayer Intentions of Pope Francis for January:

Christian Unity: That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord’s teaching by striving with prayer and fraternal charity to restore ecclesial communion and by collaborating to meet the challenges facing humanity.

Note: This year the Pope will only present one intention for the month, instead of two.



Patron Saint for 2017

By June Klins

For a number of years now, we have been randomly choosing the name of a saint to be our “holy protector” for the year. St. Faustina’s community used to do this every year on New Year’s Day. This can be a fun and educational thing to do with your family, friends, prayer group, or parish. Almost always, there is a connection between the saint and the person or group who randomly picked it. What is especially heartening is the fact that the saint does not leave you at the end of the year. So, if you do this every year, you will eventually have a whole army of holy helpers protecting you!

Although any list of saints can be used, there is a good one on this site: marytv.tv/?page_id=1011. You can also use the saint generator on jenniferfulwiler.com/saints/. However you choose, it is important to pray to the Holy Spirit first! The tradition goes that it is the saint who chooses you, not the other way around. The saint wishes to help you. As you pray with the saint every day, that saint will pray for you and help you.

On August 25, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI recommended choosing a special saint as a model. Speaking in his General Audience, the Pope encouraged everyone to have a devotion to a particular saint, so that the saint can intercede but also be a model to imitate. On October 25, 2010, Our Lady said, “*Pray and seek the intercession of all the saints. May they be for you an*

example, an incentive and a joy towards eternal life.”

This year, it was my oldest grandchild’s turn to pick the saint for *The Spirit of Medjugorje*. When 10 year-old Thomas picked St. Martin de Porres, I was a little surprised. I did not see a connection right away like I did last year with

St. Francis of Assisi. In my research, I found that Martin de Porres Velázquez, O.P. (December 9, 1579 – November 3, 1639), was a lay brother of the Dominican Order who was canonized in 1962 by Pope John XXIII.

St. Martin led an austere lifestyle, which included fasting and abstaining from meat. Of course, fasting is one of the main messages of Our Lady, so perhaps he is going to help us to do a better job of fasting this year!

St. Martin had many spiritual gifts. In one story, Martin and the novices overstayed their time at a picnic and could not get back to the convent in time for prayers. So Martin told them to join hands and, before they knew what had happened, they were standing in the convent yard, unable to explain how they had covered the several miles in a few seconds! “*Through fasting and prayer...one can suspend the laws of nature.*” (Our Lady, 7/21/82)

Apparently St. Martin wants us to know he is helping us, because the day I took the newsletter plans to the printer, I got a mailing from St. Martin de Porres Dominican Lay Community! I had never received anything from them before!

St. Martin de Porres, please pray for us!



St. Martin de Porres, far right, on the window at the Bread of Life Adoration Chapel in Erie, PA

December 2, 2016 Message to Mirjana

“Dear children, my motherly heart is crying as I am looking at what my children are doing. Sins are multiplying, the purity of soul is all the less important; my Son is being forgotten – honored all the less; and my children are being persecuted. That is why, you my children, apostles of my love, with soul and heart invoke the name of my Son. He will have the words of light for you. He manifests Himself to you, He breaks the bread with you and gives you the words of love so that you may transform them into merciful acts and, thus, be witnesses of truth. That is why, my children, do not be afraid. Permit my Son to be in you. He will make use of you to care for the wounded and to convert lost souls. Therefore, my children, return to the prayer of the Rosary. Pray it with feelings of goodness, sacrifice and mercy. Pray, not only with words, but with merciful acts. Pray with love for all people. My Son, by His sacrifice, exalted love. Therefore, live with Him so that you may have strength and hope; that you may have the love which is life and which leads to eternal life. Through God’s love, I am also with you, and will lead you with motherly love. Thank you.”

Mirjana said that Our Lady was very sad.

The Eighth Sorrow

By June Klins

When I read Our Lady’s message on December 2, I could not hold back the tears, especially when I read that Mirjana said that Our Lady was “very sad.” It broke my heart to know our Mother is so sad, although it is not a surprise. Shortly after reading the message, while praying the Seven Sorrows (see our September 2016 issue), it came to me that Our Lady’s sadness at seeing the situation with Her children, is kind of an “Eighth Sorrow.” So I have begun praying an eighth Hail Mary when praying this devotion. Maybe you could join me on this. Even one Hail Mary can be very powerful!

Mirjana has said that we can dry Our Lady’s tears by prayer and sacrifice. This is what Our Lady asked for in Fatima. Since this year marks the 100th anniversary of

Our Lady’s apparitions in Fatima, and She has said that what She started in Fatima will be fulfilled in Medjugorje, WE have to make that happen. Prayer is the easy one, but what about sacrifice? People have lost the practice of sacrifice these days. Can we renew this practice? Little sacrifices done with love can be powerful. On our website (under where it says “More”) we have a page with a list of ideas for little sacrifices one can do throughout the day. You can be creative and come up with your own ideas as well. Let’s dry Our Lady’s tears!

Editor’s note: If you do not have internet access and would like the list of sacrifices, you can send a self-addressed stamped envelope to us at P.O. Box 6346, Erie, PA 16512, and mark “Sacrifices” on the envelope.

Safely into the Blessed Mother's Arms

By Patrick Kelker

On pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 2001, I was approached by an Irish woman who told me she had a word from God for me, "Your wife is going to die, but God is going to take care of you."

We then both walked towards St. James Church, without speaking any more to each other. We came to the rear of the Church. I went to the left and she went to the right. I looked over her way again, and she was gone. My first thought was that I must have been entertained by an angel. My next thought was of my wife back home, who, when I left her, was in perfect health. I kept this unusual experience to myself and continued with my pilgrimage.

Upon arrival at home, as I was crossing the threshold of our house, my wife, Jane, crumpled to the floor, holding her back, obviously in great pain. She had to have emergency surgery to remove her gall bladder.

From that date on, Jane kept getting sick, for no apparent reason. She was feeling really rundown and had swollen lymph nodes. At that point, the doctor decided to biopsy one of the nodes. She was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphatic Leukemia, a slow moving leukemia. Several doctors agreed, "We will just keep our eye on this until we need to treat it."

Four years later, in 2005, Jane underwent her first round of chemotherapy to treat her disease. She united her suffering to Christ's suffering, and offered it up in union with His. Her suffering produced great fruit. Jane prayed for couples who were unable to conceive a child but were praying to have children. Throughout the years, and during her many rounds of chemotherapy, many babies were born to couples who were having trouble conceiving.

I always believed that Jane's birthday, on December 28, the Catholic Church's Feast day of the Holy Innocents, was very appropriate. Jane loved children and had been a stay-at-home-mother for most of her life. The neighborhood children all called her "Aunt Jane," and they loved to be with her.

I asked Jane many times to go with me to Medjugorje, and she always refused. Finally, in 2008, she agreed to go and experience what I had been talking to her about for years. My wife was a convert to the Catholic faith. Praying to Mary was difficult for her and made her feel uncomfortable.

After arriving in Medjugorje, I took Jane to the tomb of Fr. Slavko Barbaric. I told her to ask Fr. Slavko to intercede for her in obtaining what she was hoping to get from this pilgrimage. Jane heard that Vicka prayed over sick pilgrims so this is what she asked for. She had been on her knees before Father's tomb, and as she got up, she said, "I want Vicka to pray over me, and I also prayed that Father Jozo will bless our marriage." My heart sank. I knew both of these requests were probably not going to happen.

Imagine my surprise when we walked by Vicka's old

house that same day. Vicka was on her patio area with a small group of pilgrims. I told Jane to go and ask her for a blessing. When Jane reached the patio, Vicka turned and was heading up the stairs to enter the house. Jane said to me, "It must not have been God's Will for me to get a blessing." Immediately, Vicka turned around and came back down the stairs. Then she motioned Jane to come to her. She prayed over Jane for a long time, then picked her up off her knees and kissed her on the cheek.

Jane, herself, had been praying for a healing during Vicka's prayers over her. When she got up, she came right over to me and said, "There are many ways of being healed." Then she told me that when Vicka prayed over her, an energy went through her body that she couldn't explain. She said she liked to think it was the Love of God. Jane knew, from that moment on, that she would not be healed. She began trying to live life to the fullest.

When we went to hear Father Jozo speak, we couldn't even get near him because of the crowd of Italians. Fr. Jozo asked the crowd to go to the many priests available and get blessings from them. We did that, receiving a blessing from an elderly priest. Imagine our surprise, then, when we turned around and there stood Father Jozo. He immediately blessed us, together, on our foreheads. For both of us, it felt like a hot poker going through our head. What a wonderful blessing that was!

Upon arriving home from our pilgrimage, Jane began praying the Rosary daily. (She prayed it daily until she died.) She now found great comfort in the Blessed Mother. She remarked about those wonderful words of the Hail Mary: "Now, and at the hour of our death." She said she knew the Blessed Mother would be there for her at that time.

The leukemia finally took its toll. In May of 2013, Jane's left arm became paralyzed. It was about two weeks before her death. In addition, her whole body was badly bruised. Two days before she died, she lay with her arms crossed on her stomach. My two daughters and I stood at her bedside and kept vigil.

Shortly before Jane died, Christa, our eldest daughter, said she heard hundreds of voices speaking different languages, coming from afar and getting closer and closer to Jane. Sara and I did not hear these voices. Christa said the voices eventually ended up next to her mother. Jane opened her eyes for a second, looking above and beyond us at the foot of the bed. Then she closed her eyes. And slowly, very slowly, she opened her arms to a full embrace, then again very slowly, closed them – as slowly as they had opened. Her left arm had not moved for the prior two weeks of her life before she died. Her eyes opened for a brief second again, looking over our shoulders, and then closed. Again, her arms extended slowly into a full embrace, then closed, just as Jane released her last breath.



Fr. Slavko's grave

The whole room exploded into the scent of roses. The bruises on Jane's body disappeared within 20 seconds, and her body resembled that of a 30 year-old! She was 58.

I believe Jane is still interceding for couples who want children. One of Christa's friends became pregnant after saying a prayer to Jane at the funeral home, for her intercession.

Jane has died, but the words I heard back on that pilgrimage in 2001, continue to come back to me: "God is

going to take care of you." Thanks be to God.

Editor's note: Patrick is from Fort Wayne, IN. When I spoke with him on the phone, he said that he wished everyone in the world could have been in Jane's room when she died. He said it was so phenomenal that there would be no unbelievers. He also said that he feels Jane's intercession for couples who want children is powerful, and that one couple, who tried for nine years to have a child, had twins! He gave me three of her holy cards from the funeral to share.

"Prayer Groups are Powerful"

By June Klins

When our little Medjugorje prayer group meets every week, although we are few – usually five or six people – I know that Jesus is with us. He said so. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). Although we have had many prayers answered over the years, I felt prompted to share one recent story to show the power of prayer groups.

Our prayer group met on Wednesday, the night before Thanksgiving, and one of the ladies, named Mary, shared an intention from another member, named Rose, who was not able to come. Rose had asked that we pray for her daughter and her boyfriend to have a nice Thanksgiving. She felt badly that they were not able to afford a turkey to have a Thanksgiving dinner, and she could not afford to give them money either. They live in a small town that does not offer Thanksgiving dinners for the less fortunate, and could not afford the gas to drive to Mom's for dinner.

So we added that to our intentions when we prayed the 20 decades of the Rosary.

The following week, Mary shared with us what transpired during the same time we were praying for Rose's intention. Rose's daughter and her boyfriend work at a fast food restaurant, and that night her boyfriend asked his boss for an advance on his check, so they could buy a turkey. The boss said that he was sorry, but he could not do that. As

the young man walked away, he muttered under his breath, "There goes Thanksgiving." A customer overheard this and called the young man over, and said he wanted to give him something, and told him to meet him after work at a particular place that was miles away. Unfortunately, the young man did not have enough gas to get to this place. Rose's daughter called her Mom and explained about the gas situation. Then Rose remembered that a friend had given her some money earlier. So Rose wired her daughter the money and they were able to get enough gas to drive to the place to meet the customer, who presented them with two big bags of fixings for Thanksgiving dinner! Is that awesome, or what?!

This story reminded me of the Miracle at Cana. It seemed like a trivial matter to pray for, compared to all the serious intentions that we usually pray for, but not to Our Lady and Our Lord. They care about even our slightest needs.

"Prayer groups are powerful, and through them I can see, little children, that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world." (Our Lady on June 25, 2004)

Editor's note: Our Medjugorje prayer group in Erie will be meeting on Mondays (instead of Wednesdays as reported in the December issue) at 6:30 P.M. through March. If you would be interested in joining us, call June at 898-2143.

Remember: Her Intentions are YOUR Intentions

By June Klins

In our March 2013 issue, I wrote an article called "Let's Do Something Beautiful for God," in which I explained how I was led to promote having Masses said for Our Lady's intentions. The response was phenomenal at first. We had over 10,000 Masses reported by the time of the 33rd anniversary of Medjugorje. But after that first year, the number of Masses for Our Lady's intentions has dropped off. As of December 25, 2016, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 16,958.

During this year, the Centennial of Fatima, we hope to encourage you to fast and sacrifice more. As one sacrifice, could you possibly forgo buying lunch or snacks for yourself one day and use that money to have a Mass said for Our Lady's intentions? That would be a good sacrifice for the ultimate sacrifice – the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! Through many missions, the stipend is only \$5!



Mass in Medjugorje

We are so committed to this, that for your renewal this year – to thank Our Lady in our 30th year of publishing – in lieu of a donation, we will accept as your renewal a report from you that you had a Mass said for Our Lady's intentions. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this offer. If you cannot afford the Mass stipend, you can pray a 15-decade Rosary for Our Lady's

intentions. (If you already renewed for this year, this offer will extend to you for next year.)

As Romilly Fenlon of Wales wrote in her newsletter, "Remember: Her intentions are YOUR intentions, too."

Editor's Note: You can read the original story of how this started at www.spiritofmedjugorje.org/massesForIntentions.php. Please do not send us money to schedule your Mass. That is part of your sacrifice. If you need advice on where to get it scheduled, we can help you with that, however.

Visionary Jakov Received 10th and Final Secret in The United States

By Daniel Klimek

When I first visited Medjugorje, four years ago in the summer of 2008, I got the chance to spend some time with Draga Vidovic. Draga is not only a witness to the events in Medjugorje during the early years of the apparitions, but also an author and the cousin of the visionary Vicka. I found Draga to be very insightful. She spoke about the events in Medjugorje more astutely than most people do, being able to make fascinating connections that few ever notice.

For example, she told me that one of the 10 secrets of Medjugorje may very well involve the United States, since Jakov Colo, the youngest visionary, received his tenth secret from Our Lady when he came to visit the United States in 1998. It's an observation that perhaps goes unnoticed by too many Americans. Incidentally, it was on September 11, 1998 — exactly three years before one of the most tragic days in American history — that Our Lady appeared to Jakov, in Florida, announcing that Jakov should prepare in prayer for the following evening, when She would share with him the tenth and final secret he was to receive.

Jakov himself, knowing that with the reception of his tenth secret his daily apparitions would end, has testified: "If I stayed back home instead of going to the United States, maybe Our Lady would still be appearing to me."

"But all that is part of God's plan," Draga wrote, as she recorded Jakov's testimony in her book *Salvation of Mankind*.

Draga — as our conversation four years ago revealed — believes that Jakov's tenth secret will involve the United States, and therefore it was no coincidence that he received it when visiting America. Jakov's own words, supposing that Our Lady may have still continued appearing to him if he had not visited the United States in 1998, strongly supports this possibility.

What is perhaps most serious, in this context, is what

little the visionaries have said about their final secrets. The visionaries have, on numerous occasions, alluded to severe chastisements that are connected to the final secrets of Medjugorje. The visionary Mirjana Soldo has especially testified that the final secrets must transpire, that these chastisements are irreversible. In an early interview she emphasized that the tenth secret "is terrible and nothing can alter it. It will happen." Of course, whether the visionaries are receiving the same secrets or different ones is difficult to say since secrets are secrets.

Interestingly, Mirjana — who was chosen by Our Lady to reveal the secrets to the world one day through a priest — was with Jakov in the United States in 1998. The two visionaries traveled to numerous churches in Florida, spreading the Madonna's messages. Jakov, during that time, also spoke in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where 70,000 people gathered to hear of Medjugorje.

Shortly after receiving his final secret and final daily apparition, Jakov had an emotional conversation with the late Fr. Slavko Barbaric, in which he revealed: "It was the hardest day for me. I thought of so many questions, what my life would be like from now onwards. How am I going to go on? I can say that I grew up with Our Lady. I was ten She started appearing to me, and the most important things I was able to learn about God and faith were from Her. She was like a mother to me, like a true friend. But I need to say that Our Lady gave me strength to overcome all of the difficulties I was facing. I realized that it was far more important to see Our Lady with our hearts, rather than with our eyes."

Editor's note: Daniel wrote this article in 2012. He is now Br. Daniel, T.O.R. and is studying for the priesthood.

Jakov's Message of December 25, 2016

"Dear children! Today, on this day of grace, in a special way, I am calling you to pray for peace. Children, I came here as the Queen of Peace and how many times have I called you to pray for peace. But, children, your hearts are restless. Sin is preventing you from opening yourselves completely to grace and peace which God desires to give you. To live peace, my children, is to first have peace in your hearts and to be surrendered completely to God and to His will. Do not seek peace and joy in the things of this world, because this is all passing. Long for true mercy and peace which come only from God; and only in this way will your hearts be filled with true joy; and only in this way will you be able to become witnesses of peace in this peaceless world. I am your mother and intercede before my Son for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Mary's Hands

In July of 2016, visionary Jakov Colo started an organization called "Mary's Hands" with the aim of helping the poor and all people who are in need. Jakov is the president of this organization.

Jakov wrote: "Before the foundation of the organization, we had worked for three years in the parish of Medjugorje under the name of 'Office for people in need.'"

"We were inspired to do good and to help the needy by the words of The Queen of Peace,



who said: 'Also today, I invite you to be love where there is hatred, and food where there is hunger. Open your hearts little children, and let your hands be extended and generous so that every creature through you may thank God, the Creator' (Our Lady's message, September 25, 2004).

"Reading Our Lady's messages and what She is asking of us, we decided to answer Her call and be Her extended hands. We understood that every person is invited to do good and make this world a better place and more beautiful. We do not need to do big deeds,

but small deeds with great love.

"So far, we have refurbished many houses, tended many gardens. We also go to visit old people in their homes and hospitals. We help families with numerous children, pay utilities bills for those who cannot afford to, and we buy medications for people who do not have any income.

"Every month more than 200 people come to us to receive food. In a short period of time more than 50 volunteers have joined to help us in the activities of our organization. They are all young people from Medjugorje and Brotnjo, who

unselfishly desire to give of their free time to their brothers and sisters, people who are in need. All of our members meet regularly for their prayer meetings, strategy meetings and are very active in the work of the organization.

"We desire to thank all who have become part of our projects and have helped us to do good, to bring hope, to spread love and peace."

Editor's note: If you are interested in helping Jakov, you can visit www.marijine-ruke.ba.

"Bear One Another's Burdens"

The following is a transcription of a teaching by Fr. Leon Pereira, O.P. before Mass at St. James Church in Medjugorje on August 31, 2016. You can listen to it in the "Sanctuary Snippets" on www.Marytv.tv.

Now I want you to imagine... that I have stolen 10,000 euros from the lady in the front row. Then I go to confession and confess that I've stolen 10,000 euros. And I'm absolved; I'm forgiven of my sin. And then I take the money, and I have a wonderful holiday with it! Does that sound right to you? Is that okay? So, am I allowed to run off with the 10,000 euros and keep it? I've been absolved and forgiven, right?

Okay. There's something I have to pay back! (With every sin, in a sense, there is always something to pay back – some reparation to be made – some repair that has to be done, and usually it's a repair of our souls.) And by giving back the money, I'm repairing. Because of justice, I have to return this money that I've taken and doesn't belong to me.

In the same way, with every sin there's some kind of damage we do to ourselves that needs to be repaired. And this repair is what we call "penance". Penance is *not* a punishment; it is a *medicine* – a repair. And, of course, the more contrition you have – the more sorrow, out of love for God – the less penance you automatically would need.

Now in the early Church, there were certain sins for which you did penance FOR LIFE. These are: apostasy (denying the faith), adultery, and murder. You were absolved only at the end of your life, on your deathbed. So, it was a very long penance you had to do... And what used to happen is – (Remember, in the Bible, it says, "Bear one another's burdens.") ...other Christians would do penance *for* you. And one of the best people to do penance was martyrs.

Imagine, in the early centuries of the Church, the Christians were being fed to the lions. Now lions have to be hungry before they will eat Christians, so you can't feed them all

the time. So you have to keep Christians in prison, sometimes for a long time, until the lions are hungry enough before they would eat the Christians. While these Christians were in prison waiting to be fed to the lions, people who wanted their penances done would go and see these soon-to-be-martyred martyrs and say, "Will you please let your sufferings count for me, for my sufferings, for my sins? And they [the martyrs] would say, "Yes, gladly." And they would sign a little certificate. These were known as *libelli pacis* – certificates of peace. They would take these and present them to the Bishop, and the Bishop would say, "This martyr wants to let their sufferings count for you. Fine. This will count as your penance. I'll absolve you today."

So someone else does your penance for you, because Scripture says, "Bear one another's burdens." And we are the Body of Christ – if one part suffers, we suffer. That's the idea. And this is the same idea as making reparation for terrible sins. The rest of us fast and do penance when something terrible happens in the whole Church.

This idea is, of course, the root of the doctrine of indulgences. Indulgences are *not* a "get out of jail free card." They are *not* the forgiveness of sins. They *are* remission of penance. That's what indulgences are. And the Church grants lots of indulgences all the time. I'm talking about this now because this Friday and this Saturday are a *First Friday* and a *First Saturday*, and there are various indulgences attached with those, which I'll talk about tomorrow [See www.Marytv.tv Sanctuary Snippets of 9/2/2016].



Fr. Leon

Secrets

Just as the Fatima seers received secrets, the visionaries in Medjugorje have also been given secrets that they must keep until the time arrives when they are to be revealed. There is a reason for these secrets, just as Jesus also had His reasons for asking people during His public life to keep quiet about certain things.

Jesus told the apostles who were with Him at the Transfiguration not to reveal what happened until after His Resurrection. And Jesus sometimes told the people He healed not to tell. For instance, in the first chapter of Mark, when Jesus cleanses the leper, He says, "See that you say

nothing to any one..." Did you ever wonder why Jesus wanted to keep the healing a secret? Scripture scholars mention several reasons why Jesus wanted the healings to be a secret. First, Jesus did not want his miracles to be disconnected from His saving message. Secondly, He wanted to avoid the prospect that the Messiah would be a political or military leader. And third, He did not want to instigate his enemies before the chosen time of his Passion.

"Put the Sacred Scripture in a visible place in your families and read it." (Our Lady, 1/25/14)

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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 "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 \$.68 postage on it.



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