

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 AUGUST 25, 2015

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.



The underlying theme of this issue is marriage and family life, in light of the upcoming World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia this month. Please pray and fast for its success. Pictured above is the Second Luminous Mystery, the Wedding Feast of Cana. Unlike the other Mysteries of the Rosary, which are on Apparition Hill in Medjugorje, the Luminous Mysteries are located behind St. James Church.

"Dear children! Also today I am calling you to be prayer. May prayer be for you the wings for an encounter with God. The world is in a moment of trial, because it forgot and abandoned God. Therefore you, little children, be those who seek and love God above all. I am with you and I am leading you to my Son, but you must say your 'yes' in the freedom of children of God. I intercede for you and I love you, little children, with an endless love. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Vicka Speaks About Her Wedding

Editor's note: I recently stumbled upon this on the website, medjugorje.ws, and thought it was interesting and still pertinent. It was originally published in 2002 by childrenofmedjugorje.com.

Question: *Vicka, how do you see this path of marriage that you've chosen?*

Vicka: Look! Each time God calls us, we must be ready in the depth of our hearts to answer this call. I have tried to answer God's call by transmitting the messages for the past 20 years. I did it for God, for the Blessed Mother. For the past 20 years I have been doing it alone, and nothing will change now, except that I shall be doing it in a family situation. God is calling me to start a family, a holy family, a family for God. You know, I have a great responsibility to people. They look for role models, examples to follow. So I want to tell young people: do not be afraid to commit yourselves in marriage, to choose the path of marriage! But in order to be well assured in your path, whether it is that one or another, the most important thing is to put God first in your life, to put prayer first, to start the day with prayer and to end with prayer. A marriage in which there is no prayer, is a marriage that does not last, it is empty. Where there is love, there is everything. But one thing has to be emphasized: love, yes, but what love? Love for God first, then love for the person you are going to be living with. Then, on life's journey, you must not expect everything to be rosy, to be easy. No! When sacrifices become necessary, small penances, you must always offer them to the Lord with all your heart. Every day, thank the Lord for all that has happened that day. That is why I am saying: dear young people, dear new couples, do

not be afraid. Make God the most important person in your family, make Him the King of your family, put Him first, and He will bless you – not only you yourselves, but also all who come near you.

Question: *Vicka, how can a girl know which man to marry?*

Vicka: You know, with prayer it is sure, the Lord and Our Lady are ready to answer you. If you ask in prayer what your vocation is, the Lord will answer without fail. You must have good will. But you must not hasten or rush. You must not go too quickly and say to yourself when you see the first boy that goes by: "this is the boy for me". No, you must not do that. You must take your time. Pray and wait for the time of God, the right time. You have to be patient and wait that it is He, God, who sends you the right person. Patience is very important. We all tend to lose patience, we go too fast and then, after we have made a mistake, we say, "But why, Lord, this boy was not really for me." ... Today, we must be much more patient, more open to respond to what the Lord wants. And once we have found the person to marry, if one or the other is afraid of changing his life and says to himself: "Oh, it is easier on my own," he is keeping a fear within himself. No, first we have to free ourselves of all that troubles us inside, and then we can do what the Lord wants. We cannot ask for a grace when we have a large block (obstacle) inside: we will never receive this grace, because inside we are not ready for it. The Lord has given us freedom. He has also given us good will, so we must rid ourselves of our blocks...

Marriage and the Cross in Croatia

Below are excerpts from a conference given by Father Jozo, pastor of St. James Church in 1981 when the apparitions of the Blessed Mother started in Medjugorje. This is reprinted from our January, 1989 issue.

"...You are currently in a country where people get married according to a particular custom. When a couple decides to get married, they buy a cross. At the wedding ceremony, the priest blesses the cross. While the priest still holds the cross, the couple join their hands and hold the other part of the cross and pronounce their vows for the sacrament of marriage. They kiss the cross, take it home, and place it in a designated spot. This spot becomes where they pray. Everybody looks at the cross when leaving or entering the house. Children, too, learn to look at the cross. And the cross gives strength. Daily life is organized in such a way that prayers are always said in front of this cross of the marriage. And this is the place, in front of the cross of marriage, where husband and wife come for a reconciliation and ask forgiveness from one another after a fight.

"...The wedding vows get strengthened in front of the cross of the marriage. When children and/or hard times come, one can talk or cry in front of the cross. Husband or

wife would not think of abandoning their spouse, for they would also be abandoning Jesus. For it is from the cross that comes the sacrament of marriage. And it is in front of the cross that one keeps the vows.

"We do not know divorce in this country. I can't even imagine how it can happen. Since marital love is based on Jesus, how could it disappear since Jesus and the love of Jesus are the basis of the sacrament of marriage? There are unfortunately few Christian families in this world. There can't be a Christian family unless that family prays together. And when they don't, they don't grow spiritually.

"...Everyone receives many spiritual gifts from God, and two-thirds of these gifts are grown in the families. Why is

there such a lack of charity in people's hearts? Because families don't pray together. That's why the Virgin Mary wants to create a new family on the same principle as in Medjugorje. She wants to create it all over the world. For that which exists any more in the families, the Virgin Mary wants to happen in Medjugorje when people of different cultures, races, from all over the world pray together and tell everybody, 'I learned to pray at Medjugorje...I felt love...I saved my marriage.' "



Fr. Jozo blessing a couple holding a crucifix

Medjugorje – Oasis of Peace in a Turbulent World

By Anita B. Cugini

This past June, I returned to Medjugorje for the anniversary of the apparitions for the second time, and now more than ever, the sense of peace I feel is unlike anything I have ever experienced. Any who enters this little village where the presence of the Blessed Virgin is very much evident, will experience this peace.

Since my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje a year ago, I was consumed with the desire to experience Medjugorje again and open myself to the graces which flooded my being during my trip last year, and to revisit the places and see the people I came to know.

My first pilgrimage took months to plan. In many respects it seemed surreal. I knew I was going, but I thought it would never come at all. My plan was to return to Medjugorje this year in July for the Youth Festival. By the middle of June, I knew I was meant to return for the anniversary of the apparitions as I did before. My pilgrimage came to fruition on Friday afternoon, June 12th, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a span of one-half hour, and I departed exactly nine days later. It has been said that everyone who comes to Medjugorje does so because of an invitation from Our Lady. Clearly, this very special summons from the Gospa meant that I was to join this particular group.

My fellow pilgrims, some 25 strong, included men and women, young and old, from all corners of the United States (Washington state, California, Texas, North Dakota, Florida, New Jersey, and New York) and Switzerland. We had two attorneys, a pilot, an operating room nurse, a retired police officer, an investment analyst, a 12 year-old boy with autism and a young man discerning for the priesthood. Many of my fellow pilgrims had been to Medjugorje multiple times. For one woman, it was her 15th trip!

As the only member of the group coming from Florida, I flew alone from Orlando International Airport until I met the group from the east coast the following morning in Vienna, Austria. Was I terrified about flying alone? You betcha! Buoyed by prayer and advice I sought from a "frequent flyer" friend of mine who said, "Just act like you know what you are doing, and you'll be fine," I made it through. I was calm and resolute... I knew I was supposed to do this.

The spiritual director of our group was a very special priest. I had been forewarned that he was an "exorcist priest" with amazing gifts. I suppose I was as skeptical as anyone would be, but during my first interaction with Father Richard, my doubts were obliterated in a heartbeat.

After our arrival dinner on June 22nd, the entire group assembled in the dining room, and Father gave a sharing about his life and journey to the priesthood some 13 years ago.

He had been to Medjugorje several times before and stated that he received confirmation of his vocation in Medjugorje. As I listened to Father speak, a strange thing happened. I started to cry. My eyes welled up with tears... didn't know why... and I should tell you that I don't cry easily.

After he finished his sharing, I waited as he spoke with several members of the group. When he was finished, I approached him saying, "Father, may I speak with you for a moment?" He said, "Certainly." The next sequence of events defies logic. He threw his arms around me, as I was still crying and struggling to speak, said repeatedly over and over, "You must let it go... you must let it go... give it over to Jesus Christ, place it in His arms..." Then he added, "Your mother has been storming Heaven with her prayers, for she sees how upset you are."

I totally lost it... I openly sobbed in his arms. I am an only child who was extremely close to my mother. Mom would always manage to "talk me out of" anything that upset me. Here was this priest I had never met, who with the twinkling of an eye, was able to look deep into my soul and know why I had come to Medjugorje...to ask for Our Lady's help to instill peace in my heart over various family situations. Mom died in 2004. Years before her death, I confided that I feared after she and my dad were gone, I would be all alone. Her response of "Your father and I didn't bring you into this world to leave you alone... we'll always be with you" were confirmed by this very special priest.

I spent the rest of my pilgrimage in prayer and reflection, retracing my steps on Apparition Hill, Cross Mountain, and walking through the fragrant vineyards to St. James, while passing through the cemetery where Father Slavko is buried. Each night, I drank in the cacophony of languages during recitation of the Rosary and international Mass, just happy to be a part of the more than 45,000 people during the anniversary week.

The graces and blessings that rain down as you visit Medjugorje are indescribable. Seeing huge numbers of penitents waiting in never-ending lines to make their confessions to scores of priests in all different languages, for hours on end, attending the nightly outdoor Adoration hour amidst this throng of the faithful, so silent that you can hear a pin drop... only Our Lady's continuing presence here could make this so.

Medjugorje is so much more than a small town in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It's an oasis of infectious peace that permeates the hearts of all who visit. Alas, all who journey to Medjugorje must return home, but we each carry the peace experienced there in a small corner of our hearts forever.



Father Slavko's grave

Healing of the Family Tree

By Cathy Nolan

“Dear children, also today, in a special way, I invite you in this time of grace to open your souls to the Holy Spirit. Dear children, do not permit the world to lead you. Therefore, may the Holy Spirit lead you. Pray, persevere in prayer, that the Holy Spirit may descend upon your families who are in darkness. The mother prays together with you, intercedes before her son for you. Thank you, dear children, for responding to my call today.” (Message given through Ivan on May 20, 2013, on Apparition Hill with his prayer group)

Mother Mary is serious about one thing above all else. She is serious about prayer. She directs and redirects us over and over again to persevere in prayer. Prayer is Her “secret” weapon. Of course prayer is not secret. But, in our world today, prayer is all but forgotten. And even we, who have heard Her call, can forget to pray as we get busier and busier in our day to day lives.

In this message, Our Lady gives us a really good reason for persevering in prayer – the good of our families.

She tells us some of our family members are in darkness. “Pray, persevere in prayer, that the Holy Spirit may descend upon your families who are in darkness.” Without judging anyone in our families, we can assume that the darkness of this world is attempting to surround and swallow up our family members. There is darkness in our family histories, darkness in the present family line, and there will be darkness in the future generations if we do not pray with energy and commitment for them all. Through our prayer, the Holy Spirit will be able to descend on our ancestors, the present family members, and the future family tree. He will bring with Him, the Light of Truth, so that our families will be founded on the Truth of Faith.

This is a wonderful work of mercy that we can do for our families. We can pray for our families, generously and without stint. One day, they will know the effects of our prayer, no matter how hidden it is now. What joy there will be in Heaven, when we will all be joined together for eternity, due to our faithfulness to prayer!!

Fr. John Hampsch, C.M.F. has written a beautiful prayer for family healing which I want to share with all of you. We pray this prayer every day at the end of our Daily Rosary, online. It is powerful. I have seen the good effects of this prayer personally. Maybe you will find it helpful as well.

Prayer for Healing of the Family Tree

Rev. John H. Hampsch, C.M.F.

Heavenly Father, I come before you as your child, in great need of your help; I have physical health needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs, and interpersonal needs. Many of my problems have been caused by my own failures, neglect and sinfulness, for which I humbly beg your forgiveness, Lord. But I also ask you to forgive the sins of my ancestors whose failures have left their effects on me in the form of unwanted tendencies, behavior patterns and defects in body, mind and spirit. Heal me, Lord, of all these disorders.

With your help I sincerely forgive everyone, especially living or dead members of my family tree, who have directly offended me or my loved ones in any way, or those whose sins have resulted in our present sufferings and disorders. In the name of your divine Son, Jesus, and in the power of his Holy Spirit, I ask you, Father, to deliver me and my entire family tree from the influence of the evil one. Free all living and dead members of my family tree, including those in adoptive relationships, and those in extended family relationships, from every contaminating form of bondage. By your loving concern

for us, heavenly Father, and by the shed blood of your precious

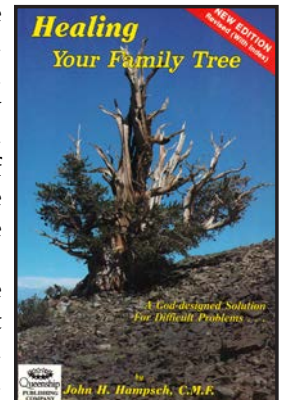
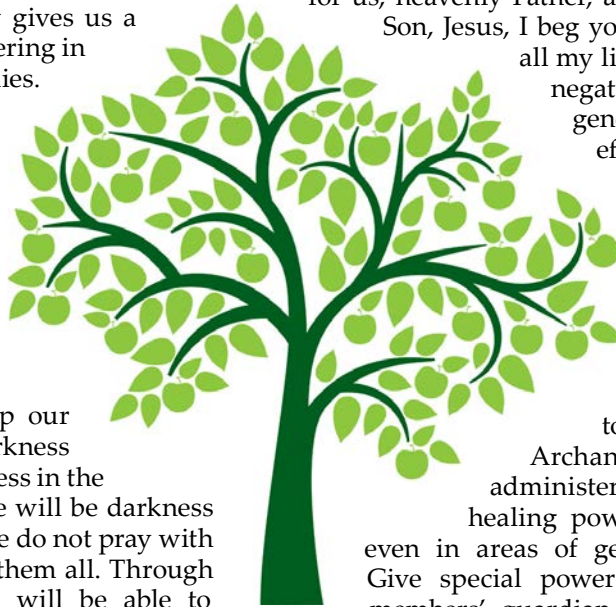
Son, Jesus, I beg you to extend your blessing to me and to all my living and deceased relatives. Heal every negative effect transmitted through all past generations, and prevent such negative effects in future generations of my family tree.

I symbolically place the cross of Jesus over the head of each person in my family tree, and between each generation; I ask you to let the cleansing blood of Jesus purify the bloodlines in my family lineage. Set your protective angels to encamp around us, and permit

Archangel Raphael, the patron of healing, to administer your divine healing power to all of us, even in areas of genetic disability. Give special power to our family members’ guardian angels to heal, protect, guide and encourage each of us in all our needs. Let your healing power be released at this very moment, and let it continue as long as your sovereignty permits.

In our family tree, Lord, replace all bondage with a holy bonding in family love. And let there be an ever-deeper bonding with you, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, to your Son, Jesus. Let the family of the Holy Trinity pervade our family with its tender, warm, loving presence, so that our family may recognize and manifest that love in all our relationships. All of our unknown needs we include with this petition that we pray in Jesus’ precious Name. Amen.

St. Joseph, Patron of family life, pray for us. Our Lady Queen of Peace, pray for us.



Fr. Hampsch's excellent book on healing of the family tree

www.marytv.tv

Struck by the Holy Spirit!

By Sr. Emmanuel

Battistina is definitely an Italian woman of our time. She is a 47-year old internet-based accountant. When her partner invited her to go to Medjugorje, she was not very interested. Then, one morning, on her car radio, she heard the song, often played by Radio Maria that had irritated her so much for years when she was looking for a program. Unexpectedly that song moved her deeply; her tears flowed continuously, without any apparent reason. She understood that the Blessed Mother was calling her. But I will let her tell her own story ...

"Since a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in July 2012, everything has changed in my life – nothing is like before! My conversion happened during the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. There were thousands of us outside around the Rotunda. Suddenly I found myself on my knees and I had the feeling that I was holding my living heart in my hands. I saw my entire life scroll down before my eyes. I clearly saw the good and the bad, and everything that seemed good at the time was becoming bad. I started to feel a great pain about my divorce.

"How could I have broken a promise made in front of God? These words echoed in my mind, 'let no one split apart what God has joined together.' I then understood that my serenity was only in my mind because my heart was ice-cold. I had always felt I was on the side of the 'righteous' and that I was a victim. Suddenly I saw how hard my heart was. I saw the suffering of my four children, what my father and my in-laws had endured, and I especially saw that I was not at all a victim. Actually I had never forgiven anyone. When my oldest daughter, nine year-old and in 4th grade, had insisted on doing her first Holy Communion, I had told her it made no sense; and my last child had not even been baptized! I saw all the New Age books that I had bought over the past 20 years. How could I have spent all that time reading and taking courses on self-development, things that only ended up pushing me away from God and my family?

"The pain was getting stronger and stronger, and little by little, I found myself with my face to the ground. I told myself, 'Lord, let me die here, because I am not worthy of even lifting my head from the ground.' At that moment I felt something like a huge hug filled with love, and a joy that is not of this world. And I told myself, 'During 18 years I thought I had given my children everything, but actually I had not given them anything because I had not given them this. So if I stay here to pray for them for the rest of my life, would that not be better than anything that I could do if I went back home? If I, as a mother, the soul of the household, had cultivated prayer instead of cultivating useless things, my children would still have a united family today!'

"I understood that when you make the decision to shrug off the cross of marriage, you are actually putting it on your children's shoulders.

"Then I felt that I had to keep the promise of faithfulness in marriage, so I decided to make a vow of chastity. I offered this to God so that a thousand families would not separate.

My life partner felt the same way. He also told me that we should consecrate ourselves completely. Some priests told me that the vow of chastity was not necessary, others that it was just something we had made up, but I was quite certain and determined because it seemed so little in comparison with the infinite mercy that I had received.

"My children thought I had become crazy because I was going to church and hung up a crucifix in the living-room. My eldest daughter was very irritated by my enthusiasm, and she told me, 'So what about all the things you've been telling us for the past 18 years?' 'I am sorry,' I told her. 'I was mistaken!'

"In November I went back to Medjugorje with my four children so that they too would have an understanding and wisdom. I was very hopeful that they would meet the Lord. I was watching them from a distance, and waiting I thought, 'But if I, their mother, with the little love I am capable of, am so happy to see my children pray, how much happier must our Heavenly Mother be? And how unhappy will She be for Her children who get lost!'

"During the pilgrimage, all of my children's hearts were touched. We started studying the Catechism together. Nine months later, the youngest, 10 years old, was baptized, and all my children received Holy Communion during the same celebration. This was the most beautiful day of my life! It was as if I could see them all being reborn at the same time. My partner and I stayed together for a year, living like brother and sister. But every day I was asking God to be able to understand what His will was, whether we should stay close to support one another, or be separated completely. I kept that doubt in my heart for a long time, but little by little, the Lord led our paths to grow apart because of work.

"After my conversion, I contacted my ex-husband again. For nine years every telephone call had ended with yelling on both sides; so for a year we did not talk to each other, and he would communicate with me through the children. When I recognized my mistakes, I looked at his faults as the consequences of my own, and then my resentment disappeared. I was the one who should ask for forgiveness! Little by little I started to feel the deep bond of marriage, sealed by God, and to feel once again a spouse. Yet I did not understand it. I asked a priest if it was all right to feel that I was a spouse, even though my husband was bonded to another person and had a son. The priest answered that the sacrament of marriage was indissoluble before God.

"Now the love that I thought had been cancelled or even had never existed, I found it once again intact in the depths of my heart. I keep it in its purity and I pray every day for the conversion of my ex-husband and for all the families. I thank Jesus and Mary for the infinite grace that my family receives every day and I continue onward on this path of conversion."

What Battistina experienced, in concentrated form and in consecutive steps, is what frequently happens for Medjugorje pilgrims: invited by Our Lady without knowing



Outside Adoration in Medjugorje

why, Battistina came; and by a special grace, she saw her whole life in the light of the Holy Spirit. She understood with her heart the mercy of God for her, she regretted her sins (that she did not see before), and she cried over them, renounced them, and confessed them. She could see herself being thoroughly transformed and she took action, making changes in her life according to what pleases God, with the

help of a good priest, faithful to the Magisterium of the Church. What a powerful example! Many people just stop at the graces they received, but it is a good thing to take concrete action once you get back home! This testimony will help us enter fully, together with Jesus, into this time of mercy that is offered to us now as never before!

Children of Medjugorje, www.childrenofmedjugorje.com.

A Little Sharing from the Youth Festival in Medjugorje

By Ana Shawl

For about five years now, I have been working with the organization of the opening ceremonies for the Youth Festival. It is a lot of work, but great work. We announce that we need youth to come and represent their countries by holding signs and a flag, and then one of the kids from that country also needs to say a few words when they get up to the altar. I usually handle the English speaking pilgrims from different countries. This time, I got a call from Rosie Zubac at Mary's Meals, and she told me that a man named Ernest, who brought his two kids to this year's Youth Festival maybe could represent the UK along with some other kids. What was special to me is that 26 years ago, Ernest was the man who started the Youth Festival in Medjugorje after he felt it in his heart and knew that he had to bring the youth to Medjugorje!

There is a big banner over here that we can write our petitions on, and then in the closing ceremony, this banner is spread and handed from pilgrim to pilgrim. It starts in the back of the crowd of people and we all have our hand



Banner with petitions

in sending and passing those prayers all the way to the altar and to the priests and we pray for all the intentions of everyone here.

I still remember something Fr. Slavko Barbaric said at the second Youth Festival meeting in one of the green tents that used to be in back in the field. It still rings in my ears, and hope it helps those who might have sons or daughters that are far from the Church. One lady at that youth festival asked, "I have raised my children by going to Mass, Confession and Catechism, but many of them have left the Church altogether, or want to try being Protestant for one reason or another. What did I do wrong?" Father said, "**Sometimes this has to be – perhaps to strengthen them later – but your children are not lost. They will come back. Give them that foundation of Christ and they will come back.**"

Editor's note: Ana heads the IIPG (International Internet Prayer Group). To join the IIPG, you can visit www.iipg.org.

A Witness Confirms Fr. Slavko's Encouraging Words

By June Klins

The day after I read Ana's words from Fr. Slavko (in the previous article), I attended a service in which a man named Tim told his conversion story. Tim said he was one of 12 children, raised by good Catholic parents, who sent him to a Catholic grade school. But when he was a teen, he fell away from the faith. Later on in life, he got a job with a Protestant church and eventually joined that faith after friends convinced him he needed to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Four years ago, Tim got hurt at work and was housebound for some time. To pass the time, Tim began surfing the channels on the TV and kept finding himself going back to listen to Mother Angelica reruns on EWTN. At first he

felt guilty watching EWTN, since he was a Protestant, but it seemed to keep beckoning to him. He eventually found himself in a Catholic church one day for Mass, and said he felt like he was "home." He went to Confession for the first time in 40 years, and then was able to receive the Eucharist. Tim said the Eucharist fills the hole he had in his heart all those years away. He is now very active in his parish and his prayer group. I thought it no coincidence that I heard this testimony the very next day after reading Fr. Slavko's encouraging words.

Editor's note: Fr. Slavko Barbaric died on 11/24/2000. The next day Our Lady said that he was already in Heaven.

Three Key Words of the Family

By June Klins

When I was young, there was a popular movie called *Love Story*, and the line most quoted from this movie was "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Pope Francis would disagree with that line!

On May 13, 2015, Pope Francis said in his general audience that the three key words of the family should be: **please**, **thank you** and **sorry**. According to the Vatican Information Service, the Pope said, "Many hurt feelings, many lesions in the family begin with the loss of those precious words: 'I am sorry.' In married life there are many arguments ... but

I advise you never to let the day end without making peace. And for this, a small gesture is enough."

"These three key words for the family are simple words, and perhaps at first they make us smile. But ... perhaps our education neglects them too much. May the Lord help us to restore them to their rightful place in our heart, in our home, and also in our civil co-existence."

"I invite all of you, little children, before all else to forgive in the family, and then you will be able to forgive others" (Our Lady, 1/25/96).

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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 \$.71 postage on it.



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