



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
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www.spiritofmedjugorje.org

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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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The Vatican Has Granted a Nihil Obstat to Medjugorje!

MONTHLY MESSAGE OF MAY 25, 2025

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 tapestry shown above was a gift to The Spirit of Medjugorje. On June 25, 2025, we will celebrate the 44th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje. We thank God the Father for sending His beautiful Daughter to us all these years. And we thank Our Lady for Her love and persistence. The best way to thank Them is by living the messages! Are we doing our best to live the "five stones"— **praying** daily with the heart, especially the Rosary, reading the **Bible** daily, **fasting** on Wednesdays and Fridays, going to **Confession** once a month, and making the **Eucharist** the center of our lives?*

"Dear children, in this time of grace, I am calling you to be people of hope, peace and joy, so that every person may be a peacemaker and a lover of life. Pray, little children, to the Holy Spirit to fill you with the strength of His own Holy Spirit of courage and surrender. And this time for you will be a gift and a walk in holiness towards eternal life. I am with you and I love you. Thank you for having responded to my call." (With Ecclesiastical approval)

An April and May to Remember and Keep in our Hearts!

By Fr. Ray Donohue



Fr. Ray

I share with you, one and all, in this June article, a most blessed and holy gift from our most holy Blessed Mother, and the graces we receive from God Himself.

This April 26th was my 40th anniversary of Ordination to the Holy Priesthood and April 27th was the 40th anniversary of celebrating my very First Mass as a holy priest of God. I wanted this to be extra special, so some of our *Spirit of Medjugorje* crew and some other pilgrims came on our

pilgrimage to Medjugorje.

Our group of pilgrims left on April 22nd, with the plane flights leaving Buffalo, NY, then going to Chicago, and then to Dubrovnik, and we all made it with no problems, and how we rejoiced! For some, it was their first time there, for others their second or third time, or more. Humbly, it was my 31st pilgrimage, by God's Holy Graces!

The first few days we had some rain, nothing really bad, and for the rest of the pilgrimage it was warm and sunny and beautiful. We all stayed in a pansion where many of us had stayed many times, with a great friend who runs it, Marija [not the visionary], and it is in walking distance to the church of Saint James, and "downtown" Medjugorje.

It was wonderful watching and listening to the pilgrims whose very first time it was, as well as those who have been there before. We were not a bunch of sightseers, but we were all PILGRIMS on a journey of holiness and peace from the very Queen of Peace Herself.

Soffa, Father Slavko's sister, a walking saint if ever there was one, came to our pansion to visit and had a ton of hugs for me, and for all the other pilgrims. She is just wonderful and so holy, and wonderfully fun to be with! She is also the mother-in-law of the visionary Mirjana. Well into her 80s, she is as active as if in her 20s, and so very happy and prayerfully holy! I met them back in the early 1980s. They lived the faith and Soffa, who is still with us here on earth, to me is the picture of Medjugorje – holy, happy, giving, thankful, and putting the Blessed Mother and all others first!

Each day we would go to the 10:00 a.m. English Mass at the holy church of Saint James, as the 9:00 a.m. Mass is in German, and the 11:00 a.m. Mass is in Italian. It is a huge church and beautiful and so holy a church, that is packed to the top, and yet, there is never any pushing or shoving, but kindness and love and joy! From the very young, to the very old, each Holy Mass is packed and again, it is a beautiful and HUGE church! If only we had that in our own countries, as the love is beautiful and contagious! We brought ALL of you in our prayers, fastings, Holy Masses and everything else. There were lines of confessions, 5 or 6 or more priests

hearing confessions outside under a roof covering each confessional.

I heard so many confessions just along the streets. People would stop, kneel down and go to Holy Confession. Many stopped me just to receive a blessing, or to pray over their family, a sick child or spouse, one after another, group after group. Talk about HOLY!!! It is so humbling as a priest to see so much faith. If only we had that here in the western world! We, your priests, were NOT ordained to Holy Priesthood to sit in an office, to handle money issues; but we WERE ORDAINED to be out with the people, to hear confessions and bring them to Jesus – to assist them in hospitals and in their own homes, to pray with them, to hear their confessions, as well as all of us priests to go to monthly confessions! THAT is just the start of what it means to be ordained a holy priest!

We should never, EVER be "so busy" as so to not visit the parishioners and especially the sick, the lonely and to do GOD's Will, not when it is convenient, but day or night. Medjugorje shows how and why God called us to be deacons and priests and just regular holy Catholic people!

Our Deacon Jerry, from *The Spirit of Medjugorje*, was there in the sanctuary with the priests (including myself), and was asked each day to either be the Deacon of the Word, or of the Holy Eucharist, quite an honor and he did a fantastic job! His wife was usually right in the front, or close to it, in the pews. Mass is spectacular everywhere it is celebrated, but you have to experience the Holy Mass at Saint James in Medjugorje

to understand it even more deeply! Just so you all know, we ALL prayed for all of you every day and for your intentions!

Many climbed up the Apparition Hill where our Blessed Mother first appeared, back in 1981, and many of us climbed up Cross Mountain. To see them from the top, Apparition Hill, Cross Mountain and Saint James Church form almost an equilateral triangle when you look at it all! Like a triangle of Holiness!

My very first time there was when the country was still Yugoslavia, and the war was going on. We heard gunfire and bombs. I saw tanks and those who were fighting for their freedom, people coming in with guns on their backs, and tanks going all around the area. I saw so much evil going on. But Our Lady repeated: "I AM THE QUEEN OF PEACE." And so She is and was. The war was so evil and the way the country treated the Holy Catholic priests was pure evil, but the Croats stood fast in holy prayer, daily Mass, kindness and love. Our Lady, Who announced Herself as the "Queen of PEACE" is and was just that, and the war ended and peace came. People believed! Believing in your prayers and love of God, and God's love for you, and our Blessed Mother's assistance and care will make all things holy and better!

I celebrated my 40th anniversary there on April 26th, and offered my 40th anniversary of celebrating my very First Mass in the Chapel of Father Slavko [in Mother's Village], who I have no doubt will be declared a saint in my lifetime!



Fr. Ray's anniversary celebration

When I met him in the 1980s and early 1990s, I knew I was in the Holy Presence of a Saint!

Our group of pilgrims was fantastic – no problems or grumblings, but only love, and more love! Holiness came from each others' eyes and hearts and words and actions! We were all one family, and loved our dinners together in the pansion, and the conversations. Love and care were overflowing in sincerity and joy and kindness, at the table, at Holy Masses, outdoor adorations, and various opportunities to pray.

I was amazed that people recognized me from my program: "20 minutes with Father Ray" on Mary TV (marytv.tv). They all asked me how Dublin was doing, as he is on all the programs.

Another wonderful miracle, and it is indeed a miracle, is that Deacon Jerry and I were invited by the visionary Ivan, who is a very dear friend of mine, to attend the apparition of our Blessed Mother in his private chapel along with a few other priests. Ivan, filled with hugs, walked Deacon Jerry and myself right to the front of his chapel, just feet away from where Our Lady would appear to him. How humbling it is, how holy and humbling it is!

Ivan's father had just died the week before. He was a friend of mine, too, since the 1980s, and a very good and holy man. Ivan's trust and love gave him so much love and strength, knowing God and our Blessed Mother would take good care of his dad in Heaven!

At the holy apparition, Deacon Jerry and I knelt down just a few feet from where our Holy Blessed Mother was appearing to Ivan, and the deacon began to shake as he felt the powerful love of our dear Blessed Mother. It was uncontrollable for him. That was a reaction of a human being in the Holy Presence of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. I held on tight to him, and as soon as Our Lady ascended into Heaven, the shaking and trembling had stopped very suddenly.

Another day, the visionary, Marija, invited us to her home for the apparition of Our Lady in her large chapel. Our whole group was invited. Deacon Jerry and I were put on a "stage" right next to the exact place where the Blessed Mother appears, and Deacon Jerry was kneeling directly across from Marija and where the Blessed Mother appears. Our dear Blessed Mother gave us so many gifts, and gave to Deacon Jerry the honor to be as close to Her as Marija the visionary was! Marija's chapel is quite large, and it was filled. But she put us clerics right where Our Lady would appear, so Deacon Jerry was looking and could touch directly at the place Our Lady appeared. We looked right into the eyes of

Marija all during the holy apparition!

We took a day trip to old Dubrovnik and celebrated Holy Mass at an ancient church [St. Blaise] that survived three earthquakes and bombing from the Serbians. I always take a side trip there with the group because it is such a beautiful and wonderful ancient city dating back to the 10th century! Deacon Jerry gave a fantastic homily as we celebrated Holy Mass for our group and many others who just come to Holy Mass! They have a Franciscan and a Dominican Monastery, right on the Adriatic Sea, and tons of little stores. At the end, it is my tradition to buy everyone a delicious ice cream cone (nothing like the American ice cream, but real and truly genuine and awesome ice cream!). The owner knows me and we have been friends since the late 1980s, so he makes sure they get what they want and extra delicious ice cream!

A pilgrimage is beautiful, especially in Medjugorje and Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. We had a beautiful Mass with all of us in an ancient church built in the 12th century, with my very dear friend Father Nichola, who is a living saint! His parish of young people put on a beautiful dinner for us in an ancient part of the original church, with his ancient dog Willy! Willy could smell Dublin, my dog, on me, but I can make a friend of any dog. All it takes is love, patience and joy! Loving God is the same. He always loves us, but to complete it and let it grow in us, is to trust Him, with love, patience and joy!

So much more happened to us all, but space and time prevents us from telling you all the miraculous and beautiful gifts the visionaries and our Holy Blessed Mother gave to us all, her pilgrims from *The Spirit of Medjugorje*! We prayed for YOU, ALL OF YOU and ALL of your intentions and protection!

God bless you, one and all, we took all of you in our hearts and prayers on our pilgrimage, and prayed for peace, to the Queen of Peace, our Holy Blessed Mother of Medjugorje. You are all always in my prayers, and in the holy prayers of *The Spirit of Medjugorje*!

Still flying very high from our very holy, blessed and joyful experience,

~Father Ray, all the group of *The Spirit of Medjugorje*, & Dublin and Sweet Pea

Editor's note: Although I was not blessed to be among the pilgrims who went with Fr. Ray, I felt like I was with them as they texted me almost daily from there. As I watched Deacon Jerry read the Gospel and Fr. Ray give the homily at the English Mass on April 27, Divine Mercy Sunday, it made me so grateful that they are part of our staff. It can still be viewed in the video library on marytv.tv. We will publish testimonies from the pilgrims in a future issue.



Mass at St. Blaise Church

Our thanks to Laura and Kevin DiBacco, Pat Heinlein, Kandace Lyons, Tom Kennedy, Tom McIntire, Diane Niebauer, Sue Taccone, Kathy Luschini, Betsy Truran, Stephanie Koshinski, Gina Adams, Annette and Chris Fuhrman, Kay Kujan, Cindy Bielanin, Peggy Chludzinski, Irene and Dan Zuba, Barb Cesare, Joan and Deacon Jerry Peterson, Marlene Figurski, Ronalee Curtis, Darleen Wilkinson, Dorothy and Kirk Bennett, Kathy Wayman, Louise Lotze, Judy Johns, Rose Heintzel, and Jane Culmer for their help with the May mailing. We thank Betsy Truran, Joan Peterson, and Carol Bleck for the use of their photos in this issue and Barb Cesare for her picture in the May issue. We also thank our proofreader, Don Spaeder, our webmaster, Jason Klins, and our prayer group administrator, Patti Millar.

As of May 25, 2025, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 40,440. Thank you.

Testimony of Marija

The following testimony by visionary Marija was given on November 23, 2024 in St. Leonard's Church in Boston, MA.

We thank Steve Shaul of medjugorje.org for sending us the transcription which was done by Cathy Nolan of marytv.tv. The video of this talk as well as Marija's apparition can be seen on marytv.tv in their video library in "Marija's apparition."

All of you, I would like to greet you who are home here, who built this beautiful church, who put this beautiful statue of Our Lady here; the most important, I can see that everything here is made with love.

At the same time, I would like to say, "Hi", "Hello", to Father Michael [Della Penna], because it's his work as well with Laureen (Ivan's wife) that brought me here today.

I met Fr. Michael a long time ago before he even became a priest. And his vocation is a vocation from Medjugorje. Not only his, but Fr. Rick, who is from here. So, in a special way, this community here is blessed; not only because of them, but because of Ivan – one of the six visionaries from Medjugorje, who got married to Laureen and became a part of this beautiful community.

Even though, we often laugh, because Laureen says that I am her most loved visionary. But she lives with Ivan. And I'm sure that she knows that it's not easy to live with a visionary! Our life is not easy, but it's beautiful because God entered our lives with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We were small as a family. We were born and raised as Catholics. But until we saw the Blessed Virgin Mary, until Our Lady appeared to us, our lives were very plain and very simple. And then after that it became so complicated.

People asked us... they asked for us. They wanted to meet us. And my mom used to say all the time that our house is no longer our house, it's like a bus station. People would come; they would sit; they would talk; they would eat; they would drink; they would look. They wanted to meet the people who received the greatest gift. Imagine: Jakov was only 9-1/2. I was 16. The oldest among us is Vicka.

So, we were children. But Our Lady took us. She started to lead us, to love us. And we fell in love with Her. Not only us, but our families. And the adventure started.

And then, we started to pray more, and more, and more. We thought that if we pray more, Our Lady is going to be with us longer; because it is so beautiful to be with Our Lady. But Our Lady didn't ask that from us, for all day to be in Apparition – no. As Jesus said to the apostles, *Go down from Tabor*. That's how Our Lady had asked us to be the witnesses.

And I remember so many times we were so tired. But we said to the Lord, *"Here we are, we are your instruments, use us, Lord."* And in a special way that is the feeling that we

gained, that we became instruments. No longer shy children, but people of faith, people of hope. Because we met Her, Our Lady, Queen of Peace, who came among us.

And She calls us; always She's calling us, *"Wake up."* And She said, *"Dear children, God permits me to be with you, to guide you and to lead you in the School of Prayer."*

And that's how everything started. From the Apparition Hill, Our Lady guided us into the church. When we came to the church, Our Lady planned all the program in the church. Because, in the beginning of the Apparitions, the church was closed; there was no program. But Our Lady asked, *"Pray the Rosary."* And we listened and answered Her call. Our Lady has said, *"Put God in the first place in your life."* And as She asked, we started to celebrate the Holy Mass.

Our Lady has asked us to pray for all those who are sick. And together with the priests that accepted the message of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we started to pray for all of those who are in need – for their healing, for the healing of their body and of their soul.

In a special way, we saw that God works; and we saw a lot of miracles. Many, many times there's a feeling that we can work together with the Lord – and it is like that. When we kneel down and when we pray, when we fast, we can feel that we work with the Lord.

It's the same what Our Lady's asking us to do. She permits

us to fall in love with Her, to follow Her, to do whatever She asks us to do. But She's deeper than what I have just said; She's much wiser. In the Cana wedding, She knew the wine was needed. And when She said, *"Do as He tells you,"* when Jesus turned the water into wine, they commented, *"At the beginning you should serve a good wine, but later on you should serve the not so good wine, because they drank already a little bit."* But they were surprised – why? There was the best wine at the end. That is exactly what

God wants from us. To be the good wine. To be the joy for the others. To be in unity with the others.

As Our Lady said at the beginning of the Apparitions, *"Be my extended hands to the others."* How? To pray for all of those who do not pray; to love God above all, for all those who do not love God; for our lives to be testimonies, basically.

And we see that every single day. We meet the people, and we talk to them. And we transmit our faith. Many times, I see people who get so far away from the Lord. I don't know where... maybe in some big shopping mall. But you see people that look at you, and when you say, *"God bless you,"* it's not just with the words. Every small little word, small little thing that you do or say, means that you believe. *"May the Lord bless you."* Let it be said with the heart. Because



Marija (left) and her translator, photo credit marytv.tv

Our Lady wants all of us to be the blessing for the others.

I remember one time my spiritual director, in the evening when I talked to him, he said to me, "God bless you, Marija, for everything that you do." And then I said to him, "God bless you even more." And then we started laughing – me on this side, and he on his side of the phone. And we started our conversation, but the joy remained. And that joy is spread around every single day.

Through Medjugorje, we see all that. All of you who have been to Medjugorje, you know that Medjugorje is not a huge city, it is not a big city, it is not very attractive. We don't have anything like you have right now. We don't have churches this big. We don't have big towers, big buildings. Nothing. We only have a lot of big rocks! And so many rocks that for trees, it is hard to grow. But Our Lady has chosen this land. And this land, the land where Medjugorje is, is Our Lady's land. And Our Lady attracts so many pilgrims, so many people – even those who do not believe, who are hungry for God – to firm up their faith. And with the joy to meet with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In a special way, I would like to say, really, from the bottom of my heart, it's a joy for me to be here. Because Medjugorje is here as well. Through Ivan, Laureen, Father Michael, and all of you who have been to Medjugorje before. And I think that each and every one of you feel the same; a little nostalgia to come back to Medjugorje very soon. Myself, as well, when I go out from Medjugorje, after a few days – even if I'm going on a holiday – I want to go back. Not because there's my house, my home, my family; it's because it's a big heart there. It's the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Heart of Mary that loves; that calls each and every one of us, "Come back to God. There is no future, dear children, without God. There is no eternal life."

And Our Lady showed us. She showed us Heaven, Purgatory and Hell. One day, She took Jakov and Vicka and told them, "I will bring you to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory." And Jakov said, "Dear Mother, take Vicka. She has seven more siblings. I'm on my own." And Our Lady smiled, and She took both of them. She showed them Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. And She said to them, "You are the ones who are going to make a decision for Heaven, for Hell or for Purgatory."

And I always say, we need to make a decision. I decide for Heaven – for holiness, for the holiness of my life. For me to my family, and I want to be a blessing for all of those people that I meet. Because I know when I was born, God created me – me, just me – the way I am, the one who is not going to be replaceable. Unique. I am not perfect. I am not perfect, but I want to look like Our Lady. I want to be a little Our Lady, if it is possible. To be Her sign, the sign of love for

all the people that I meet.

I want to invite all of you, through this, my little testimony, when you go back to your homes, to know that we are all very, very important in this project – if I may say it like this – that God has for all of us.

Just imagine, when you go to Lourdes, to the house of St. Bernadette, and she's not there. In Medjugorje, you can meet us. We are alive. We are still witnesses. And we are still holding the Torch of Freedom and the Love of God, because God has chosen Our Lady, and He sent Her among us to tell us that we are important. And She wants to take us towards Eternal Life. We are important to Her, and that's why She is with us. That's why She leads us to Her Son, Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

May the Almighty God bless you all, and in a special way, Our Blessed Virgin Mary, with Her Motherly Blessing; and may She protect all of you with Her veil. May tomorrow be the day – as Our Lady said once, when Father Slavko died (who

was our spiritual director) – Our Lady has said in Her message that, "Your Brother Slavko is born into Heaven, and he intercedes for all of you." And that means that we will never die, if we are born. With our baptism, we are born for Eternal Life. And I hope that we will meet each other there, and to praise the Lord and His Holy Mother, and Our Mother, and all the angels, and all the saints, and all the martyrs, and all of those people who left before us, and to say, "God permitted us to be the witnesses of His Love." Amen.

I'm going to say a prayer, all together we will pray. There's a tradition when Our Lady asked to pray the prayer of healing. I am going to ask Father Michael and if there is another priest, to extend your hands and to pray for all of us.

What is gone, what is past, that is gone, we cannot change it. But what is future, we can change. Tonight, Our Lady prayed over us. She looked upon all of us. And Our Lady still gives us messages, and She says, "Dear children," and at the end of every message, She says, "Thank you for having responded to my call."

Let's pray to Our Blessed Virgin Mary to give us the strength that we can change our life. What is past, and what has happened, we cannot change. But we can start a new, holier life with the blessing of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and with Our Lord's blessing, to begin a new life – a life of holiness.

Hail Mary...Hail Mary...Hail Mary...

Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Kraljice Mira, Regina della Pace, pray for us.

Editor's note: Fr. Michael Della Penna's testimony was in our October 2024 issue, which can be found in the archives on our website, spiritofmedjugorje.org.



Marija's house in Medjugorje

"The measure of love is to love without measure." ~ St. Anthony of Padua, our patron saint for 2025

Memories of the Early Days

The following testimony of Suzana Mixan is excerpted from Fruit of Medjugorje #574 on marytv.tv, aired on 9/9/24. The entire testimony of Suzana and her husband Joe is quite long. We plan to use more excerpts in the future. Since we celebrate the anniversary of the apparitions this month, we thought you might like to read about someone who was there.

My story in Medjugorje starts when I was six years old in 1981. My mother was born in Medjugorje. She is a native. She got married in [the] neighboring town, Čitluk. We lived right behind the church.

When Our Lady appeared, the parish priest called my mom... and said, "You have to come to Medjugorje because your mother is calling you to come immediately." Because we were her first medical care providers...we thought that's what she needs, to take her to the doctor or something like that. So my dad, my mom, and I – at the time I was six years old – we got into the car and we drove to my grandma's house. She lived right at the foot of Cross Mountain... When we pulled in with the car at my grandma's house, my grandma said, "Don't get out of the car. Last night some kids in Bijakovići said that they saw Our Lady on the hill, and there's people gathering. They think She will appear again." So, we really didn't doubt anything.

We pulled up with the car [near Apparition Hill] and my mom, knowing all the local ladies, started talking to them. There were about 200 people visiting. She was standing in particular with this one elderly woman, when some kids out of this group were kind of pulled and started running up the hill very fast. We wanted to go, too. People started chasing after them. We didn't have really good shoes and my mother asked to switch shoes with this older lady, because she had more comfortable shoes. They switched the shoes and my mom said, "Why don't you stay with this old lady?" and I said, "No, I will not stay here. I want to go..." My mom wasn't going to waste any seconds anymore, arguing with me. She's like, "OK. Let's go." My mother (her name was Angelica) knew every corner of that hill. She used to cut firewood and she used to hide from the woodsmen...She knew where there would be more clearing and which way would be easier to climb the hill. So what she did, basically, she took me, pushed me like that (gesturing) with the hands and then she would jump. Somehow we went around there and we were right next to the visionaries on June 25!

Me, being six years old, most of these events I just told you, I don't recall. That's stories from my mom, who has since passed away. But what I remember the most was being right next to the visionaries and they were in ecstasy, having some kind of moaning and groaning. They were on their knees. They were so overwhelmed. Their bodies were even like experiencing something (gesturing), kind of movement. I was just looking and trying to see what they're looking at. All I would see is butterflies and birds, maybe here and there, going around....some priest later explained that [the] Mother of God, She is full of grace. Even though these kids were young and pure, their spirit still has to adjust to such greatness.

[At this point Suzana's husband, Joe, gave his testimony, which we will share in the future.]

...My story with Medjugorje right after the first day continues. The first days were amazing because there were so many miracles that we saw the first days. Because I was a certain age, that my grandma needed – especially during the summertime and weekends, when I didn't have school – I often spent time with her to keep her company, help her, run to the grocery store for her or something like that. So I experienced Medjugorje when miracles would happen. We would pray the Rosary and look up the hill with binoculars and watch the Cross Mountain. And we would see it [the Cross] just sometimes disappear. Or sometimes we would wake up in the morning and look up and it was spinning.

On Apparition Hill, the signs were all kinds of signs – lights, flashes of light. At that time there was nothing even close that would make such big flashes of light...Once actually, we would go with my mom and we prayed the Rosary – we went up the hill and then we saw rainbow color balloons dancing from the sky up to Apparition Hill all the way back to Cross Mountain, like that (gesturing). In the beginning days, I remember when people were talking how this man,

that was local, washed his hands with dirt from Apparition Hill. He was blind and was able to see!

I experienced Medjugorje in the first days when we would fast strictly. First Our Lady said Friday. Then we fasted on Wednesday on bread and water. I remember in the first days when Our Lady said, "Let's start praying 7 Our Father's, 7 Hail Mary's, 7 Glory Be's." So we prayed that. And She said, "Joyful Mysteries." So we prayed Joyful, and continued to all decades of the Rosary. And then also I experienced the people from other countries when they started coming. We used to call them, when I was little, "foreigners." We were really intrigued when they would speak a different language to us.

A very special thing that I had with my grandma: She was very kind of crippled. She had a cane and she had really bad arthritis. She was very hunched down. She wasn't able to walk very fast or much. But she had binoculars. My uncle from Germany got her binoculars. She would remember what color was the color of my shirt. So I would go up the hill and pray the Rosary and she would be on her balcony, watching and praying the Rosary with me. So we felt like we were connected. She was a very holy woman...She prayed the Rosary so much that she had indents of the beads in her thumb. And she read the bible so much. She read the bible as she was cooking. Her bible was literally very dirty from everything she was doing at the time...She would also, as much as she could, she would visit elderly people in the village and pray with them – pray the Rosary and read Scripture to them and just visit them. And then sometimes, even if they just needed a haircut, we gave them haircuts! She was very special. I have very fond and many memories of my grandma.



Suzana, photo credit marytv.tv

www.marytv.tv

Pope Leo XIV is Open to Medjugorje

By Emmanuel Musa

On the occasion of the election of a new Pope, Radio Station Mir-Medjugorje hosted the Reverend Hugo Gabriel Sanchez, who spoke about his personal connection with the newly elected Pope Leo XIV. Reverend Hugo personally knows the new Pope and has collaborated with him for many years, following his journey within the Church.

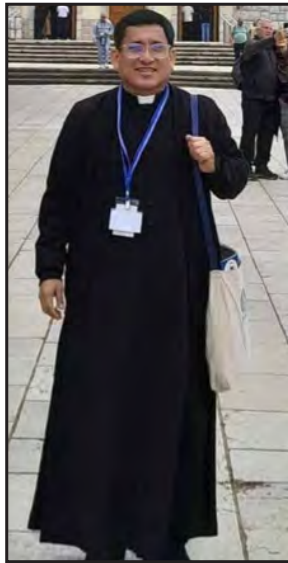
In the conversation, he shared impressions about the selection of the Pope, touching personal memories, as well as his experiences from Medjugorje, which he visited with the personal permission of the then cardinal, now the Pope. "It was a moment filled with emotions, a lot of joy and a lot of tears. I was already planning to visit him in Rome after the visit of this pilgrimage to Medjugorje, he is my close friend. He led the Dicastery for Bishops, so I knew of his potential and chances to become Pope. He is an Augustinian and an American, which gave him additional chances to be elected Pope. I am very happy about his election because I think he will follow the path of Pope Francis since he is a Pope who speaks many languages. He is very humble, simple and there is closeness with all believers. He was a bishop who had collaborated with the Holy Father for many years and followed the path of Pope Francis. He was interested in the theme of synodality in the Church and in a Church that reaches out to the periphery and cares for the marginalized," said Rev. Hugo.

He emphasized that Pope Leo XIV had always been open to Medjugorje and to priests who want to lead pilgrimages.

"I already commented that a few days ago I was in Medjugorje and it is the fourth time that I have been in Medjugorje, and for the first three times I received

permission from the current Pope Leo XIV. I remember that I first came to Medjugorje in 2021 for a pilgrimage. I had to ask for permission from the monsignor [now Pope] because we were still in a pandemic at that time, and after two days he called me and said: 'Hugo, come to pick up your permission, ask for whatever you need, and count on me for your pilgrimages to Medjugorje.' So I had the opportunity to go to Medjugorje four times in a row. The current Pope has not denied the possibility of the Medjugorje phenomenon, on the contrary, he has always been open to priests for organizing pilgrimages and spiritual retreats. He has been open to Medjugorje, giving us concessions, especially after the Nihil Obstat," said Reverend Hugo, who was appointed parish priest in Peru by the then Bishop Robert Francis Prevost, and now Pope Leo XIV, after a pilgrimage to Medjugorje.

"I am still touched because the Pope spoke in Spanish and addressed a message to the Diocese of Chiclayo, characterizing its people as very faithful to God. We have the best memories of the Pope; he is very simple, close, and he tried to live synodality in the Church with his ability to accept. He was always interested and especially close to the priests, and then to his faithful people, trying to visit parishes. I had the opportunity to meet him in my parish. He appointed me as the parish priest in 2022, when I returned from my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje; that was the first gift that the Virgin granted me. He visited my parish on the occasion of the Confirmation sacrament. He is very kind, a close person, and he approaches everyone with simplicity," said Reverend Hugo, and you can listen to the entire conversation in the audio recording.



Fr. Hugo in Medjugorje,
photo credit medjugorje.hr

God Has a Sense of Humor

By June Klins

When I read the following by Deacon Tony Alleruzzo in a church bulletin, I knew I had to share it.

"Did you know that the Bible is the most shoplifted book in the world? I wonder why. Perhaps it's because the Bible contains some of the weirdest stories imaginable. Think about it. A snake talked to Eve in the garden (Genesis 3). *We seem to read over this like it is normal!* God smote the people of Ashdod with hemorrhoids (1 Sam 5:6-12). *You gotta laugh!* Jonah was swallowed by a big fish and remained there for 3 days until he was vomited out onto dry land (Jon 1:17 and Jon 2:10). *Kind of like a Mel Brooks movie.* Kids made fun of Elisha, calling him "Baldy" multiple times. Elisha called down a curse, and immediately, two bears came out and mauled 42 of the boys (2 Kings 2:23-24). *Don't feel too sorry for them, they were like a gang.* God gave explicit orders to go outside the camp, dig a hole, and use it as a toilet there because He walked through the camp and did not want to see it (Deut 23:12-14). *Yep, it's in there. Go read it!* God said not to eat any four-legged fowl (Lev 11:20,23). *I don't know about*

you, but I have never seen a 4-legged chicken. Didn't know that the Bible could be so entertaining, did you?"

Deacon Tony went on to encourage people to register for a Bible Study the parish was offering.

I would like to add two more weird stories in the Bible. Did you know there is a talking donkey in the Bible? (Num 22: 21-39). An Old Testament "Mr. Ed?" (Only the baby boomers would remember Mr. Ed.) And the one I recently read was the story of the Linen Loincloth (Jer 13: 1-14). I was laughing out loud when I was listening to the commentary on this story by Fr. Mike Schmitz in the "Bible in a Year" podcast (Day 234).

Do you think God put those weird stories in the Bible so we would read it? I have no idea, but what I do know is that Our Lady has asked us to read the Bible daily. There is so much to learn. I highly recommend the "Bible in a Year," as one way to learn more about the Bible. Fr. Mike does such a great job with his commentaries. It is never too late to start. You can visit AscensionPress.com/BIY to sign up. It's free!

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MARY IS CALLING YOU

On June 24, 1981 in Medjugorje, Our Lady began appearing to six children. She identified Herself as the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Peace. 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, the Blessed Mother still appears daily to three of the visionaries, and annually to the others. They are all now adults. 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. They declare to see the Blessed Virgin as they see other people — three dimensional. They pray and speak with Her.

The Blessed Mother granted to confide ten secrets to each visionary (some are chastisements for the world). Some of the visionaries have received all ten secrets. Our Lady promised

to leave a visible sign at the original site of the apparitions in Medjugorje, for all humanity. In the meantime, this period of grace is for conversion and a deepening of faith.

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 (as in the story of Goliath). They are PRAYER with the heart, especially the Rosary; EUCHARIST; BIBLE; monthly CONFESSION; and FASTING.

On September 19, 2024 the Vatican announced that the apparitions in Medjugorje received a nihil obstat.

If you want a prayer cloth we made, send a self-addressed stamped business size (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") envelope with \$1.01 postage on it. This offer is available while supplies last.



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