



THE SPIRIT OF MEDJUGORJE
P.O. BOX 6614 • ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16512
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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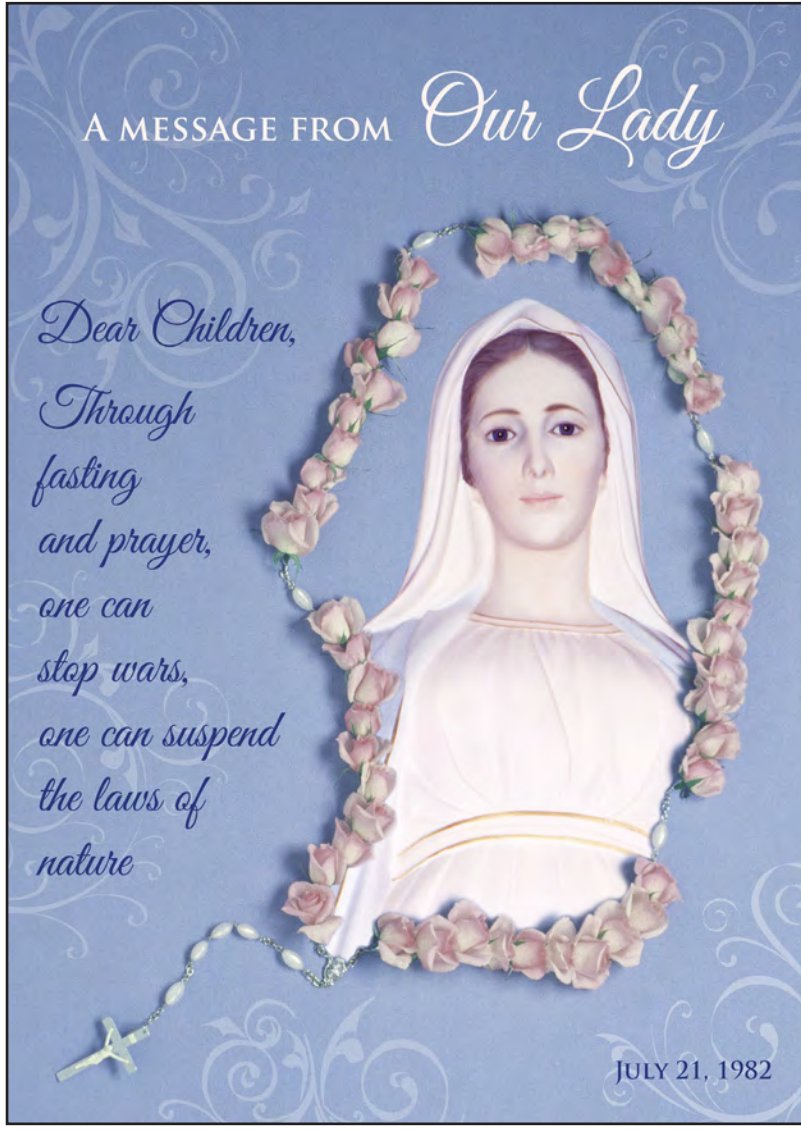
VOL. 36, NO. 10

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

OCTOBER 2023

MONTHLY MESSAGE OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

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 above poster is entitled "The Pink Rosary: A Gift From Our Lady" by Christine Frappier. The inspiring story of the artist's conversion is intertwined in the making of the poster. To read her story (which is too long for our newsletter), please go to our website, www.spiritofmedjugorje.org and under the tab called "More", click on "Featured Articles".

"Dear children! I am calling you to strong prayer. Modernism wants to enter into your thoughts and steal from you the joy of prayer and of meeting with Jesus. That is why, my dear little children, renew prayer in your families, so that my motherly heart may be joyful as in the first days, when I had chosen you, and day and night prayer resounded – and Heaven was not silent but abundantly bestowed peace and blessing on this place of grace. Thank you for having responded to my call."



Fr. Ray

Do I Smell October is Already Here?

By Fr. Ray Donohue

Tempus Fugit! Many clocks have these words on them, simply meaning: "Time flies". As the leaves are, and have been changing colors, I smell the autumn and see the signs of a changing season.

As a child, many of my neighbors would pile up the leaves in the country, where my grandparents lived, and would burn the leaves. My mother

always said she loved the smell of the burning leaves, but I never did. I liked watching the fire glow as we threw more leaves on the already burning pile and watched the smoke rise up to Heaven!

As I live in the woods, surrounded by countless trees, I smell the leaves again and it brings back so many memories.

Many things bring memories back to us, especially those of our senses. Over 50 years, whenever I use incense at Holy Masses or Novenas, it brings me right back to the Miraculous Medal Novena I served at St. Teresa's Church every Monday evening. I feel like I am right there, as I have written about many times. Smell is such an important trigger to memory.

Another sense is sight. Many times something we see brings back a happy or sad memory. Recently, I saw a 1962 Ford Fairlane 500, light blue, and I was lost in memories! My dad had a car just like it. We went to the parks in that car, picnics, my grandmother's house, and to church on really snowy days. To see that car brought back so many happy and fun memories.

What about prayers? Do they bring us back to childhood, or the nuns or our parents teaching them to us? Do we recall seeing our parents praying and wondering what they were doing? Do we recall looking at people in church kneeling before and after Holy Mass, and seeing their mouths moving but hearing nothing coming out of their mouths while fingering a holy rosary in their hands?

Memories can make us better people. Just seeing a rosary makes me think about praying one. Seeing a votive candle burning brings me back to holiness and gives me feelings of church and people filling the churches and watching them pray. I remember saying to my mom and dad: "I want what they have!"

I wanted so much to pray, to learn prayers, to be before the Lord on my knees at Benediction and at the Holy Consecration. The feelings I had and still have bring me to holiness and make me feel surrounded by Grace and Love, holy love that God and the Blessed Mother are with me.

On August 15th of this year, my Godson, Friar Emmanuel Wenke, OFM, was ordained a priest at Our Lady of Victory Basilica in my old neighborhood in Buffalo, NY. Father Emmanuel is a youthful, holy young man. That huge basilica was filled with people of all ages, tons of Franciscan Brothers and Fathers, some of us "diocesan" priests, many deacons, and they came from all over the United States to be there. It brought me right back to my own ordination

over 38 years ago in a simple little church, St. Joseph's, in Fredonia, New York, where I served as a seminarian and deacon.

The Bishop was a wonderful Franciscan Bishop and the deacon was Father Manny's very own father, Deacon Matt Wenke! Father Manny's sister is a cloistered nun and because of a vow of stability [a promise to stay in one place, in one community, for the rest of your life], could never leave the convent, but her Mother Superior was happy to have the Ordination and his First Mass live-streamed to their Monastery. The sisters and Mother Loved it!!

The music and voices were like Heaven, Angelic and holy. Incense was used, and made the worship of Our Lord even more holy, as the brotherhood of the Holy Priesthood and Professed Brothers and novices, deacons and Bishop, all joined as ONE to worship the One and Only True God in the spirit of LOVE! How I wish all of you could have been there!

As my Godson knelt before the Bishop, professing his Solemn Vows, all of us priests went right back to our own vows, married people present felt their own marriage vows renewed, and the holiness was beyond words! To see his own father as the holy deacon at the Mass was so humbling and awesome!

As the Bishop silently imposed his hands on Manny, through the Holy Spirit in total silence, that young deacon was now a priest forever and ever, a priest of Jesus Christ! Then, all of us priests went up into the Sanctuary, and we imposed our hands on Father Emmanuel's head in union of our own Holy priesthood renewing who we are.

I will say it again, how I wish you all could have been there to feel the holiness, the reverence, the love, the very meaning of what it means to be humble, a servant of God – that those hands the Bishop anointed were now used to Consecrate a piece of bread into the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Himself, to use those hands to bless and forgive sin on earth to those who come to God for forgiveness, to baptize, to unite a husband and wife in Holy Marriage, to comfort those who lost a loved one, and to anoint a soul about to go home to God in Heaven.

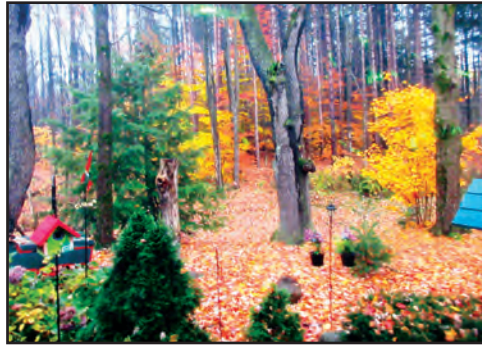
You see, at that ordination and the next day at Father Manny's first Mass, the sights, the sounds, the heavenly smell of holy incense, the Holy Words of the Mass, the joy in all the hearts present, it brought back many memories, and gave so many there new memories that will last a lifetime!

Yes, smelling the leaves burn in October, brings happy thoughts to me. Praying at Holy Mass, really longing to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, the wonderful and astounding gift of monthly Confession to cleanse us and renew us, the holy hymns we sing that come right from our hearts to God's Heart, the reverence we have for the Blessed Virgin Mary, the countless gifts the Holy Church gives to us should be renewed at every Mass, and in every day of our lives here on earth.



One of the side altars in the Basilica of Our Lady of Victory

Earthly life is temporary. Yesterday I did the funeral Mass of a lovely Sister, Sister Margaret, who was in her 90s. I was able to hear her confession and absolve her, anoint her with the Holy Oil to prepare her for the journey to new life in Heaven, give her Holy Communion, Viaticum, and hold her hand as she laid in bed silent, but praying.



*Fall leaves at Fr. Ray's
(better seen online in color)*

Her funeral Mass was not sad and morbid, but had great love and that love was happiness for her, as still being human, she gave her heart to God, just as anyone of us can and should! She had a very happy death, and the church was full! A simple life, with very few belongings, she left a legacy that will live on and on!

So, how are we going to re-approach our faith and actions? The leaves on a tree start out as little tiny buds that make us happy to see after a long winter! Then a beautiful green leaf filled with life appears, and reaching up to Heaven gives us relief from the hot sun on a hot summer's day. Then, that little leaf changes its color in the autumn of its life, to brilliant, happy colors! Then, finally, it falls to earth and covers the ground, but gives us great joy to remember and make new memories. God made that leaf for a purpose, just as He does with us. Live your faith! In living your faith, you give back to God the beauty and joy of His creating you, unique and splendid! Whether that leaf now is burned, or remains for a time on

the ground, or under the ground, God transforms the very essence of that little creation, and its soul returns to God to be happy with Him forever.

In Jesus, Mary, and Saint Joseph,
~Father ray and his little leaf, Dublin ☺

Mirjana's Encounter

By June Klins

Recently I came upon an interesting footnote from the book *Freed and Healed Through Fasting* by Sr. Emmanuel and felt prompted to share it. Sr. Emmanuel wrote:

"The LORD said to the satan, 'Very well, all that he has is in your power...'"
(Job 2:12).

"Perhaps one of the most shocking messages on the power of fasting came when Our Lady allowed Satan (disguised as a handsome young man) to approach Mirjana. Our Lady said, 'Excuse me for this, but you must realize that Satan exists. One day he appeared before the throne of God and asked permission to submit the Church to a period of trial. God gave him permission to try the Church for one century.* This century is under the power of the devil, but when the secrets confided to you come to pass, his power will be destroyed. Even now he is beginning to lose his power and has become aggressive. He is destroying marriages, creating division among priests and is responsible for obsessions and murder. You must protect yourselves against these things through fasting and prayer, especially community prayer. Carry blessed objects with you. Put them in your house, and restore the use of holy water.' (December 24, 1982)"

Last month, I had an encounter that made me feel the "power of the devil" Our Lady spoke of in this message. A doctor I had never met before was assessing my husband's condition. In conversation, I had mentioned that I had been at Mass earlier that day. This must have hit a nerve, because about a half hour or so later, he said to me in a very condescending voice, in the presence of my husband, "You can pray all you want, but it's not going to make it any better."

I was stunned that a doctor would say something like that. I felt like it was the voice of the devil that came from

his mouth, especially when my husband mentioned later that the doctor was laughing. The devil discourages prayer and destroys hope. Did I answer back or tell him about my son's Rosary miracle which is chronicled in four books? No. I knew it would not do any good. I was silent and prayed for him. Of course, I was appalled, but I also felt sorry for him. I felt sorry that he was an "unbeliever." According to Mirjana, whose special prayer intention is to pray for unbelievers, Our Lady does not call people "unbelievers," but describes them as "those who do not yet know the love of God". I cannot imagine living without knowing God's love. How does one cope in this world without knowing God's love? Mirjana says that all the bad things that happen in the world are because of "unbelievers", so we need to **fast and pray for them**.

Prayer and fasting DOES work miracles, maybe not the exact ones we *want*, but the ones we *need*. Miracles of the heart are always the best!

Note: My son's Rosary miracle story can be read at www.spiritofmedjugorje.org/index.php?ArticleSeq=60#featuredArticle

*According to CNA and many other sources, on Oct. 13, 1884, Pope Leo XIII had a vision of Satan boasting to God that he could destroy the Church. When God reminded him His Church was imperishable, Satan replied, "Grant me one century and more power of those who will serve me, and I will destroy it." God granted him 100 years.

Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for October:

For the Synod – We pray for the Church, that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a lifestyle at every level, and allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the peripheries of the world.



Our thanks to Fr. Ray Donohue, Carol Bleck, Dorothy and Kirk Bennett, Don and Mary Spaeder, Tom McIntire, Elaine Brady, Diane Niebauer, Sue Taccone, Laura and Kevin DiBacco, Pat Heinlein, Marlene Figurski, Judy Johns, Chris Falk, Tom Kennedy, Kathy Wayman, Louise Lotze, Barb Cesare, Sue Verga, Georgia Chludzinski, Betsy Truran, Peggy Chludzinski, Cindy Bielamin, Irene and Dan Zuba, Joan Peterson, Jane Culmer, Barb Sirianni, Rose Heintzel, Darleen Wilkinson, Peggy Smith, and those who want to remain anonymous for their help with the September mailing. We also thank our proofreader, Don Spaeder, our webmaster, Jason Klins, and our prayer group administrator, Patti Millar.

My Experience with Our Lady

By Steve Shawl

Many people have asked me over the years why we do what we do. Why would I give up my business, my career, and my livelihood to devote all my time and effort over the last 28 years to help spread the message of Medjugorje? To many people it sounds completely crazy. But my experience with Our Lady changed my life, and it is something I will never forget. I hope by sharing it with you, you will understand why Medjugorje is so important not only to me, but also to you, and to the entire world.

Let me first say I did nothing to deserve God's grace or Our Lady's visit, and probably quite the opposite. I take comfort in knowing that when Ivan once asked Our Lady why She chose him, She answered: "Because I do not always choose the best." I certainly fit into that category! I know that conversion is a lifelong process and struggle, and as Ivan says, "I try to be better each day." That is our lifelong challenge.

I believe the grace I received that day in March 1995 was, in part, a **result of people praying for me**. The power of prayer is something that we should **never** underestimate. If you have a loved one that is lost, pray for him or her **unceasingly**. [Editor emphasis] God hears every one of our prayers. Miracles do happen, and I am a living witness. I thank God every day for the opportunity to be even a miniscule part of His plan for the salvation of the world through Medjugorje. I pray that I never disappoint Him.

I guess the best place to start is at the beginning. I was born a cradle Catholic, and lived through the "Kumbaya Catechism" of the 60s/70s in Catholic school. As a young boy, I remember growing up in government-subsidized housing during the years my father was going to school for his PhD. Those were difficult years, and they stuck with me, and influenced my decisions later in life. I was determined to be successful in life, and to be able to have all the material things I didn't have as a child.

From a young age, I was always a hard worker. My first job was as a paperboy in the third grade. I worked all through grade school and high school to make money. Like many teenagers, I found myself seduced and immersed in all the pleasures and false promises "The World" had to offer. Looking back, I do believe if we had prayed the Rosary in our family throughout my childhood and teenage years, as Our Lady requests, I would have made different choices in my life.

From my Catholic school years, I held many grudges and harbored many misconceptions about the Faith, to such an extent, that I vowed never to set foot in a Catholic Church again. At age twenty, I went back to school and became an engineer, which ultimately led to my starting my own computer company towards the end of the 80s. The company was extremely successful, and it fed my endless desire for material things. I knew there was something missing in my life, and in my heart, but I didn't know what it was. I was constantly trying to fill that void with "Big boy toys," but

after each purchase, I still felt empty and unfulfilled. What I didn't realize at that time was that the void in my heart could only be filled by God's love and His presence in my life.

It was early 1995, and one evening I went out to dinner with my parents. Our dinner conversation was focused on recent television shows about near death experiences and angel stories. My father took the opportunity to ask me if I had ever heard of a place called Medjugorje. I answered, "No, I haven't." My father explained that it was a place in former Yugoslavia where six young

people claimed to be receiving apparitions and messages from Our Lady. The idea seemed impossible to me. If this was really taking place, why wasn't it all over the news? I mean, "Mother of God visits earth" is big news. My father told me he would give me a series of articles written by a man named Wayne Weible, which were all about this place called Medjugorje.

A few days later, as I sat alone in my house, I felt a strong prompting to read the article. As I picked it up and started to read it, I was overwhelmed with a feeling that this was all true. I had never experienced a feeling like that before, and it was profound. Then, in an instant, there was a beautiful bright white light in front of me that filled my entire field of vision. It was a light I had never seen before. It had depth and life. I could see its beauty, color, and brightness, but also felt its purity and holiness. I was literally pushed back in my chair, and I could feel the warmth of the light on my face. The whole experience is very difficult to explain or put into words, but I knew it was Divine. I knew Our Lady was there before me. I felt indescribable love and peace pouring down upon me. I hadn't cried in over twenty years, and tears were streaming down my face. I was sobbing, but out of pure joy. In an instant, I experienced a moment of clarity. All the grudges I had held against the Church and all the misconceptions I had harbored were gone, and I was infused with a knowledge of the Catholic faith. I could clearly see the Church in its simplicity, beauty, and truth. I immediately felt a deep love in my heart for the beliefs and traditions of our Faith. It was a feeling like I was home again after a long journey. I then heard Our Lady speak to my heart, and She said, "Will you help spread my messages?" It took me about one second to respond, but within that one second it was as if time stood still. In that instant, I understood in my heart the seriousness and depth of the question. I also understood that my answer was literally choosing God or denying Him. And from the absolute depths of my heart, I answered out loud, "YES, Blessed Mother, but I don't know what to do!" I somehow understood that the method of spreading Her messages would be the internet, but at that time I knew nothing about the internet. A moment later, the bright white



Steve and his wife Ana with Vicka's mother

light and Our Lady were gone. I was literally shaking with excitement and in awe at what had just happened.

The next days were busy. I booked a trip to Medjugorje, invited Wayne Weible to our parish, went to Confession for the first time in twenty-five years, and went to Mass for the first time in fifteen years. I re-learned the Rosary and started praying it every day. I also started fasting strictly on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays. It was a time of great joy, blessing, and excitement for me. I could not wait to get home each day from work to pray the Rosary. I remember searching and searching for a rosary from Medjugorje, and I finally found a woman on the east coast that ran a Marian Center. When the rosaries arrived, I couldn't wait to open the package. They were clear light blue heart-shaped beads, with a note in the box that said they were blessed by Our Lady during an apparition in Medjugorje. I immediately started praying with them. I remember always feeling a warm burning sensation in my chest when I prayed the Rosary, and my fingers that held the beads would tingle. Within a few days I noticed the links had turned gold. I could see through the beads, and could see that even the wire inside the bead had turned gold. It was a beautiful gift from Our Lady, and one that I cherish to this day.

The day after Our Lady's visit, I was praying in the morning before work and was pondering Our Lady's question. I wondered how this would all happen. I knew nothing about the internet and had no idea where to even begin. I owned a computer hardware company, but in early 1995 the internet was mainly confined to universities. Our company certainly

didn't have any involvement or knowledge of the internet at that time. I got into the office and settled down to get some work done. The phone rang, and it was an internet service provider. We spoke, and thirty days later our company was an internet service provider.

I immediately began to work on the website and named it "The Medjugorje Web". I knew nothing about html or how the internet or web pages worked. It was truly a gift from God that I was able to sit down and just started hand writing html for the site. It was effortless for me to learn. To this day, I still do all of our website work with a simple text editor. I remember in those early days spending eighteen to twenty hours a day typing in Our Lady's messages, and adding content about Medjugorje to the website. It was a very blessed time filled with great joy. Within a few months, The Medjugorje Web was born. It was the very first website on Medjugorje, and is still the largest Medjugorje website with over 4,000 pages of content, and receives almost a million hits per day.

My life will always be dedicated to helping Our Lady and Jesus in any way I can. The rest of my story is about how I met my wife Ana. But I will save that, and many other stories of the miracles and wonders we have both experienced taking almost 300 groups to Medjugorje over the past 28 years, for another day.

Editor's note: You can visit Steve's website at medjugorje.org. Pilgrimage information can be found there. Among all the extensive information there, Steve also has a link to send petitions to Medjugorje.

A Medjugorje Moment

By June Klins

After my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 1998, I was on fire to live and spread the messages of Our Lady (and still am). My family was blessed to have the internet at our house earlier than others because my husband worked in the computer department of his place of employment, which was ironically named "Lord Corporation." So, after my pilgrimage, I began searching Medjugorje online and was quickly led to Steve Shawl's website, medjugorje.org. (See story above.) As a "newbie" to Medjugorje, I wanted to learn as much as I could, so I wrote to Steve with questions and he would promptly reply. I also signed up to receive the messages of Our Lady every 25th of the month by email.

On October 25, 2001, I anxiously awaited the message of Our Lady, but it never came. That evening, I wrote to Steve and told him I had not received Our Lady's October message. The next day, when I looked at my email, not only did I have Our Lady's message, but I also had an overwhelming number of Medjugorje-related emails. I wondered what was going on, so I wrote to Steve again. But Steve did not answer. The person who answered me was his wife Ana, with whom I had never communicated. Ana explained to me that she helped Steve with the website, but she also had her own Medjugorje website for a prayer group known as the IIPG

(International Internet Prayer Group) Queen of Peace (now at <https://groups.io/g/IIPG>). Ana was familiar with my name because of all the correspondence with Steve's site, but mistakenly thought I was a member of the IIPG prayer group. Ana thought erroneously that I had been "bumped out" of the group, so she put me "back" into the group – a group I had never even known existed! What a blessing!

It was a "Medjugorje Moment" for me, orchestrated by Our Lady and the Holy Spirit for sure. The discussions in this group about the messages were very helpful, and I met so many new Medjugorje friends, many of them still friends today. The following year, when our editor had a heart attack and I took over as editor of this newsletter, I was worried about finding material for each issue, while still busy with my teaching job. The IIPG was an answer to prayers! Many of the IIPG members granted me permission to use their testimonies and writings in our newsletter. I was so grateful for Ana Shawl's "holy mistake" on October 26, 2001! The visionaries say to pay attention to dates. I later realized that October 26, 2001 was the 50th anniversary of my Baptism as well as the 43rd anniversary of my First Holy Communion!

Editor's note: You can join the IIPG at the website listed above to pray and to post prayer requests for yourself and others. Maybe you can even get the discussions about the messages rolling again.



As of September 25, 2023, the number of Masses reported for Our Lady's intentions was 39,739. Thank you.

Divine Mercy in Medjugorje (June 2023)

By David Joseph Sheehan

It started out innocently enough. I was over in Medjugorje for the twelfth time, having come over with Father Glenn Sudano, CFR and the Saint Benedict Tour group. I was wandering about, when I fell into conversation with a woman from Ireland named Geraldine. Well, we both started shooting the breeze about this and that. My parents came from Ireland and at this time of the year, most of Ireland is in Medjugorje anyways. God knows who is running the country, but that is another story!

As we were conversing, a young lady approached us and asked for directions to Apparition Hill/Blue Cross. Geraldine and I both love walking and so we told the young lady to follow us and we would lead the way. Well, Geraldine and I got gabbing away as we walked through the fields. We turned around and the young lady was gone. Whether she was an angel or just a kid who got cold feet on a hot day, I don't know. Nevertheless, it was a nice day out, though very warm, and Geraldine and I walked on a little further. Then Geraldine told me to go on without her as she wanted to pray silently to Our Lady as she walked the field. I understood this. For those of you who have been to Medjugorje, there is a certain peace to be found there in the fields, away from the noise and the hustle and bustle of the main streets.

In due time, I reached the end of the path where it intersects with the Apparition Hill road. There was Vicka's old house in front of me. I remember the first time when I came to Medjugorje in April 1998; hard to believe it was twenty-five years ago. I came with a group at that time. We all went to see Vicka and hear her give a talk. She was looking over the crowd from her porch and then our eyes met. She gave me the most beautiful smile.

Vicka is married now and lives with her husband Mario in a small village named Gradac, a few miles north of Medjugorje. This house in Medjugorje is empty now of her presence; all that remains are memories and pictures. If a house can be lonely, this house would be. It seems to miss her quick smile and her laughter. We all miss these things, but life goes on.

My body shakes me out of my reveries of yesteryear. Memories are fine, but the body wants water now. It is a very hot day. The locals are wisely staying indoors in "siesta fashion." Only the crazies like myself are out and about. It is early afternoon; the heat won't break for some time, so it is time to get some water.

Now, I am a bit old school (translation = cheap!). I don't like paying for bottled water. I know that there used to be water at the Oasis of Peace. Outside the back of the chapel, there used to be a small faucet there where you could get fresh water. I am about to go right toward the Oasis of Peace when my guardian angel Séan says to me, "Why don't you

go left down the road to the new Divine Mercy Shrine? You have seen the videos. You know there is water there for sure."

Indeed, I have seen the videos. There is a man named Thomas Huth who posts almost daily videos of riding around Medjugorje. I believe his YouTube channel is actually called "Tom Medjugorje."

Well, if I don't find water soon, I will be making one video only, "Dead Dave in Medjugorje"! So, I begin walking north along the Apparition Hill road. I know the way, having walked it many times. There are shops and small stores.

I remember one time buying an excellent picture of Christ in one of these stores. I still have it. Dawn is breaking on the lake of Galilee. The future Apostles are mending their nets and then this strange Man is in front of them. What does He want? His hands are not yet nail-scarred. That is for the future. Right now, He is calling them away from their sure, comfortable life. It may be hard, but it is their life. He calls them away and they leave the nets and the boats behind.

Memories like this help me pass the time as I amble down the road. Thank God the road seems to have a slight decline to it. I know where I am going. The Divine Mercy Shrine is near the end of the road on the left side. At that intersection,

you can go left and come back into Medjugorje. You can go right and maybe five miles to the east, you will come upon the village of Šurmanci. There is a chapel there of Divine Mercy and a miraculous image.

Well, out of water and very hot, I am in no mood to be going farther. I don't like being told that I am old, but my knees have no compunction about letting me know that I must be

mad to be out here by myself walking toward the unknown.

With God's grace and maybe a little bit of His wind at my back, I arrive at the Shrine. It is beautiful. There are benches, an impressive statue of Our Lord as Divine Mercy and most importantly, WATER! WATER! WATER! I go over eagerly to the water fountain. There are four spigots. The design of the fountain is similar to what you find on the front grounds of Saint James Church. I drink, douse myself, laugh – the mad Irishman will live another day! And then, I go over to the Shrine itself. The sun has moved enough toward the West. There is shade right there by the Shrine and Our Lord.

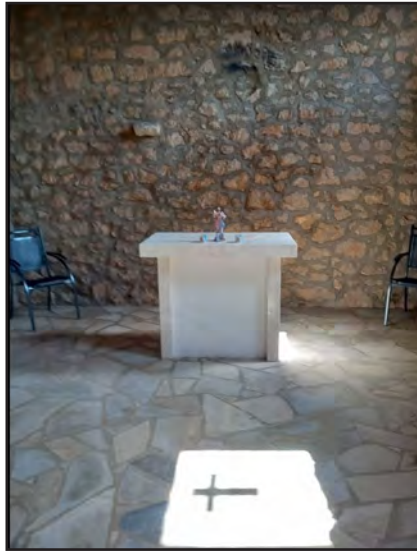
As I sit and pour magnificent cold water over my head, I recall the words of Scripture: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matthew 11:28). And surely another comes to mind from John 7:37: "And on the last, and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink."

Well, Lord, You don't have to tell me twice! So, I sat under His protective wings there at the Divine Mercy simply swimming in the water that God had provided.



Divine Mercy Shrine in Medjugorje

This is probably a good time to tell the story how the Divine Mercy Shrine came about. Dragan Kozina, one of the city fathers, was contacted by a local American, who had this dream of the Divine Mercy Shrine and of hitting water at the shrine location. Dragan thought that this was a bit extreme, as normally, they would have to drill very deep here in this area to hit the water table. However, the American was certain they would hit water if they drilled. So, Dragan put all the moving pieces together, got the right workers to do the drilling and also to construct the Shrine with both objectives going on simultaneously. Lo and behold, they hit water closer to the top than expected. All the locals were surprised, except the American. The Shrine got completed; it was in God's plan all along for what He has in store for Medjugorje.



Chapel near the Divine Mercy shrine

Now, the story continues. The next day I was telling this whole story to a fellow pilgrim, Miguel. He is 71 and likes to take long walks as well. So, we walked from the Blue Cross area down the same road as yesterday. It was morning and not as hot as the day before. We get to the Shrine and then

Miguel, with a keen eye, sees a chapel just beyond (west) of the Shrine.

It turns out that one of the locals has refurbished an old building and turned it into a chapel. If you walk north from the Divine Mercy Shrine and then turn left when you hit the intersection, you will see this small chapel in the backyard of a large house/pansion. Although it is on private property, it is open to beggars like us. Miguel has become my favorite Puerto Rican for finding this place. This little chapel, so near the Divine Mercy Shrine, gives us a welcomed respite from the sun and the heat. Inside, it is quite cool and besides, we have an altar and we are surrounded by the love of Our Lord and Our Lady.

The Shrine and the nearby Chapel are waiting for you, all you that are weary and heavily-burdened. You will find these places in Medjugorje and in all places where Our Lord and Our Lady are loved and welcomed. Perhaps, after reading this long tale, you will find these places in your own heart. God bless!

Editor's note: Dave is from Crowley, TX. He is the author of The First Thirty Stepping Stones Back to God: The Prodigal on his way home.

The Rosary

The following was written in 2002 by Mother Elvira Petrozzi, foundress of the Comunità Cenacolo, who died on August 3, 2023 (see our September 2023 issue).

Our hearts have leaped with joy in receiving a new letter from the Holy Pope about the Rosary. Since the beginning, this prayer has guided our day here in Community and on this holy crown, there have been hung the resurrected lives of many young men and women who have been touched by Cenacolo. The desperate families and the young men and women have found peace, serenity and forgiveness at this school of simple but powerful life through prayer.

The Rosary is a great gift from God to all humanity because through this crown we obtain extraordinary grace. For some, it is a very old monotonous prayer. But we are able to testify its true effects of healing, freedom, peace and reconciliation.

In Community we pray the Rosary early in the morning, another in the afternoon, another in the evening... We need to separate the sunrises from the afternoons and the afternoons from the evenings of life, for the rest of our existence.

The sunrise of every new day is the beginning of each of our stories. So, for this reason, we focus on the birth of Christ. We meet Jesus' birth through the "yes" of Mary. Our lives are [a] gift and we are also reborn by saying "yes" to Jesus' projects of love for us for that day.

The Sorrowful (second Rosary) Mysteries are then prayed in the pre-afternoon. Our adolescence, which is usually the age when problems increase, [is] the age where we do our deepest searching. When we are 12, 13, 14 years old, we start to see the defects of our parents, school becomes irritating, the difference between the rich and poor causes suffering.

We don't know where we stand, and we suffer a crazy fight with our feeling in conflict [with] all that surrounds us. It's also a moment in which educators have difficulty giving true answers and the right responses to the deep questions that young people ask. In the before-afternoon time, adolescence [is] when many doubts are left unanswered. We pray the Sorrowful Mysteries, because the passion of Jesus heals our wounds, negative memories, violence and anger. These wounds at an earlier age have created in us a false rebellion that leads us on the road of "bad" and destruction.

Then there's the moment in the evening, saying the third Rosary, where we anticipate the years of tiredness, being old and sick, the sunset of our lives. Our rosary in our hand, we know we won't get discouraged. We have a fullness, a clearness in our mind and extraordinary freedom in our heart. As we [are] contemplating the Resurrection of Christ, preparing our heart for the definite meeting with Him, you find that through pain and suffering, new life is born. The true reality [that] awaits us is Heaven. I'm preparing myself in these years. Truly I want to arrive with the light in my mind, joy in my heart and a living hope.

Therefore, let's let each day of our lives be held by this gentle crown, that through the heart of Mary, the Rosary is a prayer of the least, the poor and the simple. It is the prayer of Mary, simple and humble, but strong and powerful in the eyes of God. She knew how to receive the message of the angel with a heart, a courage, a faith so great that the Holy Spirit in Her generated Jesus. Today, one more time, She still offers Him to us from that stall in Bethlehem. So let's receive Him in our lives.

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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.

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

If you want a prayer cloth we made, send a self-addressed stamped business size (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") envelope with \$.90 postage on it.



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