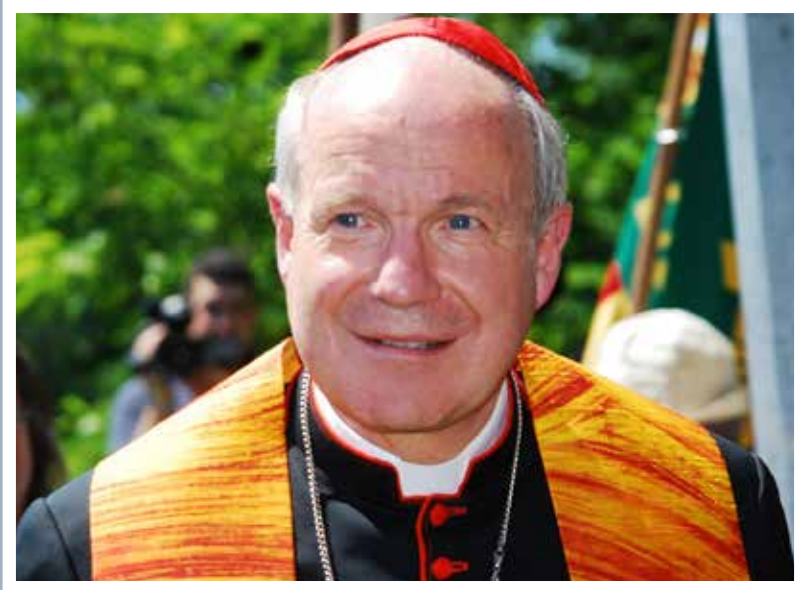


OUR LADY & MEDJUGORJE

THE STORIES, THE VATICAN, & OUR LADY'S MESSAGES





“...almost all the candidates received their vocations to the priesthood (for the Diocese of Vienna, Austria) through Medjugorje.”

CARDINAL CHRISTOPH SCHÖNBORN

SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, and editor of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, sent a message to the youth during Medjugorje’s annual Youth Festival:

“Again, as in the previous years, I wish to send you my warmest greetings, but this year we have a special opportunity to be especially grateful! Each of us has reasons to thank Holy Father for his kind care for Medjugorje! **The installment of the Apostolic Visitor (Archbishop Henryk Hoser) is the sign of a great respect and recognition.** This is the act through which the **Church officially recognized the good fruits of Medjugorje.** Archbishop Hoser is now the official representative of the Holy Father for this parish and pilgrims of Medjugorje.”

YOURS, P. CHRISTOPH CARDINAL SCHÖNBORN

AUGUST 3, 2018

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THE STORY OF MEDJUGORJE



THE STORY OF MEDJUGORJE

The Beginning

On June 24, 1981, six children in the small village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina (in what was then Communist Yugoslavia) reported seeing apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She identified herself to the children as the Queen of Peace and continued to appear to the children every day. Word about these extraordinary events spread like wildfire throughout the entire countryside, and within a matter of days, thousands of people began to gather daily on the hill, to witness the children during the time of the apparitions.

The Pastor

Fr. Jozo Zovko was the recently appointed pastor of St. James parish in Medjugorje, and he initially did not believe the story that his young parishioners were telling everyone, and wondered why everyone was going to the hill, when they should really be in the church praying. He struggled with how to handle this situation, which he viewed as dangerous, because in Communist Yugoslavia it was well known that people could be imprisoned and even killed, simply for publicly expressing their faith as Catholics.

The Persecution

The Yugoslav Communist authorities heard about these events within a matter of days, and immediately came to Medjugorje to put a stop to what they considered to be dangerous, anti-Communist gatherings. Public expressions of faith were strictly forbidden in Communist Yugoslavia, and the Communists would not tolerate thousands of people gathering daily on a hill to pray because of some alleged "apparitions." The police subjected the children to intense scrutiny, extensive questioning, threats and persecution. The Communists threatened them, their families and all their loved ones, but despite all that, the visionaries never wavered in their story.

One day, the Communists wanted to take the visionaries in for additional questioning, but the terrified children ran away from them, running through the tobacco fields and vineyards, towards the direction of St. James Church. The Communist police were chasing them. At the same time, Fr. Jozo was alone inside the church, praying about how to handle the situation that was developing on the hill. As he was contemplating this, he heard the audible voice of a woman, who said to him "go out and protect the children." Fr. Jozo immediately got up and stood in front of the church, and at that exact time, the visionaries came running to him from the fields and gathered around him, begging him to protect them from the Communists who were chasing them. Fr. Jozo hid the children in the rectory basement. From that point on, Fr. Jozo became a fervent believer in these events, and was an incredible source of hope and inspiration to the multitudes who were coming to Medjugorje daily.

The Communists couldn't seem to put a stop to the events happening on the hill, so they decided to forbid the people from climbing the hill, thinking that if the people could not climb the hill to go to the place of the apparitions, then these treasonous events would come to a stop. They encircled the hill



with guard dogs and soldiers and prohibited everyone from going up the hill. As a result, the children began having their apparitions in their homes and other secret places. The multitudes of people who had been gathering on the hill every evening still wanted to spend that time in prayer so, because they could no longer go to the hill, the people began gathering in the church.

The Evening Program of Prayer

When the overflowing crowds started gathering in the church, Fr. Jozo had to offer something to them, so he created an evening program of prayer, which included the Rosary, Mass, Adoration, opportunities for Confession, and other prayers. The official program lasted 3-4 hours every night, but people wanted more! They would stay in the church until midnight or later, longing for the spiritual content they were discovering through the apparitions of Our Lady. Fr. Jozo's preaching was powerful, filled with the Spirit, and deeply inspiring! His homilies would sometimes last 45 minutes, but everyone would be sad when he finished preaching, because they could not get enough of his powerful words and soul stirring preaching. **That evening program of prayer which was started by Fr. Jozo Zovko continues to this day and is the heart and soul of the spiritual life of Medjugorje.**

The Arrest

The Communists viewed Fr. Jozo to be as great of a threat as the visionaries and with their tale of the apparitions. One day, about seven weeks after the apparitions began, the Communists arrested Fr. Jozo. He was put on trial for treason, convicted, and given a prison sentence of 3 ½ years. He was treated harshly during his imprisonment, sometimes even being subjected to torture. He was eventually released from prison after 1 ½ years, due to pressure from the Vatican.

The Visionaries

There are six visionaries in total – four girls and two boys. Five of the visionaries were teenagers when the apparitions began (15 and 16 years old), and the youngest was 10. Three of the visionaries continue to receive daily apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary today. One receives monthly apparitions – on the second day of each month – in addition to an annual apparition. The other two visionaries receive apparitions only once a year. *(See pages 9-11 for more about the visionaries.)*

The Messages

Our Lady has come to draw all of us into a deeper relationship with her Son and to call us to a life of peace, prayer, and conversion. She especially emphasizes that, through the Sacramental life of the Church, we can find the holiness to which we all are called. *(see subsequent pages for details)*

Our Lady has proclaimed many messages since 1981, but all of her messages can be summarized into a few simple things, known as the “Five Stones of Medjugorje:”

- Pray with the heart, so that our prayer is an encounter with the Lord and not just words we speak. Pray the Rosary daily because the Rosary is one of our greatest weapons against sin and evil.
- Fast on Wednesdays and Fridays on bread and water because, as Our Lady says, with prayer and fasting, wars and natural disasters can be stopped.



- Go to Confession once a month. This practice of regular Confession can convert whole sections of the Church.
- Make the Holy Mass the center of our lives.
- Adore Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Fruits

- 40 to 50 million people have traveled to Medjugorje since the apparitions began, making it one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in the entire Catholic world.
- Millions of people have had profound spiritual conversions through Medjugorje.
- Hundreds of documented, unexplainable physical healings have occurred in Medjugorje.
- Medjugorje is called “the confessional of the world” because of how powerfully people experience this Sacrament there. There are about 65 confessionals in Medjugorje, but sometimes that is not enough to meet the needs of all the people who desire to make a sacramental Confession.
- Close to 1,000 men have found their calling to be priests in or through Medjugorje. There is no other place in the Catholic world that has produced this many priestly vocations in such a short period of time.
- Thousands of Medjugorje prayer groups have been formed throughout the world since the apparitions first began, as a way to continue to live the spirituality people encounter through Medjugorje.
- Many pilgrims who experienced the power of Adoration in Medjugorje have worked with their pastors to begin having Adoration in their home parishes.

The Testing

The visionaries endured numerous kinds of testing, over the course of many years, in an effort to determine whether or not they were lying or hallucinating. In fact, the apparitions of Medjugorje are the most thoroughly investigated apparitions in the history of the Church. All the testing that was done has concluded the visionaries are not hallucinating, are not lying, and, during their ecstasies, seem to be going through experiences that medical science cannot explain. *(see subsequent pages for details)*

The Secrets

Our Lady has entrusted the visionaries with 10 secrets. While we do not know what the secrets are, we do know that some of them are about future events in the world and future events in the Church. We also know that one of the secrets is about a sign that will be left as a confirmation that the apparitions are true. These secrets will be revealed during the lifetime of the visionaries and will be announced to the world three days before each event happens.



The Sign

Our Lady told the visionaries she will leave a permanent sign on the hill where she first appeared, and it will be clear that the sign was not made by human hands. The visionaries know what the sign will be and the date it will appear.

The Fatima Connection

Our Lady has told the Medjugorje visionaries that she has come to Medjugorje to complete what she began in Fatima. While we do not know specifically what that means, we do know that in Fatima she spoke about the Triumph of her Immaculate Heart, which has not yet happened. We can assume that Medjugorje will help to usher in that Triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. The Medjugorje visionaries have given us an idea of how that Triumph will happen when they said that "priests are the bridge to the coming Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary."



THE VISIONARIES

Vicka Ivankovic-Mijatovic

Vicka Ivankovic-Mijatovic was born on September 3, 1964 and is the oldest of the visionaries. She was 16 years old when the apparitions began. Our Lady has entrusted Vicka with nine secrets. She has told Vicka her entire life story, which Vicka has written in some notebooks and will publish when Our Lady gives her the permission to do so. Our Lady has given Vicka a specific prayer mission – to pray for the sick. On January 26, 2002, Vicka married Mario Mijatovic, they have two children, and live in a town a few miles away from Medjugorje. Vicka continues to receive daily apparitions.



Ivan Dragicevic

Ivan Dragicevic was born on May 25, 1965 and was 16 years old when the apparitions began. Our Lady has entrusted Ivan with nine secrets. She also entrusted him with a specific prayer mission, to pray for priests, families and the youth of the world. Ivan married an American woman from Boston named Lauren. They have four children, and divide their time between Boston and Medjugorje. Ivan also continues to have daily apparitions.



Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti

Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti was born on April 1, 1965, and was 16 years old when the apparitions began. Every month, on the 25th, Our Lady gives a message for the world through Marija. The prayer mission that was entrusted to Marija is to pray for souls in purgatory. Marija is married to an Italian man named Paulo Lunetti, and they have four children. The family splits their time between Italy and Medjugorje. Thus far, Marija has been entrusted with nine secrets. She continues to receive daily apparitions of Our Lady as well.



Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo

Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo was born on March 18, 1965 and was 16 years old when the apparitions began. Unlike the rest of the visionaries, all of whom lived in Medjugorje full time, Mirjana lived in the capital city, Sarajevo, but came to Medjugorje to spend summer vacations with her relatives. Although she did not graduate, Mirjana is the only visionary to have attended college, having gone to the University of Sarajevo. Mirjana was the first visionary to stop having daily apparitions. On December 25, 1982, Our Lady entrusted Mirjana with the tenth secret, and, at that point, her daily apparitions ceased. On that date however, Our Lady told her she would appear to Mirjana every year on March 18, for the rest of her life. She also told her that, at some point later, she would appear to her again, for a specific purpose. Those apparitions began 5 years later, on August 2, 1987, when she gave Mirjana the mission to pray for unbelievers. Since then, Mirjana sees Our Lady on the second day of every month, in addition to every March 18th. People generally assume Our Lady chose to appear to Mirjana on March 18 every year because that is her birthday, but Mirjana has said that it has nothing to do with her birthday, but that this date is significant for other reasons, which will be revealed at some point later. Mirjana is the first visionary to write a book, which is called "My Heart Will Triumph." Mirjana married Marko Soldo; they have two children and live in Medjugorje.



Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez

Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez was born on July 21, 1966. She was 14 years old when the apparitions began, making her the youngest of the four female visionaries. Ivanka was the first of the six visionaries to see Our Lady. Ivanka's mother died a month before the apparitions began, and during one of the early apparitions, Ivanka asked about her mother. Our Lady told Ivanka that her mother was in heaven, and then Ivanka's mother was suddenly standing beside Our Lady. Ivanka was



able to talk with her briefly. Over the years, Ivanka has been able to see her mother and speak with her five times. Ivanka continued to have daily apparitions until May 7, 1985, when Our Lady entrusted Ivanka with the tenth secret and then told her that she would no longer be appearing to her daily. She promised Ivanka that she would appear to her once a year, on June 25 (the anniversary of the Medjugorje apparitions) for the rest of her life. Her prayer mission is to pray for families. Ivanka was the first of the visionaries to get married. She lives with her husband Rajko Elez and their three children in Medjugorje.

Jakov Colo

Jakov Colo was born on March 6, 1971, and was ten years old when the apparitions began, making him the youngest of all the visionaries. Jakov's father lived and worked far from the family, in Germany, and therefore Jakov was being raised primarily by his mother. His mother died two years after the apparitions began, however, basically leaving Jakov an orphan. On September 12, 1998, Jakov was traveling in the United States when Our Lady entrusted to him the tenth secret and told him his daily apparitions would come to an end. Our Lady also told Jakov she would appear to him every year on Christmas Day, for the rest of his life. Jakov struggled tremendously with this change. After his own mother died, the Blessed Mother became Jakov's mother in the truest sense of the word, so this loss of the daily apparitions was very painful for him. The prayer mission that was entrusted to him is to pray for the sick. Jakov is married to an Italian woman named Annalisa, and they have 3 children. They live in Medjugorje.



THE MAIN MESSAGES OF MEDJUGORJE

On June 25, 2007, Our Lady gave the following message:

"Dear children! Also today, with great joy in my heart, I call you to conversion. Little children, do not forget that you are all important in this great plan, which God leads through Medjugorje. God desires to convert the entire world and to call it to salvation and to the way towards Himself, who is the beginning and the end of every being. In a special way, little children, from the depth of my heart, I call you all to open yourselves to this great grace that God give you through my presence here. I desire to thank each of you for the sacrifices and prayers. I am with you and I bless you all. Thank you for having responded to my call."

In this message, we can see what is at the heart of Medjugorje and what Our Lady's desires are. Our Lady says, "God desires to convert the entire world and to call it to salvation." Medjugorje is the great intervention in our times by God, calling us to a new life in Him, and calling us to a new birth in Christ. The purpose of Our Lady's apparitions is no less than the conversion of the entire world! And Our Lady says not only is there a plan for this goal, we all are a part of that plan. Many times Our Lady has repeated the invitation to pray that her plan be realized through Medjugorje. We do not know the specifics of that plan, but we certainly know the way in which she desires to bring that plan to fruition. She asks for a deeper life of prayer, specifically prayer of the heart.

Her desire is that prayer be an encounter with God in the intimacy of our hearts (fasting, conversion, Holy Mass, confession). We can see this plan being unfolded in the great fruits that are coming out of Medjugorje. Close to a thousand men have found their vocation to the priesthood through Medjugorje. These "Medjugorje" priests are faithful sons of the Church, who love the Lord, love the Eucharist, love Our Lady, and love the great mystical Traditions of our Church. Cardinal Schönborn, of Vienna, Austria, has publicly stated that, were it not for Medjugorje, his seminary would be empty! That is an entire country now being changed by the apparitions of Our Lady in Medjugorje. Thousands of prayer groups and Adoration chapels have been started as a result of people coming to Medjugorje and then wanting to bring some of that same spirit back to their homes and parishes.



THE FIVE STONES

Prayer of the Heart

Our Lady teaches us that prayer of the heart is about encountering God at a deeper level. When our hearts are engaged, we experience God more profoundly in the rest of the “Stones.”

Messages of Our Lady

“Today also I am calling you to prayer. You know, dear children, that God grants special graces in prayer... I call you, dear children, to prayer with the heart.” April 25, 1987

“To pray with the heart is to pray with love, trust, abandonment, and concentration. Prayer heals human souls. Prayer heals the history of sin. Without prayer, we cannot have an experience of God.”

“I am with you and I wish to teach you to pray with the heart. In prayer with the heart, you shall encounter God. Therefore, dear children, pray, pray, pray.” October 25, 1989

Fasting

Fasting is one of the most powerful tools in our spiritual “arsenal,” which Our Lady often refers to as being critical in our lives, especially in our efforts to battle sin or difficult problems in our lives.

Messages of Our Lady

“The best fast is on bread and water. Through fasting and prayer one can stop wars, one can suspend the natural laws of nature. Works of charity cannot replace fasting... Everyone, except the sick, has to fast.” July 21, 1982

“I desire to inspire you to continue to live fasting with an open heart. By fasting and renunciation, little children, you will be stronger in faith.” March 25, 2007

“The one who fasts is not afraid of evil. Once again, I repeat to you: only through prayer and fasting also wars can be stopped – wars of your unbelief and fear for the future.” December 25, 2001



Sacred Scripture

Our Lady desires that the reading of Sacred Scripture be a central part of our daily prayer, because through it, we encounter God speaking directly to us in His Word.

Messages of Our Lady

"Dear children, today I call you to read the Bible every day in your homes and let it be in a visible place so as always to encourage you to read it and pray." October 18, 1984

"If you pray, God will help you to discover the true reason for my coming. Therefore, little children, pray and read the Sacred Scriptures so that through my coming you discover the message in Sacred Scripture for you." June 25, 1991

"Little children, you do not know how to live in the grace of God, that is why I call you all anew, to carry the word of God in your heart and in thoughts. Little children, place the Sacred Scriptures in a visible place in your family, and read and live it. Teach your children, because if you are not an example to them, children depart into godlessness. Reflect and pray and then God will be born in your heart and your heart will be joyous." August 25, 1996

Confession

Our Lady asks us to commit to monthly confession and tells us that it is transformative for our souls, and if more people practiced this, it would be transformative for the world.

Messages of Our Lady

"Do not go to confession through habit, to remain the same after that. No, it is not good. Confession should give an impulse to your faith. It should stimulate you and bring you closer to Jesus." November 7, 1983

"Whoever has done very much evil during his life can go straight to Heaven if he confesses, is sorry for what he has done, and receives Communion at the end of his life." July 24, 1982

"The heavenly Father desires to deliver each of you from the slavery of sin. Therefore, little children, make good use of this time and through meeting with God in confession, leave sin and decide for holiness." February 25, 2007



The Holy Mass

Our Lady asks that the Holy Mass be the center of our lives, and that we enter into every Mass in such a way we are prepared for the mystery we are about to experience.

Messages of Our Lady

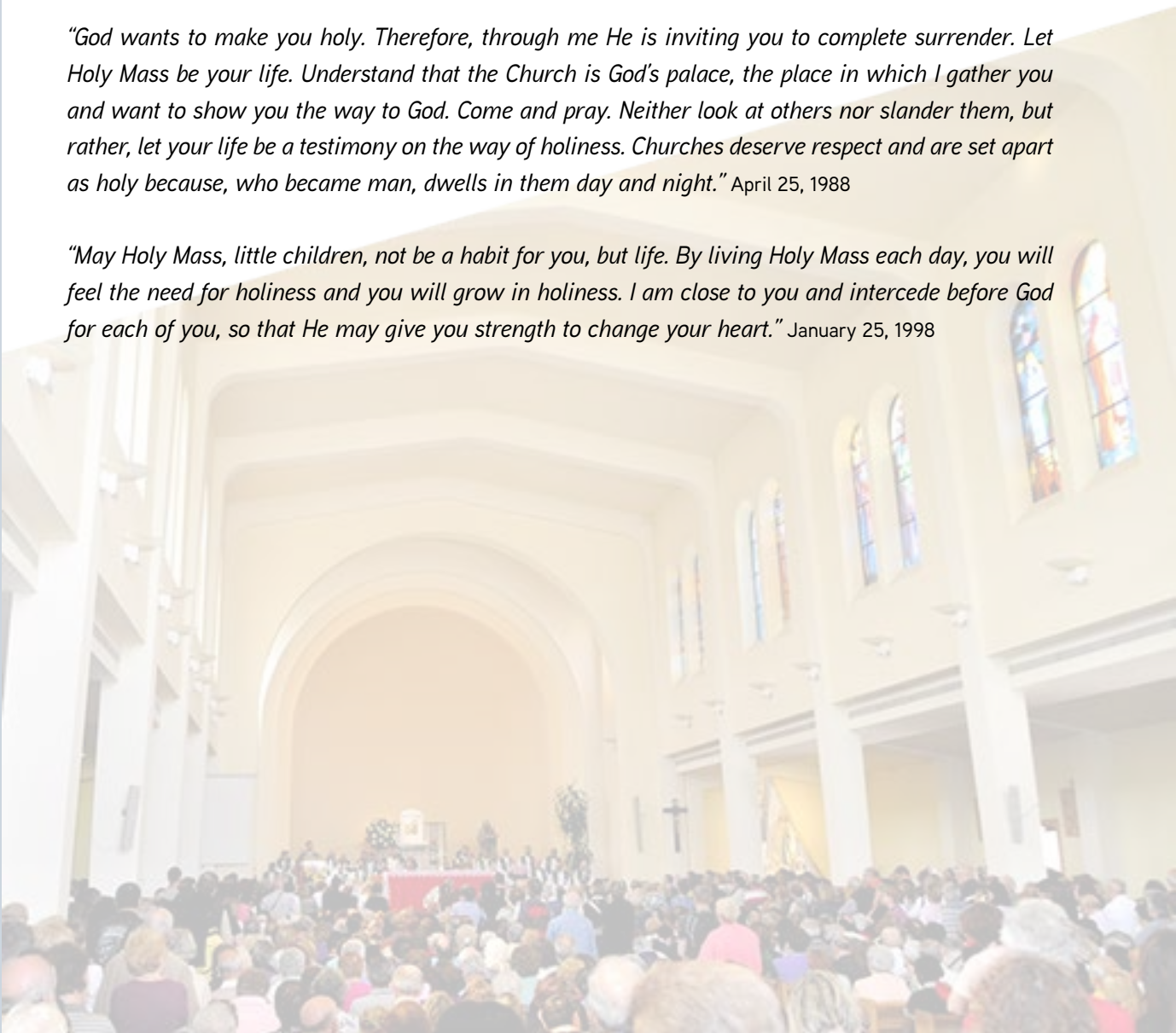
"Mass is the greatest prayer of God. You will never be able to understand its greatness. That is why you must be perfect and humble at Mass, and you should prepare yourselves for it." 1983

"I am calling you to a more active prayer and attendance at Holy Mass. I wish your Mass to be an experience of God." May 16, 1985

"I wish to call you to a living of the Holy Mass. There are many of you who have sensed the beauty of the Holy Mass, but there are also those who come unwillingly. I have chosen you, dear children, but Jesus gives you His graces in the Mass. Therefore, consciously live the Holy Mass and let your coming to it be a joyful one. Come to it with love and make the Mass your own." April 3, 1986

"God wants to make you holy. Therefore, through me He is inviting you to complete surrender. Let Holy Mass be your life. Understand that the Church is God's palace, the place in which I gather you and want to show you the way to God. Come and pray. Neither look at others nor slander them, but rather, let your life be a testimony on the way of holiness. Churches deserve respect and are set apart as holy because, who became man, dwells in them day and night." April 25, 1988

"May Holy Mass, little children, not be a habit for you, but life. By living Holy Mass each day, you will feel the need for holiness and you will grow in holiness. I am close to you and intercede before God for each of you, so that He may give you strength to change your heart." January 25, 1998



THE FRUITS

The Pilgrims

Between 40 to 50 million people from throughout the world have traveled to Medjugorje since the apparitions began. It has become one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in the entire Catholic world.

Conversions and Healings

Millions of people have claimed their lives have dramatically changed since visiting this simple, humble little village. In addition to these spiritual conversions, there have also been hundreds of documented, instantaneous physical healings that have occurred in or through Medjugorje.

Confessional of the World

One of the most powerful means of healing and conversion in Medjugorje is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There are currently about 65 confessionals in Medjugorje, but during the busier times of the year, that is not enough to meet the needs of all the people who desire to make their sacramental confession. It is not an unusual sight to see huge lines of people all over Medjugorje, waiting in line for hours to go to confession.

Vocations

The parish of Medjugorje has documented close to 1000 men who found their calling to be priests in or through Medjugorje. There is no other place in the Catholic world that has produced this many priests in such a short period of time. Cardinal Schönborn, of Vienna, Austria, who is an ardent supporter of Medjugorje, has publicly stated that, were it not for Medjugorje, his seminary would be empty.

Adoration

In 1981, when the apparitions first began, the devotional practice of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was considered a pre-Vatican II practice, and largely abandoned throughout the Church. As millions of pilgrims began to journey to Medjugorje, however, they encountered the power of Adoration on their pilgrimage and wanted to bring that practice to their home parishes. Medjugorje almost single handedly renewed the devotional practice of Adoration to the Church.

Prayer Groups

Thousands of “Medjugorje” prayer groups have been formed throughout the world since the apparitions first began, as a way to continue to live the spirituality that people encountered through Medjugorje.



CHRONOLOGY OF TESTING OF THE MEDJUGORJE VISIONARIES

June 27, 1981:

The fourth day after the apparitions began in Medjugorje, a local doctor by the name of Dr. Ante Bijevic examined the visionaries for the first time as arranged by the police in nearby Citluk. His observations were that the children were well-balanced.

June 29, 1981:

Two days later, the children were taken to a psychiatric clinic in Mostar, the nearest city, by the police. A psychiatrist, Dr. Dzudza Mulija, examined them and concluded that the children were not psychotic. According to Vicka, Dr. Dzudza stated: "It is the people who brought you here that are insane. You are absolutely normal." ¹

October 1981:

Four months after the beginning of the apparitions in Medjugorje, Croatian psychiatrist Nikola Bartulica interviewed Vicka for over an hour and a half. He drew the same conclusion as the other professionals: That Vicka was normal.

1982:

Fr. Slavko Barbaric, a doctor of social psychology and a Franciscan priest, examined all six visionaries. Fr. Slavko's concluded that there was no sign of hallucination and that the children behaved independently from each other. Fr. Slavko would later become more involved in the lives of the visionaries and the parish of Medjugorje.

1982-1983:

Dr. Ludvik Stopar was the first doctor to examine the visionaries while in a state of ecstasy. Dr. Stopar is a psychiatrist and parapsychologist from Slovenia. He visited Medjugorje four times: in May 1982, November 1982, June 1983, and November 1983. Through his testing, Dr. Stopar became convinced that the children were normal. He also came to believe that the experience of the children was supernatural.

March 1983:

Dr. Mario Botta, with a team of Italian doctors established the heartbeats of the visionaries were normal. This test, among a number of other clinical tests, implied that the apparitions did not affect physiological reality in any way.

August 23-25, 1983:

Dr. Phillipe Madre is the founder and director of a clinic for research on the interplay of somatic, psychological, and supernatural forces. He was, therefore, well qualified to examine the facts, though he visited Medjugorje more as a deacon than a doctor. His visit was cut short when he was arrested



by police and deported on the day after his arrival. Because of this he could only report generally on his impressions. It was his opinion that the visionaries were sound in mind, body, and in their spiritual development.

December 1983:

Dr. Botta, a heart surgeon from Milan, returned to Medjugorje to carry out an electrocardiogram on Ivan. Again, he concluded “that ecstasy does not suppress normal physiology but somehow transcends it.”²

1984:

Throughout 1984 the visionaries were tested in Medjugorje by a large number of Italian experts, working independently from each other. Included within this group were Dr. Maria Frederica Magatti, Dr. Lucia Capello, Dr. Enzo Gabrici, and Prof. Anna-Maria Franchini. None of them found anything that would imply doubt in the visionaries’ testimonies.

March-December 1984:

An extremely important and comprehensive series of tests was conducted by a team of French doctors using highly sophisticated equipment they brought to Medjugorje. Their visits were short in duration, but frequent trips were made to Medjugorje between March and December of 1984. Professor Henri Joyeux was the head of the team, a Professor of Cancerology in the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier and a surgeon at Montpellier’s Cancer Institute. The conclusion he reached from the data collected from their scientific tests was impressive:

“...the phenomenon...is scientifically inexplicable...”³

September 7-9, 1985:

A team of scientists from Italy, directed by Dr. Luigi Frigerio, came to Medjugorje with more detailed testing and sophisticated equipment. Among them was a neuro-physiologist who specialized in the study of “ecstasy,” by the name of Professor Margnelli.

October 1985:

On October 20, 1985, the Bishop of Mostar’s Commissioner’s Report stated, in regards to the Medjugorje apparitions, the foreign doctor’s testimonies were inadmissible, no matter how sophisticated their technology, because they did not speak Serbo-Croatian and had to rely on interpreters.

January 14, 1986:

A team of seventeen renowned natural scientists, doctors, psychiatrists, and theologians came to a 12-point conclusion on the tests administered by the international French-Italian scientific theological commission concerning the extraordinary events that are taking place in Medjugorje. It was the most competent and thorough collection of scientific data assembled up to this point.



April - December 1998:

At the request of the Parish Office in Medjugorje, the visionaries were asked once again to go through a battery of tests. Heading the team was Dr. Andreas Resch, Professor of Theology at the Papal University Alfonsianum in Rome, and an expert for “twilight realms of science.” They repeated the experiments of the French experts (1984) and the Italian experts (1985), only on a wider scale. As this study was of an equal or greater magnitude as the 1984 and 1985 studies, it became known as the “Medjugorje 3” work group.

June 25, 2005:

On the 24th anniversary of the apparitions, the most recent examination was performed at the request of the Holy See. It again brought together visionaries Ivan and Marija of Medjugorje and Professor Henri Joyeux with a French team of experts, who were given the opportunity to compare the scientific studies of 20 years ago with the present day experiences of the visionaries. Their conclusions were the same and confirmed the results of the testing that took place in 1984-85.



MARIJA AND IVAN UNDERGO MEDICAL TESTS DURING APPARITIONS

<http://medjugorje-pilgrim.blogspot.com/2012/01/visionaries-are-normal-and-healthy.html>

Speaking about the tests Marija said:

"Our Lady did not mind the tests at all. She neither forbids them nor advises participation in them. We have total free will in life, and so too in this matter. It is up to us to decide if we shall participate in the tests or not. I just hope that, through them, we shall bring more hearts closer to Our Lady. That's why I agreed to the tests. But, I have to say that I am a bit tired of all these researches. I just wonder what else people need in order to accept the truth."

On the tests Ivan said simply:

"I agreed to the tests because the Church asked me to cooperate with this."

No other claim of supernatural manifestation has ever undergone such detailed medical and scientific analysis as Medjugorje.

THE VISIONARIES ARE NORMAL AND HEALTHY

The visionaries of Medjugorje are by far the most scientifically examined seers ever in the history of Christian mysticism. The decades-long duration of the apparitions, along with the modern advancements in medical-scientific knowledge and equipment, have allowed doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians to study the visionaries and their apparitions as closely and accurately as never before.

Among the many tests and examinations that the visionaries have subjected themselves to, four major ones stand out. Performed by independent teams of scientists in 1984, 1985, 1998, and 2006, their results confirm and complement each other.

The visionaries have reacted to the scientific interest in their experiences by willful cooperation, but also with a spirit of detachment. Only one among the many scientific conclusions has really meant something to them – namely the conclusion that **they are absolutely healthy, normal people who only happen to have a most unusual experience.**



The first doctor to arrive at this conclusion was psychiatrist Dzudza Mulija. This she did as early as June 29th, 1981, the sixth day of the apparitions. She worked in the psychiatric wing of the hospital in Mostar and met the visionaries when local Communist police officers brought them to see her. She was referring to the Communists when, according to visionary Vicka Ivankovic, she ended her examinations by telling the seers:

*"It is the people who brought you here that are insane. You are absolutely normal."*¹

Next in line was Dr. Nikola Bartulica, a psychiatrist who was born in Croatia, but lived in the United States when he came to Medjugorje in October 1981 and later in 1989. During his first encounter with the visionaries he studied Vicka for almost two hours; all the while Vicka did not know that her conversation partner was a medical specialist.

"When a psychiatrist hears that a person has visions, he first wonders if that person is mentally healthy. So I asked Vicka what did she see, hear, how did she react. She answered spontaneously, without fear or hesitation, and you could see that this was a determined, completely normal person. In psychiatry, you can quickly determine if a person is sincere," Dr. Bartulica later concluded.²

Talking about all of the visionaries, the Croatian psychiatrist added:

*"It does not take an expert though to tell that the children were normal, sincere, and that their experience was not invented."*²

The Italian doctor Lucia Capello examined the visionaries for three days in February and March 1984.

"They appeared to be discreet, well-mannered, careful in their dress and in their speech and absolutely mindful of the surroundings in which they found themselves. Their behavior seemed to conform perfectly with that of young people of their own age," she concluded.¹

In 1998, the third major scientific examination of the Medjugorje visionaries and their apparitions was undertaken by a team of Austrian and Italian experts headed by Fr. Andreas Resch, an Austrian priest and professor of clinical psychology and paranormology at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. Fr. Resch and his team concluded that "the seers enjoy optimal psychophysical health."

Referring to the state of complete disconnection from the outside world that the visionaries enter during apparitions, a condition known throughout Christian history as spiritual ecstasy, the team concluded that "ecstasy is not a psychopathologic event and that after 18 years of daily apparitions it has not provoked any damage to the psychophysical health of the seers."³

In other ways, too, the so-called Medjugorje 3 Commission confirmed the conclusions of the first scientific commission that studied the Medjugorje visionaries. This group of scientists was headed by the French doctor Henri Joyeux who brought to Medjugorje a crew of medical specialists along with a battery of modern equipment back in 1984. Theirs was the first among the four major medical-scientific examinations of the Medjugorje visionaries.



"The visionaries are psychologically healthy, without neurosis and hysteria. Their ecstasies are not a pathological phenomenon...It is a functional phenomenon that facilitates a valuable experience which is coherent, healthy, enlivening, and, to the visionaries, human as well as spiritual," Dr. Joyeux wrote in conclusion.¹

"They are country youngsters who do not appear to need either a psychologist or a psychiatrist. They dress in the normal fashion of other young people of their country. They give no impression of being bigoted, each seeming to have his or her own personality; we felt at ease with all of them: they are neither geniuses nor simpletons; they are not being manipulated but remain free and healthy in mind and body," Dr. Henri Joyeux also wrote.¹

"The phenomenon is scientifically inexplicable. The visionaries of Medjugorje are not drop-outs or dreamers, nor are they tired or anxious; they are free and happy, at home in their country and in the modern world. The ecstasies are not pathological, nor is there any element of deceit," Dr. Joyeux later said before concluding: *"No scientific discipline seems able to describe these phenomena."*⁴

Though this is so, the many scientists have long been able to point out with certainty what the apparitions in Medjugorje are not about. That is, the alternative explanations known to science have all been ruled out.

Sources:

¹ Dr. Henri Joyeux and Fr. René Laurentin: "Scientific and Medical Studies of the Apparitions at Medjugorje", Veritas Publications 1987

² Medjugorje Tribune # 1, January 2007

³ Paul Baylis with Dr. Marco Margnelli: "The works of the third committee on the seers of Medjugorje", quoted here from Marian Times

⁴ Mary Craig: "Spark From Heaven", Ave Maria Press 1988

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED

When it comes to apparition experiences, a whole range of alternative explanations are well-known to science. In taking on two among the most obvious – fraud and hallucination – the Croatian psychiatrist Dr. Bartulica concluded in 2006, starting out with his impressions of visionary Vicka Ivankovic when he studied her in the 1980s:

"You have to ask yourself if it is possible that she is deceiving us. The answer is that it might be possible, but if that was the case, all the six seers are capable of this simultaneously for a period of 25 years! That in itself would be a phenomenon! And anyway that cannot be, because it has been established scientifically that their ecstasies are authentic. Besides, there is no such case in the history of psychiatry that six children start simultaneously hallucinating at 6:40 p.m.," Dr. Bartulica testified.¹



In fact, with the exception of hypnosis (which was only later ruled out with certainty), the entire collection of known alternative explanations had been excluded by independent scientists as early as 1984. This was when a French medical team headed by Dr. Henri Joyeux became the first one to deeply examine the Medjugorje visionaries with the entire battery of modern equipment known and used by medical science at that time.

Dr. Joyeux, a cancer researcher, headed a team of scientists from the University of Montpellier. The team made video and audio recordings of more than 35 apparitions and conducted a battery of tests. Among the many tests performed by the team were brain, vision, hearing, voice, and cardiac function tests, using electroencephalographs, electrooculographs, and other scientific devices.²

In their conclusions, the French team of scientists excluded manipulation, epilepsy, catalepsy, dreams, hallucinations, hysteria, neurosis, pathological ecstasy, and fraud.²

On January 14, 1986 a French-Italian commission of scientists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and theologians published the results of its investigations of the Medjugorje visionaries in a 12-point conclusion. While the nine later points were more theological in nature, the first three conclusions were strictly scientific:

1. On the basis of the psychological tests, for all and each of the visionaries, it is possible with certainty to exclude fraud and deception.
2. On the basis of the medical examinations, tests and clinical observations, etc., for all and each of the visionaries, it is possible to exclude pathological hallucinations.
3. On the basis of the results of previous researches for all and each of the visionaries, it is possible to exclude a purely natural interpretation of these manifestations.³

Dr. Enzo Gabrici, an Italian neuro-psychiatrist, examined Ivan, Vicka, Marija, and Jakov for five days in April 1984. He became the first scientist to exclude hypnosis as an explanation "because in this situation, subjects are not able to remember anything while in the trance. The Medjugorje visionaries, however, remember exactly what takes place during the ecstasy, discounting the hypnosis theory."²

While this conclusion relies on the visionaries to tell the truth about their experiences during the apparition, hypnosis was scientifically ruled out as an explanation in 1998. Headed by Fr. Andreas Resch, a theologian and psychologist from the Institute for the Field Limits of Science in Innsbruck, Austria, among the primary purposes of the 1998 examination was to determine if the apparitions could be due to hypnosis.

Experts from the Center for Study and Research on Psychophysiology of States of Consciousness in Milan, Italy, were also included in the team, and so were experts from European School of Hypnotic Psychotherapy Amisi of Milan and The Parapsychology Center of Bologna, Italy.



To determine whether the state of ecstasy experienced by the visionaries could be due to hypnosis, the examined visionaries were hypnotized. While the visionaries were in an hypnotic state, the scientists re-created the apparition experience by suggesting to the visionaries that they saw the Virgin Mary before them. The aim was to determine if the visionaries displayed the same physical and emotional reactions found and measured by the scientists during the real apparitions.

They did not, as it turned out:

“The hypnotically induced state of ecstasy did not cause the phenomenology of spontaneous experiences and therefore it can be deduced that the ecstatic states of spontaneous apparitions were not states of hypnotic trance,” the scientists concluded.⁴

On his own account, team leader Fr. Andreas Resch later said the results were even clearer than that:

“The experiments show a radical difference between the states of hypnosis and ecstasy. Therefore the point of view that ecstasy is a sort of hypnotic state that can be induced from the outside or automatically can be excluded,” he wrote seven years after the experiments.⁵

With hypnosis finally excluded, scientific experts had ruled out all known alternative explanations of the apparition phenomenon. And along the way of determining for sure what the visionaries do not experience, the scientists had also determined the characteristics of spiritual ecstasy. Some of them had even concluded that this state of complete disconnection from the exterior world is what the visionaries actually experience.

Sources:

¹ Medjugorje Tribune # 1, January 2007

² Dr. Henri Joyeux and Fr. René Laurentin: “Scientific and Medical Studies of the Apparitions at Medjugorje”, Veritas Publications 1987

³ Dr. Luigi Frigerio et al: “Dossier Scientifico su Medjugorje”, Pains 1986

⁴ “Research on the Visionaries”, results from the Medjugorje 3 Group, quoted here from Medjugorje Parish Bulletin # 109, January 27th 1999

⁵ Fr. Andreas Resch: “Die Seher von Medjugorje im Griff der Wissenschaft”, Resch Verlag 2005



THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE



TIMELINE OF THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO MEDJUGORJE

1981:

Apparitions of Medjugorje begin

1984:

Local bishop, diocese of Mostar forms a commission to investigate the events in Medjugorje.

1986:

Bishop submits a negative decision about Medjugorje to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), which at the time was led by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later, Pope Benedict).

1986:

CDF, under Cardinal Ratzinger rejects the findings of the bishop's commission, disbands the commission the local bishop created, and creates a new commission to investigate Medjugorje. *From that point on, the local bishop (and all his successors) were stripped of all jurisdiction over the apparitions of Medjugorje.*

1991:

The new commission issues an official statement about Medjugorje. They have one of three options to choose from: 1. Certain of supernatural origin; 2. Not yet certain of supernatural origin; 3. Certain of NO supernatural origin. The commission chooses option 2: Not yet certain of supernatural origin.

In Summary, the 1991 Commission makes the following statements:

1. That it cannot YET be determined whether Medjugorje is of supernatural origin;
2. That pilgrims ARE allowed to visit Medjugorje;
3. That priests ARE allowed to go there to tend to the spiritual needs of the pilgrims.

1991-Present Day:

The decision of the 1991 Medjugorje Commission remains the official position of the Church regarding Medjugorje.

2010:

The Vatican forms a new commission to investigate the apparitions of Medjugorje. The commission is headed by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, retired Vicar General of Rome and is made up of 16 members. Noticeably absent from this commission is the Bishop of Mostar (diocese in which Medjugorje is located).

2014:

The Cardinal Ruini Commission completes its investigation of Medjugorje and submits finding to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.



February 11, 2017:

Pope Francis appoints Archbishop of Warsaw Poland, **Henryk Hoser, as Papal Envoy to Medjugorje**, to evaluate the needs of Medjugorje. This mandate is a temporary one, to last a few months.

March 30, 2017:

Papal Envoy, Archbishop Hoser, arrives in Medjugorje to begin his assignment as Papal Envoy.

May 2017:

The findings of the Ruini Commission are leaked to the public. The commission recommends that the first seven days of the apparitions be approved, and that the Medjugorje be turned into a pontifical sanctuary.

May 31, 2018:

Pope Francis appoints Archbishop Hoser to a second mandate for Medjugorje, as **Special Apostolic Visitor for the parish of Medjugorje**, for an undefined period of time and *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* (at the Holy See's disposition). Archbishop Hoser's role is exclusively pastoral in nature. The Holy See's Press Office explains, "the mission of the Apostolic Visitor has the aim of ensuring a stable and continuous accompaniment to the parish community of Medjugorje and to the faithful who go there as pilgrims, and whose needs require particular attention."

July 22, 2018:

Archbishop Henryk Hoser begins his assignment as Apostolic Visitor for the parish of St. James, Medjugorje. With this action, **the Vatican has effectively placed Medjugorje under its direct control and guidance.** The Papal Nuncio for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Msgr. Luigi Pezzuto, concelebrated the Holy Mass, a first for any Vatican official.

August 1, 2018:

Papal Nuncio for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Msgr. Luigi Pezzuto, opens the annual Youth Festival in Medjugorje by **presiding at Holy Mass**, the first time the Papal Nuncio was the principal celebrant for Mass in Medjugorje.

January 2019:

Papal Nuncio for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Msgr. Luigi Pezzuto is the main celebrant for Holy mass on New Year's Eve and the High Mass for New Year's Day. Parish of Medjugorje reports that, since Archbishop Hoser's appointment as Apostolic Visitor, there is a 19% increase in pilgrims visiting Medjugorje.

May 2019:

Pope Francis authorizes pilgrimages to Medjugorje, which can now be officially organized by dioceses and parishes and will no longer take place only in a private capacity.



POPE AUTHORIZES PILGRIMAGES TO MEDJUGORJE

12 MAY 2019, 11:47

The announcement was made by the Apostolic Visitor, Henryk Hoser and the Apostolic Nuncio. Ad Interim Director Gisotti: “Attention given to favouring and promoting the fruits of good”, but this does not mean “an authentication of known events”.

Massimiliano Menichetti - Vatican City

Pope Francis has decided to authorize pilgrimages to Medjugorje, which can now be officially organized by dioceses and parishes and will no longer take place only in a private capacity which as has so far been the case. The announcement was made today during Mass, at the parish shrine which has become a destination for millions of pilgrims, by the Apostolic Nuncio Luigi Pezzuto in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Archbishop Henryk Hoser, the Holy See’s Special Apostolic Visitor.

Pilgrimages do not authenticate known events

The “ad interim” director of the Holy See Press Office, Alessandro Gisotti, responding to journalists’ questions about the announcement, specified that the papal authorization must be accompanied by “care to prevent these pilgrimages from being interpreted as an authentication of known events, which still require examination by the Church. Therefore, care must be taken to avoid creating confusion or ambiguity from the doctrinal point of view regarding such pilgrimages. This also concerns pastors of every order and level who intend to go to Medjugorje and celebrate or concelebrate there even in a solemn way”.

Pastoral attention

“Considering the considerable flow of people who go to Medjugorje and the abundant fruits of grace that have sprung from it - continued Gisotti - this authorization is part of the particular pastoral attention that the Holy Father intended to give to that reality, aimed at encouraging and promoting the fruits of good”.

The apostolic visitor, concluded the ad interim director, “will have, in this way, greater ease in establishing - relations with the priests in charge of organizing pilgrimages to Medjugorje, as well as, safe and well-prepared persons, offering them information and indications to be able to fruitfully conduct such pilgrimages, - in agreement with the ordinary people of the place.”

The Pope's decision comes a year after the appointment of Hoser, Archbishop Emeritus of Warszawa-Prague in Poland, as "Apostolic Visitor for the Parish of Medjugorje, on May 31, 2018.

Both that nomination and today's announcement do not, therefore, enter into doctrinal questions relating to the authenticity of the account of the six visionaries of what has happened in Medjugorje since June 1981, a phenomenon that has not yet been concluded. Of the six visionaries, at that time children or young people, three assure us that they still have a daily apparition of the "Queen of Peace", always at the same time in the afternoon and wherever they are: they are Vicka (who lives in Medjugorje), Marija (who lives in Monza) and Ivan (who lives in the United States but often returns home). A fourth visionary, Mirjana, says that she receives an apparition every month, on the 2nd, while for the last two this happens once a year.



UNVEILING OF A STATUE OF VIRGIN MARY OF MEDJUGORJE (ANSA)

ARCHBISHOP HENRYK HOSER, S.A.C.

APOSTOLIC VISITOR TO THE PARISH OF MEDJUGORJE



Archbishop Henryk Hoser was born Nov. 27, 1942 in Warsaw Poland. In 1966, he completed his medical studies at the Warsaw University of Medicine, and subsequently worked as a doctor. In 1969 he joined the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallotine Order) and was ordained a priest on June 16, 1974.

For the next 20 years, Archbishop Hoser served as a missionary in Rwanda. A significant part of his ministry in overseeing a Medical-Social Center in Kigali for 17 years, which he also founded. In 1994, the Vatican appointed Archbishop Hoser as Apostolic Visitor to the country of Rwanda, a post which he held for two years, pending the appointment of a Papal Nuncio for Rwanda.

Pope John Paul made Hoser an Archbishop in 2005 and appointed him Secretary Adjunct of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and President of the Pontifical Missions Society. On June 28, 2008, Pope Benedict appointed Archbishop Hoser as bishop of Warsaw-Prague, Poland, a post which he held until his retirement, on December 8, 2017.

ARCHBISHOP HOSER'S OFFICIAL ROLE IN MEDJUGORJE

On February 11, 2017, the Vatican Announced that Pope Francis named Archbishop Henryk Hoser as Special Envoy to Medjugorje:

“On February 11, 2017, the Holy Father entrusted Archbishop Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., bishop of Warsaw-Prague (Poland), to go to Medjugorje as special envoy of the Holy See. The mission has the aim of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the pastoral situation there and above all, of the needs of the faithful who go there in pilgrimage...”

**SECRETARIAT OF STATE PRESS COMMUNIQUE:
SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE HOLY SEE NAMED FOR MEDJUGORJE**



As the Vatican Press Release made clear, Archbishop Hoser’s mission as Papal Envoy was to assess the pastoral needs of Medjugorje, for the purpose of future planning, so that the needs of the millions of pilgrims who travel to Medjugorje, can be better met.

Archbishop Hoser’s role as Papal Envoy ended in May 2017, when he submitted his report to the Vatican. On May 31, 2018, he was appointed by Pope Francis as Apostolic Visitor to Medjugorje, for an undetermined period of time:

“On 31 May 2018 the Holy Father appointed H.E. Msgr. Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., archbishop-bishop emeritus of Warszawa-Praga, Poland, as special Apostolic Visitor for the parish of Medjugorje, for an undefined period and ad nutum Sanctae Sedis...”

***HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE COMMUNIQUE:
APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL APOSTOLIC VISITOR FOR THE PARISH OF MEDJUGORJE***

July 22, 2018, in a ceremony attended by the Papal Nuncio of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Msgr. Luigi Pezzuto, Hoser begins his mandate as Apostolic Visitor for parish of Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina. As such, Archbishop Henryk Hoser reports directly to the Holy Father.



STATEMENTS FROM ARCHBISHOP HOSER

MARCH 30, 2017

MEDJUGORJE.HR

In his first mandate in Medjugorje as Papal Envoy, Archbishop Henryk Hoser arrives in Medjugorje to evaluate the pastoral needs of Medjugorje and report back to the Holy Father. Upon his arrival in Medjugorje, Archbishop Hoser made the following statements to the pilgrims:

“We call Her here, the Queen of Peace...Therefore, that honoring, so intensive here, is of the greatest importance and is necessary to the whole world...We need a Heavenly intervention. The presence of our Blessed Virgin Mary – that is this intervention. It is God’s initiative...Therefore, I would like to encourage and fortify all of you, on behalf of the Pope, as his Emissary...Those who come here discover something extraordinary...They discover a huge range of profound spirituality. We can see that devotion in Medjugorje is very Christ-centered,”

“Medjugorje is a very fertile land from a religious perspective. In these years we can count 610 religious and priesthood vocations born in Medjugorje...When we are aware of the crisis of vocations ...it is clear that there is something new here, something remarkable.”

“The specific role of Medjugorje is extremely important here...You, my dear friends, should be the carriers of the joyful news. Say to the whole world that in Medjugorje we can find the light again. We need those special places of light in the world that is sinking into darkness.”

AUGUST 19, 2017

CRUXNOW.COM | KAI CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY

Papal envoy to Medjugorje, Archbishop Henryk Hoser, gave an interview in Poland to Poland’s Catholic Information Agency, KAI, in which he said the following:

“Specifically, I think it’s possible to recognize the authenticity of the first [seven] apparitions as proposed by the Ruini commission,” Hoser said. “Besides, it is difficult to get another verdict, because it’s difficult to believe that six seers will lie for 36 years. What they say has been consistent. They are not mentally incompetent. A strong argument for the authenticity of the apparitions is their faithfulness to the doctrine of the Church ... In any event, this movement will not stop and should not be stopped, because of the good fruit that grows out of it,” Hoser said. “It is one of the most alive places of prayer and conversion in Europe - and has a healthy spirituality.”



JULY 22, 2018
MEDJUGORJE.HR

Archbishop Henryk Hoser moves to Medjugorje and begins his second mandate related to Medjugorje, as Apostolic Visitor for the parish of St. James. With this action, the Vatican has effectively placed Medjugorje under its direct control and guidance.

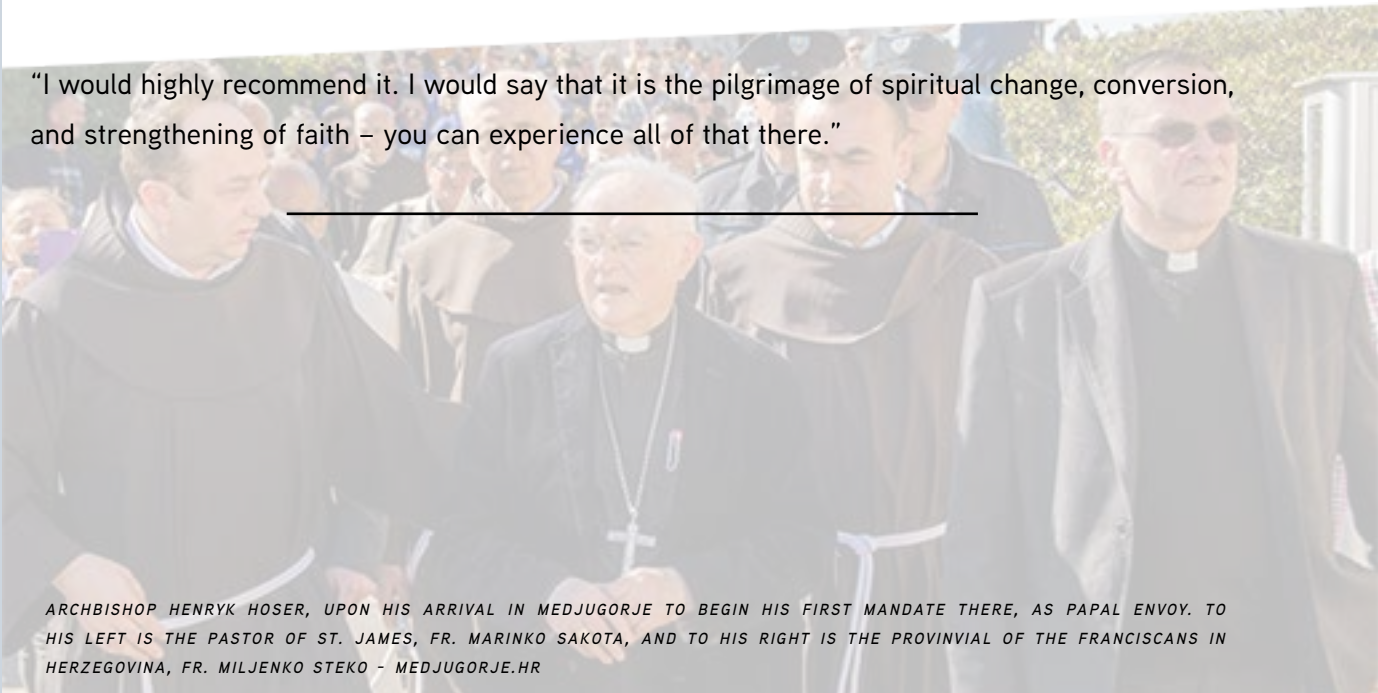
Greetings and welcoming words were given by the Franciscan Provincial, Fr. Miljenko Steko, who emphasized that this Mass in Medjugorje was of “historic importance” because it was the first time that the Apostolic Nuncio, Mons. Luigi Pezzuto, who is the direct representative of the Holy Father and the Apostolic See in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was officially present in Medjugorje to concelebrate a Mass.

In his homily on that day, Archbishop Hoser said the following:

“Pilgrims come to Medjugorje from faraway regions, from approximately 80 countries of the world...” he said. “...Let us now ask the fundamental question: Why do so many people come to Medjugorje every year? The clear answer is this: they come to meet someone, to meet God, to meet Christ, to meet His Mother. And then to discover the path that leads to the joy of living in the house of the Father and of the Mother; and ultimately to discover the Marian way as the more certain and sure one. This is the path of the Marian devotion that has been taking place here for years.”

Later in his homily, Archbishop Hoser said, “This is what the people’s devotion in Medjugorje looks like: in the center is the Holy Mass, Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the sacrament of Reconciliation. And all of this followed by other forms of devotion: the Rosary and the Way of the Cross, which have turned what in the beginning used to be sharp stones into smooth paths.”

“I would highly recommend it. I would say that it is the pilgrimage of spiritual change, conversion, and strengthening of faith – you can experience all of that there.”



ARCHBISHOP HENRYK HOSER, UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN MEDJUGORJE TO BEGIN HIS FIRST MANDATE THERE, AS PAPAL ENVOY. TO HIS LEFT IS THE PASTOR OF ST. JAMES, FR. MARINKO SAKOTA, AND TO HIS RIGHT IS THE PROVINCIAL OF THE FRANCISCANS IN HERZEGOVINA, FR. MILJENKO STEKO - MEDJUGORJE.HR



HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

THURSDAY 31.05.2018

N. 180531B

Holy See Press Office Communiqué: Appointment of Special Apostolic Visitor for the Parish of Medjugorje

On 31 May 2018 the Holy Father appointed H.E. Msgr. Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., archbishop-bishop emeritus of Warszawa-Praga, Poland, as special apostolic visitor for the parish of Medjugorje, for an undefined period and *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*.

It is an exclusively pastoral office, in continuity with the mission of Holy See Special Envoy for the parish of Medjugorje, entrusted to Msgr. Hoser on 11 February 2017, and concluded by him in recent months.

The mission of the Apostolic Visitor has the aim of ensuring a stable and continuous accompaniment to the parish community of Medjugorje and to the faithful who go there as pilgrims, and whose needs require particular attention.

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

SATURDAY 11.02.2017

N. 170211A

Secretariat of State press communiqué: special envoy of the Holy See named for Medjugorje

On February 11, 2017, the Holy Father entrusted Archbishop Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., bishop of Warsaw-Prague (Poland), to go to Medjugorje as special envoy of the Holy See.

The mission has the aim of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the pastoral situation there and above all, of the needs of the faithful who go there in pilgrimage, and on the basis of this, to suggest possible pastoral initiatives for the future. The mission will therefore have an exclusively pastoral character.

Archbishop Hoser, who will continue to exercise his role as bishop of Warsaw-Prague, is expected to finish his mandate as special envoy by summer of this year.

**INTERVIEW OF ARCHBISHOP HENRYK HOSER,
BY OFFICIAL MEDJUGORJE RADIO STATION
Radio Mir Medjugorje - December 25, 2018**

With the parishioners, we feel joy and gratitude for your arrival in Medjugorje and the mission that the Holy Father has entrusted to you. How do you feel here in Medjugorje?

I answer this question with equal joy. I'm really happy to be here. This is my second time here now. Last year I had the mission of being the Special Envoy of the Holy Father to examine the general situation, and now I am here as a permanent Apostolic Visitor, and that is a big difference because I am now here permanently and need to know not only the situation and our problems here, but together with my coworkers, we have to find a resolution to the existing problems.

Christmas is fast approaching. How should we prepare for Christmas, above all for the spiritual reality of Christmas?

The best way to prepare for Christmas is to live the liturgy of Advent. This is an unusually rich time, in terms of the spiritual content, and it consists of two parts. The first part is a preparatory phase that lasts until December 17th and is followed by immediate preparation from December 17th onwards. Here in the parish we are preparing with the early morning Masses. These Masses lead God's people into the mystery of Christmas.

What does Christmas mean to us?

The message of Christmas is an extremely rich message and I would like to emphasize the message of peace. The angels who announced to the shepherds the birth of the Lord, said that they bring peace to all people of good will.

Jesus came among us as a child in the family of Mary and Joseph. Throughout history, the family has always been in trial, and today, in particular. How can we preserve the present family and how can the example of the Holy Family help us in this regard?

One should first know that man from the very beginning was created within family relationships. A couple of men and women were blessed for their fertility. The family is the image of the Holy Trinity on earth, and the family builds up society. In order to preserve this family spirit today - and this is so difficult in our times - we need to emphasize the mission of the family in the world, and the mission says that the family is a source of joy and a way of fulfilling a human person.



Archbishop, you are a doctor, a religious of the Pallotine Order, a missionary - this has certainly marked and enriched your life. You spent 21 years in Africa. Can you share your mission experience with us today and with the listeners of the *Radio Mir Medjugorje*?

It's hard to say in a few sentences. This is above all an experience of the different cultures I encountered in Africa, in Europe, in other countries. I have spent most of my priestly life outside of my homeland, outside of my country. I could say two things on this subject. First, human nature is the same everywhere. As human beings, we are all alike. What distinguishes us is culture in a positive and a negative sense. Each culture has positive, constructive elements in the service of human development, but it can also contain elements that destroy man. So we live our human nature in its fullness and the positive characteristics of our culture!

You were an apostolic visitor to Rwanda. Can you compare the shrine of Kibeho (in Rwanda) and Medjugorje here?

Yes, there are many similar elements. At the beginning of the events in 1981, Our Lady wanted to warn the people in Kibeho about what was to come, which later turned out to be a genocide. It is the mission of the Queen of Peace that is in some way a continuation of the Fatima apparitions. Kibeho is growing and is receiving more and more pilgrims. These apparitions (of Kibeho) are approved. It is the only place in the African continent where there are approved apparitions. The Medjugorje apparitions also began in 1981, a few months before Kibeho, and it turned out to be similar, in the sense of the war that later came to Yugoslavia. The devotion that is developing in Medjugorje is directed to the Queen of Peace, and we find similarities with the apparitions in Fatima. The title "Queen of Peace" was included in the Litany of Loreto by Pope Benedict XV in 1917, which means it was in the year of the Fatima apparitions, during the First World War and during the time of the Soviet Revolution. We see that God is present in human history and He sends Our Lady to be close to us.

The reality of shrines is very important in today's world and so we see that Pope Francis has transferred the care for shrines from the Congregation for Clergy to the Congregation for Evangelization. Is the New Evangelization happening in Medjugorje?

There is no doubt. Here we live the new evangelization. The Marian devotion which is developing here is very dynamic. This is a time and place of conversion. Here, people discover God's existence in their own lives, and here people discover God's desire to be present in the human heart, all in a society that is secular, living as though God does not exist. All Marian shrines in the world do this.



After having spent many months in Medjugorje now, what would you point out as the most important fruits of Medjugorje?

These are the fruits of profound conversion. I think that the most prominent and most important fruit is the phenomenon of conversion through and with confession, the sacrament of peace, the sacrament of reconciliation. Of all that is happening here, this is the most important element.

On May 31st of this year, Pope Francis appointed you as Apostolic Visitor with a special role for the parish of Medjugorje. It is a purely pastoral mission whose purpose is to ensure a firm and permanent accompaniment of the parish community here in Medjugorje and the believers who come here. How do you look at the pastoral care in Medjugorje?

The pastoral life is still awaiting its full development and framework. The quality of the reception that the pilgrims receive, not only in the material sense, in terms of their accommodations and meals – is all being done. First and foremost, it is necessary to guarantee a suitable pastoral work tailored to the number of pilgrims.

I would like to emphasize the existence of the two roadblocks I have noticed:

1. On the one hand, sometimes, when there are a lot of pilgrims, there is a lack of priests available to hear confessions in various languages. Pilgrims come here from around 80 different countries of the world.
2. The second roadblock I have noticed is the lack of space for celebrating Mass in different languages. We must find options so that Mass can be celebrated in different languages. And we must especially get to the place where we can have perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

You are Polish, and we know that Poles have a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. What is the role of Mary in your life?

The role of Mary is indeed great. Polish devotion is always Marian. Let us not forget that in the mid-17th century, the Mother of God was proclaimed Queen of Poland. This was also a political act, which was confirmed by the king and by parliament. In all Christian houses in Poland, you will find a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The oldest religious poem in Polish, which originates from the Middle Ages, was addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary. And all Polish knights had emblems of the Blessed Virgin Mary on their armor.



Peace is that which is lacking in people today. Peace in the heart, peace among people, peace in the world. What is the role of Medjugorje, since we know that pilgrims who come to Medjugorje testify that the peace that they find here, cannot be experienced anywhere else?

The arrival of Jesus Christ in human body was announced as the arrival of the King of Peace. God brings us that peace that is so lacking at all levels and it seems to me the “School of Peace,” which we have in here in Medjugorje, helps us so much because everyone emphasizes the tranquility of this place and the spaces of silence, prayer, and reflection. All these are elements that bring us to peace with God and peace with people.

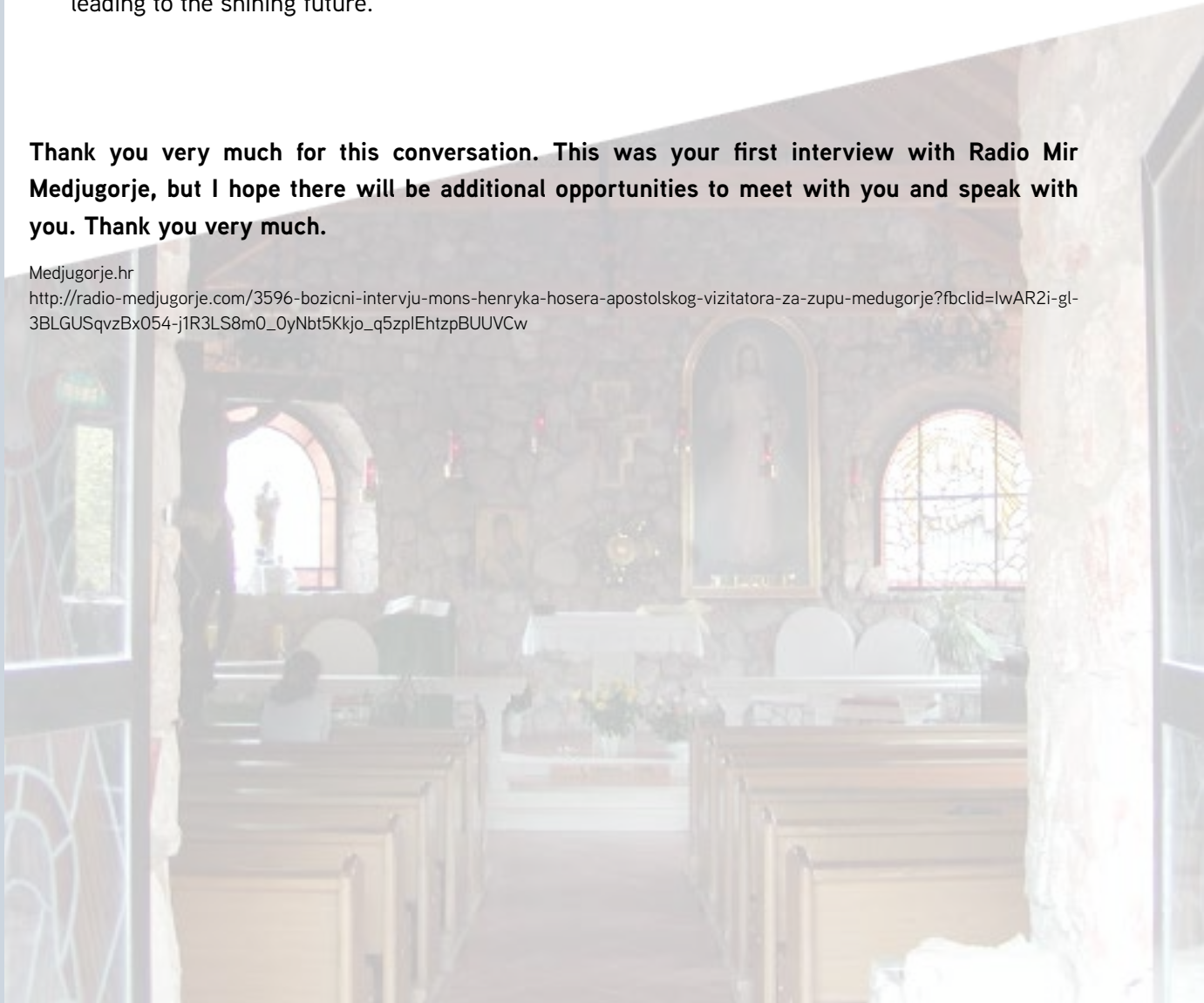
What would you like to say to our listeners at the end of this conversation?

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas with the words spoken by the angels: Peace to people of good will, to the people whom God loves. Our Lady emphasizes that God loves us all. One of the foundations of our faith is that it is the will of God to save all people without distinction, and if that does not happen then that depends on us. We are therefore on the path leading to the shining future.

Thank you very much for this conversation. This was your first interview with Radio Mir Medjugorje, but I hope there will be additional opportunities to meet with you and speak with you. Thank you very much.

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