

BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS

A Major Hollywood Motion Picture about Medjugorje

By Ann Vucic

You never know when life will throw you a curveball and open doors you never could have imagined. In late summer 2022, I got a phone call

which did just that. The person on the other end of the phone was a lovely woman named Angie Lake, who is the founder and leader of a Catholic Women's Bible Study in San Diego called Women's Christian Fellowship

(WCF). Twice in the last five years, Angie invited me to speak to the women of WCF during their annual luncheon. At both luncheons, I sat at a table with some of the leaders of the group, including Angie's niece, Holly Carney. Holly is a deeply faithful, passionate Catholic, who also happens to be a movie producer in Hollywood.

Angie and I chatted briefly before she came to the point of the phone call; Holly and another producer (also a faithful, practicing Catholic) named Jennifer Tadlock wanted to make a major motion picture about

Medjugorje, but before moving forward with this project, they wanted to go there and wanted me to accompany them. My heart practically leapt with joy at this exciting news. Bringing the message of Medjugorje to the big screen was something I long hoped would happen, but never thought anyone in Hollywood would actually do it. And having the opportunity to travel with them there would be such a privilege.

Within a few days Holly, Jennifer and I were on a three-way phone call discussing the movie and the pilgrimage. I instantly felt like I knew both women my whole life. There was an immediate comfortability and ease of communication with them. In addition, I was deeply impressed by their depth of faith and their passion for the Lord, the Church, and Medjugorje. That admiration and respect for them has only grown as we have walked forward in this project.

I also learned how this project was "born." A few years earlier, Jennifer's family went through a crisis when one of her children was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. This crisis led the family to begin praying the rosary together, which caused a profound deepening of faith in them. After her daughter was healed (through excellent medical care and the Divine Physician at work), Jennifer wanted to thank the



Holly Carney and Jennifer Tadlock, the two Hollywood producers who started this project.

Lord and the Blessed Mother for all the graces her family received. One day, an idea popped into her mind of how she could do that, I should make a movie about Medjugorje. She loved the idea of bringing Medjugorje to the big screen, and for the next year and a half, knocked on many doors in Hollywood, trying to make that happen. No one was interested.

In early August 2022, someone told Jennifer to get in touch with Holly Carney, who had recently made a movie called *FATIMA* (available on Netflix), to see if she would be interested in working with her on the Medjugorje movie. Jennifer did not know Holly but decided to contact her. The following Sunday, Jennifer was at Mass at her parish when she noticed a familiar looking man sitting in the second pew. She recognized him as famed NFL football player John Carney, who had played for the San Diego Chargers (among other teams). Jennifer knew Holly was John's wife, so she rightly assumed the dark-haired beauty sitting next to him was indeed the woman she was told to contact. It turns out both Holly and Jennifer belonged to the same parish but never met each other before. Right after that "chance encounter" at Mass, Holly and Jennifer met for dinner to discuss the idea of making a movie about Medjugorje. Holly agreed to partner with Jennifer to bring this to fruition. They both felt it was important to go to Medjugorje to experience it first-hand, so Jennifer made some inquiries about



Our team meets with the Pastor of Medjugorje, Father Zvonimir Pavicic, and the Provincial Minister of the Franciscan Order at Herzegovina, Father Jozo Gribes.

travelling there. When Holly spoke to her Aunt Angie about the plans, Angie said to her "You have to go to Medjugorje with Ann Vucic." And thus this whole thing was set in motion.

During one of our many phone calls over the next few days, Holly and Jennifer asked me to be the Medjugorje consultant for the movie. I immediately said yes. I spent the last twenty-five years of my life bringing people to Medjugorje and speaking about it all over the country. Helping people better understand Medjugorje and the trans-

formative grace of God which people experience there, is one of the passions of my heart and what I feel I was born to do. Now I had the opportunity to help guide a movie about Medjugorje, which could potentially be seen by millions throughout the world. It was like my life's mission had just had a major steroid injection.

As we compared notes on our schedules, we found a common window of seven available days, starting September 23, 2022. We made the arrangements for

(continued on next page)

Be Happy

December 25, 1993 – Dear children, today I rejoice with the little Jesus and I desire that Jesus' joy may enter into every heart. Little children, with the message I give you a blessing with my son Jesus, so that in every heart peace may reign. I love you, little children, and I invite all of you to come closer to me by means of prayer. You talk and talk but do not pray. Therefore, little children, decide for prayer. Only in this way will you *be happy* and God will give you what you seek from him. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Medjugorje in record time and within a matter of weeks of our first phone call, we were on our way. Five of us travelled to Medjugorje on that first trip: Holly and Jennifer; Kiki Carney, producer's assistant and Holly's daughter; Angie Lake, our prayer warrior for the journey, who first called me about this project; and me.

From the first moment of our pilgrimage to the final day, our trip was a whirlwind of meetings and gatherings with a variety of individuals and groups. I wanted them to experience as much of Medjugorje as possible in the short amount of time we had. This trip, however, had to be a combination of a pilgrimage and "reconnaissance," as Holly called it. Yes, they wanted the experience of being pilgrims there, but we also needed to have many meetings to see if it would actually be possible to make this movie.

From the beginning of our discussions about the film, Holly was emphatic that she would only make this movie if we were able to get the support of all the relevant Medjugorje Church officials. She wanted the movie to be made in collaboration with them and under their spiritual authority. If we could get their support, there would be a movie. If not, it was the end of the road. So our most important order of business in Medjugorje was meeting with Fr. Zvonimir Pavicic, the pastor of Medjugorje; Fr. Jozo (Joe) Grbes, the Provincial Minister of the Franciscan Order; and Archbishop Aldo Cavalli, the Apostolic Visitor to Medjugorje.

Our first meeting was with Fr. Zvonimir and Fr. Joe together. I had never met Fr. Z before (as our group called him, because pronouncing his name proved challenging for them), but I have known Fr. Joe since the late 1990's. Before he was elected to be the Franciscan Provincial Minister, Fr. Joe served in Chicago for over 25 years, which is where I met him. This first meeting was going to be a reunion with an old friend. Holly shared with them the plans for the movie and to our great joy and excitement, both Fr. Z and Fr. Joe expressed enthusiasm for this project and offered their full support and



Holly and Archbishop Aldo Cavalli, Apostolic Visitor to Medjugorje.



Archbishop Aldo Cavalli saying goodbye to our group after our meeting.

collaboration. We were pumped.

Our meeting with Archbishop Cavalli was equally as positive. The archbishop was waiting for us in the reception room of the parish office in Medjugorje and from the instant we walked in, he could not have been warmer or kinder. Holly shared with Archbishop Cavalli the plans for the movie and the direction we intended to take this film.

At the end of her explanation, with a great smile on his face, he simply said, "I agree." He told us he supported this movie project and promised to help us in any way he could. He then spent the next forty-five minutes talking with us about the wonders of the Lord and the spiritual life. We were mesmerized by his beautiful insights, his depth of spirit and his infectious joy. At the end of our

meeting, he prayed over us and during that prayer time, all of us in that room clearly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. We were positively giddy after our beautiful encounter with this holy archbishop.

There was another person whose support I very much hoped we could get, Fr. Jozo Zovko. Fr. Jozo was the pastor of Medjugorje when the apparitions began but he served in that role for less than two months afterwards because he was arrested and imprisoned by the Yugoslav Communist authorities. Fr. Jozo was a priest for whom I – and millions of others throughout the world – had a great deal of love, respect, and admiration.

My family is from Cerno, a small village just a few miles from Medjugorje, but to escape communist oppression, we moved to the United States when I was two years old. In the summer of 1981, when I was fifteen, we went back to our homeland, to spend the summer visiting family. We arrived in early June and stayed till late August. Two weeks after we arrived, the apparitions of Our Lady began in Medjugorje. I first heard about the apparitions on June 27, four days after they began, and in that moment, my life instantly and radically changed. I spent the rest of that summer going to Medjugorje as much as I could and witnessed the beginning days and months of these great events.

The memory of Fr. Jozo Zovko, the Medjugorje pastor, is seared into my heart and soul. I remember being riveted and profoundly moved in the deepest parts of my heart and soul by his preaching, his passion, his courage, and his boldness in the face of constant communist threats. I had never encountered anyone like him in my life.

I remember exactly where I stood in St. James church when a priest walked out to the ambo in mid-August that summer and made this announcement: “Today is the most difficult day of my entire life. The police have arrested Fr. Jozo.” The whole church broke out into a collective wailing. A few minutes later, however, we all felt comforted by the words of the visionary Jakov, when he told us that Our Lady said she is with Fr. Jozo.



Fr. Jozo Zovko, in the summer of 1981, (as he looked when I first met him).



Holly sharing with Fr. Jozo the vision and plans for this movie. Ann is translating.

Fr. Jozo had a mock trial and was sentenced to three and a half years of prison, during which he was abused and tortured. For many years after his release, he was stationed at a church not far from Medjugorje, then later at the Franciscan monastery in Siroki Brijeg. Millions of pilgrims visited him at these places and were mesmerized and moved by that same passion and love for the Lord and the Church which so deeply touched my heart in the summer of 1981.

I really wanted Holly, Jennifer, Kiki, and Angie to meet this living saint and hear his story. In recent years, Fr. Jozo was in poor health, and arranging a meeting with him was entirely dependent on how he was feeling. Fr. Jozo normally lives at a Franciscan monastery in Zagreb, Croatia, however, he spends quite a bit of time every summer at a

monastery on a tiny island off the southern coast of Croatia, called Badija and he was still there at that time.

I requested permission for the team to meet with him and for several days was told he was not feeling well. Finally, late one evening, I got a message that we could see him the following morning. The group was beyond thrilled to meet this holy man, and the fact that we had to trek to an island in the Adriatic Sea for that meeting made it even more thrilling.

We left Medjugorje very early the next morning and drove to Orebic, a town on the far side of the Peljesac Peninsula and from there we boarded a ferry to Korcula island. The final leg of our journey was taking a small water taxi, which barely fit the five of us and our driver, to the island of Badija. When

(continued on next page)

our boat docked at the pier, we were greeted by a priest who told us Fr. Jozo was waiting for us inside the century's old monastery.

Fr. Jozo greeted us in the reception area, and at his mere presence, all of us were hit with a rush of emotion. He led us into a chapel, where the team set up a camera to videotape our conversation. The meeting with him was more special than words can express. His holiness, warmth and enthusiasm were evident despite the frailty of his body. Holly led the conversation and I translated. She shared with him the plans for this movie. When Fr. Jozo expressed his full support for this project and offered to collaborate in any way he could, it was like the cherry on the cake. After that, Holly asked him to share with us about his life, both before and after the apparitions. Although I heard him speak many times over the course of my many trips to Medjugorje, I still got choked up as he shared his story with us. Clearly, we were in the presence of holiness.

One of the most powerful and moving moments of our time with Fr. Jozo came when he looked intensely at Holly and very poignantly said, "Our Lady has been waiting for you to make this movie!" What a confirmation of something we all already felt, that Our Lady was behind this project.

We would have been thrilled if Fr. Jozo gave us one hour of his time, but he spent close to six hours with us, including hosting us for lunch. He wanted to spend even more time with us, but we could see he was not feeling well, so we ended our meeting with him, to give him time to rest.

In addition to the meetings described above, there were many other anointed gatherings and conversation. We met with Mario, the husband of the vision-



Fr. Jozo Zovko speaking to our little group.

ary Vicka, who assured us that his wife fully supports this movie and will do anything she can to help. She promised to meet with the team as soon as she was able to. We traveled to the Franciscan Monastery at Siroki Brijeg where we heard the powerful story of the Fran-

ciscan friars who were killed during World War II because they refused to renounce Christ and the Church.

We met with one of my cousins, Silvana who was a seventeen-year-old teenager when the apparitions began and was
(continued on page 42)

Be Happy

May 25, 1987 – Dear children, I am calling every one of you to start living in God's love. Dear children, you are ready to commit sin, and to put yourselves in the hands of Satan without reflecting. I call on each one of you to consciously decide for God and against Satan. I am your mother and, therefore, I want to lead you all to complete holiness. I want each one of you to *be happy* here on earth and to be with me in heaven. That is, dear children, the purpose of my coming here and it's my desire. Thank you for having responded to my call.



Our group, intensely listening to the powerful story of the Franciscans Friars, who were killed at the Monastery in Siroki Brijeg.



John and Colleen Willard share the moving story of Colleen's miraculous healing.

a member of the youth group Fr. Jozo founded six months before the apparitions began. She gave a beautiful testimony about her own conversion, as well as what it was like watching Fr. Jozo doubt the apparitions in the beginning, but ultimately accept them.

We heard the testimony of Nancy and Patrick Latta at their castle. Our group was overwhelmed to hear the powerful story of how this wealthy couple left everything behind to come live in Medjugorje, so they could “be Our Lady’s neighbor” as Patrick likes to say.

My dear friends, John and Colleen Willard, happened to be in Medjugorje at the same time, so I invited them to join us for lunch one afternoon. The team was mesmerized by the story of Colleen’s miraculous healing in Medjugorje almost twenty years earlier, from an inoperable brain tumor and numerous other diagnoses.

These are just some of the powerful encounters and events which occurred in those few days in Medjugorje.

As we drove to the Sarajevo airport in the middle of the night, to catch our early morning flight to Vienna, our excitement and joy could not be dampened by the lack of sleep. We were positively giddy. Yes, in part it was because of all the amazing graces we had received on this anointed trip, but there was an even deeper reason. We were leaving here with all the confirmations we needed to make this movie, and even more convinced that this movie is a project born in the heart of Our Blessed Mother and guided by her hand.

A few days after we returned home, Holly had a meeting with one of her producing partners named Lucas Foster. Lucas is one of the biggest producers in Hollywood, having made such movies as *Ford vs. Ferrari* (nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards), *Man on Fire*, *Crimson Tide*, *Law Abiding Citizen* and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, just to name a few. Holly is working with Lucas on a 100-million-dollar television episodic production, about the life of the emperor Constantine, who legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire.

At their meeting for the Constantine
(*continued on page 44*)



Lunch with Fr. Jozo Zovko.



Joyful meeting with Mario Mijatovic, husband of the visionary Vicka.



The monastery on the island where we met with Fr. Jozo Zovko.



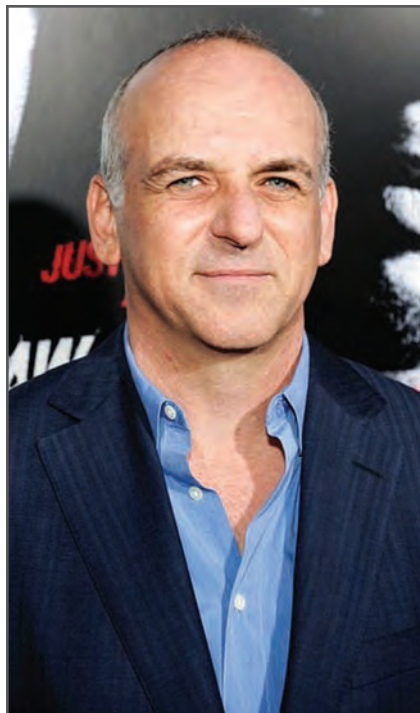
This is on the water taxi as we are leaving the monastery.

project, Holly told Lucas about her trip to Medjugorje and her plans to make a movie about it. Without skipping a beat, Lucas told her he would produce this film. I am brand new to the Hollywood world, but I have come to understand that when something is a “Lucas Foster Production,” that is BIG. Lucas only makes global films, so with him at the helm of this project, we are guaranteed to have a film for a global audience.

From the moment we returned home from our pilgrimage, I have been in daily communication with the team, primarily Holly, who is taking the lead on development. In light of all the work we have been doing together since we got back from Medjugorje, Holly told me one day, “You realize you are not just the Medjugorje consultant for this movie, you are now also an Executive Producer.” I chuckled and asked, “can I really be an Executive Producer if I don’t know what that means?” Since then, however, I have comfortably moved into the role of executive producer and have learned a lot about how a movie is made. It has definitely been a baptism by fire.

The working title of this movie is, *Between the Mountains* (which is what the word “Medjugorje” means) and is in the “development phase” right now. This means we are primarily working on raising development funds, looking at potential screenwriters, directors, and cast. Since Lucas is closely connected with the biggest names in Hollywood, he will insist on only the best for all these critical roles.

One of the most frequent questions we get is, when is this movie coming out. This film falls under the category of “Indie films,” which means it is not being financed by a big Hollywood studio. That is very important for us be-



Lucas Foster, the “A List” Hollywood Producer who will produce the film.

cause, if it was financed that way, the studio would have total control of the movie and the message in the movie. In essence, they could do whatever they wanted with it. We could not allow that to happen, so in order for the creative control to remain with our team, we have to arrange for the financing. Part of how that happens is through people making contributions and investments, among other avenues. We do have a sense that the money will come quickly, and the sooner it does come in, the sooner we can make this movie.

So how can you become a part of this movement which desires to bring the messages of the Queen of Peace to the big screen?

1. Add this project to your daily prayers.

2. Subscribe to our YouTube channel where you can follow our journey. Please watch our video’s and remember to like and/or comment. <https://www.youtube.com/@betweenthemountainsmovie>.

3. Follow us on all our Social Media platforms (look for *Between the Mountains* on Facebook and Instagram).

4. Pass this information along to everyone you know and spread the word about this movie. Help us build Our Lady’s army and bring this life-changing message of Medjugorje to the world.

5. Consider contributing financially, or investing in this movie. Your assistance will help make a movie which will have a lasting impact on our culture. For information about how you can contribute or invest, send an email to: betweenthemountainsmovie@gmail.com

The goal and purpose of this movie is to bring the powerful message of Medjugorje to a global audience, and with the visionary talent of Lucas Foster, we are guaranteed to have a film of the highest quality. There are still so many who have never heard of Medjugorje, and we want to change that with this movie. As we move forward, we want to create a movement behind this project, and we would love to have all those who love Medjugorje join us! ■

Be Happy

November 25, 1993 – Dear children, I invite you now in this time, like never before, to prepare for the coming of Jesus. Let little Jesus reign in your hearts and only then, when Jesus is your friend, will you *be happy*. It will not be difficult for you either to pray or offer sacrifices or to witness Jesus’ greatness in your life, because He will give you strength and joy in this time. I am close to you by my intercession and prayer and I love and bless all of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.