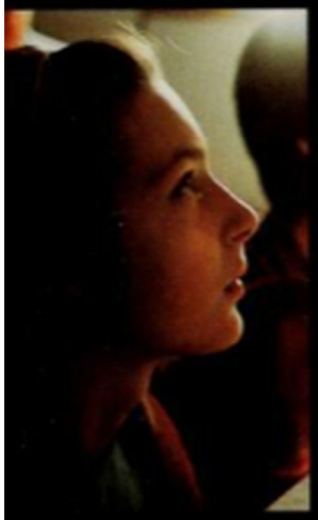








the Queen of Peace Visits Medugorje

Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.

Father Pelletier has been writing on Marian apparitions since 1952. This book finds him writing for the first time as a witness of the apparitions he describes.

Three years have gone into the writing of *The Queen of Peace Visits Medugorje*. The author spent much time and effort to be accurate and to incorporate the most recent material into his books. In keeping with this established pattern, this book is not just a reprint but a revision and an updating right to the time of his death. Various comments, enthusiastic as well as critical comments, came from readers and their remarks have led to changes. Father Pelletier was not condemnatory in his spoken words; accordingly a change was made in one instance to temper the thrust of his written words.

The Queen of Peace Visits Medugorje leads the reader from the prophetic beginning of the event in Rome in early May 1981 through the six different sites where Our Lady has appeared. Six seers, four girls and two boys, have been involved in the apparitions. Then in December 1982, Our Lady began to speak to a ten year old girl and later, in March 1983, to another ten year old girl, a close friend of the first.

In the annals of Marian apparitions there has never been the same sense of urgency in the message of Our Lady, nor such a rapid and widespread response to it. She tells us that time is running out on a sinful world. The response from Medugorje has been a tremendous movement of conversion and from the world at large a flood of pilgrims, including a large number of prie
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the Queen of Peace Visits Medugorje

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the Queen of Peace Visits Medugorje

Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.

1985
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50 Old English Road
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Reverend Joseph A. Pelletier, A. A.
1912 - 1986

Reverend Joseph Pelletier, A.A., the author of this book and of many others on Marian shrines and devotions, was born in Winchendon, MA, of a family that had roots in French Canada and in Ireland. At Assumption Preparatory School and at Assumption College he met the Order of French priests and brothers which he decided to join after graduation. He completed his theological training at the Angelicum in Rome, was ordained in 1937 and was assigned to work at Assumption College. Graduate education at Boston College prepared him to teach Sociology and Religion. He coached the tennis team, took an interest in all sports and was soon made Director of Athletics. His willingness to accept additional work was recognized by making him Dean of Students.

When the campus was almost destroyed by a tornado in June 1953, Father Joe was appointed Director of the college's reconstruction fund. In 1954 and 1955 he was associate pastor of St. Anne's parish in Fiskdale, MA., and director of its shrine. Having returned to Assumption College in 1957 he worked at fund-raising until a heart attack forced him into retirement in 1974.

Father Joe was always working on a book on Marian apparitions all the time that he was carrying out the assignments mentioned above. His first, most widely acclaimed book, was written in 1952. The Sun Danced At Fatima was followed by several books on the events at Garabandal. The charismatic renewal which was inspired by Vatican II found him in the forefront. Retirement in 1974, once his heart condition had been stabilized, gave him the opportunity to devote himself entirely to his beloved avocation: more books, diocesan directorship of the Blue Army, regional directorship of the Marian Movement of Priests, charismatic prayer services at St. John parish, trips to Medugorje and finally the present book—the last one completed but not the only one in progress. About Father Joe's personality and his inner life, Richard Brunelle, A.A., Superior of the Assumptionists at the College, made the following remarks in the funeral homily.

In one way I guess we can say Fr. Joe was a simple man. He was capable of dreaming big dreams, of harboring enormous hopes, but always the means he took to achieve his goals were simple.

I believe the main reason is that he was gifted with a robust, simple faith. His trust in God, his love of the Blessed Virgin and his confidence in her intercessory power, his strong faith in the power of Jesus, all this radiated around him. People were attracted by it. He had an uncanny way of approaching people to talk to them about Christ or Mary. He always proceeded as if the other person was open to anything he said. It was all quite disarming. You did not know what to say in return. You just had to listen to him.

Add to this a dogged determination which bordered on stubbornness. When he gave himself to something, he went all the way. Take his writing, for instance. He did not become a popular writer overnight. He had to hone his skills little by little. He also discovered that his particular gift was not exquisite prose nor profound theology, but attention to detail. When he finally understood this, he decided his biggest effort would be to uncover the authentic, down to the last detail. He poured unbelievable energy into his research in Marian apparitions. He travelled long distances to interview witnesses. He questioned unceasingly. He read everything he could put his hands on. To him, that was a real mission. It was something burning inside of him, something he was convinced the Lord had put into his heart. And like Isaiah, he said, 'Here I am, Lord. Send me.'

Fr. Joe was also a loving person. There was nothing showy about it. In fact, he could easily give the opposite impression. He often seemed aloof, even cold. Sometimes one had to awaken him from his little world to be noticed. But when one confided in him, he listened with great compassion and understanding. He loved to pray with people for any intention. He spent a lot of time counselling people. He easily won their confidence and affection.

Finally, I dare say everyone recognized in Fr. Joe a man of prayer. He spent many hours a day in prayer. The breviary and the rosary were his favorites. He loved Holy Scripture. He meditated a lot on the role of Mary in Christian life. He never missed an opportunity to preach on Mary and to invite people to recite the rosary frequently.

These are the things that are worth remembering and from which we can draw inspiration. Fr. Joe had his weaknesses. But he had his strengths. These were founded on God's gifts, natural and supernatural. Perhaps the words of the Gospel sum it up best: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.' Fr. Joe believed these words. He also lived them by lending his shoulder to many a burdened person.

Father Joe has left his community and friends so that he might experience the Vision of the Most Holy Trinity and also of Our Lady. We feel sure that he will continue to give burdened people the kind of support he always gave them because that is one of the main reasons that he wrote his books.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to Stan and Margie Karminski for the tremendous assistance they provided in gathering accurate information; to William F. Kuhn for his generous editorial help; to O. Warren Creelman of Creelman Advertising, Inc., for the cover design and mechanical preparation of the book; and to many other people -too numerous to name- for the aid they provided in proof reading, in sharing information and photos, and in other ways.

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Declaration of the Author

The events at Medugorje are presently under investigation. The author wishes to affirm his readiness to accept the final judgment of the Church.

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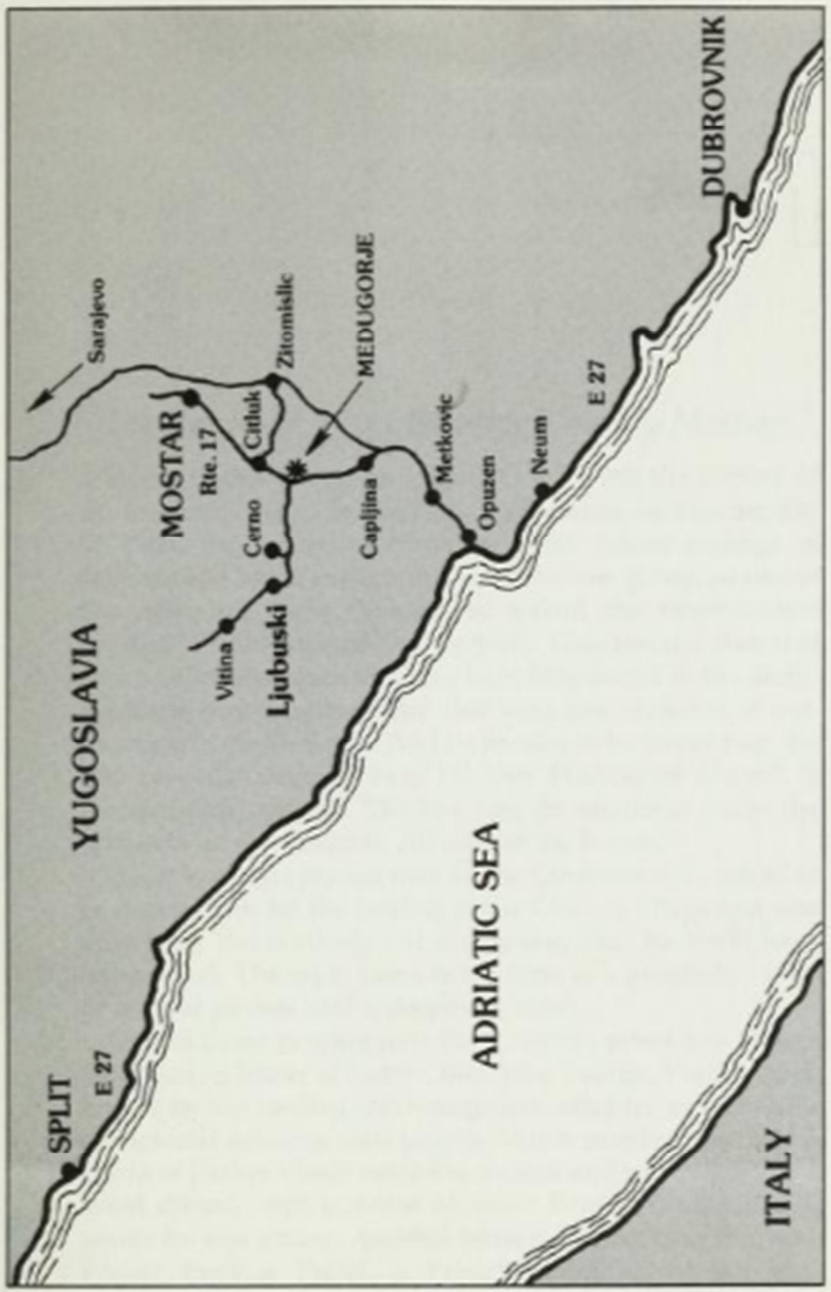
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Chapter 1

Do Not Fear, I Am Sending You My Mother

When Father Tomislav Vlasic, O.F.M. left the rectory of St. Francis of Assisi in Capljina, Yugoslavia, on a spring day of 1981, he undoubtedly did so with mixed feelings of sadness and joyful expectation. For, he was going, as one of the delegates from Croatia, to attend the International Leaders' Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that was to take place in Rome from May fourth to the ninth. He knew that meetings like this were the occasion of outpourings of God's Spirit. And he needed to be buoyed up. He had recently resigned from his own Franciscan council in Herzegovina, saying: "No one can do anything about the problems of the Church. All we can do is pray."

So, it is not surprising that at the Conference he asked to be prayed over for the healing of the Church. His prayer was answered, but certainly not in any way that he could have anticipated. The reply came in the form of a prophetic vision or mental picture and a prophetic word.

One of those praying over the Croatian priest was Briege McKenna, a Sister of Saint Clare from Tampa, Florida, well known for her healing and evangelistic ministry as well as for her special ministry with priests. While praying, she had a vision of Father Vlasic seated in a chair and surrounded by a great crowd, with streams of water flowing from beneath where he was sitting. Another person praying over him was Father Emilien Tardif, a French Canadian of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, stationed in the Dominican

Republic. He received this prophetic word: "Do not fear, I am sending you my Mother."

It was not long before Father Tomislav was given the meaning of the message imparted through this vision and this prophetic word. On Wednesday, June 24, two weeks after he had returned to Capljina from Rome, came the fulfillment of the prophetic word: "...I am sending you my Mother." In the late afternoon of that day, which was the feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptizer, Our Lady appeared to several young people. This took place on the lower part of a small mountain called Mount Podbrdo, which is located behind and quite close to a hamlet named Bijakovici, one of five hamlets that make up the township of Medugorje. The parish of Medugorje is under the patronage of Saint James. In addition to the main church of Saint James, there are three other "mission" churches which are necessary because the town's population of 2,500 is spread out over a considerable area.

What was the religious status of this parish made up of people of Croatian extraction? According to Father Tomislav Vlasic it was pretty much a run-of-the-mill parish, not particularly fervent, but "more or less like every other parish in western Herzegovina, rather Catholic with a strong traditional emphasis." The people there did go to church "more than in other regions of Yugoslavia, but they were already on the road of a declining faith."

The specific conditions Father Vlasic describes are not too different from those that prevail in many areas of the United States. The prayer life, the touchstone of Christian vitality, was at a low ebb. "Many young people did not pray, did not go to church often. The families did not pray. Few prayed....Many young people did not know what the rosary was."[1]

Chapter 2

On A Rocky Mountain Side

The First Day, Wednesday, June 24, 1981

The first day Our Lady came to Medugorje, she appeared twice in the late afternoon.

It all started around four o'clock, when two close friends, 16 year old Mirjana Dragicevic and 15 year old Ivanka Ivankovic left the latter's house in the hamlet of Bijakovici for a walk. At a sheep pasture on their way back, Ivanka happened to look up on Mount Podbrdo and saw a shining figure hovering above the ground at a distance of some two to three hundred yards. As she looked more intently, she was able to discern the form or figure of a young lady. Though perplexed and unsure, she exclaimed: "Mirjana, look there is *Gospa* - Our Lady!" Mockingly, and without bothering to look, Mirjana replied: "Come on! Would Our Lady appear to us?" And the two continued on their way to Bijakovici. Such was the first encounter with Our Lady!

The second encounter with Our Lady was as unexpected as the first. Mirjana and Ivanka left the village again with Milka Pavlovic, who had asked them to help her round up some sheep. These three girls saw Our Lady on Mount Podbrdo at the same place where she had been seen before.

Seventeen year old Vicka Ivankovic, who was a close friend of Mirjana and Ivanka, on waking from a nap received word where these friends would be. She soon joined them. On their knees, praying, Mirjana said to Vicka: "Look up there! Our Lady!" Greatly frightened, the latter did not take

the time to look but kicked off her slippers and ran away.

Along the road, Vicka saw 16 year old Ivan Dragicevic and Ivan Ivankovic, who were picking apples. She told them what was happening on Mount Podbrdo and ended up returning with them to rejoin the three girls she had deserted.

When she arrived where the three girls were, Vicka turned to speak to Ivan Dragicevic and saw him running off. However the other lad stayed with Vicka. The two of them knelt down and prayed with the other three girls.

Ivanka has said that Our Lady was holding the Infant Jesus and was passing her hand over his head. Vicka did not distinguish things that clearly. She has affirmed that Our Lady had something in her left hand and kept covering and uncovering it, as though she was showing something.[1]

As the five young people looked at the distant Vision, she beckoned them to come up the mountain side to her. They were too fearful to move. They were all afraid, although the two girls who had seen her before were less fearful than they had been when they had seen her the first time. Notwithstanding their fear, they experienced a deep peace and happiness. Our Lady remained about forty-five minutes.

Vicka was the first to go home. The others followed her five or six minutes later. It was after six-thirty and getting dark. It was also raining a little.

The Second Day, Thursday, June 25, 1981

The next day, the young people went to work in the tobacco fields, as was their custom. Ivanka, Mirjana and Vicka felt drawn to return to Mount Podbrdo where they had seen the Vision and when they had finished their work in the fields, they decided to go. Ivanka suggested that they take a walk there, adding that if they saw the Vision it would be "good", and, if they didn't, they wouldn't say anything about the affair so that the people would stop laughing at them.

Before leaving, they decided that if the Vision returned they would come back to Bijakovici and tell Marija Pavlovic and 10 year old Jakov Colo. It was near six o'clock in the late afternoon when they departed. Ivanka walked ahead of Mirjana and Vicka who followed, talking to each other. Some other children and two adults also went along.

As on the previous day, Ivanka was the first to see the Vision. She turned to her two friends and said: "Look, Our Lady!" Although the three girls were on the road at the base of Mount Podbrdo and the Vision was considerably higher up on Mount Podbrdo than on the previous day, Vicka could see "her face, eyes, hair and dress" very clearly. Remembering the decision they had made, she ran off to get Marija and Jakov who came immediately.

From her high spot, way up on Mount Podbrdo, the Vision summoned the young people to come up to her. They answered the call and were utterly amazed at the ease and speed with which they advanced up the steep and treacherous slope of sharp-edged stones and prickly briers. As Vicka described it: "We ran quickly up the hill. It was not like walking on the ground. Nor did we look for the path. We simply ran toward her. In five minutes we were up the hill -as if something had pulled us through the air. I was afraid. I was also barefoot, but no thorns had scratched me." Those who watched them were greatly surprised at the speed of their ascent and were unable to follow them up to the top of the hill.

Astonishing things continued to happen. "When we were about two meters (six feet) away from the Madonna, we felt as if we were thrown to our knees. Jakov was thrown kneeling into a thorny bush and I thought he would be injured. But he came out of it without a scratch."[2]

Vicka asked Marija if she could see Our Lady. She replied that she could see something white that was getting clearer and clearer. Eventually she was able to see her as the others did.

Jakov exclaimed: "I see Our Lady!"

The five young people feasted their eyes on the Vision. She appeared young, nineteen or twenty. She was strikingly beautiful, with a beauty beyond anything of this world. Her eyes were particularly beautiful and expressive. They were light blue, and so tender and kind. They were simply wonderful.[3] In their hearts they felt that this was Our Lady, the Mother of Jesus.

Ivanka was the first to speak. Her mother had died suddenly about two months before. She had been a good wife

and mother but was not known to have been a particularly devout Catholic. Ivanka inquired about her. Our Lady said that she was well and with her and that she shouldn't worry about her. It is said that when people heard about this, they were encouraged to learn that one did not have to do extraordinary things to get into heaven.

Mirjana now addressed Our Lady. What she said gives us an inkling of how some of the people in the village had reacted to the news of the events of the previous afternoon and how the young people had been affected by these reactions. She said to her that when they returned home and told the people what had happened, they would say that they were "crazy". If Mirjana had hoped that the gracious Visitor would promise a sign to convince people, she must have been disappointed for her only answer was a smile. However, the humanly unexplainable flight of the group up the mountain side and the lack of any injury to the barefooted Vicka and to Jakov who knelt in a thorny bush, were signs that must have impressed those who heard of them with an open mind.

Vicka asked Mirjana what the time was. She replied that it was three-fifteen.

Surprised at this answer, Vicka asked her what she meant by three-fifteen, remarking that she must have set her watch wrong. In fact, the number 12 had changed into a 9.[4] This was the first event which the seers took to be miraculous. It appears that Mirjana still has this watch in her possession.

The young people who saw Our Lady on the previous afternoon had experienced considerable fear. Those who saw her on this day likewise experienced fear, but less than before. They cried a little and they prayed a little.

Mirjana's grandmother had told her to say seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's when in the presence of the Vision. This was a traditional prayer in honor of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady that was said in the region. They said these prayers on this day and Our Lady joined them as they did. However, she did not say the Hail Marys with them. She told them that these prayers pleased her and to continue to pray them. She also asked them to join a Creed to the prayers because many people have forgotten the Creed.

The apparition lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. As Our Lady was leaving, she bade the young people farewell with these words: "Go in the peace of God". She rose in the air and the young people watched her as she departed.

In his book, Father Ljudevit Rupcic mentions "another phenomenon which took place on the second day." Before Our Lady appeared, a bright light "something like lightning" was seen by those who were on Mount Podbrdo and also by people in the village who happened to look toward Mount Podbrdo. We shall see that something similar was reported as happening on the third day of the apparitions.

The six young people who saw Our Lady on June 25, the second day of the apparitions, namely, Ivanka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic, Vicka Ivankovic, Ivan Dragicevic and Jakov Colo, will continue to see Our Lady each day. Ivan Ivankovic and Milka Pavlovic, Marija's sister, who had seen Our Lady on the preceding day, have not seen her since.

The six seers have all asserted that Our Lady came each day preceded by three flashes of light. Other people are reported as not having seen these flashes of light since June 26, the third day of the apparitions. The people who saw the flashes on June 25 and 26 understood them as signs that something important was taking place on Mount Podbrdo. These will not be the only signs given the people, as shall be seen.

As the seers were coming down the mountain side, a neighbor of theirs, Marinko Ivankovic, was just arriving at Mount Podbrdo. That morning, he had taken Marija and Vicka to Citluk, where he worked as a mechanic. They went there for some school classes. Marija told him about the apparitions and he became interested and wanted to learn more. That afternoon he spoke with Ivan Dragicevic who saw Our Lady on June 24. He decided to go to the place of the apparitions. He got there late, thinking the apparition would occur at 7:15.

Marinko noticed Ivanka coming down the hill. Her grandmother was on the road waiting for her and she went to her. They embraced. Ivanka was crying as she told her grandmother that she had asked Our Lady about her deceased

mother and had been told that she was well and in heaven. Marinko is a good and compassionate man and he tried to console Ivanka but she kept crying. He then decided to go to the rectory and tell the priests about what was happening, for he felt that it was a spiritual matter which concerned them and which they should know about.

Marinko would have liked to speak with the pastor, Father Jozo Zovko, but he was not there. He was in Zagreb. Father Zrinko Cuvalo was there and he spoke with him. He told him about the young people and what they claimed to have seen over the past two days. He added that they had been crying this evening and were in need of help. He suggested that the priest go and talk with them to console them and find out if what they were saying was true. Father Zrinko was noncommittal in his reply, but our story will soon reveal that he was prudently open to what was happening.

That night the village was humming with the news of these unusual events.

From this second day on, Marinko became an important part of the early days of the apparitions. He very actively befriended the young people who he felt were badly in need of support. Four of the youngsters were experiencing some deficit in family support. Ivanka had recently lost her mother and her father was away working in Germany. Vicka's father was also away at work in Germany. Jakov rarely saw his father who worked in Bosnia. Mirjana was spending the summer in Medugorje with her grandmother, while her parents remained in Sarajevo where the family was living at this time. Marinko's dedication and sincerity won the confidence of the seers who came to lean heavily on him.

Marinko has faithfully kept a record of the events of Medugorje[5] and this makes him a particularly valuable witness of the apparitions. His value as a witness is heightened by the fact that the record of the early days kept by the priests of the parish was confiscated by the police on August 17, 1981.

Chapter 3

Higher Up On The Mountain Side

The Third Day, Friday, June 26, 1981

On this day, Marinko and the seers agreed to go together to the base of Mount Podbrdo where Our Lady had first appeared. Our Lady's coming was preceded by a brilliant light that illumined not only the village but the entire area three times and that was seen by everyone and not only the seers. The latter looked intently and cried out: "There she is".

According to Marinko, Our Lady was higher on Mount Podbrdo than she had been on the two previous days. The seers immediately started up the mountain side toward her. Ivan and Jakov were ahead of Marinko and the four girls. Marinko, who knew the area very well, had to help the girls who were having trouble with the protruding sharp-edged stones that blanket the mountain side. Eventually the seers all came together and knelt in front of a stone. Marinko asked them if Our Lady was there and they replied that she was. She stood on a cloud. Vicka took some holy water and sprinkled the Vision saying: "If you are Our Lady, stay with us. If you are not, go away." Her only answer was a beautiful smile.

Mirjana had lost her grandfather a year before and she enquired about him. Our Lady said: "He is well".

Ivanka questioned Our Lady again about her mother who had died in the hospital without any member of the family present. She wanted to know if she had left any message for the children. Our Lady replied: "Obey your grandmother and be good to her for she is old and cannot work."

Ivanka had another question that had been prepared by Marinko: "Why have you come here and what is it you want?" Our Lady scanned the vast gathering that had come on this day. It was as if her eyes rested on each individual. She said: "I have come because there are many believers here. I want to be with you to convert and reconcile everyone."

June 26 was an intensely hot day. The heat and the crush of the huge crowd was more than Ivanka, Mirjana and Vicka could bear and they fainted. They had to be removed from the crowd and revived. The apparition lasted approximately thirty minutes. When it had been going on for ten minutes, Our Lady had the seers get up from their knees and stand, undoubtedly because of the stifling heat.

Finally the seers asked Our Lady if she would be coming again. She said she would. Then she took her leave, repeating the farewell words she had used on the previous day and that she will always use in the future: "Go in the peace of God."

The three girls who fainted had to be helped down the mountain side. Marija went down with some women. When about halfway to the village, she ran from the women she was with and went to her left. Falling to her knees, she exclaimed: "Our Lady is here!" Then she saw a cross made out of different colors like a rainbow. It was a plain cross without the body of Christ on it. Our Lady stood in front of the cross and was crying. Tears streamed down her cheeks. First she asked where the other girls were. Then she said: "Peace, peace, peace. Reconcile yourselves." Her very last words were: "Go in the peace of God."

On this third day when Ivanka asked Our Lady what she wanted, she gave a summary of the message that would be expanded upon in the days ahead. Her message was peace, the peace that can only come from conversion or reconciliation with God and with one's neighbor.

Marinko has estimated that, by the end of the apparition, there were from two to three thousand people on the mountain side. This was the first time that he was with the seers during an apparition and he has affirmed that he "firmly

believed that something was happening."

In the Hail Holy Queen, Mary is invoked as a "mother of mercy." At Medugorje she will continually reveal herself as having come to her children of the earth on a mission of mercy. She will do it both by her actions and by her words as she did on this day of June 26. She tells the seers that she has come to bring her children the deep peace and happiness that comes to man when he has been reconciled with God and his fellowmen. And she precedes this with a compassionate glance over the entire gathering, which speaks of her desire that no one be excluded from this peace and happiness. And she manifests her compassionate love for the seers by having them stand up on this debilitating day long before the apparition has ended.

Chapter 4

Government Authorities Step In

The Fourth Day, Saturday, June 27, 1981

June 27 was a most unusual and extremely busy day for the seers. In the morning, Father Jozo Zovko, the pastor of Saint James parish in Medugorje, who had returned from Zagreb, went to Mostar to visit his mother in the hospital there. He was with another Franciscan, Father Viktor Kosir. In front of the hospital they met Marinko Ivankovic's wife, Dragica. She had hurt her hand and her leg while working and had come for treatment. She told Father Jozo to go to Medugorje because the Blessed Virgin had appeared there. It was the first news of this that either priest had received.

When the two priests arrived in Medugorje, Father Zrinko told them that something was happening. He gave them tape recordings that he had made when the seers had come to the rectory to see the pastor and tell him what was happening to them. Since Father Jozo had been in Zagreb at the time, they had spoken to him and he had questioned them about the apparitions. They played the tapes but could not come to any conclusion from them. So, Father Jozo sent for the young people and they were questioned once again.

Father Jozo simply asked questions and made no comment to the children. He told them to pray. Father Viktor also interrogated them but was not able to come to any definite judgment on the matter.

News of what was happening on Mount Podbrdo had reached the local government authorities at nearby Citluk

who were responsible for Medugorje. They summoned the six seers on the afternoon of June 27. First, they were interrogated at the police headquarters. Nothing that took place there could induce them to deny that the Blessed Virgin had appeared to them.

Then, the seers were sent to a doctor, a general practitioner, Ante Vujevic. He spent more than an hour examining Ivan Dragicevic. Then, he started examining Vicka. As the time of the apparitions approached, the seers wanted to leave and the doctor let her go after a short examination. With the exception of Ivan, the seers took a taxi and went to Mount Podbrdo. Ivan went home a little later with one of his relatives.

The doctor found nothing wrong with the seers. Not wanting to become involved in an investigation which he knew would be unpopular with the people, he said it was not of his competence to pass a final judgment on the seers. He declared that his own private conviction would remain private.

What took place at Mount Podbrdo after the seers arrived is quite involved. The reason for this is that Marinko Ivankovic and Mate Pavlovic, another man from the neighborhood, wanted to submit the seers to a test concerning the apparitions.

The plan was to split the seers into two groups of three. One group was to be made up of Ivanka, Mirjana and Vicka and the other of Marija, Jakov and Ivan. Because Ivan did not come with the other seers, the second group had only Marija and Jakov in it.

Each group was to go to a different site where Our Lady had previously appeared. The group of Marija and Jakov was to go to the bottom of Mount Podbrdo and wait there for Our Lady to come. The other group was to go up on the mountain and wait there.

So Marija and Jakov went to the place where Our Lady had appeared at the bottom of Mount Podbrdo. With them as observers were Mate Pavlovic and Father Zrinko Cuvalo, the associate pastor of the parish. Marija and Jakov saw the light which preceded Our Lady and then Our Lady herself.

She invited them to come to her. Marija departed first on a dead run. Her speed was tremendous. Father Zrinko and Mate tried to follow her but were unable to stay up with her. Those who watched her were utterly amazed. Later Marija explained that all she saw was Our Lady in front of her, and she felt that she was leading and carrying her up the mountain side. She was not aware of the people who were swarming all over the area.

It took Jakov and Mate several minutes to reach Marija. They found her some twenty yards higher up than the place where Our Lady had appeared before. Marija was standing alone with her hands clasped. She was perplexed and said to Mate: "I don't know, Mate. Our Lady brought me here and then disappeared."

As the place was thick with people, it was impossible to see any distance. So, Mate went to the place where Our Lady had previously appeared on the mountain and where Ivanka, Mirjana and Vicka had been told to go. He told them what had happened to Marija. They came to her and started singing and praying. The people who were there joined them.

The seers had a strong feeling that Our Lady would appear again. And indeed she did. Suddenly, the five young people went to their knees. Our Lady had come. Her coming had been preceded by a light which the people had seen. They did not see Our Lady, but they felt sure she was there and they surged toward the seers.

As they closed in on the seers, something unusual happened. The latter clearly saw the people treading upon the veil which Our Lady wore and which went from her head to the ground. With tears in their eyes, they asked the people to move off of the place where she was standing. When their repeated pleas went unheeded, she disappeared.

Our Lady appeared a second time. Again, the pressing of the crowd resulted in a boy stepping on her veil. Again, she disappeared.

For a third time, Our Lady appeared. Then, Marinko and Mate organized a protective cordon around the seers and the place where Our Lady was standing and she remained.

A series of questions were put to Our Lady.

Vicka asked her to prove to the people who were present that she was indeed there. Her reply was that those who do not see should believe as though they were seeing.

Mirjana was very much concerned with what some people were saying about the seers and particularly about herself, namely, that they were drug addicts and epileptics. She unburdened herself to the Blessed Virgin who told her that there had always been injustice in the world, that there would always be some and that she should not pay any attention to what was being said.

Ivanka asked the heavenly Visitor who she was. She answered: "I am the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Although Marinko had befriended the seers, he was well aware that it was the priests in the parish and especially the pastor who were responsible for the apparitions. Earlier that day, he had asked Father Jozo, the pastor, if he had a message for Our Lady. He replied that he did not but that he would like to know if Our Lady had a message for the parish and for the Friars, as the priests are referred to in the area. Her reply was: "The Friars should believe firmly."

When Our Lady disappeared for the third time she did not say "Go in the peace of God," as she had done on the past two days. This surprised the seers and led them to believe that she might return again. So, they stayed where they were for a long time, praying and hoping she would return. The people stayed also. As Our Lady did not return, they finally left the mountain top and the people followed them. Marinko and several others held and supported the seers as they walked down the mountain side.

When they were about halfway to the village, the seers suddenly pulled away from those holding them, exclaiming as they did: "There she is!" Once again, Marinko and the others formed a protective cordon around them.

Our Lady greeted them in an exquisitely new tender way: "My angels, you are my dear angels." She told them she would return the next day at the same time and at the same place. Her last words were: "Go in the peace of God."

The reason that Ivan did not go to Mount Podbrdo with the other seers was because his parents had asked him not to go. They did this out of concern for him. The attention of the vast crowds of all kinds of people coming to Medugorje worried them. Also, Ivan had stomach cramps that day.

However, while Our Lady was appearing to the other seers, Ivan went a short way out of the village and Our Lady appeared to him. She greeted him, told him to be at peace and to take courage. And, as she left him she smiled.

The message of an apparition is not confined to its verbal content, to the words spoken by the heavenly messenger. Messages, sometimes important messages, can come through events, actions, the time and place where events occur and through still other ways. At times, the messages that come through such things are quite apparent. At other times, they are quite subtle.

A number of such messages come to us through the events of this fourth day. The most important of these messages is that of Mary's tender, motherly love. It is on this day when the seers went through the ordeal of their first encounter with the police that Our Lady chose to call them her dear angels for the first time.

Marinko was very much concerned with establishing whether the apparitions were authentic or not. So much was at stake in this. Father Zrinko shared this concern and for the same reasons. Several signs were given on this day that could help them in their discernment.

The first sign was the way in which Our Lady appeared on this fourth day. It was completely different from the manner in which the apparitions had occurred previously. It was so complicated and involved that it would seem to surpass the capacity of the young people involved to have thought it up by themselves. Marija breaks away from Jakov and races up the mountain alone. Our Lady appears to her alone at a different place than before and then mysteriously disappears. When Our Lady appears to all five seers together, the people see the light which immediately precedes her coming. During this apparition, she disappears twice when people step on her veil only to reappear after each withdrawal. On their way home,

she appears again. Finally, she appears to Ivan alone, for a total of six apparitions. Many people felt that the pattern of what happened proved the apparitions were not under the control of the seers. In this regard, the apparition to the five seers on their way home was particularly impressive. Together, they all pull away from the people who were supporting them and together they suddenly see Our Lady.

The most obvious sign given on this day was the speed with which Marija raced up the mountain side before the first apparition. This ecstatic flight was something that definitely surpassed the natural capacity of this young girl.

It can be said then that on this fourth day there was a heaven-given message concerning the authenticity of what the young people claimed was happening on the side of Mount Podbrdo.

A most unusual facet of this apparition was Our Lady's departure at two different moments when people stepped on her veil. A thing like this had never happened before in any other Marian apparition. It will be repeated again in subsequent apparitions.[1]

Chapter 5

Believing Without Seeing

The Fifth Day, Sunday, June 28, 1981

June 28 was a beautiful sunny day. It has been estimated that some fifteen thousand people swarmed into the Bijakovici section of Medugorje. They came from the entire area. Among them were Fathers Viktor Kosir and Zrinko Cuvalo.

Shortly after six, the seers left for Mount Podbrdo. Two of them, Marija and Jakov went with Fathers Viktor and Zrinko, who had accompanied them to Mount Podbrdo on the previous day.

Suddenly, Marija cried out: "Look, look, look!" Then according to Father Zrinko, she and Jakov "ran ahead at what seemed incredible speed." Since Marija wore a red skirt and white blouse, he could follow her easily, as she ran far ahead of him, "almost seeming to fly."[1]

It was exactly six-thirty when Our Lady came. The seers requested that the people kneel. They asked Our Lady a series of questions. Eventually some local person had the seers repeat the questions and answers and these were recorded on tape.

The seers - What do you want of us?

Our Lady - Faith and respect for me.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, what do you want of our priests?

Our Lady - That they believe firmly.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, why don't you appear in the church so that everybody can see you?

Our Lady - Blessed are they who have not seen and who believe.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, will you come again?

The seers - She will, she will come to the same place. She will come. (She acquiesced by nodding her head.)

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, do you prefer that we pray to you or sing to you?

Our Lady - Do both, sing and pray.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, what do you want of these people gathered here?

Our Lady looked at the people and smiled - That they believe without seeing.

The seers - She is disappearing. She is gone!

Vicka - Let us pray some more. She did not say anything to us. (What Vicka meant was that Our Lady had not pronounced the usual farewell: "Go in God's peace." So, the seers began to pray again. They recited two Our Fathers, two Hail Marys, two Glory Be's.)

The seers - There she is again! Let us sing a song! (And Marija started to sing: *"Marija, Marija, o kako lijepa si* - Mary, Mary how beautiful you are.")

Our Lady - My angels, my dear angels.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, what do you want of these people here?

Our Lady - That those here who do not see me, believe like the six of you who see me.

The seers - Dear Blessed Virgin, will you leave us some sign here on earth that will convince these people that we are not liars and that we are not playing games.

Our Lady - Go in the peace of God.

The seers - She went away! A light follows in her wake. She is gone! (And the seers began to sing well know Croatian hymns.[2])

As soon as the apparition was over, Father Zrinko Cuvalo questioned the seers, trying to determine if the apparitions were authentic or not. Nothing negative came out of his interrogation. Eventually, he became a firm believer in the apparitions.

On the third day Our Lady appeared, she was asked: "Why have you come here and what is it you want?" She had

replied: "I have come because there are many believers here. I want to be with you to convert and reconcile everyone." On the fourth day, when asked to prove she was appearing, Our Lady said that those who do not see should believe as though they were seeing. And when asked if she had a message for the parish and the Friars, she had replied that "they should believe firmly." Now on this fifth day, Our Lady re-emphasizes the message of faith, saying that this is what she wants of the priests, the seers themselves, and the people gathered on the mountain side, adding that the priests must believe "firmly" and that the people must believe "without seeing", "like the six of you who see me."

It is not surprising that Our Lady said the priests should believe "firmly", since it is their role to lead their flock in faith. But, looking back now at the major role the priests of Medugorje would be called upon to play with the seers and the people, it becomes clearer why she said this. The kind of deep involvement that has developed between the parish staff of priests and sisters and the seers and the people is something unique in the annals of Marian apparitions.

Chapter 6

More Questioning And Examining

The Sixth Day, Monday, June 29, 1981

Monday would be a long trying day for the seers. Once again, they were called in by the authorities in Citluk. From there they were sent to a hospital in Mostar for psychiatric testing. After a thorough examination, they were declared physically and mentally healthy by Dr. Mulija Dzudza. They returned home late that afternoon.

The seers went to the mountain side where they began praying and singing hymns at 6:19 p.m. The people assembled there, who were more numerous than ever, joined in with them. Father Viktor Kosir was present and stationed at about ten feet from the seers. Another Franciscan, Father Tomislav Vlasic was also there. This was his first visit to the place of the apparitions.

Our Lady came at precisely 6:26. Once again the seers engaged in conversation with her. When Our Lady was departing, the seers cried: "There, she has gone! Look! The light!"

Marinko had come with a stone on which a cross was painted. He asked the seers where Our Lady had stood and they guided him to the exact spot.

Grgo Kozina, one of the local people, taped the conversation between the seers and Our Lady as it was related to the people immediately after the apparition was over. Here are the more important items gleaned from this taped conversation.

Our Lady said it was "firm faith and confidence" that she desired from those who were there. Faith was the basic message of this day.

The seers were already beginning to feel the burden of persecution. They asked Our Lady if they would be able to endure it. To encourage and comfort them her reply was expressed in endearing terms: "You will endure it, my angels."

A lady, Doctor Glaumuzina, was sent by the authorities at Citluk to observe what was taking place at the site of the apparitions. The seers asked Our Lady if it was permissible for the Doctor to touch her. Our Lady's answer was: "There have always been unfaithful Judases. Let her come." The Doctor touched Our Lady and she disappeared. Then the people and the seers began to sing a hymn and Our Lady reappeared.

Following Our Lady's return, the seers pleaded for the healing of a boy named Daniel, who was paralyzed and could not talk. Here is the report of this pleading as recorded by Grgo Kozina.

> The seers - Dear Madonna, will this little boy, Daniel, ever be able to speak? Please make a miracle so that everyone will believe us. These people love you very much. Dear Madonna, make one miracle. She is looking at him. Dear Madonna, say something.
>
> Grgo Kozina - Is she still looking at the boy?
>
> The seers - She is looking at the boy, who is mute. Dear Madonna, say something, we ask you. Say something, we ask you. Say something, dear Madonna!
>
> Our Lady - Let them (Daniel's parents) believe firmly that he will be healed. Go in God's peace.[1]

It was after this that Our Lady took her final leave.

Daniel started to speak later that afternoon. His healing was a gradual process. Details about his case will be given in a later chapter.

Something further needs to be said about people touching Our Lady. It is one of the more intriguing facets of the Medugorje apparitions.

Among the questions which Father Ljudevit Rupcic asked the seers was one that had to do with touching Our Lady.

The question was: "Did you touch Our Lady?" Ivanka said: "Yes". Jakov and Ivan answered: "I touched her dress." Marija replied: "Yes, I touched her dress. Every time I touched it, it was with my whole palm. Many people touched it also."

Mirjana's answer speaks powerfully of the warm, motherly relationship that the Blessed Virgin had with the seers. She said: "I can touch her. In the beginning, I considered her as inaccessible. But, now, when she is with me, I look upon her as a mother, as my best friend who helps me."

Vicka gave an answer which is important from the point of view of the authenticity of the apparitions. She said: "Yes, I touched her dress. But it resists like metal."[2] An apparition is a mystical experience. What the seer sees appears similar to what the seer knows and has experienced on the human level. But the object, in this case the person seen, is not present to the seer in a human body, as one human being is to another. Likewise with the dress. It appears to be a dress made of material similar to dresses human beings wear, but it is not. Vicka's answer, which might appear disconcerting, is in reality completely in harmony with what would be expected from someone undergoing a true mystical experience.

Father Tomislav Vlasic was associate pastor in the town of Capljina when he came to Medugorje on June 29. Capljina is approximately 18 miles from Medugorje. He spoke with Mirjana after her return from Citluk and before her departure for Mount Podbrdo. What she told him gives us some idea of what the seers went through in Citluk. We quote from the conversation she had with him. He says that she was still "agitated" from the frightening experience of her interrogation. She had been taken to a "morgue" and had been with some "lunatics". When asked if she would go to the mountain side again, she said that she "doubted" if she would, adding that she "probably" would not "because if they take me two more times to the morgue, I will have a nervous breakdown."

Actually Mirjana did go to the place of the apparitions and Father Tomislav questioned her about this later, asking why she had come after what she had told him before the apparition. She replied that when the time had come to go to Mount

Podbrdo "no one would have been able to stop me. There was simply no question of 'shall I go or not go'."

There was a similar incident at Fatima in 1917. After the June 13 apparition, the pastor of the parish told Lucy that what was happening at the Cova da Iria might be a deception on the part of the devil. This was followed by a frightful dream involving the evil one. The result of all this was that Lucy resolved that she would not go to the Cova da Iria any more and told this to her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco. However, as the time for the next rendezvous approached on the morning of July 13, she "suddenly felt she had to go, impelled by a strange force that she could hardly resist."[3]

After the apparitions were over on this day, the seers were taken to the rectory for questioning.

Later that night, the seers went to Marinko's house. There they stood on the terrace and talked to the people about the apparition. They repeated all that the Blessed Virgin had told them. The people were hungry for her words and the seers were very happy. It was about eleven o'clock when the people finally departed.

Chapter 7

Apparition At Cerno

The Seventh Day, Tuesday, June 30, 1981

June 30 is important in the history of the apparitions at Medugorje for it saw these happenings move away for the first time from the immediate area of Mount Podbrdo.

At about two in the afternoon, two assistant social workers from Citluk came to Bijakovici to get the seers. They were Ljubica Vasilj and Mirjana Ivankovic. Apparently the government felt that it could put an end to the apparitions by keeping the young people away from the site where everything had happened up to that time. The women told the seers that they wanted to see if Our Lady would appear to them at some other site than Mount Podbrdo. They said that they wanted to take them in their car for that purpose.

Some of the seers were eating when the two women arrived. They hurried and five of them finally got into the car and drove off. Ivan was the missing member of the group.

The women had a simple plan. They would drive the seers around the area until the time for the apparitions at Mount Podbrdo had passed. So, the seers were taken to Citluk, Pocitelj, Capljina, the water falls of Kravica, and Cerno. They arrived at Cerno at the time the apparitions had been taking place at Mount Podbrdo. Thousands of people were waiting for them on the mountain side.

When they came to a certain place along the road at Cerno, the seers felt compelled to ask the women to stop the car. At first they refused, but finally they acceded to the request. The

place where they were at that time was but a few miles from Mount Podbrdo which they could see. They were out in the barren countryside and there were no houses in the immediate area. They got out of the car and the seers began their usual prayer. Then on Mount Podbrdo, they saw a light that was illuminating the place where the people were waiting and the light was moving toward them.

Ivanka asked the two women if they saw the light. They said they did. The seers knelt and sang hymns. And Our Lady appeared to them.

Mirjana apparently felt some uneasiness about having accepted the assistant social workers' plan of seeing if Our Lady would appear to them at some place other than Mount Podbrdo. For she asked her if she minded that they had not gone to the mountain side but had come to this other place. She replied that she did not mind.

No doubt because of the problems stemming from the place, the seers asked Our Lady if she would mind if they did not go to the mountain side any more but went to the church. With some hesitation she answered: "I will not, my angels."[1]

Then, she just looked at the seers for a long time.

The seers asked if she would leave them some sign. She did not answer, but began to depart slowly and said: "Go in the peace of God."

Again, the seers saw the light on Mount Podbrdo at the place where the people were.

When the young people arrived at Medugorje, it was some time between six and seven. They met immediately with Father Jozo who taped the conversation he had with them. As he had given them some questions he wanted them to ask Our Lady, he enquired if they had done this. Mirjana replied that in their haste to leave with the two assistant social workers they had forgotten to take the questions along.

After the report of what had happened that afternoon, a discussion began at the rectory concerning the advisability of the seers going to Mount Podbrdo where the people were still waiting and telling them what had happened at Cerno. Mirjana said she felt drawn to go and let the people know that Our Lady had appeared there and tell them what she had said.

However, after talking the matter over for some time, the seers decided not to go. One thing that the discussion brought out was the seers' apparent feeling that Our Lady would appear henceforth in the church if they went there. But no decision was taken to make that move at this time.

The seers' day ended on a sad note. When they arrived at Bijakovici at about ten o'clock, they were told that their good friend Marinko Ivankovic had been taken to the police station for questioning. Notwithstanding the late hour, the seers decided to go and assure the police that Marinko had not initiated the apparitions and that he was not guilty of anything. That night was a painful one for the seers and their families.

Chapter 8

Extraordinary Answer To The Pastor's Prayers

The Eighth Day, Tuesday, July 1, 1981

July 1 saw a number of important new developments take place in the Medugorje event. The first had to do with the pastor, Father Jozo. His was the main responsibility for what was happening and he did not take this responsibility lightly. Though he deliberately kept away from the site of the apparitions, he was in close contact with the seers. He spoke with them, questioned them and gave them advice. But, he could not bring himself to accept the apparitions as authentic, even though he prayed much about this.

On July 1, God answered his prayers in an unexpected way. The answer came in such an unexpected way that he still vividly remembers the details of how it happened.

The government was having no success in its efforts to bring the events of Medugorje to a halt. The two assistant social workers who had been sent on June 30 not only had been unsuccessful in their attempt to stop the apparitions, but they had been so affected by what had happened to them at Cerno that they handed in their resignation.

It was at this point that the police intervened directly. Toward noon, they came to Medugorje to try to stop the seers from going to the mountain side. When they learned of this, the seers fled Bijakovici and ran through the vineyards toward the church. The police pursued them.

In the meantime, Father Jozo was in the church praying. He was in the third pew on the left side. The breviary and the

Bible were in front of him. He was alone in the church. "Then," he told Father Svetozar Kraljevic, "something happened that for me was important and decisive...a turning point and a moment of revelation. While I was praying, I heard a voice say, 'Come out and protect the children'."

He got up immediately, leaving the breviary and the Bible where they were. He went out the center door of the church, which faces north. As he was about to step out, the seers ran toward him from the left side of the church and cried out: "The police are chasing us. Hide us!" They crowded around him and began to cry. With the seers, was Vicka's sister, Ana. He embraced the children and went to the rectory with them. There he placed them in a room that was not occupied and locked the door.

Soon, the police arrived on the run and asked Fr. Jozo if he had seen the children. He told them that he had and they raced off toward Bijakovici in pursuit of them. Then Fr. Jozo returned to the children and talked with them, telling them it would be safer for them to stay in the rectory. This they did. Our Lady appeared to them in that room. It was the first time that Our Lady appeared elsewhere than out in the open air. In the days ahead, there would be seven other apparitions in that same room, and a number of apparitions in other houses also.

During the course of the afternoon, word was sent to the people who were gathering on the mountain side that there would be a service in the church. At about five o'clock, Father Jozo asked Father Zrinko Cuvalo, the associate pastor, to lead the people in the rosary. It was the first time that the rosary was prayed with the people. At six o'clock, Father Jozo celebrated the Eucharist. The church was jammed right up to the altar with people. Speaking about this first Mass, Father Jozo said: "In the homily, I asked the people to pray and to fast, begging God to help us to understand the events in our parish. This mass of people responded to my request with a great exclamation, full of faith: 'We will'."[1]

Father Jozo was able to bring the questioning of the seers by the police to an end by having recourse to an existing law in virtue of which the police cannot question minors without the consent of the parents. When the parents advised the police

that they were opposed to the interrogations of their children, they stopped doing it.

In addition to the voice which Father Jozo heard in the church on July 1, something else that was very significant happened to him on a summer night in 1981. At 6:30 p.m., "during the daily ceremony", the seers had a silent apparition that Father Jozo was privileged to share in. "He, too, saw and was stupefied."[1] People noticed a change in him after this. It affected his preaching as well as other facets of his life.

This episode of the young people fleeing from the police and Father Jozo hearing the voice while praying in the church and going to their defense is extremely important in terms of the authenticity of the Medugorje event. If the young people had been inventing and simulating the apparitions, is it likely they would have continued their duplicity after this incident? To spare themselves any further repetition of such a thing, all they would have had to do is say that Our Lady was no longer appearing to them. To the contrary, within hours of their close escape from the police, they claimed that Our Lady had visited them again in the rectory.

Equally important is the part played in this incident by the voice Father Jozo heard and his response to that voice. This is all the more significant for it is well known that Father Jozo was extremely cool to what the young people were claiming before he heard that voice.

Chapter 9

Who Are These Young People?

It is interesting to note how God uses children as his heralds when he wants to communicate messages of great importance to his Church. At LaSalette in 1846 he spoke through two children, Melanie and Maximin. At Lourdes in 1858, there was but one child, Bernadette, whereas at Fatima in 1917, there were three, Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia. If we are to judge the importance of an apparition by the number of young people involved, we would have to rank Medugorje very high for there are six of them at this place.

There are a number of rather evident reasons why God chooses youngsters as his heralds. They are very open to his action in them. Their minds and hearts are not cluttered and blocked with the false notions and prejudices that people acquire as they progress in age. They are more likely to transmit the messages they receive without alterations than adults would. Finally, their limited knowledge and the limited development of their minds is a relative guarantee that they are not inventing everything. The younger the children the more the above reasons apply.

The number of young people that God uses also has much to do with the acceptance of the message by the people. The greater the number, the more difficult deception becomes. This is particularly true when the apparitions are very numerous as they are at Medugorje. When several children never disagree in what they relate day after day over a long period of time we can presume that they are telling the truth.

The range in ages of the six young people at Medugorje is noteworthy. When the apparitions began, one was only ten years old, another was fifteen, three were sixteen and one was seventeen. In view of what was said above, the presence of a ten year old is particularly important. It so happens that he is one of those who live in Medugorje itself and therefore is one of the trio who sees Our Lady each day in the village church. Because of the protection for truth that comes with numbers, one would have to say that this trio is especially important. The other two who live in Medugorje and are members of this little group were fifteen and sixteen when the apparitions started in 1981.

Who are these young people to whom Our Lady has appeared at Medugorje? They are all very normal, but different from each other and have quite distinctive personalities. With one exception, all of them are of very average intelligence. The exception is Mirjana. She is considerably above the others in mental capacity. Although two of the group are not living now in Bijakovici, all six of them were born there.

Marija Pavlovic is the third oldest member of the group. She was born on April 1, 1965. Her father, Philip, works in agriculture. Her mother's name is Iva. She has three brothers who work in West Germany. And she has two sisters. The older is married and the younger is in grammar school at Bijakovici. She has been studying in Mostar where she is completing her apprenticeship as a hairdresser. Mostar is only 18 miles away and Marija travels back and forth by bus and gets home in time for the daily evening apparition.

She is of average height and thin. Like all the other girls, she wears dresses-and never slacks or dungarees-when she comes for the apparitions. The dresses worn by the teenagers of the area are very much like those worn by American girls of their age.

Marija is the most serene and deeply spiritual of the seers. She is a retiring and unobtrusive type person. Those who know her describe her as "just beautiful" because of her deep spirituality, prayerfulness and humility. Several times, Our Lady has called her to pray more and she has responded with

a growing commitment to prayer. She is planning to become a nun.

Vicka Ivankovic, the oldest of the group, was born July 3, 1964. Her father, Peter, works in West Germany. Her mother's name is Zlata. Her grandmother, Vicka, is in her late eighties and in good health. There are eight children in the family. Her oldest sister, who has a degree in pharmacy, is now married, as is the next oldest sister. The latter graduated from a commercial high school. The younger children are still in grammar school. Vicka is learning the textile industry in a professional school at Mostar. The unmarried older children cultivate the family land on which grapes and tobacco are raised.

Vicka is of medium height and thin. She has strong features and her face is very expressive. She has dancing eyes and a delightful smile. She is the charmer of the group, although there is nothing artificial or put-on about her.

She is fascinating to watch during the apparitions. She simply radiates delight. Her rather large lips move rapidly. She frequently nods her head in approval. Her almost constant smile occasionally expands into what could be termed mild laughter. This is what I observed on the four days when I was in a position to watch her face during the apparitions. This seems to have been the experience of others also.

Though her health is not good, she is filled with energy and is strong-willed. She is not afraid to assume responsibility. This manifested itself in the fall of 1981, when Our Lady indicated that it would not be good for all the older seers to go away to school and leave little Jakov alone in Medugorje. Vicka immediately volunteered to stop going to school in Mostar, which she did. She now works in the tobacco fields but plans to enter the convent eventually. Her family, particularly her father, is devoutly religious.

Mirjana Dragicevic is the second oldest of the seers. She was born on March 18, 1965. Her father, Jozo, is an x-ray technician in a hospital and her mother, Milena, works in a shop. She has one brother, who is at school, and no sisters. Very intelligent, Mirjana is attending college at the University of Sarajevo, where the family now lives.

Mirjana's grandmother is still living and resides in

Bijakovici. Mirjana spends her summer vacations with her and that is how she happened to be in Medugorje when the apparitions began.

Of medium height, she has blond hair, a fact that distinguishes her from the other three girls.

Ivan Dragicevic, the older of the two boys who see Our Lady, was born on May 25, 1965. He, his father, Stanko, and his mother, Zlata, cultivate the family holdings. There are three other younger children in the family. Although Ivan and Mirjana have the same family name, they are not related.

The tallest of the group, he is also the most timid and retiring. His thick dark hair covers half of his ears and forehead. A nice looking lad, he never seems to smile and usually has a serious, pensive look on his face. His simple, dark clothes reflect his rather somber personality.

Ivan entered the minor seminary in Dubrovnik at the end of August, 1981, but had to leave because he was not adequately prepared for the studies there by his previous education in Medugorje. However, Ivan has not abandoned the hope of becoming a priest. He wants to become a Franciscan and is presently studying on his own through a correspondence course. His family is very religious.

Ivanka Ivankovic, the youngest of the four girls, was born on April 21, 1966. Her father, Ivan, works in West Germany. Her mother, Jagoda, died in May, 1981, Though born in Bijakovici, Ivanka and her family now live in Mostar. She has one brother and one sister. All three of them attend high school in Mostar. Her grandmother, Iva, who is quite old, takes care of the house since the death of the mother. Ivanka helps her considerably.

The prettiest of the girls, Ivanka appears to be somewhat more typical of today's teenager than the other three girls, but she also seems to be well balanced and firmly religious. She is the only seer who is clearly considering marriage.

Although the family lives in Mostar, it has kept the old homestead in Bijakovici where it spends its vacations and cultivates the land. During the school year, Ivanka comes there on Saturdays and Sundays.

Jakov Colo, the youngest of the seers, was born on June 3, 1971. His father, Ante, works in Sarajevo. Jaca, his mother,

died on September 5, 1983. Her death affected Jakov all the more deeply since his father rarely comes home. Jakov now lives with his uncle, Philip Pavlovic, and his family.

Short for his age, Jakov makes up in energy what he is lacking in height. The youngster is like a jack-in-the-box. It is very hard for him to stay put in any one place for any length of time.

The presence of this young, fidgety lad among the group of seers is of special value in terms of the authenticity of the apparitions. It is highly improbable that he would come to church for two and three hours of prayer every single day, in winter as in summer, in bad weather as in good weather, and this for well over three years, simply to make believe that he is seeing the Blessed Virgin.

Jakov is quick witted, as the following incident illustrates. The Bishop of Mostar, who has personally interviewed all of the seers, questioned Jakov about the secrets Our Lady has confided to them. The youngster replied that he was not permitted by the Blessed Virgin to talk about them. Then, the Bishop said: "Well, you could write the secrets on a piece of paper, put them in an envelope and leave the envelope here." Jakov replied: "Yes, but I could also write the secrets down, put them in an envelope and leave the envelope at home."

Although there is a considerable gap in age and in character development between Jakov and the other five young people, the latter all accept him fully and relate to him very easily.

All of the seers get along together very nicely, notwithstanding their distinctive personalities. They manifest great respect for each other and there is no rivalry or visible jealousy among them. Even though Vicka is the most active, neither she nor any other member of the group can be called its real leader.

The seers are typical of the area of the world from which they come and indeed of the times in which they live. The clothes they wear are quite like those of our own country. During the day, the girls can be seen in jeans and a sweater or a flannel skirt and a sweater, and the boys wearing jeans, a sweatshirt and sneakers. Vicka had lunch one day with our

group. She wore a red sweatshirt with New York in large black letters across the front.

The seers do not isolate themselves from others of their age. The girls sing in a choir at Sunday Mass and Jakov is an altar boy.

Father Tomislav Vlasic has affirmed that the seers are "ready to die for Mary and the apparition."

Chapter 10

The Important Role Of The Parish Staff

Each authentic Marian apparition is a unique event with characteristics of its own. One of the unique features of the Medugorje event is the very close association of the parish pastoral staff of priests and sisters with the visionaries. These Franciscan religious are like secondary supporting personages. It would seem that God was telling us that this is the way it was going to be by the way it all started in Rome as Father Tomislav Vlasic was being prayed over for the healing of the Church.

This close association between the official spiritual leaders of the parish and the young people to whom Our Lady has appeared has taken place in a variety of ways as will be seen as our story proceeds. An indirect but very powerful and effective way is the fashion in which they have been called to participate in the message of penance and reparation which our heavenly mother has given us at Medugorje.

All of the Franciscan priests and sisters who have been assigned to Saint James parish in Medugorje have suffered to some degree. Three categories of demands have been made upon them, those of the parishioners, the seers, and the pilgrims who have been coming to Medugorje in ever growing numbers. The demands of the seers and of the pilgrims have been heavier on certain members of the parish staff than on others.

The one who suffered most is the man who was pastor when the apparitions began, Father Jozo Zovko. He was in

the most difficult situation as the person mainly responsible for the spiritual welfare of the parish. Part of his problem was that he had only come to Medugorje on November 11, 1980, and did not really know the parishioners nor the seers when the apparitions began.

In the first days, he deliberately avoided going to the site of the apparitions and adopted a stand-offish attitude that confused many. However, his refusal to become openly associated with the seers did not mean that he was not concerned with what was happening. Not only did he interview the seers in the very early days of the event, but he spent much time in prayer, seeking discernment. As was seen, it was in response to this fervent prayer that heaven intervened to guide him.

In the middle of August, Father Jozo told Father Zrinko Cuvalo, the associate pastor: "Be prepared to take over my job." The reason for this mysterious statement was soon discovered.

On August 17, the police came. They arrested Father Jozo and raided the rectory. The sisters were locked up in one room for the entire day without food and the whole house was ransacked. All the money, records and documents were confiscated. Among the things taken were the reports of the early apparitions. This explains why there is not full agreement among the members of the parish staff about the events of the first days.

Father Jozo was tried on October 21 and 22 and condemned for fostering sedition. He was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. Signs were seen by many people on Mount Krizevac on both days of his trial. The cross became a column of light and assumed the form of a T. Then it changed into a luminous lady who could only be seen indistinctly. This lasted half-an-hour. It was later seen again a number of times when it was less intense and of shorter duration.

Strong pressure was brought to bear on the government and Father Jozo's sentence was shortened. He returned to Medugorje on February 17, 1983. He had been in jail eighteen months.

Father Jozo did not remain in the parish very long after his return from prison. Spiritually he benefited by his painful experience. "Every good priest," he said, "should see the inside of a jail and suffer for the faith. I discovered in prison what the Catholic faith is and the strength and dignity of a life being offered."

Father Zrinko Cuvalo was associate pastor when Father Jozo arrived in Medugorje. He had preceded him in the parish by only a couple of months. When Father Jozo was imprisoned, Father Zrinko took charge of the parish but was not immediately named pastor. Father Jozo continued to be considered pastor for a while, but eventually Father Zrinko was named to that position which he fulfilled until August 28, 1982. Initially, he does not seem to have believed in the apparitions. At least his remarks in the early days were far from manifesting any such belief. The priests of Saint James parish can certainly not be accused of having instigated the apparitions. This is so true that Ivanka said to Father Jozo in the very early days of the apparitions: "The only ones who do not believe us are the priests and the police!"

Father Tomislav Pervan, a scripture scholar, took over as pastor when Father Zrinko left the parish.

Father Tomislav Vlasic, who was present at the June 29 apparition, was transferred from Saint Francis of Assisi parish in Capljina[1] to Saint James of Medugorje on August 18, 1981. For three years he fulfilled a major role as spiritual director of the seers and their unofficial mouthpiece and by his deep involvement in the evening services of the parish. He was transferred to nearby Vitina in the latter part of 1984.

A third priest, Father Slavko Barbaric, has also been serving in the parish for some time.

The parish staff is rounded out by three Franciscan sisters. When their convent was completely gutted, they were not granted permission to restore it and they now live crowded into a small room attached to the modest rectory. In order to accommodate visitors, the sisters have to give up their beds and use sleeping bags given to them by pilgrims.

One of the sisters, Janja Boras, who arrived in the parish in 1982 has become very close to the girl members of the

group of six seers.

There is a marvelous spirit that reigns between the priests and sisters of the pastoral staff and between that staff and the parishioners and visitors. The demands of visitors on the busy parish staff are very great. This is particularly true during the summer vacation months and on weekends when the number of visitors goes up into the thousands. For a considerable time, the evening service in the church always ended with individual praying for healing. But this became a crushing burden, going on at times until midnight, and so the individual praying for healing has been greatly reduced and is no longer a nightly affair.

There can be no doubt that much of the conversion and spiritual renewal of the Medugorje parish and region is due to the prudence and zeal of the parish priests and also to the strong support given them by the sisters who work with them. They have successfully tied in the messages of the apparitions with the traditional liturgical and sacramental life of the church.

The key factors in this marriage of the messages and the liturgy and sacraments are the daily six o'clock Mass instituted by Father Jozo Zovko, and the monthly triduum that culminates in the feast of reconciliation.

The triduum of reconciliation was an ingenious way of implementing Our Lady's request for conversion and monthly confession. It will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

Although much sacrifice is asked of the members of the parish staff, the rewards have not been lacking, as witnessed by this statement made by Father Tomislav Vlasic.

> It is very interesting to be living all of this, to literally be living by faith. I would need a month just to write down all that is happening personally inside me. Even my recitation of the psalms *(which constitute the major part of the daily breviary prayers said by the priests)* has changed, psalms I never even understood before. This personal change is something very important to me.[1]

Chapter 11

Diversity In The Apparitions

All of the apparitions of the first six days had taken place at or in the vicinity of Mount Podbrdo. When on the seventh day Our Lady appeared at Cerno, this marked the beginning of a new phase in the Medugorje event, the appearance of Our Lady at a number of new sites.

Although the apparitions continued on a daily basis, there is no information available concerning the precise sites of many of the appearances after the eighth day when Our Lady visited the seers in the rectory. The principal reason for this is the loss of the records which were confiscated when the police raided the rectory.

It seems that the seven other apparitions that took place in the room of the rectory where Our Lady came on July 1 occurred on the following seven days, from July 2 through July 8. Sometime prior to August 12, 1981, when the apparitions completely ceased taking place on Mount Podbrdo, Our Lady stopped appearing to the six seers for a period of five days. At the next apparition, they asked her why she had done this. She replied it had been to test them and see if they would continue to come to pray even if she did not come.

In addition to the government's attempt to stop the apparitions through the children, various measures had been taken to try and stop the people from reaching the site of the apparitions. The government viewed the ever growing number of those coming to Medugorje with considerable apprehension. It was feared that this might end in an uprising

of the Croatian people against the government, because a desire for independence was known to exist among them.

As all the various attempts of the government to stop the apparitions had failed, a more drastic measure was taken. On August 12, the police issued an order forbidding anyone to go to the place of the apparitions on Mount Podbrdo. A law was invoked which stated that the church is the only legal place where religious services are permitted.

Because of this, Our Lady began appearing at various sites in the area of Bijakovici. She appeared in the fields, in the woods, in the homes of the seers and in most of the other homes, especially in one of them that had a large room. Secrecy was maintained when the apparitions were in the homes, because of the danger of police reprisals. The apparitions in the fields and the woods occurred while the weather was still good.

Our Lady generally came when the seers were praying together. In the course of these apparitions, she talked with them and gave them messages. She also prayed and sang with them. All during the period when Our Lady was appearing in these various locations, the evening rosary and Mass were maintained in the parish church and the people came to them.

The last major change in the site of the apparitions came on January 12, 1982, when Our Lady began appearing in a little room off the sanctuary in the parish church of Saint James. With this change, the apparitions would finally have "found their home", as it were.

We saw that Ivan did not go to Mount Podbrdo with the other seers on June 27 because his mother asked him not to go. But, Our Lady appeared to him alone, as she visited the other seers on the mountainside. This is a pattern she will follow in the future. When one of the seers has a legitimate reason for not being with the others in the church at the usual time of the apparitions, she will appear to that person wherever he or she is, as long as he or she is in prayer at that time. Three times when Vicka went to Zagreb, Our Lady came to her there while she was appearing to the other seers in Medugorje.

At the end of August, 1981, when Ivan went away to the minor seminary in Dubrovnic, Our Lady told him she would not appear to him until he got acquainted with his new way of life to which he found it difficult to adapt. And so Ivan did not see her for seven days. But she also said that after the adjustment period she would appear to him at two o'clock because he could not be in prayer at the time of the apparitions in Saint James church. Truly an accommodating mother!

Since Our Lady began appearing in the church, almost all the apparitions have taken place in the late afternoon or early evening, from approximately 5:15 to 6:30, depending on the season of the year.

Some apparitions have taken place at other times. How many is not known. Marinko Ivankovic speaks of one of these that took place "about twenty days" after the start of the Medugorje event. This would place it at about the middle of July, 1981, while the regular site of the apparitions was still the mountain side. We relate the event as it was told to Father Svetozar Kraljevic by Marinko who was present at it.

One evening, Our Lady told the seers to come to the place of the apparitions on Mount Podbrdo at about eleven o'clock. They invited Marinko and some thirty to forty other "believers" from the village. When they had gathered there, they began praying. At a certain moment, Marinko looked up and saw what appeared to be the sky opening up some nine to twelve feet and a great, intense light coming toward him and the other people present. Everyone exclaimed together: "Look! The light!"

The spot where Our Lady had appeared was marked by a hole and an old wooden cross. The hole had resulted from the people removing dirt. Marinko and the others were standing in a circle around the hole. Then something unusual happened that Marinko said he could not explain, nor could the others he talked to about it.

It seemed to him that a globe of light came out of the cross and burst in their midst into thousands of bright stars. Some of the children became panicky and started to scream.

Immediately Marija cried out: "Calm down, Our Lady is with us." Everyone knelt and for forty minutes prayed and cried together. Marinko describes the prayer as one that a person "could rarely experience" and where we felt that "Jesus and Our Lady were with us."

At the end of the forty minutes, everyone stood up with the seers who said: "Our Lady is looking at all of you and telling you that those who would like to touch her may do so." Everyone ran to the place where Our Lady was and the seers began leading people to Our Lady so they could touch her. But, her veil was stepped upon and the seers cried out: "She has left." Those who had touched her said that they felt like a numbing of their hands.

In the meantime, people from the nearby neighborhood called Cilici saw the place where Our Lady was appearing circled with light. They came there and arrived when the people were touching Our Lady. When she left, everyone departed.

There are some interesting features about this apparition. First, there is the unusual hour at which it occurred. Then, there is the fact that the seers were told in advance of the apparition by Our Lady. This has happened quite frequently at Medugorje.

However, the most significant facets of this appearance have to do with the tender, motherly love manifested by Our Lady when she invited the people to touch her, and her sudden departure when someone trod upon her veil.

Concerning signs, there is the light coming out of the opening in the sky and the globe of light that came out of the cross and exploded into a myriad of bright stars. In addition to these signs seen at the site of the apparition on Mount Podbrdo, there is the light that was seen by the people from Cilici.

Such light was something that the seers saw every time Our Lady appeared. It was seen by the two assistant social workers on June 30 at Cerno. They saw the light in the distance that was illuminating Mount Podbrdo and which moved toward them and the seers. Light in the sky was seen by others many times and in many different ways at

Medugorje, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

The departure of Our Lady when someone walked on her veil recalls what happened on June 27 when Our Lady departed twice because her veil had been stepped upon two different times during the apparition. These are the only two apparitions that I know about when this is reported to have happened. And I have never heard of it having happened at any other Marian apparition. This is a good sign. LaSalette, Lourdes and Fatima, to mention but these three well-known apparitions, each possesses traits that are particular to it. Medugorje has a number of traits that distinguish it from these other three events.

The statement by the seers that Our Lady was looking at "all" of the spectators and saying that those who would like to could touch her, speaks powerfully of Mary's motherly love, the love of a true mother who excludes none of her children.

Another apparition that manifests Mary's motherly love for her children of the earth is one that Marinko told to Father Svetozar in the same conversation in which he related the preceding apparition. It occurred in the Fall of 1981 when Marinko was making brandy from the local grape harvest, as many of the local people do. He pinpoints it by saying that it took place "exactly two days before Father Jozo's trial."

One interesting feature of this vision is that it took place at Vicka's house, in her room. Jakov and Vicka were to have an apparition there and they invited Marinko. He went with his son, Davor, and another child, Matan Sego. When they arrived, they found children there, singing religious hymns in front of the house.

Jakov and Vicka entered the house alone. Suddenly Jakov called out: "Marinko, Our Lady is here." He ran up the steps to the little landing in front of the door and knelt there, without going in. His son and Matan knelt behind him. He raised his hand and exclaimed: "Dear Blessed Virgin, prove now or never to the unbelievers that our Jozo is not guilty." Then the seers said: "Marinko, the Blessed Virgin is smiling at you. She is coming to you." Apparently following Our Lady as she went

toward Marinko, the seers turned to him and continued: "There she is. She is kissing you, embracing you and blessing you." Marinko was excited and "felt as though his heart was going to burst and come out of him." The seers went on: "Marinko, Our Lady is telling you: 'Marinko, do not give up your faith. Keep your faith'." His reply was: "I am not afraid to give my life for Jesus, but let him show me the path I should follow."

Then, Jakov and Vicka returned to where Our Lady had been at the start of the apparition. Once again the seers spoke out. Repeating Our Lady's words, they said: "Look at those children who are glorifying me." She was alluding to the children who were with Marinko in front of the house, singing religious hymns. The seers continued: "Our Lady is asking that all those children be brought here that she might bless them." The children came to the door, as did Marinko's mother and sister-in-law. Again, apparently following Our Lady, Jakov and Vicka turned and said: "Our Lady is above you. She is blessing all of you." With this the apparition ended.

No comment needs to be made on the manifestation of Mary's tender, motherly love that comes to us through this apparition. It is a case where actions speak louder than words.

We are indebted to Marinko for the account of another very interesting apparition. It has several features that make it worth relating. One of these is the fact that it took place in an open field. It is the only detailed account presently available of such an apparition.

Marinko tells us that the field or lawn in question is located between Bijakovici and Cilici. People from the neighborhood of Bijakovici and Cilici began meeting there to sing and pray. As this became known, other people joined them. On the evening of the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, people were gathered at this field. At about ten o'clock, after the Mass and prayers over the sick at the church, the seers joined the people who were at this field. As they were all praying the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's and the Creed, Our Lady appeared.

At one point, the seers said: "Our Lady allows those who so

desire to come and touch her." As the people responded to the invitation and came forward one by one, the seers indicated to them, "You are touching her veil...her head...her dress." This went on for about ten to fifteen minutes. When Our Lady departed, Marija cried out: "Oh, Marinko! Our Lady left us completely blackened." When Marinko asked Marija why that happened, she told him: "There were sinners here who were touching her and as they did her dress got dark and black." Then, Marija asked all those present to go to confession as soon as possible.

After the apparition was over, Marinko stayed on for a while, talking with Marija. He learned about another apparition that had taken place shortly before the preceding one and that almost seems as a preparation for it.

Marija told Marinko that after the church service that evening, she had gone home to change before coming to the field. While alone in her room, Our Lady appeared to her and said: "The devil is trying to infiltrate himself here in order to get something. My Son wants to win over all the souls, but the devil is exerting himself to get something. He is making every effort and wants at any price to infiltrate among you." Marija added that Our Lady told her something else which Marinko reports in this fashion: "I don't know if Marija understood Our Lady correctly or not. Supposedly, she said that she does not know how it will turn out, if the devil will succeed or not, or how much he will succeed."[1] (Father Svetozar adds the editorial comment that this has to do with "the events at Medugorje".)

The episode of touching Our Lady that occurred in the field contains some powerful teaching. First, the invitation by Our Lady to all who so desired to touch her speaks eloquently of her love for her children on earth. That love was represented as extending to all her children without exception and as desiring to establish a close and intimate relationship with them. This last aspect of the teaching is so important and so needed. We tend to be excessively formal and distant in our relationship with our heavenly mother. We must learn to be more simple and childlike in our dealings with her.

This same episode ended with another powerful teaching.

one on the evil of sin. There were several related parts to this teaching. These were the blackening of Our Lady's dress and her departure because of being touched by sinners, and Marija's request that everyone go to confession as soon as possible. In Marinko's account of this event, he does not say whether this request was made by Our Lady and simply transmitted to the people by Marija, or whether Marija made it on her own. It does not seem likely that Marija would make a request of this kind on her own. In any event, it flows logically from the blackening of Our Lady's dress and her departure because of having been touched by sinners. Also, it ties in perfectly with the verbal message given a number of times by Our Lady at Medugorje, namely, repentance and reconciliation with God through confession. It was a concrete way of expressing this message, one that could be readily understood by everyone.

The message concerning the devil received by Marija in her room would seem to be advance warning to prepare her for the trials and tribulations that always accompany such events as were being experienced at Medugorje. For the evil one always attacks and tries to destroy anything that has great potential for good. And the greater the potential for good it has, the more powerfully he opposes it. Rarely does he begin by an open, frontal attack. He is the great deceiver and usually starts by working under cover by infiltration, often using good and well intentioned people.

The Church's traditional teaching on the devil and hell has been challenged and even repudiated by some Catholics. It is interesting to note that Our Lady began to speak of these things early at Medugorje. She will mention the devil a number of times in her messages and will even give the seers a vision of hell.

The latest hour at which an apparition occurred - according to available information - is two in the morning. This took place on August 7, 1981. Our Lady called the seers to Mount Podbrdo and asked them to pray there that people would do penance for sinners. And she promised them that she would give a special sign so that the world would believe. She gave additional information about the sign in September of that

same year. First, apparently on September 4, she said that the sign would be given at the end of the apparitions. Then, at the end of September, she told all the seers with the exception of Marija, the precise time of the sign and she held them to secrecy about this.

The very hour, two in the morning, contained a message about penance. It was a concrete way of teaching the seers what she meant by penance for sinners. Our Lady would not be afraid to ask these young people to be generous in their practice of penance. And generous they will be. Their generosity has been an example not only for the people of the area but also for the parish staff of priests and sisters as they themselves have admitted.

There has been considerable diversity in the duration of the apparitions. This is particularly true of the early apparitions before they began occurring in the church. Father Rupcic asked the seers about the duration of the apparitions. The following times were given by one or more of the seers: 5, 6, 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes.[2] Most of the apparitions that have taken place in the church have lasted but a very short while, from three to five minutes. There are definitely some apparitions that have lasted longer than this. In the middle of July, 1983, one apparition lasted 30 minutes and the next day another lasted 42 or 43 minutes. This was reported by Americans who were there at the time. The five days I was there in the middle of October of that same year, the apparitions all lasted only some three or four minutes. In the summer of 1984, many, if not most, of the apparitions, were lasting one minute and even less.

One of the most notable changes in the apparitions began in the summer of 1984. This will be taken up in a later chapter.

Diversity in the apparitions also manifested itself at Medugorje in that Our Lady was not the only one who appeared to the seers. They saw the Sorrowful Christ. He was crowned with thorns and covered with blood. Our Lady said: "This is my Son. See how he suffered for mankind."[3]

This vision is very important in view of the stress on penance and reparation in the Medugorje message. It complements the vision of hell and purgatory that some of the seers had and

serves the same purpose of inspiring them to detest sin and to be generous in making atonement for it.

In regard to Jesus, Our Lady appears with the Infant Jesus in her arms on certain feast days such as Christmas. He does not talk to them on these occasions.

In his interrogation of the seers, Father Rupcic asked them what else they had seen in addition to Jesus and Mary. Here are the answers he received.

Marija - We saw heaven, hell and purgatory. Our Lady showed us that also. She showed it once at Vicka's house and once at my house and a third time, but I don't remember where. I saw people in heaven who were so happy. The beauty of heaven is indescribable. It is positively visible that God's love is present there. Hell is a place of pain and suffering. It is horrible.

Jakov - I saw angels in Vicka's house.

Vicka - When Father Jozo was in prison. Our Lady showed him to us once. It was like in a film. We saw heaven and hell. There is a large space. Here and there are many people. When you enter, on the left, there is a man. I didn't ask who he is or what he does. He opens the door...There are groups of people...smiling, talking. Angels circle above them. And hell. There is a great fire that has no embers but only flames. There are people, who go along, one by one, crying. This one has horns, that one tails and another has four feet. God help us!

Ivanka-*(The 1983 Croatian edition of Father Rupcic's book has a blank here. However, in the French version of his book, Ivanka is quoted as having given the answer that follows.)* I also saw two angels, my mother, hell and heaven.[4]

Mirjana - Yes, I saw the devil. I was waiting for Our Lady and just as I was about to make the sign of the cross, he appeared instead of her. I was frightened. He promised me the nicest things. I said: "No!" Then all at once, he disappeared and Our Lady came. She told me that he always tries to turn the true believer from the right path.

Our Lady showed me heaven. It is a wonderful place, where there is happiness and contentment. Happiness. Happiness and contentment can be seen on all faces. The trees are completely different than they are here. The sun is also much stronger.

Ivan - Jesus.[5]

It is interesting to note how heaven, hell and those in hell were represented to the seers in ways that corresponded to the traditional images of them with which Catholics are familiar.

One of the seers mentioned purgatory in her reply to Father Rupcic. But she replied in the plural: "We saw heaven, hell and purgatory." The fact is that all six of them have seen heaven, five have seen purgatory and four have seen hell. The two who have not been shown hell indicated that, when they were offered the opportunity to see it, they declined because they were too fearful of such an experience.

A most unusual incident occurred concerning these visions. One day, Vicka and Jakov, who are close friends, disappeared from the face of the earth. They were gone for twenty minutes. This happened at Jakov's house. His mother had seen him in the house just prior to his disappearing. Distraught, she called him, thinking he had left the house to go into the village. As this brought no response, she went in and out of the house, fearful that something had happened to him. But, there was no sign of either of the two anywhere. When they finally returned, they said they had seen heaven and hell and had passed through purgatory. They affirmed that when Our Lady took them through purgatory she stated: "These people are waiting for your prayers and sacrifices." It is not difficult to imagine how quickly news of this event must have spread throughout the region and beyond.

A unique feature of the Medugorje apparitions is the way the seers have been asked to prepare for certain special feasts, such as the Immaculate Conception, with days of prayer and fasting.

The diversity in the apparitions in Medugorje manifests itself in still another way that is unique and has to do with Our Lady's outward appearance. Usually, she comes wearing a bright, lucid grey dress that the seers find hard to describe. She has a brilliant white veil and on her head is a glowing crown of stars. Generally, she appears smiling and holds her hands out from her side and lifted upward.

However, on important feast days of the Church, Our Lady smiles more joyfully and her dress appears different, "golden," "brilliant". This has happened on the Feast of the Assump-

tion, which absolutely stands out in the minds of the seers, the Nativity or Birthday of Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception, Christmas, Easter,[6] and a few others, such as June 25, the anniversary of the day on which Mary first spoke with the seers and the day she told them she wants the Church to designate as the Feast of Our Lady, Queen of Peace.

Our Lady told the seers that she would impart ten secrets to all of them. They have been received on an individual basis. The first to receive ten is Mirjana. She received the tenth secret on December 25, 1982. On that day, Our Lady told Mirjana that she would not appear to her any more on a regular basis, but only on her birthday (March 18) and when she was experiencing some special difficulty in her life. She told her she would have to live by faith henceforth, as other people do.

The other seers have all received nine secrets, except Vicka who has received only eight.

The early months of the apparitions were characterized by considerable diversity. This diversity manifested itself not only in the apparitions themselves, but also in the signs that were immediately associated with them, as has been seen. In addition to those signs, there were others linked less closely in time with the apparitions. These will be examined in our next chapter.

In regard to the diversity in the apparitions, it should be noted that this is a reassuring factor in terms of the authenticity of these happenings. It is indeed highly improbable that six young people varying in age from ten to seventeen would have invented and agreed upon the strange and complicated scenario that has unfolded itself since June 24, 1981. This is particularly true of the first eight days. It is much more likely that they would have come up with a simple plan in keeping with what occurred at Lourdes, LaSalette or Fatima.

Chapter 12

From The Fields And Homes Into The Church

It was on June 30, 1981, that the seers asked Our Lady if she would mind appearing in the church and received the answer that she wouldn't mind. But, it was only very early in 1982 that the apparitions moved from the fields, the woods and the homes into the church and made that their permanent locale. This was a tremendously important move, the full consequences of which it is impossible to weigh. Much of what has happened at Medugorje must be attributed to this. It brought about a fusion of the apparitions and their message and the sacramental life of the Church. The result has been a marvel - a special transformation of a people and of an area never before witnessed in the annals of Marian apparitions, even at such places as Lourdes and Fatima. Some of this started as soon as Father Jozo introduced the evening rosary and Mass on the first of July. But, it was intensified when the apparitions began taking place regularly in the church.

When the apparitions moved into the church a program was worked out which integrated the apparitions with the evening service that had been going on since July 1, 1981. It was possible to do this since the apparitions took place at approximately the same time each evening. The program includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the rosary, the apparitions, the Eucharist, and a healing service or some other religious activity. In the summer the program starts an hour later than it does in the winter. The program has included

those elements in the above order for some time now. However, what takes place after the Eucharist has undergone some changes.

Here is what can be called a typical evening in the church. The rosary starts the program, let us say, at five-thirty. People start arriving at the church considerably in advance of that time. On some days, the church will be filled by five o'clock. As the crowd assembles, priests come into the church and begin hearing confessions in various parts of the edifice. If there is an overflow crowd outside, priests will hear confessions there. The Franciscans have a number of parishes in the region and a large monastery in the nearby village of Humac. Priests from these parishes and particularly from the Humac monastery help with these confessions. There are always several priests hearing confessions. Their number will vary according to the crowd that is anticipated. On Sundays, there is a first morning Mass for children. Then there is a late morning Mass at eleven and an early evening one at six-fifteen. On an average Sunday, some twenty priests will hear confessions from about four-thirty to approximately eight or eight-thirty. Occasionally on a Sunday or major feast day, there will be as many as thirty or more priests available for confessions.

On November 27 and 28, 1982, Bobbie Cavnar of Dallas, Texas, a leader in the Catholic charismatic renewal, visited Medugorje and in the December report he wrote after his return to the United States, he imparts interesting information about the large crowds of people he saw walking long distances to the church and about the impressive sight of people going to confession in the open air.

When he and his group arrived by automobile at Medugorje on Saturday, November 27, the evening Mass was over. It was dark and they were still over two miles from the church. "The road," he says, "was absolutely jammed with people walking home. Many of them walk as much as twenty miles once or twice a week to attend the rosary and Mass."

Sunday, they were in the village for both the late morning and the evening Mass. "Parishioners," he states, began to

arrive for the 11 a.m. Mass about 10 a.m. By 10:30, the church was almost full with 25 or 30 people standing.... Many priests from the surrounding area arrived during the afternoon and were hearing confessions everywhere. It seemed like there were priests under every tree with a line of people waiting to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I have never seen anything like that before anywhere in the world."

When the rosary starts at five-thirty, the church is frequently filled to overflowing. Often, every square inch of the large edifice is occupied, with the aisles completely blocked, the choir loft filled and even the sanctuary invaded. That is the way it was on an ordinary weekday in March, 1983, when a priest friend of mine visited Medugorje. And that is the way it was on Saturday, October 15, 1983, when I was there. There were bus loads of people from Austria and Italy on that day.

For a long time, those seers who were in the village led the five-thirty recitation of the rosary which includes the Fatima invocation between the decades. They knelt on the floor in the sanctuary behind the altar and facing the people, as the priest does when celebrating the Eucharist.

If a priest was available, he would announce the mysteries and give a meditation on them. Also, when the rosary was over and the seers departed for the room of the apparitions, he would lead the people in the recitation of the litany of the saints.

The seers were no longer leading the rosary in October of 1983.

It is after the rosary that Our Lady appears. Those of the seers who are in Medugorje on a given day enter a small room in the front of the church to the right of the main altar. This room, which had been used as a storage area, is directly opposite the sacristy on the other side of the sanctuary. The room is open in the morning and early afternoon for those who want to pray there. If many people are expected, the door may be locked in the course of the afternoon to avoid overcrowding since the room is small, about fifteen by fifteen feet. The appointments are very simple. Along the wall im-

mediately to the left of the doorway, is a plain wooden table. It is covered by an altar cloth for the celebration of the Eucharist. I was privileged to concelebrate Mass there with two other American priests. Its principal purpose is to hold the various objects that people place there before the apparition begins. On one of the five days I was in the room, the table was completely covered with objects before the apparition started. People place on it rosaries and other religious articles, bottles filled with water frequently taken from the well near the rectory, and slips of paper asking for favors and blessings.

In the corner, to the left of this table or improvised altar, is a large statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is a hold-over from the previous church. On the wall opposite the door is a large window. Benches, stools and chairs line the open spaces along the various walls of the room. Along the wall with the door is an electric organ and a piece of furniture with drawers. Since October, 1983, the table and the crucifix above it have been shifted to the wall directly opposite the one where they were before.

Here is what took place in the church and the room of the apparitions on the five nights I was there. On Thursday, October 13, Vicka and Jakov came into the room in advance of the rosary but later left it. The rosary in the church, led by a priest, began at about five o'clock. At 5:25, Ivanka, Jakov and Vicka entered the room of the apparitions. They lined up before the table. Then, in audible voices they made the sign of the cross and started the Our Father. After the first few words, several things happened in quick succession: their voices became inaudible, they went down to their knees together and their heads tilted backward, as they raised their eyes to the area of the cross which hangs on the wall several feet above the table. Our Lady had come. The voices of the priest and the people reciting the litany in the church could be heard.

The apparition lasted from three to four minutes. When it was over, the three seers went out into the sanctuary and knelt behind the altar, facing the people. They led the people in the recitation of the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and

Glory Be's and the Creed. Jakov held a microphone during these prayers but the two girls prayed out loud with him.

This was followed by the Mass with a fifteen to twenty minute homily. Then, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for an hour. Worship was led by Father Tomislav Vlasic and was attended by all those who had been present at the Mass. With his gaze always fixed on the Blessed Sacrament, Father Tomislav prayed out loud for several minutes. Then, there was a time of silence followed by some singing by the people. This went on for about an hour. The last part of the hour was devoted to praying for healing. The entire evening session from the start of the rosary to the end of the hour of adoration lasted about three hours. The message Our Lady imparted to the seers that evening was tape recorded in the sacristy.

Friday was a repetition of Thursday with the same three seers at the apparition and Father Tomislav Vlasic leading the people in an hour of prayer in honor of the passion of Our Lord. He spoke for several minutes. There was a pause for silent prayer followed by singing on the part of the congregation. The service continued on in this way for the whole hour. These Friday devotions after the Mass were introduced as part of the celebration of the Holy Year of the Redemption.

Saturday differed somewhat from the two previous days. Five seers participated in the apparition. Mirjana, the girl from Sarajevo was not present. Also, the recitation of the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's took place in the church after the Mass and not just before the Mass as on the two previous evenings. However, it was led by the seers and was followed by prayer for healing. A priest and the five seers prayed individually for healing which did not last very long and ended the evening service.

Sunday evening was basically the same as Saturday. The only difference was the way in which the healing service was conducted. Standing behind the altar and facing the people, Father Tomislav Vlasic prayed over the congregation in Croatian and Father Tomislav Pervan, the pastor, prayed in German. Father Pervan invited those visiting priests who

were in the sanctuary with him to join him as he extended his hands and prayed silently. There was no praying over people individually. The general prayer by the parish priests was of relatively short duration and marked the end of the evening service. The church was full with people standing but not as packed as on Saturday. Apparently, visitors from distant places had left for home.

On Monday, things were back to a seemingly weekday routine, similar to that of Thursday and Friday except that the service ended with the Eucharist. There were no special devotions after the Mass. However, there was a meeting of some thirty young people (late teens and early twenties) that took place in the church proper quite some time after the conclusion of the Mass. The church has no halls or meeting rooms.

Concerning the time of the apparitions there were minor differences in when they started on the five evenings when I was present in the room of the apparitions. There were some fifteen to twenty minutes between the earliest time Our Lady came and the latest. However, the duration of her visits was quite similar on all five evenings, that is, from three to four minutes.

In regard to the time of Our Lady's arrival, the differences on the various nights seem to have been determined by the time of the seers' entrance into the room of the apparitions. They did not come into the room at exactly the same time each night. However each evening, once they had all entered the room, had lined up before the table and had started to pray, Our Lady came almost immediately.

As the seers fall to their knees, their gaze is immediately directed upward toward the area of the crucifix on the wall directly behind the table. Little Jakov, who usually is in the center of the group experiencing the apparition, has his head tilted backward quite sharply but his eyes stare at the same place on the wall of the low ceiling room as the other seers. All their faces are intent and serene. Vicka's face is the most expressive and reflects the greatest joy. On four of the five days I was in the room of the apparitions, I was very close to the seers and positioned in front of them so that I could watch their faces. Vicka was engaged in conversation

with Our Lady during almost the entire time of all four apparitions and her face reflected joy and happiness in various degrees. The lips of her large mouth were moving most of the time. Occasionally she nodded her head vigorously, evidently in approval of something Our Lady said, and at times she broke out into a big smile that bordered on laughter. There was little change in the expression on the faces of the other seers. Sometimes their lips moved ever so slightly but they never seemed to be in real dialogue with Our Lady.

For some time the seers could transmit questions to Our Lady that they had received from people. She would often answer them, but not always. Occasionally after a number of questions had been asked, she would say: "That is enough questions."

The seers' gaze remains fixed on the same spot during the entire apparition. There is an interesting phenomenon connected with the blinking of their eyes. Their eyes do not react to light in a normal way. Although they blink their eyes during an apparition, when flash bulbs go off in their faces and close to them, their eyes never flicker, nor do they manifest any other visible reaction.

The seers have been submitted to some tests during the apparitions. On Christmas day, 1983, one of the Franciscan priests put some pressure on Vicka's arm. She manifested no awareness of this and continued talking with Our Lady and smiling as though nothing had happened. Then, he lifted little Jakov. He appeared heavy. But, there was no evident reaction on his part and he continued in his contemplation of Our Lady. When the apparition had ended, the priest questioned the two seers, who indicated that they had not felt anything while the tests were going on.[1]

On another occasion, Ivan was given an encephalogram during an apparition. It indicated normal brain activity with no sign of any dreaming or hallucination.

Finally, a member of the Bishop's Commission of Investigation stuck a needle in Vicka's back, her shoulder and her arm. Though this drew blood which showed on her dress, she did not manifest any sign of feeling anything.

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During an apparition, if Our Lady is admonishing one of the seers, correcting some fault, the other seers cannot hear what she is saying. She always admonishes the seers in a gentle, very motherly way.

When the seers ask Our Lady to pray for certain intentions that people have referred to them, she will say: "Let us pray for them" and she will lead them in prayer. When the seers respond, they can be heard by the people in the room. Our Lady will never lead the seers in the recitation of the Hail Mary.

The articles that people place on the table over which Our Lady appears are said to be blessed by Our Lady. She told the seers that her blessing does not remove the need for additional blessing by a priest.

All effort is made by the parish staff to get in touch with the seers as soon as possible after the apparition and get a report on it. On one of the nights I was there, a priest announced that during the apparition that evening Our Lady had said: "People must take seriously what I say." When we discuss the messages Our Lady has given at Medugorje, we shall see that there is a sense of urgency about them.

So far, we have seen what could be called the externals of the apparitions. What about the apparitions from the seers' point of view? What do they see?

For a very short while at the beginning of the apparitions, the seers would see three brilliant lights or flashes of light, and only then Our Lady. After a few days, Our Lady was preceded by only one brilliant light. Our Lady appears, coming out of this light. She stands on a cloud that grows wider the longer she stays. During the apparition, the young people do not see nor hear anything but Our Lady.

She is of medium height and appears to be 19 or 20 years old.

She wears a dress of bright, lucid grey, which the young people find hard to describe. It is not held in at the waist by a sash and completely covers her feet. She has a brilliant white veil and a bit of black curly hair can be seen to the left of her face. On her head is a crown of glowing stars. She has rosy cheeks. Her eyes are light blue and expressive. They speak of kindness and tenderness. Her countenance is indescribably beautiful and generally she appears smiling. Her open hands and her forearms extend outward toward the seers.

Our Lady is the one who always speaks first, and in "pure" Croatian. Her first words are significantly: "Praised be Jesus!" Her farewell, like her greeting, is always the same: "Go in the peace of God."

She departs as she comes, in a great light. When she does, the seers exclaim: *"Ode* - She's gone!" They blink their eyes, stand up and smile.

What strikes visitors and particularly priests are the attention, reverence and participation of the congregation during the entire lengthy evening service, and also the relatively large number of children, young people and men who come each day. Before the apparitions, if the Eucharist lasted more than forty-five minutes, the people would complain!

There is always considerable singing and it seems that just about everyone takes part in it. When I was in Medugorje, a Franciscan priest played an electric organ located at the front of the church and a small choir stood next to him.

On two of the five nights when I concelebrated Mass, I was asked to aid in the distribution of Communion. The priests went down into the church and gave Communion at a number of stations. I was very deeply touched by the faith in the divine presence that was so evident on the faces of some of the middle aged peasant women and some of the young people to whom I distributed Communion. An American priest of Croatian extraction who heard confessions in the open air once for four-and-a-half hours said that the quality of the confessions of people of all ages, children, young people and older ones, was the thing that impressed him most on his visit to Medugorje. Their confessions were not just the routine recitation of a shopping list of sins.

A great blessing that has flowed from the apparitions moving into the parish church and out of sight of the people, is that the parishioners and visitors do not come to witness a spectacle, to look at the seers in ecstasy. They come to the church out of a deep spiritual conviction. There is no emotionalism or sensationalism at Medugorje. Everything is on a very high spiritual level.

Chapter 13

Signs And Wonders

Signs visible to the people began manifesting themselves very soon at Medugorje. As a large number of these have to do with the large cross that stands on the summit of Mount Krizevac, a word must be said of its origin. The cross gives a clue as to why Our Lady chose this village and region for this particular manifestation of her love and concern for her children of the earth. Looking down over the church of Saint James and visible for miles and miles around the vast valley below, this cross speaks powerfully of the strong message of penance and atonement Our Lady came to bring to the world. It does this by reminding everyone of the suffering of Christ for the redemption of mankind. And it does it in a very special way through the story of its erection.

The fifteen ton concrete cross was put up by the people of the area in 1933 to commemorate the nineteenth centenary of the Redemption. Their spirit of penance and their understanding of its importance were manifested by the fact that all the material which went into the construction of the cross was carried up the 1770 foot mountain by hand. The cross was so meaningful to the people that they changed the mountain's name from Sipovac to Krizevac. *Kriz* is the Croatian word for cross. It became the custom, even prior to the apparitions, to celebrate Mass there each year on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14).

It is difficult to give precise dates for many of the signs that have been seen at Medugorje. This is not surprising, given

their great number and the long period of time over which they have been witnessed. Also, when the police confiscated the parish records on August 17, 1981, some of the early dates were lost.

Signs were particularly numerous as one might expect in the first months of the apparitions. They have been witnessed by many people and especially by those of the hamlet of Bijakovici in which all the seers were born. They have been an important factor in drawing local people to the place of the apparitions and they help us understand how enormous crowds could have been present at them in a matter of days after they began.

The very first signs were given as early as the second day of the apparitions, June 25, 1981. That was the first day on which the seers ran up the steep slopes of Mount Podbrdo with amazing speed and ease and this notwithstanding the fact the surface of the mountain side is covered with sharp-edged stones and prickly thickets. Vicka, who was barefooted, commented: "And yet no thorn pricked me." And she added: "When we came to within about six feet of Our Lady, we felt as though we were being seized and pushed to our knees. Jakov knelt in a kind of thorny bush. I thought he would get hurt, but he came out of it without anything happening to him."

These initial signs were quickly followed by manifestations of light that would assume many forms and become the main type of signs witnessed at Medugorje. The first of these was seen on the third day Our Lady appeared. On that day, Our Lady's coming was preceded by a brilliant light that illumined not only the village but the entire area and was seen by everyone. On the fourth day, the people gathered on Mount Podbrdo saw the light which immediately preceded Our Lady's coming to the five seers who were there.

On the seventh day, June 30, the seers were taken for a ride by the two assistant social workers from Citluk. When they stopped the car at Cerno at the time the apparitions had been occurring on Mount Podbrdo, the young people saw a light that was illuminating the mountain side of the apparitions and that was moving toward them. The two assistant social workers said that they saw the light too.

All of these first signs were basically of the same nature and were witnessed by the people before an apparition began or just as it was starting.

We have to go from June 30 to August 2 for another definitely dated light phenomenon. The August 2 sign was a very impressive one that recalls the dance of the sun that took place at Fatima on October 13, 1917,[1] and which was the miracle Our Lady had promised the three little shepherds she would perform on that day so that people would believe. The Medugorje dance of the sun was seen a number of times since August 2.

The dance of the sun that was witnessed on August 2 had many facets to it, considerably more than the October 13 Fatima phenomenon.[1] There seem to be some constant elements that were witnessed by all of the approximately 150 people who saw it while they were on the mountain side of the apparitions. Here are the constant elements. It took place late in the afternoon when the sun was about to set. The sun was seen to spin around on its own axis. The people could look at it without hurting their eyes. It seemed to come toward those who were watching it and then to recede from them. As it came closer, great darkness appeared behind it. The reaction of the people was varied. Some prayed, some cried, some were afraid and some ran away. At the end, a white cloud was seen coming down over the mountain side of the apparitions. It moved toward the sun which continued to spin and then set in its normal fashion. The entire phenomenon lasted some fifteen minutes.

In addition to these common elements seen by everyone, a large number of people saw numerous globes of different colors moving around the sun, while others claimed they saw Our Lady, the Sacred Heart and a great number of angels with trumpets coming out of the sun. It is to be noted that August 2 is the feast of Our Lady, Queen of Angels. Still others saw the sun spinning as though in a large heart. Then, a large heart was seen and under it six small hearts. What did the large and small hearts represent? Our Lady and the six seers?

Somewhat similar phenomena were witnessed on August 3 and 4. Father Umberto Loncar, a Franciscan priest, gives

witness to what he saw on these two days, but in doing so he also mentions the events of August 2. At the time he was living in Gradnice which is some distance from Medugorje.

Father Loncar says that on August 2 and 3 many pilgrims observed that the sun had become pale and that it had bright rings around it. These rings were casting reddish rays on the parish church of Medugorje. A little later, they saw different colored bright globes rotating around the sun. All this was seen while Our Lady was appearing to the seers from 6:20 to 6:40 p.m. Father Loncar says that he had not looked at the sun or the sky on August 2 nor had he observed any of the phenomena and he candidly admits that he did not believe in them.

On August 3, Father Loncar looked at the sun and observed the same things the pilgrims had seen the previous day and at the same time they had seen them. He still did not believe in them. He thought they could be explained by purely natural causes.

However, August 4 was a different matter. He deliberately stayed home and did not go to Medugorje. What he saw was observed at the rectory. At 6 p.m., he came out of the rectory and cast a quick glance at the sun through the fingers of his hand. He wanted to avoid being dazzled by the sun and becoming the victim of visual impressions. The sun had already started to pale and a mild, very pleasant breeze had come up.

He looked toward Medugorje. At exactly 6:20 p.m., he was surprised to see a most unusual reddish-violet cloud coming from Cerno. It traveled with considerable speed, much faster than clouds usually do. It came above Mount Krizevac with its huge cross and stayed there for a minute or two. Then above the woods, it started to move eastward and went down toward the earth. At this point, Father Loncar lost sight of the sun because of the trees and hills in front of him. He had seen all this from the upper part of the parish house.

From there, the priest went through the house to the terrace which lies between the rectory and the church. There something even more unusual greeted his eyes, something that left him awe-stricken. He saw a magnificent, reddish-

violet figure of a wonderful lady rising from Mount Crnica (Podbrdo).[2] It rose majestically in the sky. Then, slowly losing its delightful reddish-violet colors, it disappeared.

The last thing Father Loncar saw was a white veil. It was unusually white under the lady's feet and fluttered elegantly in the air under them for about half-a-minute.

Father Loncar remarked that what he saw occurred on a day and at the very same time that Our Lady appeared to the young people at Bijakovici. A noteworthy facet of this sign is that Father Loncar was not in the immediate area of the apparitions when he witnessed it. He has expressed the opinion that it was a miraculous sign, bearing witness that the events at Medugorje are from God.[3]

I have an eye-witness report of sky phenomena involving the sun and the huge concrete cross which occurred on December 9, 1983. The person writing the report was with a group of pilgrims and describes what happened on December 8 and December 9. We quote from this report.

> Medugorje was a deep experience for everyone in our group. It shook us all! Marija received the ninth secret before our eyes in the apparition chapel. She wept profusely. *(We know from Mirjana who has received all ten secrets that the ninth and tenth ones are "grave matters...a chastisement for the sins of the world").*...
>
> The day after the eighth we had a sun miracle at 1 p.m.... We had just walked behind the church in order to look up to the cross mountain when a storm commenced. It almost threw us over and the church seemed to shake. Clouds, as dark as night, were driven across the sky by this brief storm....
>
> Suddenly, the sun broke through with spectacular rays and then some saw the sun spin. Our leader, the 'doubting Thomas,' and two women of our group saw it especially clear.
>
> But all the people assembled got on their knees because we all saw the darting and fiery rays breaking through the dark clouds in various directions.
>
> As the clouds disappeared, the sky became rose red and the sun paled. In the sun was the Andrew cross, and as it disappeared, a huge cross began to be raised above the sun, peaked by a crown. All this was light and around it the darkness grew again, as though the judgment of God was at hand.
>
> All the while, the cross on the cross mountain was invisible. The land below and the sky around grew in darkness. Only the spectacular rose colors twirling around the illumined cross raised above the sun grew brighter and brighter.
>
> Then, it all vanished and the dreary winter day took its normal course.
>
> In the evening, Father Slavko told us that he had gone out after the evening Mass to look up at the cross mountain, where such a spectacular sight had deeply touched us all.
>
> The sky behind the mountain was being colored by a far off sundown—blood red!
>
> Thus Mary on her high feast (the Immaculate Conception) had given us two signs. Father Slavko was evidently moved by it all.

A most important sign was the word *Mir*-Peace-that was written one evening in large bright letters in the sky above the cross on Mount Krizevac. This occurred in the early days of the apparitions and was seen by the pastor and many people from the village. It has been witnessed a number of times. We shall see later that peace is at the very heart of the message Our Lady brought to the world at Medugorje. This was a dramatic way of manifesting it.

It seems that it is phenomena involving the cross on Mount Krizevac which have been observed most frequently. A number of different things have been observed. People have seen the cross change into a column of light that stood on top of the mountain between the earth and the sky. Father Svetozar Kraljevic affirms that he himself witnessed this and that it has also been observed by many others.[4] The horizontal bar of the cross and its lower part have turned bright white, forming a T or tau cross. Also, the cross has changed into the bright or luminous form of a young lady "which fits the description of the Blessed Virgin Mary given by the seers without being as clear."[5] This phenomenon would have been observed many times, at different times of the day, when the sky was clear and when it was covered, and has lasted from a few minutes to half-an-hour.[6] It was more intense and lasted for half-an-hour on October 21 and 22, 1981, during the trial of the pastor, Father Jozo Zovko.[7]

It is significant that the luminous figure of a lady has been seen by many people and from such places as Miletina, Citluk

and Gradina. It has also been observed a number of times by pilgrims who have come to Medugorje.

Because of the major importance of the heavenly signs and especially of those involving the figure or silhouette of a lady, we now submit the report of an event that took place at Medugorje on October 22, 1981, and that was witnessed by a considerable number of people including several Franciscan priests, three of whom have given detailed reports of what they saw. We report the essential facts of this event as described by each of these three priests.

Here is the report of Father Luka Vlasic. On October 22, 1981, he went to Medugorje from the nearby Franciscan monastery at Humac, where he was stationed. Three other Franciscans from the same monastery went along with him. They were Janko Bubalo, Vinko Dragicevic and Stanko Vasilj. These four priests went each day to the parish church of Saint James where they helped with the confessions.

As usual, the four priests arrived at the church shortly after four o'clock. In the rectory, Father Zrinko Cuvalo, the pastor of the parish, asked him to wait in his office because he wanted to talk to him. While waiting there, he just happened to look out the window toward Mount Krizevac. He noticed that the cross was gone and in its place stood a large, white, bright column. Soon, the column changed into "a statue with the contour of a woman". He called Father Tomislav Vlasic, the associate pastor of Saint James parish, who went and got some binoculars. Then Fathers Janko Bubalo and Stanko Vasilj came and the four priests took turns looking through the binoculars.

Father Luka Vlasic looked through the binoculars twice. He was excited by what he saw. This "statue of a woman" had her hands extended. All Father Luka could see was her general contour. He could not distinguish her eyes, mouth, hair or other details.

The lady was looking towards the parish church. At times, it looked as though she was bowing towards her left and her right. The appearance lasted for about half-an-hour.

Father Luka was not only excited. He also experienced joy. The thought came to him: "This is a reward from Our Lady for

the long and exhausting four months of hearing confessions in Medugorje."

Many pilgrims, those around the church and those in the church who came out, witnessed the appearance. All were kneeling, praying, singing, shouting with joy as they looked toward Mount Krizevac. "Their faces were aglow with exultation."

Father Luka ended his signed statement with the words: "I am willing to confirm the truthfulness of this testimony by oath at any time."

Father Janko Bubalo was with Luka Vlasic on October 22. He, too, has described what he saw on that day. It was a little after 5 p.m. when he looked out the rectory window and saw two of the nuns on the parish staff kneeling on the wet ground with their arms wide open. Near them were some seventy men and women also kneeling and quite oblivious of the rain that was falling. Some were crying, some praying and others singing religious hymns. They were all looking toward the cross on Mount Krizevac. Father Janko looked in that direction but the cross had disappeared. "In its place was a strange pale rose colored light without equivalent in real life." As his eyesight is poor he looked through Father Tomislav's binoculars and in the place of the cross he saw "the silhouette of a woman." Her arms were open and her feet were hidden in a luminous cloud near the base of the pedestal of the cross. He could not make out any details, such as the face, the eyes or the hair. As he feasted his eyes on the sight, he was filled with joy. He affirms that the other priests who were with him saw the same thing and that all the people in the village who looked at Mount Krizevac at that time also witnessed it. It lasted about 40 minutes. He adds that people prevailed on the seers to ask Our Lady about the significance of this happening and she told them that "she was the one who was on the mountain."

Here is Father Stanko Vasilj's account of what he saw on October 22. He went to the sacristy of the church and then outside. The rain had stopped but the sky was dark. He looked toward Mount Krizevac and noticed that the cross had disappeared. Shortly after that he saw a "white column" in the

place of the cross. He went back into the sacristy and told Sister Ignacia Bebek to go out and look. She replied "That's Our Lady! Yesterday the people of Miletina saw it several times at the same place."

Then, he left for the rectory and on his way encountered Father Vinko Dragicevic, the fourth priest from Humac, and two sisters. They were looking in the direction of Mount Krizevac. He asked them if they could see anything: Father Vinko retorted: "You aren't blind are you! Don't you see?"

In the rectory, Father Stanko took the binoculars and looked toward Mount Krizevac. Now, in place of the white column, he saw the silhouette of a woman with a cape. The cape was grey, but a very light and luminous grey. At a certain moment, a ray of sparkling light issued from her right cheek.

He left the rectory to tell the people who were in the church. But, he found them on their knees behind the church and looking toward Mount Krizevac, praying, singing and shouting for joy.

As this was going on, a car from the old cathedral city of Split arrived at the church. There were three Carmelite priests and four nuns in it. They joined the others in praying. When it was all over, they stated that they had witnessed this phenomenon from Tromedja on. Tromedja is about a mile-and-a-half away. One of the nuns said she had not seen anything, either on the way or at the church.

At the end, a cloud rose up from the site of the cross. "It was clear and transparent and divided in two, in the form of a fan." Then, another cloud, this one dark and somber, came down like a curtain on each side of the cross. Finally, the cross appeared as it usually looks.

Father Stanko ends his account with these words: "I affirm all this, fully aware of my great responsibility before God and the Church."[8]

Another sign that would seem to have been given as much for the government as for the people, occurred on October 28, 1981. On that day, a fire of unknown nature broke out at the site of the first apparition. It lasted about fifteen minutes and was seen by several hundred people, including a number of priests and sisters.

A guard who was on duty at the foot of the mountain to stop the people from going up and who was there when the fire started did not see anything. However, his replacement did see the fire. When it was over, he examined the place thoroughly and could not find a trace of scorched matter. The fire had burned without consuming anything!

Some of the signs have had to do with the stars. On the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 18, 1982, and the feast of the Immaculate Heart, June 19, 1982, stars were seen rotating in the sky. And, they were alternately lit and extinguished for more than an hour. The stars involved in this way were the ordinary stars that are seen in the sky every summer night. This phenomenon repeated itself again later. An American priest witnessed phenomena similar to the above in 1984.

In regard to the signs involving the cross on Mount Krizevac, Father Tomislav Vlasic has said: "Several times, with my own eyes I have seen the cross vanish and instead of the cross there appeared a white figure, like a silhouette of Our Lady." And he affirms that Our Lady told the seers that all of these signs are to reawaken the people's faith. She also said to them: "Every day I pray to my Son in front of the cross, asking him to forgive the world."[9]

The greatest of all the signs is yet to come. It will be left permanently on the mountain of the first apparitions and will be visible to everyone. According to Father Tomislav Vlasic, all the seers say they have seen this sign in the course of the apparitions and they know the date when it will occur. It will be the source of many miracles and healings.

Three warnings will be given to the world before this great sign takes place. They will follow each other within a rather brief period of time. Three days before each of these warnings Mirjana will advise a priest of her choice.

The three warnings and the great sign are all a call to faith, a call to non-believers to believe and to the faithful to deepen their faith. In addition to this, the permanent sign will be a testimony to the authenticity of the apparitions.

Mirjana says that these events are close at hand and that people should open their hearts to God and convert as quickly as possible.[10]

What has been said above about the signs and wonders witnessed at Medugorje does not exhaust all the manifestations of this kind that have taken place there. Enough has been given to impart a good idea of this particular means which is but one of several that God is using to authenticate the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at this Yugoslav village.

The particularly large number of signs during the first months of the apparitions was given to make these happenings known in Yugoslavia. This is certainly what has happened. As we have seen, in a matter of days thousands of people were streaming into Medugorje.

The less frequent signs in the sky that have been witnessed since the first months would seem to be more for the benefit of the pilgrims coming from various countries around the world and these have been coming in ever increasing numbers.

Worthy of note is the fact that signs in the sky have been seen not only by Roman Catholics but also by Orthodox Christians and Moslems.

Because so many of the signs have involved the cross on Mount Krizevac, it has taken on new importance for the people. They began climbing the mountain- a surprising number in their bare feet- to pray there. At the open air Mass celebrated there on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in 1981, estimates of the numbers present go as high as 70,000. Eventually the police intervened and forbade anyone to go there. However, in May of 1983, the ban was lifted. Both the site of the first apparitions on Mount Podbrdo and the cross on Mount Krizevac have become sacred places that are visited by the local people and by pilgrims from other areas and countries. It is no easy climb to reach these places. Given the stress on penance in the Medugorje message, it is easy to discern the providential nature of the selection of these two sites as important parts of the Medugorje event.

Chapter 14

Healings And Conversions

In addition to the exceptional signs described in the preceding chapter, Medugorje has also known the more traditional ones that have always accompanied authentic apparitions. These are healings and conversions.

Physical cures are especially valuable since they can be medically ascertained as humanly inexplicable. As we begin to speak of some of these, we wish to make clear that none of those to be mentioned have undergone the rigorous type of medical examination that healings are submitted to by the Lourdes medical bureau. The procedure followed for the examination of physical healings at Lourdes is long and laborious. It is to be hoped that something of this nature will eventually be established at Medugorje. But it is simply out of the question at this time when the apparitions are still going on. The burden on the parish staff is presently very heavy and exhausting.

We very simply present some of the cures that have been reported as occurring at Medugorje with the meager information that is now available without claiming that they are of a miraculous nature. It is the local bishop's prerogative to declare any healing as miraculous. However, it is important to say something of the healings that are being reported at Medugorje since they are numerous and very definitely constitute a part of the total event that is unfolding there.

One of the first healings which occurred in the early days of the apparitions is that of "little Daniel." His is one of the better

known cases.

The third child of John and Anda Setka, Daniel was born normal and healthy on September 21, 1978. Four days after his birth, he came down with septicemia. He turned blue, became rigid and had convulsions. He was taken to the children's hospital in Mostar where he remained for a month. As his father worked in West Germany, he was taken there for a month. Nothing seemed to help him.

The parents also turned to heaven for help. Pilgrimages were made to Saint John of Jace in Bosnia and to Saint Roko. In two years and nine months, there was no change in the child's condition.

It was then that the parents heard of Medugorje. Immediately, the whole family, including Daniel, went to the hillside where the apparitions were taking place. His mother and father carried him up Mount Podbrdo. The father asked the seers to intercede with Our Lady for little Daniel. They replied that they already had too many requests to submit to her and to come back the next day which they did. This was on June 29, 1981, the sixth day Our Lady appeared. After the apparition, Jakov reported that the Blessed Virgin had said that Daniel's parents were to believe firmly and the boy would be healed.

On the way home, the family stopped at a restaurant. Up to then, Daniel had not been able to talk. Also, his head had always been tilted to the right and he had only been able to take a step or two without falling. To everyone's amazement, Daniel tapped on the table with his hand and said: "Give me something to drink."

From that time on, his speech gradually improved. He began putting words together better and better and to speak, though still not perfectly. Then he started to stand up and to walk on a level surface. His walking continued to improve to the point that it was not long before he could go up stairs normally and run down. Eventually he was able to sing.

As of April 3, 1983, although much improved, Daniel was still not able to use his right hand in the same way he could his left. And, even though he could say anything he wanted to, he still could not pronounce his words distinctly.

As Father Svetozar Kraljevic left Daniel's house on April 3, after interviewing the parents, he saw the boy kicking a soccer ball in the yard.[1]

In his book, Father Rupcic describes 56 healings that have been reported as taking place at Medugorje. One case he mentions involved two different healings.

Jozo Vasilj was born in Medugorje in 1896. Eight years ago, he suffered an attack of apoplexy which resulted in the loss of sight of his left eye. Over the last four years, he also lost the sight of his right eye and became totally blind. He asked Vida Vasilj to bring him two plants, the everlasting and the sage, from the mountain side of the apparitions. That night he placed them under his head. Then the next morning, he put the plants in some water and washed himself with it, reciting the Creed as he did this. While drying himself with the towel, he told his wife he could see and proved it by telling her that she did not have her stockings on.

For some time, his hands had been covered with painful ulcers. One day he went to the parish church and the ulcers disappeared. This was before the apparitions had moved into the church.

Both of these healings took place in the early days of the apparitions and Father Stanko Vasilj gathered the above information on September 14, 1981.[2]

Jozo Vasilj's use of plants from the mountain side of the apparitions as sacramentals is noteworthy. In a good number of the physical healings reported by Father Rupcic in his book, plants, flowers and dirt taken from the mountain side of the apparitions and placed or crushed in water were used.

At Lourdes many of the healings occur when people are bathed in the water that comes from the spring which Our Lady pointed out to Bernadette. In Medugorje, there is a well near the rectory. People take some of this water in bottles and place it on the table of the apparitions prior to the seers' coming into the room for the daily apparition. They were doing this in October of 1983 when I was there. It would be interesting to know the blessings that have come through the use of this water.

An infinitely wise God is not confined to any one way of do-

ing things and this applies to healings. At Lourdes the healings do not all take place through the "Lourdes water". Many occur through the Eucharist, at Mass and at the blessing of the sick with the Blessed Sacrament during the afternoon ceremonies. They are also known to have taken place while people were making the Way of the Cross. And so it is at Medugorje, where healings have occurred through attendance at Mass and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The most important healings are the spiritual ones and, of course, most of these come through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What stories the priests who hear confessions at Medugorje could tell, if they were permitted to do so.

Grapes and tobacco are the two main products of the area, so it is not surprising that excessive use of both was prevalent. There has been a great change in this regard since the apparitions began.

More important is what happened regarding the deep divisions and animosities in the hamlet of Bijakovici where all six seers were born. Small groups of people who live in close physical proximity to each other frequently develop dislikes and even real hatreds some of which manifest themselves in acts of violence. Bijakovici had fallen victim to this kind of thing. This too has cleared up since the apparitions.

Father Tomislav Vlasic gives the following description of the spiritual transformation that has taken place at Medugorje as a result of the apparitions.

> Before the apparitions, the people of the parish...were annoyed when Mass lasted more than 45 minutes. After the apparitions, they remained in church for three hours or more and after returning home prayed some more. They prayed in the fields, in their cars - everywhere. On the average, all families pray one hour a day.
>
> The churches everywhere here are always full, full of people and especially young people.
>
> Thursday, we have an hour of adoration of the Blesséd Sacrament after Mass.
>
> The people here fast every Friday on bread and water. Many people and many families fast twice a week. There are some who make a total fast, eating and drinking nothing all day. The only food they take is the Eucharist, yet they work, sometimes at hard labor.
>
> The young people lead the way. They pray and fast more than others.
>
> The people who live here do not ask themselves whether or not the apparitions are true. They say: "We no longer believe, we know. We now have a new life. We do not want to retrograde. We do not want our previous life with its pains and litigations. Now, we are happy and we definitely want to continue this way."[3]

In a subsequent chapter we shall speak of a meditation prayer group composed of some fifty young people of from fifteen to twenty-five years of age who have committed themselves to delay any decision on their life's calling for four years, to pray three hours each day and to fast twice a week on bread and water. In how many parishes could one expect to find young people promising to do this today? The extraordinary spiritual change that has taken place among the young people of Saint James parish has to be one of the most powerful witnesses to the explosion of grace that has been taking place at Medugorje.

"You will know them by their deeds" (Mt.7: 16). The spiritual fruit that has come from the apparitions is the best proof of their authenticity. The deep spiritual conversion, the change of hearts that manifests itself in a change of life is the greatest of all the many "signs" that have been given at Medugorje. As Father John Bertolucci stated after spending five days in Medugorje: "As far as I am concerned, the most powerful thing I witnessed over in Yugoslavia was hundreds of thousands of lives changed for the better. That is the sign that moved me."

Chapter 15

Mirjana Dragicevic No Longer Sees Our Lady Each Day

An important new development occurred on December 25, 1982, when Mirjana Dragicevic experienced her last regular daily apparition of Our Lady. However, the other five seers to whom Our Lady began appearing in June of 1981 continue to see her on a daily basis in the parish church. The cessation of Our Lady's daily visits was a traumatic experience for Mirjana. She told Father Tomislav Vlasic about this in an interview she had with him on January 10, 1983, while she was still hurting from what had happened. Here is what she told Father Tomislav. Most of what follows is in Mirjana's own words.

I was with the Blessed Virgin for 18 months and became very close to her. I felt she loved me with a motherly love. I was able to ask her questions about anything I wanted to. I asked her about heaven, hell and purgatory, to explain some things that were not clear to me.

I saw heaven. I did not see hell, because I did not want to. I did not see purgatory either, but Our Lady described it to me.

Two days before Christmas of 1982, she appeared to me in my room at the usual hour, as she had been doing every day. She said that she would be with me for the last time on Christmas. On Christmas she was with me for forty-five minutes and we talked about many things. We really put everything together into a unified whole. I questioned her about many people, asking her what they should do.

Then she presented me with a very precious gift. She said she would appear to me on each of my birthdays for as long as I live.[1] Independently of the sign[2] or anything else (sic), she will also appear to me when something very difficult happens to me, something that "hurts me bad". She will come then to help me.

But from now on, I have to live my life without her visits, her help, her advice.

I asked her why she has to cease appearing to me and why I had to be the first to stop seeing her. She said she had stayed "pretty long, longer than she needed to ...*(than)* she intended to". But, I have to understand that I am like any other young person, any other girl and that I have to return to living without her.

She also said that I am more mature than the other seers, that I have to help them a lot. I have to be with them, to speak to them. We should understand each other, be united and stay together.

Mirjana feels that Mary's "gift" of coming to her on every birthday is "something great, marvelous". Our Lady pointed out to her that if questions arise about which she would like answers, she can take them up with her on each birthday.

Mirjana experienced much difficulty in adjusting to the fact that Our Lady would no longer visit her on a daily basis as in the past. This turned out to be a very great trial which saddened and depressed her. We quote her now at length, for the cross which chosen souls are called to carry is a sign of the authenticity of their special mission.

When Our Lady left after her apparition on Christmas day, I sat there. I don't know. Somehow I felt very strange. I thought: it isn't true, she will come again. I will pray again at the usual time and she will come. I experienced a certain restlessness. For example, I preferred that everyone leave me alone. I locked myself in my room and these thoughts would come to me: She will come again, she won't come again. Everything was so distressful. What am I going to do? How am I going to get along without her? What am I going to do?

Then I would pray and pray for a long time. It was as though I was in some kind of a trance. Then, when I would come to myself, I would say: What am I doing this for? She is not there. She will not come. It was terrible, terrible.

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Then I would pray and pray for a long time. It was as though I was in some kind of a trance. Then, when I would come to myself, I would say: What am I doing this for? She is not there. She will not come. It was terrible, terrible.

In school, everybody was telling me that I had gone crazy. I didn't want to talk with anyone. Before this, I would not allow anybody to see that I was suffering about something. But now since this happened to me about fourteen days ago, I just wanted to sit alone.

In the classroom, I did not know what was going on. If a professor called me, I did not know what was happening. If he said a word to me and asked why I was not listening, why I was doing certain things, I would start crying without knowing why. I was terribly sensitive.

It has been really terrible. Now little by little, it is getting easier. But, it is still difficult.

I am always thinking about her. I will smile, but then immediately I say to myself: "she will not come" and this makes me sad. I keep doing this, reminding myself that she will not come and this makes me sad. Really, something is hurting in my soul.

Since Our Lady stopped appearing to me, I pray as follows. If I go to school in the morning, then in the afternoon at the time when Our Lady used to come, I go to my room, take a rosary and pray for an hour or two, according to the time that is available to me. Generally, it is never less than an hour.

I ask God to give me the strength to behave normally again. I also pray for unbelievers, for their conversion, and I pray for the secrets.

At this point in Mirjana's interview with Father Vlasic, he asked her if she read scripture. She said that she did. Then, she went on to explain how she prays. A careful reading of her reply indicates that there are two parts to her prayer. She starts with some formal prayer (she mentions the rosary) and when she has become immersed in this she finds herself in a simple conversation with God. Then she goes back to the formal prayer which again leads to a conversation with God, and so on for the duration of her prayer time. All her praying is done out loud, her formal prayer and her conversing with God. We go now to what Mirjana says in her interview.

When I pray, something comes to me in prayer. I really immerse myself in prayer *(formal prayer such as the rosary)* and this leads me to a point where it is as though I am speaking with somebody. Then I converse and talk with God. Then I go back to praying *(formal prayer)* and from there to conversing. I do all this out loud.[3]

Mostly, I pray alone. Sometimes, my mother comes when she is home. She works. Also, Sister Marinka and I get together and pray.

The interpretation of Mirjana's prayer as a two movement process that alternates formal prayer and simple conversation is confirmed in another section of Father Vlasic's interview with her in which she talks about the partial healing of a man from Sarajevo who could not walk. This man wrote to Mirjana who prayed to Our Lady for him.

Our Lady said that he is a very good believer, but he should pray. He prays, but not for himself. He has to pray precisely for himself, for his healing. Then he prayed and I prayed too. Three months later, he wrote to me that he could walk a little. He got on his feet and walked a little with one crutch.

A person must emphasize the particular thing that is being prayed for: "Dear God, I am praying for my healing." You must pray for that. But, you must pray from your heart, from the bottom of your soul, with feeling. It does not have to be a *(formal)* prayer, but a conversation with God: "Dear Lord, you see my suffering. You see my condition. I am not complaining. My cross is not too heavy for me, but I would like to be on my legs once again so that I too might see the world." You pray like that. I mean, there should be conversation, then again prayer.

I would recommend that sick people close themselves in with God, speaking with him and praying for an hour every day. I think that would help their souls very much and would bring them grace from God.

Our Lady always recommends faith, prayer and penance to all the sick. She never requires anything special of a particular sick person. She says the same thing to every sick person. She pointed out that what the person should emphasize is this: "I am praying for this and this." And the sick person should pray with his or her soul. They should pray devoutly. They shouldn't pray the Our Father rapidly. They should pray it devoutly. The main thing is not to say the Our Father. You have to feel it.

Concerning fasting and the sick, Our Lady said that the sick do not have to fast. They could perform some other good deed. But, it is not enough for those who could fast to perform some other good deed instead. It is just those who are sick and whose health does not permit them to fast who can replace the fast with some good deed.

Mirjana was asked if Our Lady demanded that everybody fast on bread and water alone, or if she allowed or recommended different kinds of fasting. She answered as follows:

> We did not talk about that. She simply said that fasting consists of taking only bread and water. We did not discuss whether it has to be like that always. But, probably it should be only bread and water for everybody, that is, for those who would like to receive something from God, who would like to have him help them. *(It is clear that Mirjana was only expressing an opinion concerning the need for everyone to fast only on bread and water.)*

Mirjana was asked one other question concerning prayer. She was asked if, now that Our Lady has stopped appearing to her, she experiences a feeling of her presence in her inner self. Her answer is revealing. It informs us that even now that Our Lady has stopped appearing to her she is blessed with mystical graces of prayer. This in turn gives us an inkling of the spiritual fruit she has derived from seeing Our Lady. And this is important in appraising the authenticity of Medugorje. Here is her reply.

> Oh, I do. I did last night while I was saying the seven Our Fathers, etc. I felt that *(presence)* beautifully. It was as though I was praying with her. It was as though I was hearing her voice in my heart, as though it was echoing in me and praying with me. I did not notice anything around me. I simply immersed myself, praying exactly as she does. I heard my voice and hers echoing. I heard this in my soul and not in my ears.

What Mirjana has said about prayer of petition, whether the person praying be sick or well, can be summarized as follows. There are two parts to this prayer. It starts with some formal prayer, that is, with set forms or formulas of prayer as the rosary or seven Our Fathers, etc...These should not be recited rapidly, but devoutly that is, with one's heart, with

feeling. When the person has become immersed in this formal prayer, he or she should engage in a conversation with God, talking with him in one's own words and telling him very simply what one is seeking, whether it be health or something else. This conversation with God should be simple but it should also be done with feeling, with one's heart. Then, the person goes back to formal prayer and from that to conversation, alternating formal prayer and conversation according to the time available. Mirjana said she prayed from one to two hours every day.

Will the other five seers undergo a similar painful experience when Our Lady stops visiting them on a regular daily basis? It would seem that they will and that Mirjana, the "most mature" of the six, has the mission of "helping them" by sharing with them and having them benefit from her experience.

Chapter 16

New Apparitions And New Seers Jelena And Marijana

A unique happening in the annals of Marian apparitions took place at Medugorje a year-and-a-half after the event started. Without ceasing to appear in the village church, Our Lady began manifesting herself in a completely new way to two new seers.

It all began in an unusual way on December 15, 1982. Ten year old Jelena Vasilj[1] was attending a biology class. As she was wondering about the time, she heard a voice that said: "it is a quarter past ten." Mystified she looked around to find out who had said this. Not discovering the person, she asked her neighbor what the time was. The answer came: "A quarter past ten."

Then, the teacher asked a question. As Jelena was about to raise her hand, she heard the same voice as before say: "Don't raise your hand. She won't call on you."[2] Again, Jelena did not know where the voice came from.

A week later, Jelena discovered who had spoken to her in the classroom. "By the twenty-second of December," she said, when interviewed in August, 1984, "I saw and heard the angel who prepared me for the coming of Our Lady...He didn't say so, but I knew he was my angel, my guardian angel." He appeared to her for a full week, calling her to prayer and penance.

Our Lady came on December 29. Her first communications with her were like the initial ones of Jelena's guardian angel in the classroom. They were in the form of locutions. She spoke to her but did not appear to her. However, it was not long before Our Lady did appear to her and she continued to appear to her every day and sometimes two and three times a day. Jelena must prepare for these visits by prayer. The first apparitions took place in her room at home and some still occur there. Then, some apparitions, that will be mentioned shortly, began taking place in the sacristy of the church.

On the feast of Saint Joseph, March 19, 1983, Our Lady began appearing to another very young girl, Marijana Vasilj.[3] Though their family names are the same, she and Jelena are not related.

Marijana, who was interviewed in August, 1984, said that Our Lady's first apparition to her took place in Jelena's house. She and Jelena are close friends. Marijana states that Our Lady is preceded by a white cloud that disappears when Our Lady comes. She is all in white. She wears a crown of stars held together by themselves "without a wire." A rosary hangs from her folded hands.

Marijana said that Our Lord has accompanied Our Lady "maybe three or four times." He had long black hair and wore a grey robe with a red cape. She and Jelena did not see his entire body, but only from the waist up. He has appeared both smiling and not smiling. He has never spoken. Our Lady is the only one who speaks and gives messages.

All of the above information about these two young girls comes from interviews conducted separately with each of them in August, 1984. What follows comes from a sermon and talk, both given by Father Tomislav Vlasic on August 15, 1983. He is the person closest to the two girls.[4]

The apparitions to Jelena and Marijana differ from those to the other six seers. The first two have "another type of apparition", an "inner" one. They "see with the heart" whereas the other six see the same thing with shut or open eyes. Jelena and Marijana "see Our Lady like in a film."[5] The first vision of Our Lord that Saint Teresa of Avila mentions in her *Life* seems to have been similar to the apparitions that Jelena and Marijana are experiencing. We quote the great Spanish mystic and Doctor of the Church.

> I was once in the company of a certain person, right at the beginning of my acquaintance with her, when the Lord was pleased to make me realize that these friendships were not good for me, and to warn me and enlighten my blindness. Christ revealed himself to me, in an attitude of great sternness, and showed me what there was in this that displeased him. *I saw him with the eyes of the soul* (emphasis added) more clearly than I could ever have seen him with those of the body and it made such an impression upon me that, although it is now more than twenty-six years ago, I seem to have him present with me still.[6]

The present mission of these two girls is complementary to that of the 1981 group, but they were told that it would differ later. Our Lady is using these two girls now for a deeper work of the Holy Spirit. She is not giving them secrets that contain important messages for the world. She speaks to them of holiness. When asked what Our Lady says to her, Jelena replied: "Nothing special. Everything is simple that she tells me - to pray and to fast. Our Lady just tells me that every Christian should try to be holy."

On May 1, 1983, Our Lady began giving Jelena teachings concerning the spiritual life. She told her to write the teachings down because she is to entrust them later to the authorities of the Church. Throughout the entire day, Our Lady guides her in her spiritual life. Jelena can communicate and speak to Our Lady at will. She can ask questions, but only if they are related to the field of faith. Our Lady told her that all she needs to know is written in the gospel, that she should read and believe it and that she would find all the answers there.

Our Lady told Jelena that she wanted to bless her each day. "When she comes to bless me," Jelena says, "light flows from her hands. There is something special that emanates from her." We are dealing here with a mystical experience that this young girl has difficulty in expressing.

At the end of May, 1983, Our Lady told Jelena to advise the priest that she wanted a prayer group in the parish and that she would give rules or guidelines for the sanctification of its members. Others throughout the world could also use these guidelines.

Father Tomislav Vlasic is the priest who gathered the members of this prayer group.

Our Lady said she preferred young people because they are free "to totally consecrate themselves to God and to my Heart." Married people have time-consuming family and work obligations. However, anyone who wants to participate in this program can at least follow parts of it.

Our Lady allowed one month for the selection and preparation of the group. At the beginning some fifty-six young people of both sexes joined it.

Here are the things which Our Lady said she expected of its members.

She asked that they pray at least three hours every day. She said that they should not be surprised at this request, stating that they had not been able to fulfill their duties because they prayed too little. They should pray at least half-an-hour in the morning and half-an-hour at night. The remaining two hours of prayer could be done at other moments of the day, for example, in the church at the evening service.

She declared: "I recommend that you go to Mass frequently, every day if possible."

Our Lady said they would have to put off any decision concerning their life's calling for four years.

They would have to renounce everything and put themselves totally at the disposition of God. They must renounce all fear, because if they are abandoned to God there is no place for fear. All the difficulties they will have will be for their spiritual growth and for the glory of God.

Our Lady asked them to fast twice a week on bread and water and said that when problems arose she would ask them to fast and pray more. On June 3, 1984, Father Tomislav Vlasic told some Italian pilgrims that the group had been "fasting three days a week for the last three months."

Finally, Our Lady said that she wanted the prayer group to meet once a week.

Jelena and Marijana pray together each day along with a third young girl who is a close friend of theirs. All three girls live very near each other in the same hamlet which is on the opposite side of the church from Bijakovici. The third girl

does not see Our Lady nor receive messages from her as Jelena and Marijana do.

The girls pray out loud when they pray together. Someone who knows Jelena well and has heard her pray says that her prayer is beautiful and has very great depth to it.

Our Lady told the girls that in the winter they should pray an hour each day, which they do late in the afternoon. Because of their work in the fields during the summer, she said that at that time of the year it was sufficient to pray for half an hour.

In the interview with her, Marijana was asked when she prays during the day. She answered: "In the morning, at noon time and from five-thirty to six." Jelena also prays morning, noon and late afternoon.

When the late afternoon prayer is over, the three girls go to the church for the Mass and evening services. When these are concluded, they help the sister put away the candles and microphones and then go into the sacristy. They kneel before the two statues that are there and begin to pray. Our Lady appears to Jelena and Marijana and speaks with them. After she departs, they say three Our Fathers in thanksgiving. Then, the two girls put the message Our Lady has communicated on tape with the help of the sister who has been with them during the apparition. Messages that they receive for themselves are not recorded on the tape.

The prayer group is made up of young people between fifteen and twenty-five years of age. Marija Pavlovic is the only member of the group of six seers who prays with this group which Father Tomislav Vlasic calls the meditation prayer group. As mentioned above, she is the most deeply spiritual of the six seers, the one Our Lady has especially called to prayer.

The group meets on Tuesday nights in the basement of the rectory. Jelena and Marijana do not attend the meetings. Until Father Tomislav Vlasic was transferred from Medugorje to Capljina in the latter part of 1984, he passed on the instructions they received from Our Lady. When he could not attend a meeting, the group prayed by itself.

For the first meeting, Our Lady said that the members of the group should love their enemies. They should not judge,

nor bear rancor nor curse anyone, but bless and pray for them. She said: "I know that you are not able to love your enemies, but I beg you to pray every day at least five minutes to the Sacred Heart and to my Heart and we will give you the divine love with which you will be able to love even your enemies."

For the second meeting, she said: "You have begun to pray three hours a day and this is good. But, you keep looking at your watches and worrying about the numerous things you will have to do after the meeting. If you continue doing this, you will not be able to fulfill these duties properly nor will you be able to advance spiritually. You must renounce your preoccupations and be ready so that the Spirit can lead and guide you interiorly. Only in this way, can you advance spiritually. When you do this, you will discover that you have the time to complete all your duties and also have time left over."

Frequently, Our Lady has asked the members of the group to consecrate themselves to her Heart and abandon themselves completely to her. She said: "You must begin to pray much for the Holy Spirit to descend on the earth." And she has asked the group to spend at least half of the time of their daily prayer petitioning the Holy Spirit to guide the Pope, the Bishop and all those in positions of authority in the Church.

A month-and-a-half after the beginning, Our Lady told the group: "You have decided to follow Jesus, to consecrate yourselves totally to him. Now, when a person decides to follow God totally, Satan comes along and tries to remove that person from the path on which they have set out. This is the time of testing. He will try by all means to lead you astray. Satan will tell you: 'This is too much. This is nonsense. You can be Christians like everybody else. Don't pray, don't fast.' I tell you, this is the time when you must persevere in your fast and your prayers. You must not listen to Satan. Do what I have told you. Satan can do nothing to those who believe in God and have totally abandoned themselves to him. But you are inexperienced and so I urge you to be careful."

Then, Our Lady said: "Continue your prayers. I shall lead you into more profound experiences. These are limited to this group."

"As of now," says Father Tomislav Vlasic, "we can write nothing about these experiences and things that the Blessed Virgin is confiding to us at this time. When she tells us, we will then be able to write to anyone who wants to follow this path. Our Lady said she would be happy if all the world followed this path. If it is at all possible, follow this path."

On one occasion when Jelena recited the rosary with Our Lady, she prayed it "as she was taught it in church." Our Lady said: "This is not the rosary. You prayed only with your lips. You must concentrate. You must sit down without moving and enter inside." This is basically the same advice Our Lady repeatedly gave the other seers about the importance of praying "with your heart."

Our Lady has given Jelena "a new type of rosary," a Jesus rosary. Our Lady actually recited this rosary with her. It is to be "offered for those in positions of authority in the Church." It is prayed at each Tuesday meeting.

A lad who is about sixteen years old and a member of the meditation prayer group has described the Jesus rosary as consisting of reflections on seven mysteries, each of which deals with some aspect of the life of Jesus.

The prayers of the first six mysteries comprise five Our Fathers, one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. Those of the 7th mystery comprise only three Our Fathers, one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. Between each mystery, there is a short meditation on the mystery, the invocation "O Jesus, be my protection and my strength," a little spontaneous prayer and singing.

The topics of the mysteries are: 1. The birth of Jesus; 2. Jesus' love for the sick; 3. Jesus' complete surrender to his Father; 4. Jesus' complete surrender of himself in suffering; 5. Jesus' complete trust in the Father; 6. Jesus' victory through the resurrection; 7. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles.

The above information was obtained in August, 1984, by some Americans. They attended two of these meetings. They were not admitted inside the room where the meeting was taking place, but were allowed to stand in the doorway. They said that the meditation between each mystery lasted about five

minutes, the spontaneous prayer was of short duration with only two or three of the members speaking out, and Father Tomislav Vlasic spoke to the group at the conclusion of the rosary. They added that during the prayer the lights were dimmed and a quiet meditative atmosphere prevailed throughout the meeting. Even the spontaneous prayers were spoken softly, almost in a whisper.

When asked how much he prayed each day, the young sixteen-year old lad replied: "Half-an-hour morning and evening, the Angelus at noon, Mass and Bible reading." He added that Father Vlasic's advice to the group was: "Pray, pray, pray, whether you feel like it or not."

Humanly speaking, one would never expect two young girls to be chosen to guide a meditation prayer group. It would seem to be utter folly. God's purpose in doing this is evidently to show us that what is taking place in and through this group is his work.

We now submit some information concerning Jelena and Marijana that was obtained during the interviews with them.

Interview with Jelena

Did your life change since you have seen Our Lady?
Yes and no. Yes-I pray more and go to church more. No-We are still like other children.

Does Marijana have different messages than you?
They are not the same but they are similar.

Do you hear what Our Lady says to Marijana?
No. *(Each hears only her own message.)*'

Do you see Our Lady for the same amount of time every day?
It is never the same. Sometimes it is longer and sometimes, shorter. Sometimes it is only for a few seconds. *(Our Lady can tell her in a few seconds what it would take us a very long time to tell.)*

Do you have any special prayers to say?
The Mass is the best prayer.

Why does Our Lady appear to you?
She didn't say, but I don't think it is because I am especially good.

Interview with Marijana.

What does Our Lady say to you?
Most of all she tells me to pray and fast. And she talks to me about the conversion of people. She says to pray hard for peace in the world because the world is not at peace. She said that prayer is everything and without prayer we can do nothing. These are the most important things she talks about.

Can you ask Our Lady questions?
Sometimes I can. Almost all the time, her answer is to pray, fast and have a strong faith.

Does Our Lady ever tell you to do something for other people or to show them something?
No, except to give them the message to pray and fast and to tell them that prayer is most important.

Does Our Lady tell you how to pray?
You must desire to pray.

Do you write what Our Lady tells you in a book?
No, we tell it to the priest.

What has changed in you since this started?
Now that we see her, we pray more and go to church more. We have more desire to pray.

What would you say to Americans?
To pray and to fast.

Our Lady's messages to Jelena and Marijana must be seen in conjunction with her messages to the other six seers. The very special focus of the messages to the two girls has been prayer and fasting and especially prayer. Jelena: "She said that prayer is everything and without prayer we can do nothing." Marijana: "(Our Lady tells me) to give them the message to pray and fast and to tell them that prayer is most important."

Through the six seers, Our Lady is seeking to alert the world to the catastrophe toward which it is so rapidly heading and she is also telling it the means it must take to avert or at least alleviate that disaster. Through Jelena and Marijana, she is issuing a call to personal holiness: "I will carry you on the road to holiness. I want to sanctify you." Those who join the meditation prayer group "have to renounce everything and

put themselves totally at God's disposition."

Both series of messages involve a conversion, a turning to God. The messages to Jelena and Marijana are a call to a more complete and total turning to God than the messages to the other seers. The call to a deeper interior life seems to be symbolized by the more interior nature of the charism being bestowed on Jelena and Marijana who see Our Lady "in their hearts."

One thing is clear. God is preparing a prayerful people in Yugoslavia. This was already apparent from the original phase of the Medugorje event that began on June 24, 1981. It is being powerfully confirmed through the later phase of that event which started on December 15, 1982. This is a challenging message for there is nothing the church needs more today than a prayerful people.

Chapter 17

Our Lady's Two Thousandth Birthday

At the end of May, 1984, Our Lady told Ivan that August 5 would be the two thousandth anniversary of her birthday.[1] She said that to "console" her, her Son Jesus would present her with "a special gift" of many conversions throughout the world. In preparation for this day, she asked for three days of prayer and fasting.[2]

On July 29, Our Lady spoke again to Ivan about August 5, saying that the important thing was not to talk about it and publicize it, but to pray and fast. If this were done, "her Son would take care of every heart that comes to Medugorje." What Our Lady probably meant by this last phrase was that to be blessed by Jesus it was not necessary to be present bodily at Medugorje, but that it was sufficient to be there spiritually, with one's heart.

The people of Saint James parish responded magnificently to Our Lady's request for prayer and fasting. News about August 5 spread with amazing rapidity in the United States and there were a good number of people here in this country who fasted on bread and water for three days prior to that date.

In addition to praying and fasting in preparation for August 5, Our Lady told the seers to make the day of August 5 a day of prayer:

> I have dedicated all my life to you through the centuries. Let it not be too much to give that day to me. There will be conversions,

> changes in the lives of people, in those who are psychologically ill, in sinners. Especially young people will accept me.

August 3

To give the reader some idea of what happens at Medugorje on important occasions, to impart something of the "feel and flavor" of the place at such times, we share a report written by Margie Karminski who spent nine days there at the time of Our Lady's two thousandth birthday. While there, she kept a daily log of what happened and wrote her report soon after she returned to the United States.

Margie was accompanied by her husband Stan and daughter Katie and a priest friend. They flew into Split where they hired a car and drove off with their baggage and heavy video equipment.

They arrived in Medugorje on Friday, August third. As they approached the village, they saw new construction lining the road. On nearing the church, they had to weave their car carefully through the pilgrims that crowded the roads which were lined with buses and cars. The parking lot near the church was packed with buses, cars, campers and tents.

At 5 p.m. when they entered the church it was filling rapidly and becoming difficult to find seats. Confessions were being heard in the confessionals and along the side aisles. Their priest friend was pressed into service for English confessions.

Some pilgrims came in singing hymns in Italian. The aisles were soon clogged with people. So was the wide area between the front pews and the altars, and the steps leading up to the main altar. Pilgrims were streaming in and out of the room of the apparitions, where they prayed, took pictures and placed articles on the table over which Our Lady appeared.

A microphone system allowed the thousands who were forced to remain outside to follow and participate in what was going on within the church. Priests were hearing confessions in a number of places around the church for these people.

At about six-thirty, Father Tomislav Vlasic led the congregation in the recitation of the rosary. The seers were in the sacristy. After the rosary, they crossed the sanctuary and entered the room of the apparitions. Ivan, Marija, Jakov and

Ivanka were the only ones there. Vicka, who had a tumor in her head, was not feeling well enough to be present, and Mirjana no longer sees Our Lady. Only priests and sisters were allowed in the room of the apparition. In the church, a priest led the people in the recitation of the rosary while the seers were in the room.

The apparition lasted only a minute or two. When it was over, the seers came out and led the people in the recitation of the Creed, seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys and seven Glory Be's. Then they went into the sacristy.

There were some fifty-two priests concelebrating that night. When they had vested in the sacristy, the Mass started. Prior to that, Father Slavko Barbaric had been obliged to ask the people to move back from the altar. This had happened also on the Saturday night in October of 1983 when I had concelebrated Mass with about ten other priests. It is terribly hot during the day in the summer months and the church was like an oven.

The Mass was followed by the Way of the Cross. Three teenage altar boys with a cross accompanied the priest from station to station. Participation by the people in the praying and singing was excellent, as it had been during the Eucharist. The entire evening service lasted about three-and-one half hours. The Karminskis returned to their hotel in Mostar where they stayed for the first three of the nine days they spent in Medugorje.

August 4

When they returned to Medugorje on Saturday morning, August 4, they found many pilgrims already milling around. There was a first Mass in Croatian at 7 a.m. followed by others in Italian, French and German. The priest with the Karminskis said a Mass in English at 10 a.m. that was heavily attended. The Karminskis met English speaking pilgrims from the United States, England, Ireland, Holland and Rome. Sister Janja Boras, who speaks English quite well, had a briefing session after the English Mass during which she updated the people concerning the most recent events.

After the briefing session, the Karminskis visited with a nun at Potoci they had met on a previous trip. They returned with

the nun to the church at Medugorje late in the afternoon. The place was already crowded and the church was filled with people. Thousands were sitting, standing or kneeling outside, around the church. The loudspeakers carried the praying and singing going on within the church to those outside.

Priests were sitting in the fields, on the hay strewn lawns, on the walk alongside the church, everywhere, all hearing confessions. People waited patiently, then knelt beside the priests. All was done very devoutly and reverently.

Sixty-five to seventy priests concelebrated at the evening Mass. A number of them had to sit in the body of the church. Some of those in the sanctuary had to leave during the Mass because of the steaming heat. Others were fanning themselves and wiping their brows. Father Jozo Zovko, who had been pastor when the apparitions began, preached an inspiring homily. Prayer petitions were made in Croatian, Slovene, Italian, German, French, English, Polish, Dutch and other languages that were not identified. Priests brought Communion outside to the thousands who were there. A priest informed the people that Our Lady had told the seers during her apparition that night that she was very happy so many people had come and believed.

After the Mass, Fathers Tomislav Vlasic, Slavko Barbaric and a French priest prayed for healing. Those outside the church followed the prayers that reached them through the public address system. The rosary was incorporated into the healing service which lasted for an hour. It was 9:45 p.m. when everything was concluded. By then it was refreshingly cool outside.

As the four Americans were driving back to their hotel in Mostar, they encountered pilgrims walking home along the dark road about ten miles outside of Medugorje.

August 5

On Sunday, August 5, the Karminskis once again picked up the sister they knew at Potoci. On their way to Medugorje, the sister told them the nuns would often walk from Potoci to Medugorje, a distance of about thirty miles, starting at three in the morning and getting there at ten. As they drove along, they encountered a man walking alone on the road. The sister

identified him as a priest from Mostar whom she knew. He waved to them as they passed by. The sister said he had a car but wanted to walk-a distance of twenty-four miles. It was 2 p.m. then and about 90 degrees in the shade. Some ten miles from Medugorje, they saw pilgrims walking along the road, reciting the rosary. It is estimated that some 30,000 to 40,000 people came for August 5.

It was 2:30 p.m. when they arrived at the parish church. The priest in their group went over to the church to hear confessions in English and to prepare for a three o'clock English Mass. Another American priest concelebrated with him and many of the Americans whom the Karminskis had seen the previous day attended the Mass. A Mass for a very large number of Germans had preceded the English Mass. Most of them remained on for the English Mass so the Karminskis had to squeeze their way to the front of the church.

The sister from Potoci told Margie Karminski that two teenage girls from Dubrovnik said that around 7 a.m. Our Lady had appeared on Mount Krizevac for about 15 minutes. Her hands were uplifted and she turned slowly. Some people saw her dressed in brilliant white and some in colors. Sister told Margie that at first she had doubted their story but later believed it when others reported seeing the same things.[3]

That was not the only sign seen on August 5. Signs in the sun were also witnessed later in the day while the apparition was going on in the church. Two sisters from the United States were kind enough to give me written accounts of what they saw.

> We were sitting outside in a large crowd of people when someone tapped me on the shoulder and told me to look at the sun. When I looked, the sun was the size of a large dinner plate and it was spinning furiously. I immediately told my sister to look and we both witnessed this unusual phenomenon. This occurred on August 5, 1984, from 6:45 p.m. to 6:50.

> On August 5, my sister and I were sitting outside. The church was too crowded to enter. I was sitting on the ground next to my sister's wheelchair with my eyes closed. It was approximately 6:45 p.m. We prayed the five decades of the rosary and then the litany began.

> Suddenly, my sister said: "Look! Look at the sun!" I opened my eyes and looked up. It was the most amazing sight. I looked directly at the sun without it hurting my eyes at all. The glare and the rays that it usually emits were gone. As we watched the outer rim, we could see it spinning furiously. It continued like this for approximately five minutes. And then it was over. The glare returned and none of us could stare directly at it any longer.

These two sisters were privileged to witness another sign during their two week stay in Medugorje in August, 1984. Here is the account one of them gave of it.

> One day, we noticed the nuns and the priests kneeling on the ground and looking towards the mountain where the huge cross is. When we looked, the cross had disappeared. About an hour later, the cross was back on top of the mountain.

Margie Karminski said that the villagers have come to accept the frequency of the signs and wonders as normal. They say that they occur about every three or four weeks and last for two or three days. In her account of August 5, she also affirms that at the back of the church some people reported having seen the sun spinning during the apparition. Some saw it, and some did not, even though they looked at the sun at the same time as those who saw it.

A young American boy went up to the site of the first apparitions on August 4. The temperature was about 95 degrees. Yet, there were about a hundred people there, most of them in their bare feet, kneeling on the rocky surface in the scorching sun and praying the rosary. There was some commotion to the boy's left and when he turned to see what it was approximately thirty people were pointing to nearby Mount Krizevac. He looked and did not see anything. When he inquired what had happened, he was told that the cross on top of the mountain had been spinning for about a minute.[4]

Some eighty priests concelebrated at the Mass on August 5 which was presided over by Father Tomislav Vlasic. He spoke of an eighty year old woman who had walked 120 kilometers and of a young man who had walked from Belgium and whom the Karminskis had met earlier in the day. He also told of a criminal who had spent ten years in jail on a murder

charge and whom a priest had taken to Medugorje on a pilgrimage. Once there, he had cursed and blasphemed and asked: "What am I doing here?" He was taken to the room of the apparitions where he was completely overcome with intense pain from head to foot. The pain was so bad he had to lie down. The pain went up into his head and he suddenly saw every sin he had committed. He cried out: "O my God, what have I done? Now, I must do something to repair my life." He heard Jesus say to him: "You are mine now." His life has completely changed now and he goes to Mass and prays every day.

The seers said Our Lady was the most brilliant they had ever seen her. She was glowing and very happy. She said that she was "very pleased at the response of the people to her request" *(for three days of prayer and fasting in preparation for her birthday).* "Thank you for your coming," she said. "Thank you for all your prayers. Continue to pray. Make sacrifices. Convert yourselves. Pray, pray, don't stop praying."

In the interview with Jelena utilized above, she was asked about August 5. She replied that Our Lady "said she had never cried so much." And she actually shed three kinds of tears. First, "three normal tears," next "three tears of blood" symbolic of her "sorrow," and finally "three golden tears" representing her "happiness." She was very happy because the people had carried out her requests and "done everything she had asked them to do."

August 6

From August sixth to the eleventh, the day of their departure from Medugorje, the Karminski group was lodged and fed in the home of a local family. As Stan Karminski spoke Polish, which, like Croatian, is a Slavic language, this assured good communication. Of course, pantomime was used, too. The family - husband, wife and three children-was relatively well off and lived in a modern two story house on a rocky slope of Mount Podbrdo. Outside stairs led to the second floor where two rooms were put at the disposal of the Karminski group. All the water came from a cistern on a cliff above and behind the house. It had to be carried by bucket into the house. The toilet was on the second floor. Water for the sink, flush toilet and for baths was stored in the tub. As it had not rained for almost forty days and the cistern was low, this family was exposing itself by taking in four extra people.

The group entered its temporary home after the evening service. Typical of the warm hospitality they would experience in the days ahead, they found a delicious meal waiting for them. As is the custom there, the father sat at table with the group and the food was served by the mother and a daughter. After the homemade schnapps and wine, there was soup, a salad of fresh tomatoes, onions and dressing, boiled beef and homemade bread. The group would have all its breakfasts-Turkish coffee or tea, bread and sweet cookies- and evening meals with this kind family.

It was learned that the host's father had been one of the young men who had carried on his back the material with which the large cement cross had been built on Mount Krizevac in 1933. He had just died a few weeks previous at the age of eighty-four. It was also discovered that the hostess had a sister living in the Karminskis' home state of Pennsylvania.

August 7

On August 7, when the Mass and evening service had ended, it began to rain. Lightning struck and the power went off. But the rain was a great blessing as all the cisterns in the area were extremely low. Over the weekend, water trucks had come from Mostar to refill the cistern at St. James church as this was the only source of water for the thousands and thousands of pilgrims. The people in the church that night had to leave by candlelight.

When the Karminski group entered the driveway of their temporary home, they found their host waiting in the heavy rain with a flashlight. Because of the power failure, he had feared they might have some trouble finding their way in the dark. The power was not restored until the next day. That night dinner was by candlelight.

August 9

Thursday, August 9, was a particularly rewarding day for the Karminskis. They had been preparing a video documentary on the apparitions since their first visit to Medugorje in March of 1983. They had been able to tape the seers in ecstasy at that time. On their second visit in October of 1983, when I

had been with them, they had also been privileged to tape the seers in ecstasy on two different nights. In March of 1984, their daughters, Katie and Theresa, had come to Medugorje and taped the seers in ecstasy twice. Now on August 9 they were again allowed to tape the seers during the apparition.[5]

The Eucharist that followed the apparition was especially well illuminated because a German film crew was recording the happenings. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed for an hour after the Mass.

August 10

Katie and Margie were a little sick during the night. Since it had been planned to climb Mount Krizevac on the morning of August 10, Margie decided it would be better for her to forego the arduous forty minute climb and get some extra rest.

As the other three members of the group were coming down from the mountain, they met a number of people going up. Some were praying the rosary as they went along. All the women were in their bare feet. They were particularly struck by two of these who were around fifty years old. Their hostess was among those going up, and in her bare feet. She later told Margie she had climbed the mountain to pray for her, as she wasn't feeling so well. Margie said she had to ask herself if she would have climbed the mountain for a stranger who wasn't feeling well. She had climbed the mountain before and knew how steep and rocky the path was. The fact is that Margie was able to sleep until the other members of the group returned to the house. Then, she got up and joined them.

After the evening Mass and healing service that followed it, the family with whom they were living was shown the video tape Katie had made the previous evening in the room of the apparitions. They had never seen the young people during an apparition and were amazed and visibly moved at seeing them in ecstasy.

After the video session, there was a meal of bread and water, for this was a Friday. Then the group climbed Mount Podbrdo to the place of the first apparitions. This would be an eventful last night at Medugorje. What took place there that night belongs to a new phase in the Medugorje event and is the subject of Appendix 1.

Chapter 18

A Most Distinguished Visitor

The end of 1984 and the beginning of 1985 saw a most distinguished visitor come to Medugorje. It was His Excellency, the Most Reverend Frane Franic, Archbishop of Split. He had made an earlier visit on December 19, 1981, when he attended the evening service in the church with a scarf around his neck to conceal his Roman collar. He gave an account of his brief visit in *Vijesnik: The Messenger of the Diocese of Split*, in which he stated: "I returned very pleased."[1]

Archbishop Franic's next visit to Medugorje was on December 16-17, 1984. What made that particular visit especially significant were two interviews with His Excellency concerning Medugorje. One of these preceded his visit by a week and the other took place at the end of his two day stay in Medugorje. Both interviews are extremely important. As they are so closely related in time, we shall speak of them together.

The interview that preceded His Excellency's second visit to Medugorje took place on December 6, 1984. It was conducted by *Glas Koncila, The Voice of the Council*, a Catholic paper published in Zagreb. It appeared in the December sixteenth issue of the paper. We quote the more important part of the interview.

> *Glas Koncila* - Most Reverend Archbishop, our readers are showering us with questions about Medugorje. They are puzzled by a variety of news items about the alleged prohibition of pilgrimages to that place issued by our Conference of Bishops and the Holy See.

Archbishop Franic - I was not personally present at the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia which issued the statement to the public.

Concerning the Bishops' statement which says that there should be no officially led pilgrimages to Medugorje, I am in agreement with my brother Bishops. It is my understanding that they wanted above all to abstain from final conclusions before an investigation was made by the Church. I am not in favor of curtailing the pilgrimages, but I do think that the pilgrimages should not be officially organized. I am convinced that the Bishops wanted to say that the pilgrimages should not be led to Medugorje in the name of the Holy See or in the name of some diocese. All other pilgrimages should be considered private. And these pilgrimages, as I see during this month, are not stopping. Instead of lessening, they are intensifying. I consider this as positive.

Here I would like to express my own opinion which I state privately as a believer, not as a Bishop but based on my personal conviction that these events are of supernatural origin. This I conclude from the resulting fruits which no one can deny. That is the great intensified prayer, penance and conversion that the Blessed Mother recommends as a way to peace. The Virgin said the same thing at Fatima as well as at Lourdes...

The Virgin is advising and guiding us once again, repeating that which was forgotten of her message at Fatima, penance, prayer and conversion. This is what is happening daily at Medugorje.

I cannot accept the fear that it may all end up to be a fraud of the devil and that it all rests on wrong assumptions concerning the supernaturality of the visions. Almost every day, I meet up with many hundreds of Italian pilgrims and among them are professors, medical doctors and other intellectuals. The other day, November 3, the president of the Italian Demo Christian Group was in Medugorje. He climbed the hill, made the stations of cross and went to confession. How could I possibly tell all those intellectuals, theologians, and experts that this is all of the devil...How they are all going to confession, praying and being converted. To me, that seems absurd.

I also consider it absurd to expect that pilgrimages be halted until the Conference of Bishops decides whether the apparitions result from God's action or that of the devil. Namely, if these pilgrimages, prayers and conversions were to be halted, that is,

actually strangled, and if all these were to be extinguished, nobody would care whether or not it is from God, since nothing would be there anymore anyway. We might only want to know if it died off by itself or if it was strangled by an unlawful force.

Many of us are trying to explain these events theologically and scientifically. I myself am one of the smallest of these. I am only a witness of my own personal inner conviction. World experts and specialists of every possible description are studying it, often going there privately. The Bishops' Conference should be thankful to God for already having an abundance of literature on the cases studied and for being able to hear the voice of the theological and scientific experts of the world.

If the members of the Commission *(established by Bishop Pavao Zanic of Mostar, in whose diocese Medugorje is located)* wish to act scientifically, they should adhere to scientific methods, namely, examining sources and literature. This is the fundamental methodology of scientific research. The sources in this case are the children visionaries and their messages, the piety of the pilgrims and the feeling of the people of faith. The literature is what is being written about it. Interviews are necessary, speaking to the pilgrims and observing their faith or their lack of it.

Glas Koncila - There is some apprehension that the visionaries may be intentionally or unintentionally deceiving us. For example, if they really did see the Virgin, they should already in this world be confirmed in grace. Their every sin thereafter would be proof against the supernaturality of the apparitions.

Archbishop Franic - I always said that it is necessary to examine each message separately since there are not even two messages that are on the same supernatural level. There are human imperfections in the minds and hearts of the young visionaries and their contact with the supernatural depends on how well they are able to overcome those obstacles at that moment. These *(obstacles)* could also be suggestions coming from other people. Rene Laurentin told me that he found a statement of Saint Catherine of Siena that the Virgin appeared to her and said that she was not the Immaculate Conception. Evidently, the saint followed the suggestions of her Dominican teachers who at that time before the proclamation of the dogma held that theological opinion. That suggestion was so powerful in her mind that not even during mystical

ecstasy was she able to immerse herself so deeply in God as to overcome it. Thus, she substituted a human suggestion for God's word. This is why the messages need to be studied one by one. For instance, those alleged messages *(received from the Blessed Virgin)* concerning the two Franciscans who were expelled from their order. I spoke with them and advised them to submit. In the same manner, I advised the Franciscans in Herzegovina to turn over those seven precious parishes to the Bishop.[2] It would surely please the Madonna if they did. But then, this is where human weaknesses come in.

It is therefore necessary when making examinations to exclude human imperfection and find out the true nucleus, the essence of the revelations. Each message contains its own meaning depending on the exact moment *(when it is given)* and on the degree of the visionaries' readiness. People have their faults. Children remain children and can, when not in ecstasy, say something untrue. They may cheat on something, they may be disobedient or absent-minded in prayer. They are not saints.

Glas Koncila - Are you requesting that these reported private revelations be approached by the methods of biblical investigation?

Archbishop Franic - Exactly. Scientific exegesis should be applied. I observed (certain things myself). And I spoke with some experts, for example, with *(Father)* Laurentin, with Father *(Michael)* Scanlon, who is president of a Franciscan University *(Steubenville)* in the United States and with Father Teodozije, a great mystic in Rome, and also with some French theologians. They all agree that these phenomena should be seriously investigated and not spoken of beforehand as being an hallucination. An hallucination lasting three years would certainly destroy even the most healthy mind. If the children have been suffering from hallucinations for three years and have remained healthy, this would already be a miracle.

Two days ago, some Italians who were at my place told me that 139 documents relative to healings had already been collected. A Jesuit in Naples, Father Massimo Rastrelli, told me about a lady's healing from cancer for which they were gathering documentation. Of fifty registered cases, twenty-five have been selected for further investigation. Once I had seventeen specialists from Milan with me, some of whom were university professors, who had examined the children during the ecstasies

with a variety of electronic instruments. Here then in a word, is my own personal conviction.

Glas Koncila - It is said that it would be prudent for the church authorities to forbid the children to lead the praying of the seven Our Fathers and the Creed and to prohibit their coming together in the church for the apparitions.

Archbishop Franic - Look, this is not happening in my diocese. The local bishop is the competent and responsible authority. I do not know whether or not the Bishop of Mostar will prohibit the Madonna's appearances in the church and forbid the children from leading the prayers of the Our Father. If he does do this, then I will submit to it. While it is open and free, I take it that any priest as well as any bishop may go there as a private believer and pray.

The interview that took place at the end of Archbishop Franic's second visit to Medugorje was conducted by the Franciscans. We quote only the more pertinent parts of the lengthy interview.

Interviewer - Most Reverend Archbishop, I would like to use this opportunity to talk with you. Every visitor who can help us govern ourselves here is precious to us. Is there anything you would like to say?

Archbishop Franic - The first time I could be present with the visionaries during an apparition was on December 16 and 17....During these two days with you Franciscans, I find you have been accused here and elsewhere in the world of being the main perpetrators in orchestrating and manipulating everything. Some of your adversaries admit that people are coming, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and converting, but, they believe that to be the fruit of the faith of the people of Herzegovina, people of the mountains, who are unspoiled. They believe you Franciscans are intervening in order that, in your disagreement with the Bishop, you may get the parishes you feel you are entitled to. Therefore, you are considered to be manipulating the faith of the people and the pilgrims for your material gain and for your prestige in order to remain the leaders of the people, as in the past, without having to share that role with the Bishop and the secular clergy. I have observed none of these features in the Franciscans of Medugorje, your only goal being to respond to the call which you feel in your souls for conversion and for the glory of God. I have seen a

great piety in you. Last night I told a Portuguese priest here that I found the Franciscans to be polite, pious, self-denying and working only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Therefore, I reject these objections...

Our Lady is appearing here. That is my conviction. I saw the children twice during the visions and I also visited them in their homes. I must say that these visits to the homes of Vicka, Marija, little Jakov and Ivan convinced me even more.

I saw Ivan. I saw that he has a life's dream and that he, as a man, will find his way in life. My meeting with the visionaries surprised me very much. My personal impression of them is very good. For example, Ivan did not succeed in the seminary, but I see he knows where he is going. God is showing him the way into the future and, obviously, with his cooperation.

Vicka is a direct and open type. She is sharp, but sincere, in her expressions; and she has her calling. I believe Our Lady is relating her life to Vicka, who is faithfully recording it. She talks about her illness or illnesses as something unessential, even though they are serious. She passes it off lightly — I was surprised. She looks at her calling only in the supernatural light. She is mature for her age and has preserved her own nature. I do not see anything bad in her. I can only say that grace is leading her, Our Lady is leading her.

Visions like these are the lowest kind of charisms. The work of the Holy Spirit is present there. I am convinced by the training of the children. All of them show a great maturity. Little Jakov made a very good impression on me, especially during the apparitions and in his home. He is very sober and, at the same time, very lively. He is a dear little boy, mentally healthy and likeable.

Marija recovered from an illness which could have ended in an unusual way. She is also bearing that as if it is nothing. She speaks about illness and health as if the two are the same. Let only God's will be done. She is so resigned in all this that it is obvious that she is open to the Holy Spirit. I have to conclude that the Holy Spirit is leading her, and leading her according to her own nature.

Interviewer - We were speaking about Marija. She is one of the most precious souls who, like a seismograph, reacts to all the impulses of the Spirit. She is entirely open to God,

like a glass which receives everything that the Lord tells her.

Archbishop Franic - Yes, that is true. Marija is like that. She is like that by nature. We know every character is capable of holiness. Each has its own expression, and it does not necessarily mean that she is on the highest level of holiness if she is like that. However, she does manifest a greater depth in her relations with people, a greater kindness; or it may be that her behavior pleases us more. Her gentleness is completely feminine and wholly Christian.

She gave me a prophecy. On December 17, the day of my episcopal consecration, she asked Our Lady a question. On that day, very privately, I celebrated the thirty-fourth anniversary of my episcopal consecration with a Mass which I led in Medugorje. I was completely incognito. No one mentioned that I was an archbishop but simply a priest among other priests. I asked Marija if I would be imposing too much to ask Our Lady if she had a message for me. I expressly said that I would be happy if she would give me some admonition for my conversion, if she would point her finger at my weaknesses and tell me where I need to be careful and where I need to improve. However, I received word that, from this day on, greater suffering is expected of me and that Our Lady will be with me in that greater suffering. It will probably be a reaction to my stand regarding Medugorje. I have already seen this in Rome and at home also. However, we will see what happens.

We also visited Jelena and Marijana. They are not in the group of visionaries. They made an even greater impression on me because they have inner locutions. Through these, the truths of the faith are being explained, but in a deeper way. There, everything is together; the visions and locutions are united. But the locutions are on a higher level of experience. They are on an intellectual level and give the impression of a greater reflectiveness and inner experience than *(the apparitions)* of the visionaries.

In a word, I would put all this into the framework of the spiritual renewal in the Church which Mary started in Lourdes and in Fatima. Mary can't do anything without the Holy Spirit. She wasn't able to conceive in her womb and in her heart, without the Holy Spirit. As St. Augustine said, 'first she conceived in her heart with her faith, and then in her womb with her body.' All this happened in her through

the Holy Spirit. And today in the Church, she cannot give Christ to the world without the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is leading the renewal of the Church through Mary. She is not a goddess from whom we are expecting salvation. She is only an intercessor, a mediator between us and God and Christ. Her apparitions and the signs of her motherly love come from the Holy Spirit who, together with Christ, is embracing the world. Through the direction of the Father, she is giving love to the world and redeeming it. Therefore, I especially see the work of the Holy Spirit in the charism of locutions, communicating with words and inner messages. I am convinced that the same Spirit which is working in them, is working in all the renewal movements in the Church.

I would especially like to emphasize that the young, of whom there are a good number in Split, say that they have received an impetus for prayer in Medugorje. In Split, they have adoration every Thursday at Saint Philip's. They also have Mass every Saturday where they pray in their own way. They say that in Medugorje they have received a call not only to come to the religion classes but also to pray together and celebrate Mass. Therefore, this is something that has grown here, grassroots. This is real faith, real Church - Pentecost. This is de-politicized Church, Church which is looking not only for the glory of God, to give him thanks and praise, but also is endeavoring to save people. This is the Church which, through Christ's saving work, is bringing people to God, spreading his kingdom and leading them to the eternal kingdom.

We know that the early Church emphasized prayer, prayer meetings, instructions and catechesis. For many centuries, the Church was led through instruction at prayer meetings. I see the future of the Church in this. And, I see a new Church being born in front of our eyes, the Church of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Jesus Crucified and Risen.

However, when the Spirit comes among us, we do not recognize him. We have become so crystallized in our classical pastoral work that when the Holy Spirit brings us new ways, we do not understand them. I do not see any discrepancy between Medugorje and the Holy Spirit who is working in different ways in our Church and in the world. I see continuity in Medugorje and the culmination of all his ways.

I absolutely never expected that the whole world would be attracted to and touched by Medugorje, which, to my great surprise, has become the culmination of the working of the Holy Spirit. I see that Our Lady is calling all of us to come here from different countries to recognize brothers and sisters in each other. In that way, we who are different communicate with each other and, under the embrace of Our Lady, recognize each other as real brothers and sisters. We are becoming one because faith is bringing us closer to each other.

I especially see the importance of the role of Medugorje in the ecumenical work of the Church where Our Lady is bringing us closer, uniting us with our brothers from the Orthodox church, the Moslems, and even our brother Marxists. Our Lady is spreading only love. She is the mother of all and she is teaching us to love even at moments when we feel that our brothers do not understand us and interpret us falsely. One can conclude, according to what is happening here, what is being talked about here, and what the children say, that one universal love is being born here through the gospel, which is recommending that we love all men even when it seems they are our enemies.

I believe the main thing for those of us who respect Our Lady of Medugorje is to strengthen our faith in God and in man. I believe that we have to be ready for suffering and lack of understanding, to spread love even where we do not find it, so that the message and victory of Our Lady are not defeated but become the salvation of everyone.

Personally, I return from Medugorje with a firm conviction that I should never allow anxiety to arise in me toward priests or believers who think differently. I desire to remain always in the frame of mind which I experienced during these two days with you Franciscans who are working here day and night, hearing confessions, preaching, teaching people how to pray to God through meditation and the liturgy. The central place is preserved for the sacraments and for evangelism.

Interviewer - I would like to ask a few other things. I would like to return to the dimension of the visionaries' sufferings. Jakov's and Ivanka's mothers died. Vicka and Marija have unusual cycles of illness and attacks. And, really, they talk about these things as being normal or as what must be.

Archbishop Franic - I see that they look at things in terms of eternity. I was impressed by the way they talk about illness and suffering. It seems to me that they would even accept death in this simple way, with complete self-surrender. And we know they are still very young.

Interviewer - I have personally urged Marija to go with me to a doctor. Almost crying, she responded to me: 'God has his plan as well.' I told her: 'Marija, unless you know that you will rise like a deer tomorrow, I have to tell you to go to a doctor today.'

Archbishop Franic - Because they are in contact with the other world, it seems to us that they behave strangely. They should be instructed that God has given us an intellect to use. This should be considered because it might end in fanaticism.

Interviewer - I must tell you about yesterday when Marija said, in a completely incidental manner: 'You know, I wish to offer to my dear God, for the intention of the Bishop, all the suffering that comes to me because of him. The Lord is asking me for this sacrifice for him so that peace and love may come among all of us.' Her look, her intention, the offering and sacrifice of her own life, of her own sufferings, is something exalted.

What stand should we take toward those who are attacking us? Should we be silent or should we respond?

Archbishop Franic - There should be an information center for events in Medugorje so that people will know what is happening there. Things should be explained in a very peaceful way, with no attacks, but only good information. This would help you, me and all those of good will. Sometimes we receive information which, in itself, is bad because it is false. We have to find a good solution for this.

Interviewer - You have already said that, globally, you do not see any theological difficulties with the report of the Commission *(of investigation established by the Bishop of Mostar)*. We asked what these difficulties might be. In spite of all our efforts, it seems to me we could not find any difficulties. Laurentin also asked what the difficulties were about. What do you think?

Archbishop Franic - I know that the best experts were not able to find any difficulties. Our Lady has not come to divide parishes. I believe that justice demands that the Holy See be obeyed. I believe that the two Franciscans who were expelled from the Order should submit and start their rehabilitation. After all, the Church has given her discernment.

I think the disciplinary objection is not in direct connection with Medugorje, but some adversaries, outside and within, are connecting the two. If this gets resolved, every objection, and even the possibility of objection, would be removed. Some people cannot understand that the Holy Spirit would be directly engaged in the Church in this extraordinary way. We know that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and that he leads the Church through the hierarchy. That's true. But, he also leads it directly. He gives his active graces and he gives direct inspirations to the people in the form of active graces. These inspirations can be in a visible form, like the visions, or in the form of inner locutions, prophecies, and miraculous healings. It is the same Holy Spirit who gives different gifts.

Again, the Holy Spirit directs everything through gifts, charisms, which were important not only for the early Church but are also for our contemporary Church. Some people still do not understand. They think that this is some kind of fiction, fanaticism or unbalanced piety. But it is, in reality, traditional prayer and piety.

Interviewer-Some who find this a serious objection have posed the question: 'How is it possible that Our Lady is appearing every day?'

Archbishop Franic - This is the work of the Holy Spirit and it is not something entirely new. For example, P. Amroth, the editor of the leading Marian magazine in Italy, *Mater Dei*, said that Saint Veronica Juliani had daily visions of Our Lady all her life.

Interviewer - Then wouldn't it be better to ask 'Why?' and not 'Is it possible?'

Archbishop Franic - Yes, that should be asked. And Mary has answered that already: peace and reconciliation. This is most important to us today, too, because we have been wounded by our contemporary way of life and by the difficulties and ideologies which affect us. Families have been damaged as well as societies and international relations. The danger of a horrible war is threatening. What do you need more than peace and reconciliation? Everything else revolves around that!

Interviewer - Many people, especially our Bishop, are perplexed by the talk about the great sign in Medugorje. Every

week, I speak with the visionaries in the name of the parish. I have asked them a number of times about the sign. They always say: 'Our Lady instructed us. We have seen it. We know. There is no need to worry. As for us, we must pray and fast.' They say that there would have been other signs if we had accepted the messages better and if Our Lady had not found so much resistance.

Ought we to understand the talk about the great sign in terms of the Apocalypse?

Archbishop Franic - The Apocalypse does talk about the great sign: a woman, clothed in the sun appears in the skies with a dragon opposing her. Maybe the sign is beginning to be realized in this way. When the prophets spoke, they did not know what they were saying in their prophecies. For example, prophets in the Old Testament spoke about Christ as King of Kings. Were they able to know that he could be a King on the cross? They did not comprehend properly what God was saying throughout time.

The talk about the great sign is prophetic language. When the children speak, they do not understand many of the things they say since they did not study theology. Therefore, we are here to explain all their expressions about the words, messages, signs and so on. This cannot be done too literally because that could lead to fanaticism, nor can it be rationalized because that would be from the other world.

Archbishop Frane Franic's next visit to Medugorje occurred on January 23-24, 1985. On January twenty-third, he was in the room of the apparitions during the ecstasy of the seers. Among the other people who witnessed the apparition were some priests from the Archbishop's diocese of Split and a priest from the United States. Ivan, Marija and Vicka were the only seers present that evening. Our Lady gave a special message for the priests who were there. In the sacristy, Vicka relayed the message Our Lady had given for the priests: "I am pleased with the presence of these priests and assure them of my love, patience and maternal tenderness." One of the priests from the diocese of Split spoke English and translated it for the American priest from whom I received it.

On January twenty-third, a young lady from the United States was walking near the church when the man of the



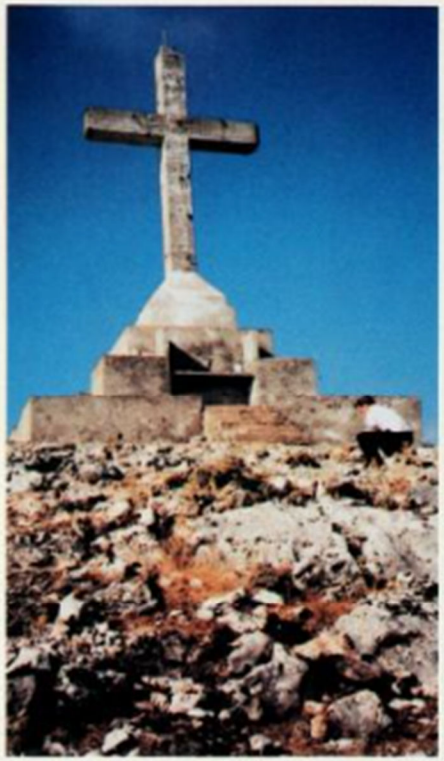
Mount Podbrdo, site of first apparitions



The path up Mt. Podbrdo



Looking toward Mt. Krizevac (center peak)



The cross on Mt. Krizevac



Fr. Tomislav Vlasic preaching at the cross on Mt. Krizevac



The path up Mt. Krizevac



The lower slope of Mt. Podbrdo overlooking Bijakovici and the village church of St. James



Church of St. James, site of daily apparitions from early January, 1982 until April 2, 1985



Waiting for the seers in the small room of the apparitions



The seers entering the room of the apparitions



Peeking into the room of the apparitions



The room of the apparitions



Vicka, Ivanka and Mirjana



Jakov and Ivan



Jakov, Ivanka and Marija



Marija



Jakov, Ivanka, Marija and Ivan



Marija and Ivan



Marija, Ivanka, Jakov and Vicka



Vicka

Jakov





Jakov, Ivanka and Marija



Vicka and Ivanka



Jakov, Ivanka and Marija
People place articles on table before the apparition



Concelebrated Mass following apparition



Confession in the open



Overflow crowd



Archbishop Frane Franic of Split concelebrates Mass in room of apparitions, January 1985



The rectory (room to the right) where the daily apparitions have been occurring since April 2, 1985



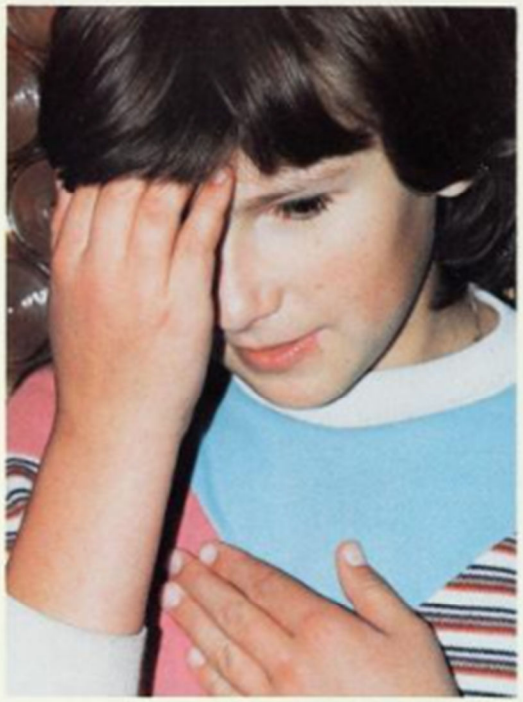
Archbishop Franic speaks with Vicka, January 1985



Vicka, Jakov and Ivanka



Ivan, Marija, Jakov and Vicka



Jelena Vasilj who had a locution (words without any vision) with Our Lady on December 29, 1982 and to whom Our Lady appeared a short time afterwards





Marijana Vasilj to whom Our Lady first appeared on March 19, 1983

house where she was staying called out to her and told her to look at the cross on Mount Krizevac. She looked and saw that it was a brilliant white. She saw it that way for about ten seconds. She said that the sky was overcast and for that reason the brilliancy of the cross could not be attributed to the sun. The man told her that the cross had been that way for twenty minutes and that he had been looking for her to tell her about it. He added that he had not seen it like that for six months.

"There will be signs," Our Lady had said on the feast of Mount Carmel. We have mentioned those that have come to our attention. Were there others? It is likely that there were.

On January twenty-fourth, the Archbishop was once again present at the evening apparition in the church. Our Lady had a special message for him. One of the seers transmitted it to him immediately, while he was still in the room of the apparitions. He was told that Our Lady had come over to where he was sitting, had given him a blessing and had said that she wanted him to be assured of her continued prayer. The American priest was also present at the apparition. He said that the Archbishop was visibly moved. "Elated" and "like a humble child", he got up and embraced all the priests who were present in the room with him.

Chapter 19

Renewal In The Holy Spirit At Medugorje

What role has the charismatic renewal played in the Medugorje event? This is a matter that demands clarification as there has been considerable misunderstanding about it. The misunderstanding consists in attributing to the charismatic renewal in Medugorje a role that it has actually not had. Specifically, this misunderstanding comes from assuming that the charismatic renewal has manifested itself at Medugorje in the same way it has in this country.

This misunderstanding is quite comprehensible and basically derives from a lack of information concerning all the facts. Indeed, the facts that were initially obtained seemed to imply a strong influence of the charismatic renewal at Medugorje. What were these facts?

The apparitions can be said to have had their origin at Rome at The International Leaders Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal held in May of 1981. And the person most involved in this was a "charismatic" priest from Yugoslavia, Father Tomislav Vlasic, who was prayed over for the healing of the Church and was given a prophecy concerning the apparitions. This in itself would be very meaningful to people in the charismatic movement in the United States. But, there were other facts that would also be very meaningful and misleading to them.

Father Tomislav Vlasic was put in charge of the spiritual direction of the group of young people seeing Our Lady. He

has stated: "Once I asked Our Lady through the seers if it was good to have a prayer group in this parish and bring them into the renewal of the Spirit. *(Her answer was:)* 'It is good, and not only in the parish of Medugorje, but it should be everywhere in all parishes.'"[1]

A prayer group was started in the parish and all the seers are said to have been "baptized in the Holy Spirit."[2]

Some of the priests and some of the sisters who staff the parish of Saint James are also said to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

From the above facts, it would be quite normal for American Catholics who are in the renewal to assume that the renewal would play a considerable role at Medugorje. And there are still more facts that could easily confirm them in that opinion. Healing teams, composed of a seer and a few other people, prayed publicly over people in the church each night after the Eucharistic celebration[3] in very much the same fashion as is done in the United States after charismatic prayer meetings. Finally, Our Lady gave the seers specific instructions on how to pray over people for healing.

On the basis of all these facts, it would seem normal to think that the charismatic renewal has played an important part in what has gone on at Medugorje. The Holy Spirit has indeed played a vital role, but the charismatic renewal as it is known in the United States does not seem to have been a very significant factor in what has taken place there.

It is important to observe that Father Tomislav Vlasic joined the parish staff only after the apparitions had been going on daily for some two months. Neither Father Jozo nor Father Zrinko nor any of the Sisters were "charismatic." It is Father Tomislav Vlasic who introduced the charismatic renewal in Saint James parish. He only arrived there on August 18, 1981 after Father Jozo had been imprisoned. This is the answer to those who have expressed the fear that the apparitions might have been a subjective response to enthusiastic charismatic influences. If Father Tomislav Vlasic could ever have been described as enthusiastic about the charismatic renewal, that description does not fit him today.

An important characteristic of the charismatic renewal is

the manifestation of the charismatic gifts, which usually occurs through the members of a "prayer" group. Now, what is not generally known is that Father Tomislav has some apprehension about these gifts. Admitting that there are "some" of these gifts at Medugorje but "not many," he added: "But, I say it would have been better for us had there been none." His main apprehension concerning the gifts would appear to stem from the special situation in which he finds himself. "The people and the priests are not able to understand these gifts," he explained. "They would only be obstacles for the priests, given that many of them say that the charismatic movement is something parapsychological." And people "would say that priests have brought or imported parapsychological phenomena into Medugorje. So, now they say it is Our Lady and this, according to me, is better..." He also raises the issue of the leadership of the prayer group: "If a leader does not pray enough, then to belong to such a group is not very important."

Another danger Father Tomislav sees in the charismatic movement is the danger of an exclusivist or elitist attitude on the part of those who participate in it. This results in exaggerating the importance of the movement and looking down on those who do not participate in it. He believes that this restricts our freedom and is not in keeping with the great respect for our freedom which Our Lady has manifested at Medugorje. As he has expressed it: "Here, I have seen that Our Lady never brings a recipe to anyone. If a person inquires: 'What shall I do in this situation? Shall I follow this vocation or that vocation?,' Our Lady never replies otherwise than: 'You must decide.'" This was the case of the seers who asked her if she wanted them to follow a religious vocation.

"So," Father Tomislav concludes, "we now work here on universal principles that are fundamental to Christianity: prayer, fasting, love and peace. It is our wish that everyone be able to participate, the old and the young, all on this wide path. The prayer groups, the charismatic groups, the meditation groups would be groups to deepen faith, to bring all this to the people, to bring them a deeper spiritual life. I say, according to me, it is not very important to belong to a charismatic group. It is not very important, but it is very important to let

the Spirit live within us."

Although Father Tomislav has reservations about the charismatic movement, he is well aware of the importance of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual life. He pointed out that Our Lady has stressed this in her messages to the seers."...In this year (1983), Our Lady asks us to pray and fast so that the Holy Spirit will descend on earth. It is a matter of renewal in the Spirit of the entire world. It is not only a matter of prayer groups."[4]

It would seem that Our Lady is counting especially on the "meditation prayer group" for the deeper work of the Holy Spirit at Medugorje. In August of 1984 it was definitely the only prayer group in the parish.

Father Vlasic develops this point in his August 15, 1983 interview:

> People wonder why Our Lady told us to pray seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's, and the Creed and why she says one should pray the rosary. What I have understood is that Our Lady is giving concrete means which are acceptable to everyone.
>
> Often Our Lady underlines that it is not good to pray seven Our Fathers or any other prayer, with the lips, but that one has to pray with the heart. So one day, she asked the people to pray three Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's in order that the Holy Spirit might descend on the earth, but to pray them at least for fifteen minutes, that is with the heart...
>
> Our Lady prayed with one seer (Jelena) and taught us a rosary of Jesus Christ. It is a meditated rosary with spiritual songs and spontaneous prayers and also with Our Fathers, Glory Be's and the Creed.
>
> One can see that Our Lady has given practical means to people *(means adapted to their capacity)*, and to those who have advanced in the spiritual life, in meditation, she has also given concrete means (i.e. *the meditated rosary)*.[5]

One has to see Father Tomislav's coolness toward charismatic prayer groups in its proper perspective. He finds himself in a very special situation. He is in a parish where apparitions have a message for the entire world at a moment of great crisis when it is faced with a catastrophe of staggering proportions. Nothing must be allowed to distract from this

central fact. The charismatic gifts that manifest themselves in prayer groups could divert attention from the apparitions at Medugorje if they were significantly manifested there. God is doing something unique in this humble village. The charismatic renewal at Medugorje must be viewed there in that light.

Father Tomislav's attitude toward charismatic prayer groups must not be allowed to obscure the fact that Our Lady did say it would be good to have a prayer group at Saint James parish and that all parishes should have one. Also, part of Our Lady's message at Medugorje is "praying and fasting so that the Holy Spirit will descend upon the earth."

The meditation prayer group and the spiritual directives Our Lady gives for the personal sanctification of its members are very enlightening and help put the apparitions to the six young people in their proper perspective. Everything at Medugorje seems to point to encouraging personal holiness. During the second phase of the apparitions to the six seers, Our Lady concentrated on giving personal spiritual guidance to all members of the group. That in itself was an indication of what Our Lady was seeking above all at Medugorje.

The simple folk of Saint James parish and indeed of the entire area have evidently sensed this, as is manifested by the almost unbelievable spiritual transformation that has taken place and which so deeply impresses all who go there, especially priests whom one would expect to be particularly sensitive to this. The love of these peasants for the Eucharist, as evidenced by their attendance at daily Mass, their monthly three days of intensified prayer, penance and confession that ends with the Feast of Reconciliation, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, their outstanding practice of the great virtue of love as shown through forgiveness among themselves and through generous kindness and hospitality toward visitors, their frequent fasting on bread and water, all these things show that these people are fast becoming a holy people. None of the major Marian apparitions of our era have produced such results. God is truly doing something new at Medugorje.

This amazing outpouring of God's love has a sobering aspect to it. If the measure of this outpouring of God's love is the measure of the catastrophe that menaces us, then this catastrophe is great indeed. We would do well to remember what happened when we did not listen to the heavenly warning given us at Fatima.

Having been personally involved since 1970 in a leadership role in the charismatic renewal in the United States, I was intrigued by the reports I read about the apparitions at Medugorje and what was said about the Holy Spirit in these reports. It was evident that through Mary God was telling us something about the Holy Spirit and the charismatic renewal. I sought every bit of information I could obtain about this, particularly through people who I learned were going to Medugorje. I asked them to obtain information based upon specific questions. It soon became apparent that the charismatic prayer group at Saint James parish was not functioning like prayer groups in the United States.

When I went to Medugorje in October 1983, I had quite a long interview with the pastor of the parish, Father Tomislav Pervan, using an interpreter who knew English. Father Pervan made it clear that God was doing something unique at Medugorje and that we had to be careful about reading into the charismatic experience going on there what was happening in other places. He felt so strongly about this that he said one could not fully understand what was going on in Medugorje without living in the locality. From some of the facts that came forth in the interview, I can understand why he said that. The parish life in Medugorje is so different from what it is in the United States. It is a very intense parish life, centering on the church and on the prayers and the liturgical life that takes place there. And the priests are naturally very much involved in all this.

I quote directly the following section of Father Pervan's interview for it seems to sum up quite well the renewal in the Holy Spirit that is going on at Medugorje:

> Here we are going back to the Holy Spirit. Here there is no emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not as important as the life *(according to the Holy*

Spirit). Your have to live the life according to the Holy Spirit and if you live the life according to the Holy Spirit, you will receive the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Something that indicates that the charismatic gifts have been far from featured is the coming of Father Emilien Tardif to Medugorje in August of 1983. Father Tardif is the priest who prayed over Father Tomislav Vlasic in Rome in May, 1981, and who received the prophetic message: "Do not worry, I am sending you my Mother." He came with another Canadian priest, also a missionary of the Sacred Heart, Father Pierre Rancourt, and with Doctor Philippe Madre, a member of the French charismatic community of the Lion of Juda. They arrived in Medugorje on August 23. Their intention was to "stir up the charisms, especially the gift of healing" which had already manifested itself at Medugorje. They had planned to spend some time there. They started their session on August 23. They were so successful and there were so many healings that word of their activities quickly reached the police who were alarmed and arrested them on August 25. They were freed the next day at 1:30 in the morning and told to leave the country by midnight or they would be incarcerated. They were also forbidden to return to Yugoslavia for a full year.[6] This episode is more eloquent than words and clearly corroborates what Fathers Vlasic and Pervan said about the low profile of the charismatic gifts in Medugorje. One has to wonder if it wasn't for the best that the "awakening session" did end quickly. Thus attention was not diverted away from the apparitions of Our Lady.

It is certain that the Holy Spirit is very active in Medugorje through the spiritual guidance that is flowing from the apparitions to the original six seers and from those to Jelena and Marijana. However, there are two other factors that are less evident but from which we can learn much. These are the role of the priests and the devotion of the people to Mary.

The parish staff of priest and sisters and the parishioners form a single community. The spiritual leadership of this parish family is indisputedly in the hands of the priests and it is exercised with wisdom and love. Father Tomislav Vlasic is a key person. He directs the six seers and is very much involved

in the various kinds of prayer that go on in the parish. His very important role in the apparitions and especially in the accompanying outpouring of the Holy Spirit was prophesied at Rome when he asked to be prayed over for the healing of the Church. It will be remembered that the part of the prophetic message concerning him came in the form of a mental image or vision. He was seen sitting on a chair surrounded by a vast throng and streams of water were seen pouring out to the people from beneath his chair. He was being told that in the forthcoming apparitions of Our Lady at Medugorje he would be used powerfully in bringing to people "the rivers of living water" (Jn 7:38) that would flow so abundantly at that place.

Although Father Tomislav Vlasic's role has been very important, the entire parish staff is involved in various capacities in what is taking place at Medugorje. One of the sisters, Sister Janja Boras, is very close to the girls involved in the apparitions. So, what we are witnessing in regard to the renewal in the Holy Spirit at Medugorje is what happens when that renewal in a parish is guided by the official spiritual leaders of the parish.

Another thing we are witnessing is how the renewal prospers and bears abundant fruit when Mary is duly recognized and honored, when people involved in the renewal not only have great love for her, but also openly manifest and express that love. This is a vital lesson that is being taught at Medugorje.

Father John Bertolucci was deeply impressed by what he saw at Medugorje in March of 1983 when he visited the home of one of the parish families. Shortly after his return to America, he gave a talk on March 26, at the New York General Charismatic Conference. The talk was entitled "The Grace of Pentecost." In it he gave this witness to the new insight he received in Yugoslavia concerning the importance of Mary's role in the plan of salvation:

> I have to tell you something burning in my heart. I just came back from Yugoslavia....I went over there because of something happening that just awes me....
>
> We were asked by the Charismatic Renewal Office in Rome to take our television team which produces the weekly pro-

gram *The Glory of God*....to film the phenomenon taking place in the province of Herzegovina among a whole group of Roman Catholics who are of Croatian ancestry....We went to film what is happening in a little parish, Saint James, that is experiencing spiritual renewal.

I want to say something at this point for all of you. There is another grace of Pentecost that we ought to take a good look at. It is the grace of being aware of everyone who was in that upper room. If you go back and look at *Acts 1*, verse 14, it says 'together they devoted themselves to constant prayer.' Do you know what it says then? 'There were some women in their company.' Then, it singles out 'Mary, the mother of Jesus.'

There is a grace of Pentecost, brothers and sisters, that I have come to appreciate. Deeper levels of the charismatic gifts. And one of them is recognizing that that passage is related to what is in John about the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-11), when Jesus, through a miraculous intervention, created the new wine. The new wine which was served last was better than the wine that was served first.

But there was a very important person there, who motivated that whole process, who collaborated with that whole process, who had something to do with that whole process. She is mentioned too, Mary.

Then, I am conscious that at the foot of the cross, in the Gospel of John, Jesus says something about handing over his mother to John and John to his mother....It's more than just a simple thing of saying, take care of her. There is more going on there. One of the graces, one of the facets of this grace of Pentecost that has moved me lately is a *growing appreciation of the proper and authentic grace of Mary in the whole plan of salvation (emphasis added).*

I want to tell you that when I went over to that parish and was experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the awesomeness of it all was the fact that it was in connection with apparitions which six teenage children claim they are receiving.

Now, I submit this and defer publicly to the judgment of the magisterium of the Church. But, I want to tell you what I saw. I want to tell you what my cameras recorded.

I want to tell you that I was in the midst of a parish undergoing spiritual renewal which is revolutionary. I experienced a parish community and the thousands of people in

that area coming to the Lord, giving their lives wholeheartedly to Jesus Christ....

I saw a Christ-centered parish. *It had proper respect for the Madonna (emphasis added)...*

I saw a parish that is being renewed by the Holy Spirit because God sent a very special messenger, who is doing in that parish what she did at Cana, in the upper room and at the foot of the cross....pointing to Jesus, saying: 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Now, I *spent one week among these people and will never be the same (emphasis added).*

As far as I am concerned, the most powerful thing I witnessed over in Yugoslavia was hundreds of thousands of live changed for the better. That is the sign that moved me.'

Chapter 20

The Messages And The Secrets

Mary comes to God's people in times of crisis as his very special messenger. She comes to warn them and give them guidance. This is simply a continuation of the policy God followed with his people in Old Testament times. He raised up prophets in times of great need. In the *Book of Amos* we are told: "Indeed, the Lord God does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets" (3:7). The Jews considered this so normal that when God delayed in sending prophets during bad times, the Psalmist complained and cried out in distress: "There is no prophet now, and no one of us knows how long. . . " (Ps 74:9).

God loves us no less than he loved his people of old. When he has had something very special to say in modern times, he has sent the mother of Jesus as his messenger.

It is important to understand apparitions, especially Marian apparitions. They are special means that God provides for exceptional situations and times in history. However, they are also normal means, in the sense that they are part of God's overall plan for us. They have a definite place in that plan. What we must see in them is God in his love speaking to us and giving us guidance in times of great need. That is why in more recent times Popes, more and more, have given them official recognition in various ways. This is particularly true of Fatima, the most recent of the approved major Marian apparitions. The Popes have participated in important celebrations that have taken place at Fatima, by sending personal

radio messages or personal Legates or by coming themselves to the site of these events.[1] Although the Church does not impose belief in such apparitions, she herself does not regard them as unimportant, as the following words of Pope John XXIII indicate.

> We exhort you to listen with simplicity of heart and honesty of mind to the salutary warnings of the Mother of God. The Roman pontiffs, . . . if they have been constituted the guardians and interpreters of the divine revelation contained in the Scriptures and in Tradition, also have the duty, when, after mature examination, they deem it necessary for the common good, of bringing to the attention of the faithful those supernatural lights which it pleases God to dispense freely to certain privileged souls, not for the purpose of presenting new doctrines, but rather to guide us in our conduct.[2]

The most important thing about any apparition is its message. The signs and wonders that accompany apparitions are given to authenticate and draw attention to them so that people may accept and heed their message. Sometimes, all of the messages are not revealed immediately. Some are to be kept secret until a designated time. At Fatima, several secrets were imparted to the three little shepherds. At Medugorje, Our Lady has imparted more secrets than at Fatima or any other of the well known Marian apparitions.

Why are secrets imparted in apparitions such as Fatima and Medugorje? The word secret has a magical effect on people. It arouses curiosity and stimulates interest. God makes use of this to draw attention to the message he wishes to transmit through his heavenly messenger.

Our Lady began imparting secrets quite soon at Medugorje. The seers were told that each of them would receive ten. Our Lady has been imparting these secrets progressively to each seer. When Father Rupcic's book was published in 1983, Marija had received six, Vicka seven, Ivanka seven and Mirjana nine. Jakov and Ivan did not tell him how many they had received.[3] At the present time, Mirjana and Ivanka have received all ten secrets and all the other seers have received nine with the exception of Vicka who has received only eight. It is interesting to note that Mirjana received the tenth secret

on December 25, 1982, which Our Lady told her was the last day on which she would appear to her regularly as she had been doing in the past. Henceforth, she would only appear to her on her birthday (March 18) and in times of great need.

Father Rupcic asked the seers questions about the secrets' contents. The responses were quite general and not too revealing.

Marija said they pertain "to us, to the Church, and to people in general."

Jakov said they pertain "to our lives and to people."

Vicka said "the first has to do with the church in Medugorje" and they also pertain "to the sign, to all humanity and to everyone, to the Church in general and there are some for us."

Ivanka said "they pertain to us, personally, to the Church and to the world."

Mirjana said "they pertain to us, to the sign, to the whole world and to Medugorje."[4]

When asked by Father Rupcic whether the secrets concerning the world had to do with good or bad things, their reply was that there were good things and bad things.[5]

Our Lady will tell the seers when and to whom the secrets are to be revealed.[6]

The best available source of information concerning the secrets is a report Father Tomislav Vlasic sent to the Pope and to the Bishop of Mostar on December 2, 1983. Our Lady requested through the seer, Mirjana, that he do this.

> According to Mirjana, during the apparition on December 25, 1982, the Madonna confided the tenth and last secret to her, and she revealed the dates on which the various secrets will come to pass. The Blessed Virgin revealed many aspects of the future to Mirjana, many more up to now than to the other seers. For that reason, I relate now what Mirjana told me in a conversation on November 5, 1983. I shall summarize the esential things she said, without any literal quotations.
>
> —Before the visible sign[7] is given to humanity, there will be three warnings to the world. The warnings will be warnings on the earth. Mirjana will witness them. Three days before one of these warnings, she will advise a priest of her choice. Mirjana's testimony will be a confirmation of the apparitions and an incentive for the conversion of the world. After these warnings, the visible sign will be given for all humanity at the place of the apparitions in Medugorje. The sign will be given as the testimony of the apparitions and a call back to faith.
>
> —The ninth and tenth secrets are grave matters. They are a chastisement for the sins of the world. The punishment is inevitable because we cannot expect the conversion of the entire world. The chastisement can be mitigated by prayers and penance.[8] It cannot be suppressed. An evil which threatened the world, according to the seventh secret, had been eliminated through prayer and fasting, Mirjana said. For that reason, the Blessed Virgin continues to ask for prayer and fasting: 'You have forgotten that with prayer and fasting you can ward off wars, suspend natural laws.'
>
> —After the first warning, the others will follow within a rather brief period of time. So it is that people will have time for conversion.
>
> —This time is a period of grace and conversion. After the visible sign, those who are still alive will have little time for conversion. For that reason, the Blessed Virgin calls for urgent conversion and reconciliation.
>
> —The invitation to prayer and penance is destined to ward off evil and war and above all to save souls.
>
> —We are close to the events predicted by the Blessed Virgin.
>
> —Convert yourselves as quickly as possible. Open your hearts to God. This is a message to all mankind.[9]

Father Tomislav Vlasic gave a little additional information about the secrets during the taped interview of August 15, 1983: "They (the seers) say that with the realization of the secrets entrusted to them by Our Lady, life in the world will change. Afterwards, men will believe like in ancient times. What will change and how it will change, we don't know, given that the seers don't want to say anything about the secrets."

"Life in the world will change. Afterwards, men will believe like in ancient times." These few words imply a lot about the extraordinary events that lie ahead and for which Our Lady came to prepare us at Medugorje.

Chapter 21

Leading The Seers To Holiness

The message of Medugorje could be summarized in a single word - conversion. But the conversion that Our Lady is seeking at Medugorje is of two kinds. There is the conversion of the sinner who has cut himself off from God through serious sin and then reconciles himself with him. And there is the conversion of the one who lives normally in God's friendship, but who at some point in time seeks to seriously deepen that friendship.

At Medugorje, Our Lady's message has to do with both kinds of conversion. She has come to call sinners back to God and to put them on the road to salvation. Much of the message of Medugorje that has been made known has to do with those who have strayed seriously from the road to salvation. Medugorje is also a call to holiness. We have seen the special mission of Jelena and Marijana in this regard. They have personally been called to holiness and have also been entrusted with leading others to holiness. What about the other six seers? It can be said that they too have personally been called to holiness. Their call to holiness is the object of the present chapter.

A very important place has been given to personal messages for all six of these seers. Indeed, there has been an entire phase of Our Lady's heavenly visits devoted to messages or instructions that had to do with their personal guidance and spiritual growth. During this period, Our Lady has acted as their spiritual director.

Our Lady told the children: "You are like water faucets and can become rusty." It is the understanding of those close to the young people that God is using them to impart a very important message to the Church and to the world, but that this message will not come through them as fully as it should unless they keep themselves in a good spiritual condition by their personal growth in the spiritual life. If they allow themselves to become spiritually rusty, they will not be good channels for communicating God's message.

It is precisely to keep the children from becoming spiritually rusty that she herself has undertaken to instruct them in the way of perfection. She has been successful in this, as the young people themselves testify. Father Rupcic asked them if they had "changed in any way because of Our Lady's apparitions?" They were quite candid in their answers. All indicated that they felt they had changed for the better, spelling out the ways in which they felt there had been improvement. All six specifically mentioned prayer as an area where they had changed for the better. They used expressions such as "Now, it pleases me to pray...I like to pray better...I pray more, before I was always in a hurry...Now, I am happy to pray...Now, I have more strength for prayer." Four of the young people specifically said that they "prayed more." Similar expressions were used to indicate improvement in regard to going to church, attending Mass, receiving Communion and going to confession.[1] Very significant is the mention of improvement in the area of the sacraments.

There has been considerably more emphasis placed on the sacraments, particularly that of Reconciliation, at Medugorje than at Lourdes or at Fatima. In those earlier apparitions, the sacramental message was indirect or implied. At both of those places, Our Lady sought "a chapel" where her Son in the Eucharist could be honored and received.

At Fatima, the angel brought Communion to the three little shepherds in 1916 during his last apparition to them on Mount Cabeco. On that same occasion he also taught them a eucharistic prayer of reparation which became an important part of their daily prayer life. Francisco spent long hours of adoration and reparation before the Blessed Sacrament in the

village church. Jacinta developed a great hunger for the reception of "the hidden Jesus." Lucia's First Solemn Communion was the occasion of very special graces. These were all indirect teachings on the Eucharist.

During an apparition, if the Blessed Virgin gives a message for the whole world or for all of the young people, then all of them will be able to hear what she is saying. But, if what she is saying is meant only for one of them, only the person concerned will be able to hear what she says. This is what happens when Our Lady corrects or admonishes one of them. Only the person being admonished will hear her. She will correct that person very soon after the wrong was done, while the incident was still fresh in his mind.

When Our Lady gives one of them some personal advice, it is also only that young person who hears what she has to say. One of the visionaries said: "In some situations, where there was no way out, she told me how I should act or behave." Another said: "She told me that I was very naive, that I believe everyone, that I have to correct that."

In her guidance and spiritual direction of the young people, Our Lady has shown herself to be respectful of their free will. This comes out in answers they gave to Father Rupcic's question whether Our Lady had told them what they should do in life. These replies make it clear that she would like to see them all "become sisters and priests." But this is only "her wish" and "she will not force anyone." Mirjana said she told Our Lady that some of them wanted to become sisters or priests and others wanted to stay in the world. The Blessed Virgin replied that the decision "was our affair" and that "one or the other would be good." And "she explained and gave us advice." She said that to enter the convent and not stay would "bring shame on the Church and everyone."

At the time these answers were given, four of the seers indicated a preference for a religious vocation and the two others said that they were undecided.[2]

It is interesting to note the concrete way in which Our Lady teaches the children. For example, in teaching them about overcoming sin, she used the device of a novena in preparation for the feast of her Immaculate Conception on December

8. During each day of the novena, they were asked to renounce some specific sin and to fast on bread and water. A member of the parish staff pointed out that the seers adhere very strictly to these fasts, never taking anything but bread and water.

It has been noticed that at least occasionally the events at Medugorje have occurred at liturgically appropriate times. Such, it seems, was the linking of the teaching on sin with the feast commemorating Mary's Immaculate Conception, her preservation from original sin. Such also was Jakov's and Vicka's disappearance from earth and their vision of heaven on the feast of All Saints.

Our Lady has used visions, particularly those of heaven, hell and purgatory as means of teaching the young people and of stimulating them to pray and make sacrifices for sinners and the souls in purgatory. All six of them have seen heaven. Four have seen hell and the other two indicated they had not seen it because they have been too fearful of such an experience. The Blessed Virgin said this about hell: "This is the punishment of those who do not love God and many today are going to hell." Five have seen purgatory and the sixth one did not see it but Our Lady described it to her. Of purgatory, Our Lady stated: "These people are waiting for your prayers and sacrifices."

At Fatima on July 13, 1917, the three little shepherds were given a vision of hell that made a lasting impression on them and had much to do with stimulating their generosity in praying and making sacrifices. This was particularly true of Jacinta, the youngest of the trio who saw Our Blessed Mother.

We must always remember that at Medugorje as at Fatima, Our Lady is always teaching us as well as the visionaries. We can be sure that she wants all of us to pray more and to be generous in making sacrifices, especially for sinners, the "many sinners" who today are on the road to eternal perdition.

Chapter 22

Messages For The Parish

From the early days, Our Lady began manifesting special motherly love for the six seers. One of the important ways in which she did this was through the spiritual guidance she gave to them.

The people of Medugorje were also the object of her special love. We know that she gave special messages for them. But, we do not know the specific content nor the precise dates of most of the early messages.

However, a new development took place at the beginning of 1984. Our Lady told Jelena that she wanted the parishioners of Saint James to come together at the church one evening a week so that she could direct them in their spiritual life. The priests chose Thursday.

Since March 1, Our Lady has been giving messages quite regularly every Thursday - and exceptionally on some other days. The messages have not been rigorously restricted to the parishioners. They have also been offered to others, especially those who come there often. They are a call to all those who have an open heart. These Thursday night messages have been coming to the parish through the original group of six seers and almost entirely through one member of that group, namely, Marija. Other messages for the parish have been received through Jelena.[1]

One of the important objectives Our Lady is pursuing is to prepare the parish for the future events which she has been revealing to the seers. Father Tomislav Vlasic affirmed: "As

we go along, Our Lady is pushing the parish to improve more and more."

1. Thursday Night Messages Received through the Original Group of Seers.

March 1, 1984

Dear children! I have chosen this parish in a special way and I wish to lead it. I am guarding it in love and I wish everyone to be mine.

Thank you for your response this evening. It is my wish that you always be here in greater numbers with me and my Son. Every Thursday, I will give a special message to you.

March 8, 1984

Thank you for your response to my call.

Dear children! In this parish, start converting yourselves. In that way all those who come here will be able to convert. *(Your example will inspire those who come here to convert themselves.)*

March 15, 1984

This evening, dear children, I am grateful in a special way for your being here. Adore continually the Blessed Sacrament. I am always present when the faithful are in adoration. Special graces are then being received.

(Every Thursday evening the faithful worship the Blessed Sacrament after Mass, but this evening it was noticed that many men remained in the church for adoration, although they had worked hard in the fields.)

March 22, 1984

Dear children! This evening I am asking you in a special way during this Lent to honor the wounds of my Son, which he received because of the sins of this parish. Unite yourselves with my prayers for this parish so that his sufferings may become bearable. Thank you for your response to my call. Make an effort to come in greater numbers.

March 29, 1984

Dear children! This evening I am asking in a special way for your perseverance in trials. Ponder how the Almighty is

still suffering because of your sins. So when sufferings come, offer them as your sacrifice to God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 5, 1984

Dear children! This evening I am especially asking you to venerate the Heart of my Son, Jesus. Make atonement for the wounds inflicted on the Heart of my Son. That Heart has been offended by all sorts of sin.

Thank you for coming this evening.

April 12, 1984

Dear children! This evening I ask you to stop slandering and to pray for the unity of the parish. For my Son and I have a special plan for this parish.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 19, 1984

Dear children! Sympathize with me. Pray, pray, pray!

Monday, April 30, 1984

(Our Lady didn't give a message for the parish on Thursday, April 26. On April 30, Marija asked her why she didn't give her a message for the parish on Thursday.)

Even though I had a special message for the parish to awaken the faith of every believer, I did not want to force anyone to do anything he didn't want to do. Only a very small number of people have accepted the Thursday messages. At the beginning, there were more who accepted them, but now it seems as if they have become something ordinary. Recently, some have been asking for the messages only out of curiosity and not out of faith and devotion to my Son and me.

May 10, 1984

(Many believers were struck by the last message of Our Lady. Many thought that Our Lady was not going to give any more messages for the parish, but on this evening she did.)

I am still speaking to you and I intend to continue. But listen to my instructions.

May 17, 1984

Dear children! Today I am very happy because there are many who desire to devote themselves to me. I thank you. You have not made a mistake. My Son, Jesus, wishes to bestow special graces on you through me. My Son is happy because of your dedication.

Thank you because you have responded to my call.

May 24, 1984

Dear children! I have already told you that I have chosen you in a special way just as you are. I, as your Mother, love you all. In your moments of difficulty don't be afraid. I love you even when you are far away from me and my Son.

I ask you not to allow my heart to shed tears of blood because of the souls who are being lost through sin. Therefore, dear children, pray, pray, pray!

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 31, 1984

(This was the feast of the Ascension. There were many people from abroad. Our Lady did not give any message. She said to Marija that she would give the message on Saturday to be announced to the people on Sunday.)

Saturday, June 2, 1984

(This is the novena for Pentecost.)

Dear children! During the days of this novena, pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all of your families and your parish. Pray, and you shall not regret it. God will give you the gifts *(of the Holy Spirit)* and you will glorify him for them till the end of your life.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Saturday, June 9, 1984

(Again last Thursday, Our Lady did not give any message for the parish. She promised to give it this evening.)

Dear children! Tomorrow night *(Pentecost Sunday)* pray for the Spirit of truth, especially those of you from this parish. The Spirit of truth is necessary for you in order to convey the messages the way I give them to you, without adding or removing anything. Pray that the Holy Spirit grant you the spirit of prayer, that you may pray more. I, as your

Mother, tell you that you pray little.
Thank you for your response to my call.

June 21, 1984

Pray, pray, pray!
Thank you for your response to my call.

July 5, 1984

Dear children! Today I wish to tell you: always start your work and end your work with prayer. If you do that God will bless you and your work.
These days you have been working too much and praying too little. Therefore, pray! In prayer you will find rest.
Thank you for your response to my call.

July 12, 1984

Dear children! These days Satan is trying to thwart all my plans. Pray that his plan may not be fulfilled. I will pray to my Son, Jesus, that he give you the grace to experience his victory over Satan's temptations.
Thank you for your response to my call.

July 19, 1984

Dear children! These days you have been experiencing how Satan is working. I am always with you; do not be afraid of temptations. God is always watching over you. I have given myself up to you and I sympathize with you even in the smallest temptation.
Thank you for your response to my call.

July 26, 1984

Dear children! Today also I would like to call you to persistent prayer and penance. Especially, let the young people of this parish be more active in their prayer.
Thank you for your response to my call.

August 2, 1984

Dear children! Today I am happy and I thank you for your prayers. Pray more these days for the conversion of sinners.
Thank you for your response to my call.

Saturday, August 11, 1984

(Our Lady did not give a message last Thursday. This is what she said to Marija this evening.)
Dear children! Pray, because Satan is continually trying to thwart my plans. Pray with your heart and in prayer give yourselves up to Jesus.

Tuesday, August 14, 1984

(This apparition was unexpected. Ivan was praying in his house. After praying, as he was getting ready to go to church for the evening service, Our Lady appeared to him and asked him to transmit this message to the people.)
I ask the people to pray with me these days. Pray more. Fast strictly on Wednesday and Friday. Every day, say at least one rosary: joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries.
(Our Lady asked the people to accept this message with a firm will. She asked this in a special way of the parishioners and believers of the surrounding places.)

August 16, 1984

Dear children! I beg all of you, especially those of this parish, to live my messages and to tell them to whomever you meet.
Thank you for your response to my call.

August 23, 1984

Pray, pray, pray!
(Marija informed us that Our Lady had asked the people, especially the young, to keep order in the church during Mass.)

August 30, 1984

Dear children! The cross *(on Mount Krizevac)* was in God's plan when you built it. These days especially, go on the hill and pray at the foot of the cross. I need your prayers.
Thank you for your response to my call.

September 6, 1984

Dear children! Without prayer there is no peace.
Therefore, dear children, I say to you, pray at the foot of the cross for peace.
Thank you for your response to my call.

September 13, 1984

Dear children! I continually need your prayers. You wonder what all these prayers are for. Look around, dear children, and you will see how much ground sin has gained in this world. Therefore, pray that Jesus conquers.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 20, 1984

Dear children! Today I ask you to start fasting, putting your heart in it. There are many people who fast but only because everyone else is fasting. It has become a custom which no one wants to stop. I ask the parish to fast out of gratitude to God for allowing me to remain this long in this parish. Dear children, fast and pray with your heart.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 27, 1984

Dear children! Your prayer has helped my plans to be fulfilled. Pray continually for their complete fulfillment.

I beg the families of the parish to pray the family rosary.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 4, 1984

Dear children! Today I would like to tell you that your prayers delight me, but there are those in the parish who do not pray and my heart is sad.

Pray therefore, that I may bring all your sacrifices and prayers to the Lord.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Monday, October 8, 1984

(This message was given for the parish through Jakov in his home. He did not go to the church on that day because he was not well.)

Dear children! Let all the prayers you say in your homes in the evening be for the conversion of sinners because the world is in great sin. Pray the rosary every evening.

October 11, 1984

Dear children! Thank you for offering all your pains to God, even at this time when he is testing you through the crops which you are reaping. *(Our Lady is alluding to prolonged rain which came in the middle of the harvesting and caused great damage.)*

Be aware, dear children, that he loves you and that it is for that reason that he tests you. Always present your burdens to God and do not worry.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 18, 1984, Feast of St. Luke, the Evangelist

Dear children! Today I ask you to read the Bible in your homes every day. Place it in a visible place there, where it will always remind you to read it and to pray.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 25, 1984

Dear children! Pray during this month. God gave this month to me. I give it to you. Pray and ask God for graces. I will pray that he give them to you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 1, 1984

Dear children! Today I call you to renew family prayer in your homes. The field work is over. Now, may all of you devote yourselves to prayer. Let prayer have first place in your families.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 8, 1984

Dear children! You are not aware of the importance of the messages which God is sending to you through me. He is giving you great graces and you are not grasping them. Pray to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment. If you only knew how great are the graces God is giving you, you would pray without ceasing.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 15, 1984

You are a chosen people and God has given you great graces. You are not aware of the importance of every message I am giving you.

Now I only wish to say: Pray, pray, pray! I do not know what else to tell you because I love you and wish that in prayer you

come to know my love and the love of God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 22, 1984

Dear children! These days, live all the main messages and continue to root them in your hearts this week. *(That week marked the end of one liturgical season and the beginning of Advent.)*

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 29, 1984

Dear children! You do not know how to love and you do not know how to listen with love to the words I am giving you.

Be aware, my beloved ones, that I am your Mother and that I have come upon the earth to teach you how to listen out of love, how to pray out of love, and not out of compulsion because of the cross you are carrying. Through the cross, God is glorified in every person.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 6, 1984

Dear children! These days, I am calling you to family prayer. Many times, I have given you messages in God's name, but you have not listened.

This Christmas will be an unforgettable day for you, only if you accept the messages I am giving you.

Dear children, do not allow that day of joy to be a day of deepest sorrow for me.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 13, 1984

Dear children! You know that the day of joy is coming near, but without love you will obtain nothing. Therefore, first of all start loving your family and everyone in the parish. Then you will be able to love and accept all those who come here.

Let this week be the week of learning how to love.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 20, 1984

Today I am asking you to do something concrete for Jesus Christ. On the day of joy, I want every family of the parish to bring a flower as a sign of abandonment to Jesus.

I want every member of the family to have one flower next to the crib so that Jesus can come and see your devotion to him.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 27, 1984

Dear children! This Christmas, Satan wanted in a special way to thwart God's plans. You, dear children, witnessed Satan even on Christmas day. But God conquered in your hearts. Let your hearts be continually joyful.

January 3, 1985

Dear children! These days, the Lord granted you many graces. Let this week be a week of thanksgiving for all the graces God has granted you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 10, 1985

Dear children! Today I want to thank you for all your sacrifices. I thank especially those who come here gladly and have become dear to my heart. There are many parishioners who are not listening to my messages. It is because of those who are especially close to my heart that I give messages to the parish. And I will continue giving them for I love you and want you to spread them by your love.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Monday, January 14, 1985

Dear children! Satan is so strong. With all his power he wants to thwart the plans I have undertaken with you. You must only pray. Just pray and do not stop for a moment. I will pray to my Son that the plans I have started be fulfilled. Be patient and persevering in your prayers. Do not let Satan discourage you. He is working vigorously in the world. Be cautious.

January 17, 1985

In these days, Satan is fighting deviously against this parish, and you, dear children, are asleep in *(regard to)* prayer. Only some of you are going to Mass. Persevere in these days of temptation.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 24, 1985

Dear children! These days you have savored the sweetness of God through the renewal in your parish. Satan is working even more violently to take the joy away from each of you. Through prayer you can totally disarm him and ensure your happiness.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 31, 1985

Dear children! Today I want to tell you to open your hearts to God, like flowers in the spring yearning for the sun. I am your Mother and I always want you to be closer to the Father, that he may always pour abundant gifts into your hearts.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 7, 1985

Dear children! Satan is manifesting himself in this parish in a particular way these days. Pray, dear children, that God's plan be carried out, and that every work of Satan be turned to the glory of God.

I have remained this long to help you in your great trials.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 14, 1985

Dear children! Today is the day when I give you the message for the parish, but the whole parish is not accepting the messages and does not live them. I am sad and I want you, dear children, to listen to me and to live my messages.

Every family must pray and read the Bible.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 21, 1985

Dear children! From day to day, I have been appealing to you for renewal and prayer in the parish. But you are not

responding. Today I am appealing to you for the last time. This is the season of Lent, and you, as a parish in Lent, should be moved through love by my appeal. If you are not, I do not want to give you any more messages.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 28, 1985

Dear children! Today I call you to live these words during this week: I love God.

Dear children! With love, you can achieve everything, even what appears impossible. God wants this parish to belong to him completely. And I want that too.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 7, 1985

Dear children! Today I invite you to renew prayer in your families. Dear children, encourage the very young to pray and to go to holy Mass.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 14, 1985

Dear children! In your life, you all experienced light and darkness. God gives every man the power to recognize good and evil. I am calling you to light, which you must carry to all those who are in darkness. From day to day, people come in your houses which are in darkness. You, dear children, give them light.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 21, 1985

Dear children! I want to give you the messages. Therefore I ask you to accept these messages. Dear children, I love you in a special way. I have chosen this parish which is more dear to me than any other...to where I gladly came when the Almighty sent me. Therefore, dear children, I ask you to accept me for your well being. Follow the messages.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 28, 1985

Dear children! Today, I am asking you to pray, pray, pray. In prayer you will experience great joy and the solution to every helpless situation. Thank you for moving in prayer.

Each one of you belongs to my heart. I will be grateful to all who begin praying again in your families.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 18, 1985

Dear children! Today I thank you for every opening of your hearts. Joy overwhelms me for every heart that opens to God, especially in the parish. Rejoice with me. Pray all the prayers for the opening of sinful hearts. I want this. God wants this through me.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 25, 1985

Dear children! Today I want to tell you to begin to work in your hearts as you work in the fields. Work and change your hearts so that the Spirit of God may move into your hearts.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 2, 1985

Dear children! Today, I invite you to pray with your heart and not only through habit. Some are coming but do not pray with their hearts. Therefore, as a mother, I beg you to pray that prayer may prevail in your hearts at every moment.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 9, 1985

Dear children! You do not know how many graces God is bestowing upon you these days when the Holy Spirit is working in a special way. You do not want to advance. Your hearts are turned to earthly things and you are occupied by them.

Turn your hearts to prayer and ask that the Holy Spirit be poured upon you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 16, 1985

Dear children! I am calling you to more attentive prayer and to participation in the Mass. I want you to experience God within yourselves at Mass.

I want to tell the youth especially to be open to the Holy Spirit because God desires to draw you to himself during these days when Satan is active.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 23, 1985

Dear children! These days, I am calling you especially to open your hearts to the Holy Spirit. These days, the Holy Spirit is acting through you in a particular way.

So, open your hearts and surrender your lives to Jesus so that he may work through them and make you stronger in faith.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 30, 1985

Dear children! I am calling you again to prayer of the heart. Let prayer, dear children, be your everyday food. In a special way now when work in the fields is exhausting you, you cannot pray with your heart. Pray and then you will overcome every tiredness. Prayer will be your happiness and rest.

Thank you for your response to my call.

2. Messages Received through Jelena

Our Lady has spoken to the parish on many important occasions through Jelena.

March 1, 1984

On this day, Our Lady invited the parishioners of Saint James to read the gospel of Saint Matthew, chapter 6, verses 24 to 34. She asked them to read it every Thursday. In this passage of the gospel, Jesus asks us to put God first in our lives and to trust completely in him, and he assures us that if we do this, he will provide for all our needs.

Liturgically related messages

A number of Our Lady's messages to Jelena are invitations to the parishioners to prepare for important liturgical events. She asked them to prepare themselves in a special way for Holy Saturday, the Sacrament of Confirmation (by a novena), the feast of Pentecost and the third anniversary of the apparitions.

December 21, 1984

I want you to be a flower that will bloom for Jesus at Christmas, a flower that will not cease blooming when Christmas is over. I want your hearts to be *(like those of the)* shepherds for Jesus.

Various undated messages

Dear children! If you only knew how great is my love for you, you would cry for joy.

Dear children! When someone is standing before you asking you for a favor, you respond by granting it. Yet, I stand before many hearts and they do not open up to me. Pray that the world may receive my love.

Dear children! The love of God has not flowed over the whole world. Therefore, pray!

Dear children! I want the whole world to become my children, but people do not want to. I want to give them everything. Therefore, pray!

We are fortunate to have so many of these parish messages. They are very important and could be called guidelines to holiness for Christian families. It is obvious that Our Lady did not intend them solely for the parishioners of Saint James. Notable is the theme of prayer that runs through so many of them. It is interesting to see how Our Lady stresses preparation for special events, such as Pentecost, the Sacrament of Confirmation, June 24, anniversary of the first apparition, and August 5, her Birthday. This is in keeping with the tradition of the Church and the former vigils of prayer and fasting. So many things are touched upon in these messages!

Noteworthy also is the tremendous effort Satan is making to disrupt what the Queen of Peace is trying to do at Medugorje and through Medugorje. This should alert us to how much is at stake here!

Chapter 23

Catastrophe And The Crisis Of Faith

The message of Medugorje is essentially a message for the world and for a world that is undergoing a critical crisis of faith. Because of that crisis the world finds itself on the edge of catastrophe. This can be called the basic message of Medugorje and it is for the world at large. It is a message that is addressed to all men since all men are affected in some way or other by this crisis of faith.

In addition to this broad basic message of Medugorje, there are a number of specific messages that are addressed to various categories of people. There are messages for the Church at large, for the parish of Medugorje, for the Pope, for the Bishop of Mostar, for priests, for the seers themselves, and there have also been messages for certain individuals, such as those given in reply to a request for healing or to certain questions which have been addressed to Our lady through the seers. Our concern shall be principally with the message for the world and the Church at large. That is the object of the present chapter.

In a general way, it can be said that there have been three phases to the Medugorje messages. The first phase had to do with the world and the Church. The second phase consisted in a personal spiritual formation program for the seers in which Our Lady corrected them of their faults and told them how to improve their lives, that is, how to grow in Christian maturity and holiness and prayer. In the third phase, Our Lady talked about her own life.

Our Lady has said that the world is now on the edge of catastrophe. There is a sense of urgency about the Medugorje message that sets it apart from other apparitions. The crisis which has brought the mother of Jesus to Medugorje is very great, far greater than most people would suspect. The present crisis of faith has resulted in widespread rejection of God and of his law. We are living in a sin-filled world and these sins are so serious and numerous that they cry to heaven for vengeance. We have reached a point when God's mercy must give way to his justice and he must punish the world.

It is significant that all of the first messages of the early days of the apparitions speak of faith.

The first day on which Our Lady spoke was June 25, the second day she appeared. She joined the seers when they said seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys (Our Lady was silent during the Hail Marys) and Glory Be's. She told them that these prayers pleased her and to continue to pray them. Then, she asked them to join a Creed to these three other prayers. Now, the Creed is a profession of faith. In subsequent apparitions, Our Lady presented the recitation of the Creed as a means of strengthening the faith and she said that the recitation of a Creed and seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's should be the minimum of one's daily prayer. The seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's are a devotional prayer recited in honor of The Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

When Our Lady finally took leave of the seers on June 25, her words of farewell were: "Go in the peace of God." We are in God's peace when we believe in him and live according to our faith.

The message of faith becomes more explicit from the third day on. On June 26, when asked why she had come and what she wanted, Our Lady replied: "I have come because there are many believers here. I want to be with you to convert and reconcile everyone." Her words of farewell were once again, as henceforth they will always be: "Go in the peace of God."

As Marija was returning home after the June 26 apparition, Our Lady appeared to her again when she was halfway to the village. She stood in front of a cross that did not have the body of Christ on it. She was crying and tears streamed down her

cheeks. After asking where the other girls were, she said: "Peace, peace, peace. Reconcile yourselves." Her last words were "Go in the peace of God."[1]

This was an important apparition. It made clear that we were being called to reconcile ourselves with God. Peace would result from that reconciliation. The cross without the body of Christ is rather unusual and undoubtedly has some special significance. It could be that the absence of the corpus was meant to symbolize the rejection of Christ and faith in him and this is what caused the great sorrow and weeping of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

On the fourth day, when Our Lady was asked to prove that she was appearing, she replied that those who do not see her should believe as though they were seeing her. And when asked if she had a message for the parish and the priests, she said: "The Friars should believe firmly."

The fifth day saw new insistence on faith. When the seers asked Our Lady what she wanted of them, she replied: "Faith and respect for me." When they asked her what she wanted from priests, she said: "That they believe firmly." The reason for this answer is evident. The priests are the shepherds of the flock. To lead their sheep in their faith, they themselves must be staunch believers. Finally, when the seers asked Our Lady what she wanted of "these people gathered here," she replied: "That they believe without seeing."

Our Lady disappeared for a short while. When she returned, the seers resumed their questioning and once again they asked: "What do you want of these people here?" She replied: "That those here who do not see me, believe like the six of you who see me."

Again on the sixth day, the message of faith was imparted in a powerful way. When the seers once again asked Our Lady what she wanted "from these people," her reply was: "There is only one God and one faith. Believe firmly!" On that same sixth day, the seers asked another question very similar to the one above: "Dear Blessed Virgin, what is it that you want here?" Her answer was: "That you have firm faith and confidence." Finally, when Our Lady was asked to heal little Daniel, she replied: "Let them *(his parents who had carried*

him up the mountain side to the place of the apparitions) firmly believe that he will be healed." Our Lady will continually stress faith as important for obtaining a healing.

The message of faith came through in a rather unusual way during an apparition that took place at Vicka's house in the middle of October, 1981, "exactly two days before Father Jozo's trial." Marinko and a few others were present. Our Lady smiled at Marinko. Then, she came to where he was, kissed, embraced and blessed him and said: "Marinko, do not give up your faith. Keep your faith."

There is another apparition which took place in the relatively early days of the Medugorje event that helps us understand the magnitude of the crisis of faith that the Catholic Church and all Christian churches are experiencing. This occurred on the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels, 1981. Marija was the only seer involved. While in her room at home after the church service that evening, Our Lady appeared to her and said: "The devil is trying to infiltrate himself here in order to get something. He is making every effort and wants at any price to infiltrate among you."

In a report that Father Tomislav Vlasic sent to the Pope and to the Bishop of Mostar at the end of 1983, he gave some important information on the role of Satan in what we are witnessing in the Church and in the world today. We quote the pertinent section of that report.

> ...Mirjana says that in 1982 she had an apparition which, according to us, throws rays of light on the history of the Church. She tells of an apparition in which Satan came to her disguised as the Blessed Virgin. Satan asked Mirjana to renounce the Madonna and to follow him if she wanted to be happy in love and in life, whereas with the Blessed Virgin she would have to suffer. Mirjana repelled him. Immediately, the Blessed Virgin came and Satan disappeared.
>
> Then, the Blessed Virgin gave in substance the following message:
>
> — Excuse me for this, but you must know that Satan exists. One day, he presented himself before the throne of God and asked permission to try the Church for a period of time. God permitted him to try it during one century. This century is under the power of the devil, but when the secrets which have been confided to you have been fulfilled, his power will be destroyed. Already now, he is beginning to lose his power and he has become aggressive: he destroys marriages, stirs up division between priests, brings about obsessions and murders. You must protect yourself by fasting and prayer, especially community prayer. Carry blessed objects with you. Place them in your houses. Return to the use of holy water.
>
> According to certain Catholic experts who have studied these apparitions, this message of Mirjana would clarify the vision which the Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIII, had. According to them, it was after having had an apocalyptic vision of the future of the Church that Leo XIII would have introduced the prayer to Saint Michael which priests recited after the Mass up until the Council. These experts say that the century of trials foreseen by the Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIII, is about to end.

At the conclusion of his report, Father Tomislav says that he "gave it to the seers so that they might ask the Blessed Virgin if its content was exact." Ivan brought him her reply: its "content...is true."[2]

What we are witnessing in the world today is a particularly violent moment in the Christian warfare of which Saint Paul speaks in his *Epistle to the Ephesians:* "Our battle is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in regions above...In all circumstances, hold faith up before you as your shield; it will help you extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one" (6:12, 16).

Loss of faith can be said to be the ultimate cause of the impending catastrophe that menaces the world. But, what will this catastrophe consist of? The seers have been silent on this point. The most that is known also comes to us through Father Tomislav's 1983 report to the Pope and the Bishop of Mostar. The last part of the section of that report that was quoted in an earlier chapter seems to allude to this catastrophe although the word is not mentioned. Because of its importance we quote the pertinent section once again, drawing the reader's attention to this particularly ominous phrase: "After the visible sign, *those who are still alive* (emphasis added) will have little time for conversion."

> — The ninth and tenth secrets are grave matters. They are a chastisement for the sins of the world. The punishment is in-

evitable because we cannot expect the conversion of the entire world. The chastisement can be mitigated by prayers and penance. It cannot be suppressed. An evil which threatened the world, according to the seventh secret, has been eliminated through prayer and fasting, Mirjana said. For that reason, the Blessed Virgin continues to ask for prayer and fasting: 'You have forgotten that with prayer and fasting you can ward off wars, suspend the laws of nature.'

— After the first warning, the others will follow within a rather brief period of time. So it is that people will have time for conversion.

— This time is a period of grace and conversion. After the visible sign, those who are still alive will have little time for conversion. For that reason, the Blessed Virgin calls for urgent conversion and reconciliation.

— The invitation to prayer and penance is destined to ward off evil and war and above all to save souls.

— According to Mirjana, we are close to the events predicted by the Blessed Virgin. Because of this, Mirjana says to mankind: 'Convert yourselves as quickly as possible. Open your hearts to God.'[3]

Many of Our Lady's messages have made it clear that the reason for her appearances at Medugorje was the imminence of some great disaster that menaces the world. And this calamity was so terrifying and so close at hand that her motherly love for her children of the earth was prompting her to come and warn us so that we might do something about it.

Our Lady's messages seem to imply that the catastrophe which hangs over our heads will be due to our sins. We shall reap what we have sown. The wages of sin is death.

The sins of the world are so numerous and have been going on for so long that there is a real danger we may become hardened to them and lulled into a dangerous false sense of security. This has happened a number of times in the past and always with the same tragic results. Examples abound in both Testaments of the Bible according to which the evil that people commit almost invariably leads to pain and destruction.

Today, invoking constitutionally-guaranteed rights to free speech, the pornography industry — with only the most thinly

veiled ties to organized crime — exploits practically every communication medium in its promotion of sexual promiscuity and wantonness. The natural relationship between love and sex, established by God at the time of the creation of man and woman (Genesis 2: 23-25) is treated as irrelevant and outdated.

But society is paying a terrible price for those mistakes. Sexually transmitted diseases are at epidemic levels, causing unprecedented concern among national health officials regarding the nation's ability to address the problem before millions of deaths ensue. It is not God who brings death to the sinner; it is godless behavior which leads to deadly excess. As we are told in *Proverbs:* "By his own iniquities the wicked man will be caught, in the meshes of his own sin he will be held fast. He will die from lack of discipline, through the greatness of his folly he will be lost" (5: 22-3).

Families as well as individuals are being seriously affected by the lawlessness of our times. Our ever increasing divorce rate has now reached the point where there is one divorce for every 1.8 families. The repercussions of this are tremendously harmful. More than a million children a year are involved in divorce cases.

Then, there are the millions being slaughtered each year by abortion and infanticide throughout the world. There are the evils of alcohol and substance abuse. Both of these are reaching more and more young people. And there are the crimes of violence, which in our country are becoming more and more numerous within the family.

All of this has reached such proportions that it staggers the imagination. There seems to be no end of it in sight. It keeps increasing and increasing.

But these things cannot go on indefinitely. There comes a time when they call out to God for justice. Ralph Martin has described the situation in which the world finds itself at the present time in these terms:

I believe that time is running out for our generation. I believe that our generation will see the fire of God. Our genera-

tion faces a choice: repentance or judgment. Time ran out for Sodom and Gomorrah. Time ran out for the generation of Noah. Time tragically ran out for the city of Jerusalem. And time is running out for us.

I believe that God gives warnings to his people to turn back to him before it is too late. God warned the city of Jerusalem before the Roman armies destroyed it. He warned Nineva and he warned Noah's generation. Jesus indicates in Luke (13: 1-5), that God also gives people warnings by means of natural disaster.

Ralph Martin goes on to mention among these signs and warnings, "the various kinds of incurable diseases" and "the strange weather of recent years", the droughts and floods and earthquakes and volcanoes that have occurred throughout the world. And one must not forget the nuclear bomb that is constantly hanging over our heads.

We are living in a time of grace during which God is calling us to repent and turn back to him. This is a time of visitation, a time of choice. At Medugorje, Our Lady has been repeating in her own words what Isaiah said to Israel in his day: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near" (55:6).

The destiny of our generation lies in our own hands, as it did in the hands of Noah's generation and of Jesus' generation. Will it be the peace that flows from repentance and reconciliation with God and our fellowmen, or will it be the catastrophe Our Lady has so frequently warned us about at Medugorje?

> Coming within sight of the city, he wept over it and said: 'If only you had known the path to peace in this day....Days will come upon you when your enemies will encircle you with a rampart,...will wipe you out, you and your children within your walls, and leave not a stone on a stone within you, because you have failed to recognize the time of your visitation' (Luke 19:41-44).

Dare we fail to recognize the time of our visitation? That time is running out on us. Our Lady has said so.

At Fatima, Our Lady prophesied World War II as a punishment for our sins. At Medugorje, she tells us that our lack of faith and consequent sinfulness are about to cost us dearly.

Chapter 24

Our Lady Queen Of Peace And Conversion

Our Lady Queen of Peace

In addition to faith, peace is another topic that stands out in the words spoken by Our Lady during the first days of the apparitions on Mount Podbrdo.

On June 25, the second day Our Lady appeared and the first on which she spoke, her parting words were: "Go in the peace of God." And from that day on, her farewell would always be those very same words that feature the ultimate purpose of her coming to Medugorje, to bring the peace "of God", the peace that comes from living in his friendship.

On June 26, in the apparition to the six seers on Mount Podbrdo, Our Lady declared: "I have come to be with you to convert and reconcile everyone." In the subsequent apparition to Marija on her way home, she said: "Peace, peace, peace. Reconcile yourselves."

These two June 26 apparitions make it clear that the peace Our Lady is seeking is above all the peace of heart and mind that comes from conversion and reconciliation between God and men.

In addition to Our Lady coming back frequently on the topic of peace during her apparitions, three very special things have underscored how important she deems it to be.

There is the day on which she first chose to appear, June 24, the Feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptizer, the precursor of Jesus Christ. John's mission was to preach

penance and reform of life which brings about peace of heart and mind. Then, Our Lady made clear that a major objective in coming to Medugorje was the spiritual or inner peace that comes from reconciliation with God by stating that she wanted a new feast, Our Lady Queen of Peace, to be instituted in the Church on June 25, the day following the feast of Saint John the Baptizer. Finally, there was the blazoning of the word *Mir* (Peace) in the sky above the cross on Mount Krizevac.

Peace in the world among nations would come about when men are reconciled with God and with each other.

Conversion

Because of the great decrease in faith and consequent prevalence of sin in the world, Our Lady has spoken frequently at Medugorje of conversion which includes reconciliation with both God and man, and of confession which is the sacramental way through which reconciliation is effected in the Catholic Church.

On June 26, the third day on which Our Lady appeared, when Ivanka, at the suggestion of Marinko, asked her what she wanted at Medugorje, her reply had been: "I want to be with you to convert and reconcile everyone." On that same day, after the apparition on the mountain side during which Our Lady gave the above reply, Marija saw her again as she was walking home from that apparition. Our Lady stood weeping in front of a cross that did not have a body of Christ on it. She said: "Peace, peace, peace. Reconcile yourselves."

On December 7, eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady said: "Many people are on the way to conversion, but not all of them." The next day, December 8, the seers had expected Our Lady would be joyful, as she usually was on her major feast days. But they were surprised. Our Lady appeared very serious. She knelt down, opened her hands toward heaven and began to pray: "My dear and beloved Son, please forgive those serious and numerous sins by which humanity is offending you." She continued to pray in this fashion, but the seers do not remember the exact words she used.

After she finished her prayer, she said the Our Father and the Glory Be together with the young people. Then, she told them that she prays daily at the foot of the cross on Mount Krizevac, asking her divine Son to forgive sinful humanity.[1]

Part of Father Tomislav Vlasic's August 15, 1983 interview deals with conversion. We quote the following sections that refer to it.

> Already with the specific name with which she presented herself to the seers, 'I am the Queen of Peace,' Our Lady gave her main message, namely *mir*, which means peace.
>
> Several times, Our Lady told the seers that the world is living in great tensions and that it cannot be saved if it continues like this.
>
> The world has to find peace to be saved. But, it will not find peace without God. It will only find peace in God.
>
> Therefore, Our Lady asks for conversions....The call to conversion has been strong, especially in recent times.
>
> A message was given to one of the seers in the following words: Tell my sons and daughters, tell all the world as soon as possible that I desire their conversion. The only word I give to the world is: 'Convert- and do not wait.' I will ask my Son that he not punish the world, but that the world be saved. You don't know, nor can you know, what God will send to the world. Convert yourselves, renounce everything, be ready for everything, because all this is part of conversion.
>
> A few days ago *(a few days before August 15, 1983)*, Our Lady repeated her call to conversion, saying: 'Tell the world not to wait. It needs to convert itself. When God comes, he will not joke with anybody. I tell you that you have to take my messages seriously.'[2]
>
> Our Lady has promised to leave a sign on the mountain of the apparitions. This sign will be given for atheists...Regarding the sign, Our Lady said: 'You faithful must not wait for the sign to convert yourselves. Don't delay in converting yourselves. This is a time of grace for you. You can never thank God *(enough)* for this grace he has given you. This time is for a deepening of faith and for your conversion. When the sign comes it will be late for many.'

On April 20, 1983, one of the seers saw Our Lady crying for sinners and heard her make an important plea on their behalf:

"I would like to convert them, but they don't convert themselves. Don't wait... I need your prayer and your penance."

"I need your prayer and your penance." This plea for sinners was addressed specifically to the seers. But, there can be no doubt that Our Lady intended it for all of us. If for no other reason than our own self-interest, we should take this plea to heart. It is only through prayer and penance that the catastrophe that hangs over us will be mitigated.

Our Lady made a similar plea at Fatima. In the course of the fourth apparition, in August of 1917, she said to the three little shepherds: "Pray, pray very much and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and to pray for them."

At Medugorje, the specific form of penance that Our Lady asks for is fasting, and the austere form of fasting on bread and water. The efficacy of that form of penance was indirectly brought out on August 15, 1983, when Our Lady said that "Satan is furious with those who fast and convert themselves."

And the fasting was particularly linked with conversion. Father Tomislav Vlasic has said: "From the beginning, Our Lady has underlined that conversion can only come about through prayer and fasting."[3]

Chapter 25

Monthly Confession And The Triduum Of Reconciliation

On August 6, 1982, Our Lady made this statement which has been so marvelously taken to heart and so effectively applied in the parish by the priests of Saint James parish: "If Christians started to go to confession every month, reconciling themselves with God and their neighbors, soon whole Christian regions would be spiritually healed."[1]

The key to the spiritual transformation of Saint James parish that deeply impresses all those who go there, particularly priests, is the Triduum of Reconciliation, which is held each month.

When on July 1, 1981, the eighth day of the apparitions, Father Jozo Zovko, the pastor, introduced the first rosary at 5 p.m. and the first Mass at 6 p.m., he could not have foreseen what this would ultimately lead to. The jammed church which greeted Father Jozo, who celebrated that Eucharist, was the first of many, many packed churches that would follow.

When the Sacrament of Reconciliation was made readily available at the daily evening Mass, an important step toward the Triduum of Reconciliation had been taken.

The Triduum is a monthly event that starts at the evening service on the last Thursday of the month. On that day, the regular daily schedule of rosary, apparition, seven Our Fathers and Eucharist is immediately followed by a Holy Hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On Friday, the hour of Eucharistic adoration after the Mass is replaced by an hour of veneration of the Cross. On Saturday, it is replaced by

devotions to the Blessed Virgin. Confessions take place on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Extra priests are available for confessions.

Sunday is the Feast of Reconciliation and features reconciliation between families. Families in the same neighborhood get together for a meal. The focus on this day is the joy that comes from reconciliation.

Speaking of the Triduum of Reconciliation, Father Tomislav says it is "not just a monthly confession to pass in front of a priest." In other words it is a confession in depth. An American priest of Croatian extraction went to Medugorje in the summer of 1983. Because he spoke Croatian he was asked to hear confessions, which he did outside of the church. He heard confessions for four-and-a-half hours and was deeply impressed with the depth or quality of the confessions. This was true of all those who came to him, irrespective of their age, the young as well as the older people. As he expressed it: "These were not the usual shopping list confessions."

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is being used as it was meant to be used, as a tool or means of growth in holiness as well as a means of forgiveness, of reconciliation. In addition to the forgiveness of the sins confessed, the Sacrament of Reconciliation brings the penitent special help or grace to overcome and eradicate these sins.

Thanks to the device of the Triduum of Reconciliation, the people are regularly reminded of Our Lady's request for monthly confession and they are helped by their priests to derive maximum benefit from this important and presently neglected sacrament. It is not without reason that Medugorje is said to be something unique.

The strong emphasis on confession in the Medugorje message may well be one of the reasons why Our Lady chose to appear in the parish of Saint James. There are a considerable number of Franciscan priests in that area who can be called upon to help with the confessions. There is a large monastery at Humac, which is only a dozen miles from Saint James church. Several priests from that monastery have been coming daily to hear confessions. Then there are a number of Franciscan-staffed parishes in the area which are

not very far from Medugorje. That explains how at times there have been some thirty or more priests hearing confessions there.

The parish staff at Medugorje has not had to introduce new devotions to renew the parish. It has had the vision to see that all the tools needed were already at hand. All that was needed was to make these tools available to the people.

Chapter 26

Prayer And The Sacraments

Prayer

Prayer is a theme that is woven through the entire fabric of the Medugorje apparitions. Since the first days, it has come back again, and again, and again. It is the solid rock upon which the spiritual structure Our Lady has been building firmly rests.

Prayer is the life blood of our souls. It keeps them healthy and vigorous. Without it, our souls are weakened and eventually exposed to the death of serious sin. Never was man more in need of prayer than today, when sin invites him on every side. That is why Our Lady has so frequently asked for prayer at Medugorje.

Our Lady began asking for prayer from the very first days of the apparitions. On the second day of the apparitions, June 25, 1981, the seers recited seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys and seven Glory Be's in the presence of Our Lady. She joined them in these prayers[1] and told them to continue to pray them, asking that they also say the Creed once. Much later, she stated that these prayers are the minimum a person should say each day. They have been a much used prayer at Medugorje and constitute a part of the daily liturgy held in the church each evening. It should be noted that prayer was the very first thing Our Lady recommended at Medugorje. That alone tells us much about how important she considers it.

On June 28, the fifth day of the apparitions, the seers asked Our Lady if she preferred that they pray or sing. Her reply was

that they "do both, pray and sing." The singing of religious hymns is, of course, a form of prayer.

It is significant that with the exception of the first and second day of the apparitions, which were unusual ones, Our Lady appeared only after the young people had started praying. And it has continued that way ever since.

Not only has Our Lady requested prayer but she has frequently prayed with the seers during the apparitions. This usually occurs when the young people ask Our Lady to pray for some intention, such as a healing. Our Lady will say: "Let us pray together for this." When she prays with them this way, the seers' voices become audible. It is the only part of their conversation with Our Lady that is ever heard by the spectators. It has also happened occasionally that when a seer was praying somewhere for the healing of a certain person, Our Lady appeared and prayed with the seer.

All of the seers have received what could be called graces of prayer. They pray more, they pray better. This is true not only of the original group of seers but also of Jelena and Marijana. Their personal prayer life has improved. Also, prayer is the heart of the messages these two seers have been asked to transmit to others as evidenced by the answer Marijana gave when asked if Our Lady ever told her to do something for other people or to show them something: "No, except to give them the message to pray and fast and to tell them that prayer is the most important."

Our Lady's request for prayer has frequently been a joint request for prayer and fasting and this for the conversion of sinners. As already mentioned, on April 20, 1983, one of the seers saw Our Lady crying for sinners and pleading on their behalf: "I would like to convert them, but they don't convert themselves. Don't wait... I need your prayer and your penance."

In her pleading for the world, Our Lady also linked fasting and prayer, reminding us of how pleasing to God this can be: "You have forgotten that with prayer and fasting you can ward off war and suspend natural laws." It is a fact that fasting and penance are pleasing to God and strengthen our prayer when they are joined to it.

The meditation prayer group which Our Lady told Jelena she wanted established is a powerful indication of the importance Our Lady attaches to prayer.

There has never been any let-up in Our Lady's request for prayer. Indeed, her plea for prayer only seems to have become more frequent and more insistent as time has gone on.

On July 20, 1984, Our Lady gave the seers instructions on how to pray. The following information concerning this apparition was given by Marija.

> Our Lady said: 'Open your hearts and come. Pray your prayers out loud.' We used to say our prayers for ourselves, in our hearts. But the Blessed Virgin said: 'Speak, speak. I know your pains. When you express them to me out loud it is going to be easier for you.'
>
> Then, we started. As we were saying those prayers, she was following each of us with her eyes and she looked as though she were feeling with each one who was praying, each one in the group. Someone was praying for the Bishop.[2] Then, a large tear came from Our Lady's eyes. She had her hands together and she started crying even more. Then, she said to us: 'You are my little flowers. Be my light.'
>
> Then, with her hands she indicated that we should kneel and she said a prayer which we could not understand.
>
> Then, she blessed us with her cross and said: 'Pray, my children. It will be easier for me,' and she went away crying.[3]

"Pray, my children. It will be easier for me." Apparently, something was causing Our Lady deep sorrow and the prayers of the children would alleviate that sorrow. We are reminded of Francisco of Fatima, who delighted in spending hours before the tabernacle "consoling" Jesus.

"Speak, speak. I know your pains. When you express them to me out loud it is going to be easier for you." Our Lady does not need to have the seers speak out their needs. She knows them even before they express them. The seers are the ones who will benefit from praying out loud. It will be recalled that in her January 10, 1983 interview with Father Tomislav Vlasic, Mirjana, the seer from Sarajevo, spoke at some length about praying out loud. It was evident that she derived benefit from this manner of praying.

It would be interesting to know how frequently Our Lady spoke about praying out loud at Medugorje and what other things she might have said about this manner of praying.

In a talk to a group of Italian pilgrims on June 3, 1984, Father Tomislav Vlasic said Our Lady gave the following message on Holy Saturday, April 21, 1984. It would seem that the message was received by Jelena.

> Open your hearts and raise your hands because Jesus wants to give you a special gift, which is also my gift. It is this: the trials you will have to go through, you will go through easily. We will show you the way out, if you follow us.
>
> Don't say that the Holy Year is finished and that you can stop praying. Rather, increase your prayers. Let the Holy Year be a stepping stone ahead.
>
> And the seer saw the Resurrected Christ. From his wounds came a brilliant light that fell on all the people....'Tell all the people they can be happy only with me.'

An interesting message was addressed to the members of the parish staff in March of 1984. Our Lady said that they were wasting a lot of time giving information to people. She asked them not to do this. "Please make this a place of prayer", she said.

In response to a question which a priest had asked the seers to submit to Our Lady, she explained her role as an intercessor. Her answer was: "Please pray to Jesus. I am his mother and I intercede with him. But all prayer goes to Jesus. I will help, I will pray. However, everything does not depend on me, but also on your strength and that of those who pray."[4]

As has been seen, Our Lady has especially recommended certain prayers. But she has also taken into consideration the varying needs and capacities of different types of people and has offered many options.

Without attempting to establish any order of importance among them, we submit the following list of prayers and devotions Our Lady has mentioned at Medugorje. The seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's, and the Creed, the traditional rosary of Our Lady, the rosary of Jesus Christ, prayer, prayer for healing and meditative prayer, devotion and consecration to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the Sacra-

ment of Reconciliation, the Mass and Communion.

One should not be misled into believing that Our Lady favors only these prayers and devotions. She has emphasized the fact every prayer is pleasing to God if it comes from the heart.

Prayer for Healing

Prayer for healing has played a significant role at Medugorje. For a long while, it seems that people were prayed over individually as well as collectively each night at the conclusion of the evening Mass. The seers were involved in the small groups that prayed individually over people. When this became too great a burden -going on at times until midnight-it was greatly reduced.

Father Rupcic asked the six seers what Our Lady required from people who wanted to be healed. From the answers they gave, it is clear that especially four things are required: faith, fasting, prayer and penance. Faith is very important. "She requires strong faith most of all," one of the seers replied.[5]

In his report on Medugorje, Father Thomas Forrest gives the following information concerning what Our Lady has told the seers about praying for the sick and for healing.

> The answer to such prayers depends not only on the one who does the praying, but also on the one being prayed for. The sick person himself must also be praying and even fasting.
>
> The surest paths to healing are those of faith and of abandonment to God.
>
> In praying for the recovery of the gravely sick, not just one but a whole group of people should undertake the prayer, continuing to pray daily for the sick person, fasting for him as well. The Madonna has said for the healing of the sick: 'I need the help of your prayers and sacrifices.'
>
> The shortest daily prayer for a sick person, according to the Madonna, is an Our Father, a Hail Mary and Glory Be to the Father. But, she adds that any kind of prayer for them is good.
>
> The Madonna has stated: 'I myself cannot heal you. Only God Himself can heal you.'
>
> Priests who wish to grow in this gift, must learn to pray and to fast a great deal.
>
> The Madonna speaks about two things that are very useful in praying for healing: the imposition of hands, and the anointing with blessed oil.
>
> She also ties in closely the Sacrament of Reconciliation with healing, and Medugorje has seen even physical healings take place through the making of a good confession.

The Sacraments

Although Our Lady does not seem to have spoken with as much frequency about the Eucharist as about some other topics, there can be no doubt that it is an extremely important part of the Medugorje message. It is the more unusual parts of her verbal message that have been publicized. This is quite understandable but it would be most unfortunate if this were to lead us to neglect that greatest channel of God's grace.

As more and more information has come forth, it has become increasingly clear that the Eucharist holds center stage in Medugorje. We are discovering that from the very start Our Lady spoke to the six seers about the Eucharist and its importance with more frequency than was suspected. This helps us to understand why the parish staff has placed so much emphasis on the Mass and public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the church services that have been made available to parishioners and pilgrims.

But it is also a fact that Our Lady herself has brought the Eucharist into her messages and requests in a new and more insistent way as time has gone on. This has come about especially through the new seers, Jelena and Marijana. She has done this through the personal messages she has given these two young girls and in the messages she has given the parish through them. We saw Jelena's statements to the effect that Our Lady never spoke to her about the rosary but spoke to her about the Mass, saying that it is "the best" and that the people should "go to Mass more and more and to Communion." And Our Lady recommended that the members of the meditation prayer group go to Mass "frequently, every day if possible."

One of the strong signs pointing to the authenticity of the Medugorje message is its emphasis on the Sacraments of the Church, particularly Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Chapter 27

Penance, Fasting And Reparation

The strong focusing on penance and specifically on fasting in the message of Medugorje is certainly one of the things that differentiates it from other Marian apparitions. The Fatima message places much emphasis on penance and sacrifice, but of quite a different kind. Sister Lucy has made it clear that at Fatima Our Lady was not seeking austere forms of penance, such as fasting on bread and water. Rather, she was asking for the smaller and more humble penances and sacrifices that are involved in willingly and lovingly accepting the pain and hardship that so often accompany the fulfillment of our daily occupations and duties.

An important aspect that the penance messages of Fatima and Medugorje have in common with each other is reparation or atonement. Reparation was explicitly mentioned many times at Fatima, as when Our Lady asked the three children to pray and make sacrifices for sinners because there are none to do this for them. All three children responded generously to this request. This was especially true of little Jacinta, the youngest of the trio. She became a real heroine of reparation, seemingly never able to do enough for poor sinners.

Reparation is an important facet of the Medugorje message. Our Lady frequently requested prayer and fasting. Extreme times require extreme measures. Our Lady's message that we are on the edge of catastrophe is the key to understanding the austere message of Medugorje, particularly the often repeated request that we fast on bread and water.

One cannot understand the extent of Our Lady's pleading for fasting on bread and water except in the light of the perilous times in which we live.

Maybe it is because of the great need for reparation at this particular moment of history that Yugoslavia was chosen for these apparitions. Living under a Communistic regime that harasses believers, the Croatian Catholics would be disposed to accept at face value their heavenly Mother's disturbing message, including its austere requests. And it cannot be denied that the request for fasting on bread and water is austere.

There can be no doubt that Our Lady deems fasting on bread and water very important in the present crisis. For that request has been repeated and even intensified and broadened.

She began by asking for fasting on bread and water once a week, on Fridays. Then she requested a second day, Wednesday. All of the six seers have complied and fast on bread and water twice a week. So too has the parish staff of priests and sisters. The people of Medugorje have also responded generously to Our Lady's plea. A good half of the parish began fasting once a week on bread and water. And since Our Lady asked for a second day of fasting, some have been doing this. Finally, in regard to the seers, Marija and one or two of the other girls have added a third day of fasting, which is Saturday. But on this third day, the fasting is not so severe and some potatoes are taken along with the bread and water.

A new facet was added to the fasting when Our Lady asked the seers to prepare for the feast of the Immaculate Conception by a novena which includes nine days of fasting on bread and water. More recently she asked not only the seers but everyone to prepare for her birthday with three days of fasting on bread and water.

There is considerable focus on reparation in the messages Our Lady has given for the parishioners of Saint James. It is especially clear in the following messages that were received during Lent.

> ...I ask you in a special way during this Lent to honor the wounds of my Son, which he received because of the sins of

this parish. Unite yourselves with my prayers for this parish so that his sufferings may become bearable. (March 22, 1984)

...I am asking you to venerate the Heart of My Son, Jesus. Make atonement for the wounds inflicted on the Heart of my Son. That Heart has been offended by all sorts of sins.(April 5, 1984)

Fasting is a powerful means of reparation. But to be effective it must be done with the proper motivation. Our Lady reminded the parishioners of Saint James of this in her message of September 20, 1984.

...Today, I ask you to start fasting, putting your heart in it. There are many who fast, but only because everyone else is fasting. It has become a custom that no one wants to stop. I ask the parish to fast out of gratitude to God for allowing me to remain this long in this parish.

Dear children, fast and pray with your heart.

At Medugorje, Our Lady's request for fasting was almost always joined to a request for prayer. Fasting and other forms of penance render our prayer more pleasing to God. Aware of this, the saints, who are our models, frequently joined penance to their prayers, especially when they prayed for important things. Fasting in the early or apostolic church seems to have always been linked to prayer when important issues were at stake (See *Acts* 13: 2-3; 14: 23).

Fasting liberates the mind and the spirit, disposing us to pray.

Most of us would need to get rid of false notions and prejudices about fasting that create a psychological state which makes it much more difficult than it would be if we approached it in the proper state of mind.

The generous response of the local people by fasting on bread and water is striking. Another form of penance that is less sensational but still noteworthy is that practiced by those who come to daily Mass. Most of them walk considerable distances. They do this in all kinds of weather. The rainy and cold days are not the only ones that involve hardship. The summers are intensely hot in the Medugorje area. It will be remembered that three of the girls were overcome by heat during one of the June, 1981, apparitions.

The stipulation that those who join the meditation prayer group must fast twice a week on bread and water and may later be asked to add more fasting and prayer, if problems arise, is just one more bit of evidence of the important place this form of penance holds in Our Lady's messages at Medugorje.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14 is one of the days that draws great crowds to Medugorje. A large number of people, including young people, climb up and down Mount Krizevac barefooted, as they attend Mass that is always celebrated there at the concrete cross on that day.

Since Our Lady began appearing on Mount Krizevac in 1984, it has become a popular place for those who wish to pray and do penance. Mount Podbrdo has never ceased to attract people. Although the distance to the site of the first apparitions is not quite as great as that to the cross of Mount Krizevac, the path is more difficult and painful.

Although Our Lady has said that "the best" form of fasting is on bread and water alone, she is well aware that this is not possible for everyone, for example those who are too sick or too weak to do so. These people can renounce different things. She said: "First of all, renounce television programs. They are a great source of sin for your families. After these programs, you are incapable of praying. Renounce alcohol, cigarettes and various pleasures. Everyone can make these renunciations."

Our heavenly mother's insistence on penance, especially on fasting on bread and water, indicate her evaluation of the magnitude of the catastrophe that awaits us if we do not repent and reconcile ourselves with God and our neighbor.

Chapter 28

Miscellaneous Messages

A considerable number of the messages which Our Lady imparted at Medugorje were for special categories of people. We have seen that there were messages for priests in general, and for the priests of Saint James parish.

The Bishop of Mostar

There have been messages for the Bishop of Mostar, His Excellency the Most Rev. Pavao Zanic. In response to a question by Father Rupcic, Marija mentions a message for the bishop which the seers communicated to him at the time it was received.[1]

In the summer of 1983, Our Lady told the seers to fast twice a week for the Bishop because he carries a heavy responsibility. She added that, if necessary, she would ask for a third day of fasting. And she asked them to pray for the Bishop every day. Since then Our Lady has frequently requested prayers for the Bishop.

The Pope

There have also been messages for the Pope. Some of these are secrets which the seers cannot speak about until Our Lady tells them they can. And some are not secrets. For example, the Pope should consider himself as the father of all peoples and not only of Christians. And he should tirelessly and bravely spread the message of peace and love towards all people.[2]

Poland and Russia

In October of 1981, Our Lady gave Marija the following messages that were in reply to questions asked by a priest from Mostar. There was a message concerning Poland to the effect that there would soon be great conflicts there but that the just would be victorious. And there was a message which stated that Russia is the nation where God will be the most glorified.[3] This last message brings to mind the prophetic message of Fatima in which Our Lady asked that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart by the Pope in union with all the bishops of the world, stating that she would eventually be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart and converted, and a period of peace would be granted to the world.[4]

False Prophets

In Mirjana Dragicevic's interview with Father Tomislav Vlasic on January 10, 1983, she told him that Our Lady had spoken to her about the false prophets of our day. She told her that there are "a great number of false prophets in the world in our time. There are many who lie, claiming that they see her or Jesus." She said that "this is a great sin" and that we should pray a lot for these people. They don't understand how grave a sin it is to lie about seeing someone from heaven. And Mirjana added that she and the Blessed Virgin prayed for fourteen days "only for false prophets."

October 13, 1984, message for priests

In October of 1984, some six thousand priests from all over the world attended a charismatic retreat in Rome during which they were privileged to hear Pope John Paul II and Sister Teresa of Calcutta among other speakers. After the retreat, one hundred and ten American priests went to Medugorje. On October 13, they met in late afternoon with four of the seers in the hall under the rectory. A few French and Italian priests were there also and during the meeting Our Lady appeared to the seers and gave this message.

> My dear sons, today the Lord has permitted me to gather you here to give you the message which is for all those who love me.

My dear sons, pray and always ask God to continue to inspire you. In everything you do in the future, always seek the will of God.

My dear sons, thank you for having answered my call to come here.

Like most of the messages that Our Lady gave us at Medugorje, this one is short and simple. But it is vitally important and bears close scrutiny. It contains much more than appears at first sight.

"Today, the Lord has permitted me to gather you here." Our Lady is saying that the priests she is talking to are a very special group. They are not there by chance but have been specially picked and called by her from three foreign countries. Although the priests have come mainly from one country, the message of this day is for all priests, "for all those who love me."

Then the core of the message is a reminder to all priests of their call to holiness without which they will be simply "noisy gongs and clanging cymbals" (1 *Cor.* 13:1). That holiness is not complicated: "Pray and always ask God to continue to inspire you. In everything you do in the future, always seek the will of God."

It is fitting that we close our account of the happenings at Medugorje with this message addressed to priests. Our Lady has appeared there because of a crisis of faith. Ultimately, it is the priests who are the guardians of the faith in the day to day life of the Church.

Epilogue
Mary Our Mother

What must be seen first in any apparition, Marian or other, is the goodness of our heavenly Father. For Mary like any heavenly visitor, comes as his messenger, as one sent by him.

Mary is not just any messenger. She is the Father's very best messenger, the one he reserves to bring his most important messages to his children of the earth. And so it is that when Mary appears somewhere and gives us proof that it is indeed she, we must take notice for we know that there is something significant at stake for us.

One of the foremost things that the Father wants to teach us when he sends Mary as his messenger is that she is no ordinary person in his plan for our salvation. This apparently is something that we have difficulty in understanding, for he keeps sending Mary to us again and again. This is especially true of the last one hundred and twenty five years, starting with Lourdes in 1858.

The Father sends Mary because she is important and he wants us to know it. But, he also sends her because she is our mother, our spiritual mother, given to us by Jesus from the cross as a last testament and proof of his love.

There is no role that Mary delights in more than that of being our spiritual mother. In the apparitions where she is involved, the seers immediately perceive this. Medugorje is no exception. One of the ways in which she manifested the tenderness of her affection for the seers was by calling them

"her angels, her dear angels". She lost no time in doing this, using the expression for the first time on the fourth day she appeared.

Allowing people to touch her was an unusual manifestation of Our Lady's love, one that could be readily understood by both the seers and the people. On the sixth day she appeared, Our Lady allowed Doctor Glaumuzina, the observer sent by the authorities at Citluk, to touch her. She allowed spectators to touch her on other occasions, as was seen. I know of no other Marian apparition where Our Lady submitted to such a thing.

But Our Lady was even more condescending than this in her manifestations of motherly love at Medugorje. We recall her apparitions to Jakov and Vicka that occurred in the latter's house in the fall of 1981. Marinko, a few children and adults were present. Our Lady "smiled" at Marinko. Then, she "came" to him, "kissed, embraced and blessed" him. A little later, she "blessed" the children and the adults. She has blessed and kissed people on other occasions also.

For a long while, Our Lady allowed the seers to transmit questions to her on the part of people and she answered many of these questions. The seers said that she blessed all the articles that were on the table over which she appeared in the church.

There was a powerful teaching in all these many kindnesses of the Blessed Virgin and it was basically the same teaching for all the recipients of these loving acts, whether they were seers or others: "I am your mother, the most tender and considerate of all mothers. I want to establish a warm, loving relationship with each and every one of you. I want you to be simple and childlike in your dealings with me. My son, Jesus, told you that you had to become like 'little children' (*Mt.*18: 3). That is the way I want you to be with me."

All of the seers of Medugorje would undoubtedly subscribe to what Mirjana said about Our Lady.

> At the beginning, I looked on her as something inaccessible, but now when she is with me, I look on her as a mother, as my best friend who helps me.
>
> I...became very close to her. I felt she loved me with a motherly love. I was able to ask her questions about anything I wanted to.[1]

Devotion to our Blessed Mother has suffered greatly in the last twenty years. This has been a tremendous loss for the Church. To restore love of her and confidence in the power of her intercession, is one of the important purposes for which the Father sent her to Medugorje. Certainly one of the reasons why these apparitions have been going on for so long is the low ebb that our love of her and recourse to her have reached.

We saw that Our Lady asked that the members of the meditation prayer group consecrate themselves to her Heart and abandon themselves completely to her. Consecration to Mary is not something new. It was popularized by Saint Louis de Montfort (1673-1716) during his life time of preaching and bequeathed to posterity through his spiritual classic *A Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*[2] Saint Maximilian Kolbe was a modern day apostle of total consecration to Mary. It was undoubtedly through the influence of the writings of this Polish Franciscan, that Pope John Paul II came to consecrate himself to Mary and took as a motto both as Bishop and Supreme Pontiff *Totus tuus Maria* - I am all Yours, Mary. Our recent Popes, Pius XII, Paul VI and John Paul II have all consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.[3]

At Fatima, Our Lady asked for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart, promising the conversion of that country and a period of peace for the world through the consecration. But, she requested a particular form of consecration, namely, a consecration of Russia by the Pope in union with all the bishops of the world. This remains to be done.[4] It would seem that there has not been enough prayer and penance to bring this about and that to obtain these prayers and penance is one of the reasons why Our Lady has come to Medugorje.

The Hail Holy Queen has been one of the most popular prayers in the Church. At Medugorje, Mary is reminding us that she is still "our Queen, our Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope."

Appendix 1
Renewed Apparitions On Mount Podbrdo And Mount Krizevac

[The following text was prepared by Father Pelletier for the very first printing but, because it relates activities which were forbidden by local authorities, he feared possible reprisals on the people who took part in them and decided to leave it out. We feel the danger has passed and we print these accounts by the Karminskis, Drew Mason and Aggie Kuhn to whom we are grateful for their contributions.

Editor's note]

Mount Podbrdo

The climbing of Mount Podbrdo by the three Karminskis on the night of August 10 was in keeping with the Medugorje message. It started with some penance. As there is no clearly defined path to the place of the first apparitions, they lost their way in the dark. They climbed over large stones and crawled on their hands and knees under prickly brush. Then they heard singing and tried to head in the direction of the music. Eventually they found the trail, but not before thorns had torn through their clothes and into their flesh.

When they arrived at the site of the apparitions, they found some twenty young people, including the seers, Ivan and Marija, sitting in front of one of the rustic crosses that marked the place where Our Lady had appeared. In front of the cross was a small shrine with candles burning. Also present were people from the United States and Ireland whom the Karmin-

ski group had met during the past days and four members of the parish staff.

One of the young people played a guitar as the group sang religious hymns. Some of the tunes were similar to American hymns. After a while, the singing stopped and everyone knelt down as Ivan began to say the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be. This was followed by a long period of complete silence. Then Ivan and Marija broke the silence with the Our Father and the Glory Be. There was no Hail Mary this time, for Our Lady had appeared.

The apparition lasted about thirty minutes. When it was over a priest began the rosary. All remained kneeling on the rocky terrain. Among those present was a young lady who spoke English and reported the following information from Ivan. Our Lady prayed with the group and kissed each one of those there on the forehead. She said that they should pray for Father Tomislav Vlasic. (Quite soon after this, he was transferred from Medugorje to Vitina.)

This appearing once again at the site of the first apparitions has been going on for some time. It is not known exactly when these apparitions started over.

On March 20, 1984, during the apparition in the church, Our Lady asked Ivan to go to the mountain of the apparitions. He went after the church service and Our Lady spoke to him for an hour. She prayed with him for the Franciscans and said: "Tell the Franciscans that everything will be all right."

On the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, July 16, 1984, Ivan was on Mount Podbrdo with a group of people. At exactly 11 p.m., he began leading them in prayer. At the second Our Father, his voice stopped and there followed a six minute period of silence. Then he told the people that Our Lady had given him this message:

> Pray and fast these days. Satan is pressuring someone. I am praying for the Friars in the parish. Let them not be afraid. I know of changes which are to come and when the changes take place, I will be there. Do not be afraid. There will be signs for the people and for sinners, for those who drink and smoke. Young people will accept me again.

A teenage American was present at an apparition that took place on Mount Podbrdo on the evening of August 6. Here is his account of what he witnessed.

> There were only about 20 people on the mountain that evening, mostly young people. As I would discover later, it was an evening specially prepared by the Blessed Mother for the young people of Medugorje. Since I was only 16, the children (Marija and Ivan) brought me along.
>
> We were sitting, singing and praying. Then suddenly, we knelt and prayed, saying an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. After that silence fell upon us. Seconds after the silence began, a wind came up. Also, there was immediately an incredible peace, a stillness which seemingly quieted everything. Nothing was heard for about twenty minutes.
>
> Finally, the children led us in an Our Father and a Glory Be, at which time I realized that the Blessed Mother was appearing on the mountain, for she is the only one in the entire country who skips the Hail Mary while praying.
>
> After the apparition had ended, we blessed ourselves.
>
> The next day, I discovered what had happened. The Blessed Mother had given the children a message, telling them to pray for non-believers. After this, she went around bending down and kissing each of us. Then, she blessed us and prayed for us.

Mount Krizevac

The apparitions at Medugorje are turning out to be full of surprises. Not only has Our Lady appeared again on Mount Podbrdo, the mountain of the first apparitions, she has also started to appear at a completely new site, Mount Krizevac, the mountain of the cross. The two mountains are part of the same mountain range and are not far from each other.

When did Our Lady begin appearing at this new site? The first mention of this new development that I saw was in the report of the young American just quoted. He says that Our Lady made it known that she would appear on Mount Krizevac to Ivan on August 4 at "about twelve o'clock" at night. But, he was sick and not able to go. However, she appeared at seven in the morning of August 5, her birthday. She was seen by all those camping around the church of Saint James. In that apparition, which lasted fifteen minutes, Our Lady's hands were uplifted and she turned slowly. Some peo-

ple saw her dressed in brilliant white and others in color. This seems to be the same kind of apparition that was witnessed a number of times in the past at the cross of Mount Krizevac.

Another American was in Medugorje in November, 1984, and was present at apparitions on the mountain of the cross that occurred there on the seventh and the fourteenth of that month. He was kind enough to put in writing for me what he saw on those two nights.

> I spent ten days in Medugorje and on two Wednesday nights I went up Mount Krizevac. (It takes a good forty minutes to make the steep climb.) On both nights, the Tuesday night prayer group walked up the mountain with Ivan and Marija, saying the rosary as they went along.
>
> When they reached the top, they all sat down together and started singing hymns to the accompaniment of a guitar. They sang for about half-an-hour. Two of the hymns that I recognized were *Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore* and *When the Saints Go Marching In.* Then, they prayed the rosary until Mary came.
>
> On November 7, the apparition to Ivan and Marija lasted about twenty minutes. It was a beautiful night with a full moon.
>
> The November 14 apparition was only five to ten minutes long. That night, it was cold and wet, with light rain falling. Because of the rain, instead of praying after the apparition, as they did the first night, everyone left immediately. They were all able to get down the slippery, rocky mountain path before it started to pour.
>
> On both nights, the young people asked a few questions which Our Lady answered. She also gave some advice.
>
> On the second Wednesday, Our Lady said: 'I am happy that so many of you came. Pray two more rosaries in front of the crucifix before going to bed tonight.'
>
> On both Wednesdays, Our Lady asked that they pray for her intentions, without saying what these were.

These two apparitions underline the important place the rosary has come to assume in the prayer life of the seers and of the young people of Medugorje.

On December 12, feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady appeared again on Mount Krizevac. The previous day, December 11, "a dance of the sun" took place shortly after 3 p.m. An American woman who witnessed it has described it. At the time it happened she was behind the church with her husband, a friend from the United States and an Irishman.

> The Irishman asked us *(the three Americans)* to pray with him the beautiful prayer which the angel taught the Fatima children back in 1916 while the Host was suspended in mid-air and the angel was prostrate on the ground. We prayed with him, 'O Most Holy Trinity...,' three times. We again squinted at the sun. We had been squinting at it since we had come outside to pray, but lo and behold, we could look at it comfortably.
>
> The sun started to quiver and shake as if it wanted to rip itself loose from the sky. It looked like it had a disc covering it which also shook. The natives call this protective disc 'the Host'. The struggle lasted about half a minute and then the sun started to rotate clockwise toward us. It was spectacular and awesome.
>
> My husband-he came to Medugorje believing that the Blessed Mother appears, but nothing else-kept repeating over and over again, 'Well, I'll be! Look at that! Do you see that?'
>
> The Irishman kept praising God. I forgot what my friend did, but I know that I couldn't do anything but sit and cry.
>
> The Irishman finally brought us back to our senses when he fell on his knees and started to pray, 'O Most Holy Trinity...' We joined in, all the while watching the sun.
>
> It came toward us and then spun back counter-clockwise. Our prayers became more fervent and intensified as we kept watching this miracle.
>
> We were just four people, alone behind the church, and God permitted us to see what the people saw at Fatima in 1917. What an inconceivable blessing. It lasted until about 3:40 p.m.

On December 12, this same woman was privileged to witness "the dance of the sun" once again. She was with her husband, the Irishman of the previous afternoon, and a lady from England. Here is her report.

> It was around 2 p.m. We had told the lady from England about the sun miracle of the day before, and she now joined us in back of the church to pray the rosary. After this we again prayed, 'O Most Holy Trinity...'
>
> It was about ten minutes before 3 p.m. The sky was cloudless and the sun's rays were hot. The sun started to quiver and shake and then spin toward us. We praised God and con-

tinually prayed the Angel's prayer over and over. The more we prayed, the more spectacular the sight became.

The sun started to spin faster and faster and all of a sudden we could see a beautiful red glow around it. This changed to yellow, orange and a most beautiful violet. It started back again and it came towards us, again changing colors around it. I looked at the lady from England next to me and all of a sudden saw that she was bathed in the colors that the sun was throwing off. I also saw the ground bathed in red, yellow, orange and violet.

But, as if that wasn't enough, suddenly the sun jumped across the sky as if it was going down in the West behind the mountain. But just as fast as it jumped over, it jumped back. After that, it zig-zagged up and down.

But I kept quiet. I guess I couldn't believe my eyes.

My husband and the others all saw it too! This spectacle lasted one full hour. After speaking to the people around us, we found out that only two men didn't see it.

We are indebted to this same American woman for a description of what took place on Mount Krizevac on the night of that same December 12.

We reached the top of the mountain at ten-thirty or slightly thereafter. Some young people, ages sixteen to twenty-five, were already there. One of them had a guitar. A few older people were there also. A trickle of people kept arriving. It was very cold.

It was not long before Ivan arrived with some of his friends. By this time, there was a total of forty to fifty people, a little more than half of whom were young people. There was also one priest from the parish.

Ivan and his friends sat in front of the cross, facing the church below. They prayed and sang hymns. There was more singing than praying. Quite a few women made their way around the cross, praying on their knees as they moved over the stony terrain.

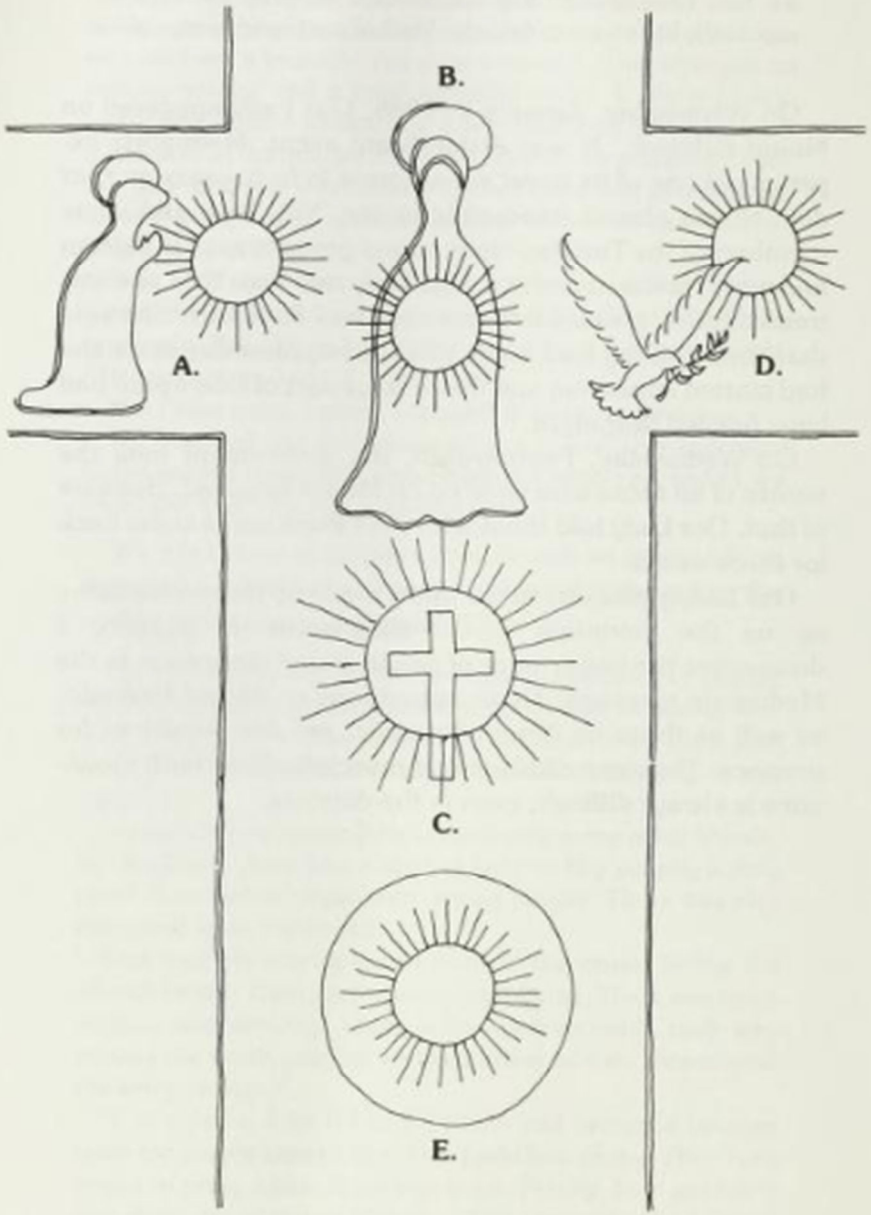
At one point, Ivan fell to his knees and everyone became quiet for people sensed that Our Lady had come. Then Ivan began to pray. Again there was quiet. Finally, Ivan got up. It was then about eleven o'clock. The apparition had lasted some two to three minutes.

Our Lady said she was pleased with us and to keep up what we had been doing. She asked that we pray for sinners, especially big sinners. And she blessed each and every one of us.

On Wednesday, January 2, 1985, Our Lady appeared on Mount Krizevac. It was a significant event. Medugorje experienced one of its worst snowstorms in forty years on that day. It was almost impossible to see. Yet, Ivan and some members of the Tuesday night prayer group braved the storm and went up the mountain. Our Lady told Ivan that she was tremendously pleased because they had done this. She said that their coming had made this the happiest day since she had started appearing and that a large part of God's plan had been fulfilled that night.

On Wednesday, February 20, the government took the names of all those who went up on Mount Krizevac. Because of that, Our Lady told those who were there not to come back for three weeks.

Our Lady's pleasure at the effort made by those who came up on the mountain in the snowstorm on January 2 dramatizes the importance of penance and reparation in the Medugorje message. These apparitions on Mount Podbrdo, as well as those on Mount Krizevac, provide occasions for penance. The steep climb up and especially down both mountains is always difficult, even in the daytime.



Appendix 2

A Recent Witness Speaks Out

The Christian Life As It Was Meant To Be Lived

John Craig and his wife, Joan, were part of a group of 175 people from Chicago and Cleveland who were in Medugorje from March 29 to April 4, 1985. John has written a moving account of what he and his wife experienced. Fortunately we are able to include this report as an appendix before going to press. The report has been shortened and a few editorial changes have been made.

Joan and I returned joyfully on Holy Thursday, April 4, from our pilgrimage to Medugorje, Yugoslavia, and we feel compelled to share our experience as it will profoundly influence our future lives.

We went to Yugoslavia as believers based on our reading the accounts of several authors. We returned with the deepened conviction of the blind man of the gospel who testified: 'I know this much: I was blind before; now I can see' *(Jn 9: 25)*. Thus, our report is intended to testify only to what we saw, what we experienced and what we learned. We leave the resolution of the question of authenticity to the Church.

PHYSICAL PHENOMENA INVOLVING THE SUN

We personally observed two remarkable phenomena involving the sun, and received the testimony of Father John O'Malley (a visiting Irish missionary from Argentina) about a third, separate phenomenon.

1. Gyrations of the Sun

During the period of time immediately preceding, during and following the apparition to the seers (which occurred at 6:45 p.m., each day we were there) we observed the sun spinning, pulsating and throbbing in the sky. This phenomenon was observable to the naked, unprotected eye.

Here is how this phenomenon was specifically observed. One looked directly into the sun. In approximately two to three seconds, a yellow halo formed around the sun, framing it. The sun viewed through the rimmed halo was then as clear as a full moon. The halo then faded away leaving only the sun.

The sun then did things in no particular sequence.

a. It spun in a clockwise direction so fast it gave the impression there were two suns.

b. It pulsated like a beating heart.

c. It throbbed as if moving closer to the earth and returning to its place.

These phenomena occurred on all four days of our visit and were visible from many different places throughout the surrounding geographic area.

2. Spiritual Figures Surrounding the Sun

The second, even more remarkable phenomenon of the sun, was also observable only during the time described above.

Here is a description of this phenomenon. The sun was viewed initially as described above, that is, through a halo, until it was as clear and well defined as the moon. Then, five individual unique "overlays" became clearly visible on or near the sun (See the drawings at the head of the appendix).

a. The kneeling silhouette of the Blessed Mother to the upper left of the sun, at approximately "11 o'clock" on the sun.

b. The standing silhouette of the Blessed Mother (front facade) encompassing and blocking the sun.

c. A cross overlayed on and emanating from the sun.

d. A three-dimensional dove directly below the sun.

e. A perfectly round, white host encompassing and blocking the sun.

Again, these phenomena were observed by Joan and me and by many others of our group.

THE CROSS ON THE HILL

The following account was given by Father John O'Malley, Irish missionary from Argentina.

On one of the first mornings in Medugorje, the housekeeper in the home where he was staying came excitedly to his room to bring him to the front of the house. She pointed to the cross on Mount Krizevac. The horizontal member had disappeared. The base and the vertical members were present. The horizontal member returned to view in several minutes. There were no clouds in the sky.

The next morning at 7:30, Father O'Malley arose to observe the cross again. On this occasion, under sunlight conditions and a cloudless sky, both the vertical and the horizontal members were gone, leaving only the base visible to the viewer. Both members reappeared in several minutes.

THE FRUITS EVIDENT IN THE PARISH OF SAINT JAMES

Although less physically sensational, we believe that the most marvelous sign in Medugorje is the intense environment of prayer and Christian service that is evident throughout the community.

The parish holds devotional services every evening from 6:00 to 9:00. Joan and I attended these services for four consecutive evenings. They are offered in Croatian and consist of the following parts.

1. The recitation of the sorrowful and joyful mysteries of the rosary.

2. The Eucharist. This is the center of the devotional services. The Mass is profoundly devout. Every person sings every song. No song books are used and no hymn numbers posted. The entire church is a choir.

The consecration was the most devout community experience of my Christian life. Every knee in every crowded aisle and corner bends to the floor in adoration. At the words of the consecration, the faithful, in almost perfect spontaneous unison, can be heard to utter "My Lord and my God" at the elevation of the Host, and "My Jesus mercy" at the elevation of the Precious Blood. The experience must be lived to appreciate its full beauty and impact.

3. The blessing of religious objects. This centers around the recitation of the Litany of the Saints.

4. The prayers for healing. The principal celebrant prays over the entire congregation asking the Lord's healing for those who seek it.

5. The prayers for conversion. The principal celebrant leads the congregation in these prayers. The Blessed Mother asks that these prayers be said around the world: the Apostles' Creed, seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys and seven Glory Be's.

6. The recitation of the glorious mysteries of the rosary. This concludes the devotional services.

7. Confessions. These are heard throughout the entire three hours of the services.

Having described the sequence of the evening services, we now add our notes and observations regarding them.

1. Confessions are being heard perpetually. There is hardly ever a time, while the church is open, that they are not being heard. We would suggest that far more confessions were heard in the four days we were in Medugorje than we have seen heard during our lifetime.

2. The church is filled to overflowing every night and we saw no one leave early.

3. The services are packed with teen-agers and young adults.

4. The homilies are delivered with obvious conviction. Everyone listens with keen attention.

THE FRUITS IN THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

We observed and received the simplest of loving care among the villagers as they went about their daily activities.

The recitation of the rosary was evident everywhere as one strolled the streets and fields of the village.

The peasant villagers received us and our fellow pilgrims, and, in spite of the language difference, treated us with spontaneous Christian care. We saw no frowns, only smiles, and evidence of great interior and exterior peace.

CONCLUSION

This simple report can only begin to convey all that one experiences in Medugorje.

We believe that the fruits evident in the parish of Saint James are the principal sign of Our Lady's presence and influence.

Our group agreed that what it saw in Medugorje was the living expression of what the Church has wanted to create in parishes since the Second Vatican Council.

Appendix 3
Two More Recent Witnesses Speak Out
A People Living According To The Gospel

In early March, 1985, John Franklin's wife went to see a video tape on Medugorje entitled "Message for Peace." She was deeply moved and shared her experience with her husband. Two months later, John Franklin and his mother-in-law, Rita Schleker, were in Medugorje. They arrived there on May tenth and stayed eleven days. Happily we are able to include both of their reports as another appendix before going to press. Both reports have been shortened and some editorial changes have been made.

John Franklin's Report

I know of no words to accurately describe Medugorje, the place and the people.

The people there were living the gospel as you might imagine it was lived shortly after the death of Jesus. It was evident in their happiness, their generosity and their peace. You could feel the presence of Jesus and Mary so strongly in these people and in this place.

I found it overwhelming that you could attain such closeness with so many people in so short a time. It seemed that in that place, the fear of vulnerability was gone, your defenses were down. The stone walls built around our hearts after so many years of mistrust, fears and worries were no longer needed.

People were genuine and openly honest. Most of them were truly seeking to repair and renew their relationships between themselves and with Jesus and Mary.

The church was alive, full of the Holy Spirit. Rarely had I

witnessed such Spirit-filled masses. I found this to be true especially in the English speaking Masses we shared most mornings with a few people in the chapel of the apparitions. All of the visiting priests were so spiritually moved. You could see it on their faces and detect it in their homilies.

Somehow, while there, all you had been taught or learned about God and the Church became so real. I could feel the peace of Christ in myself and in my brothers and sisters around me. We had nothing to fear. God was with us.

This is the miracle of Medugorje. It shows you to be free, to let go, to joyfully give yourself, your worries, your crosses, your free will, the gifts God had given you, back to him, knowing that he will provide, as only he can do.

I feel the urgency of spreading the message Mary has brought us at Medugorje, which is the gospel message of her Son, Jesus. The people of Medugorje are living this gospel message, as we are asked to do.

I was privileged to witness the dance of the sun twice and to be present at two apparitions.

On May thirteenth at about six-forty-five, I witnessed it. I had been saying the rosary behind the rectory and on finishing it, walked around to the rear by the well. I noticed some people I had met looking up at the sun. I looked myself for an instant and noticed nothing more than the bright sun. Then, I looked again and saw the sun quite clearly. It appeared to be closer than it normally is, and within the perimeter of the sun was a disc slightly smaller in diameter. The disc was semi-transparent white and blocked out the bright rays of the sun. Commonly referred to in Medugorje as the host, the disc was revolving around within the sun, but since it was somewhat smaller than the sun, it allowed bright rays to be emitted and it made the sun appear to be spinning. The disc would stand still and then begin revolving again, slowly at first and then faster, then slower again.

The sun itself moved about in the sky within a small area. I stood there in amazement for about ten minutes. On speaking with others, I learned that many symbolic things were seen within this same host. Some saw a cross. Others saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, which appeared red to some and white to others.

On Sunday, May nineteenth, I witnessed the dance of the sun a second time. I had been behind the church praying the rosary and had gotten up to go around to the front. At the side of the church, I noticed a large group of people looking up and pointing at the sun.

As on the first occasion, my first glance revealed nothing unusual. I continued walking and went into the church where I began to pray the rosary again. It was then about six-ten.

I noticed people entering the church, going to certain individuals and taking them outside. I decided to go out and see what was happening. I looked at the sun, and as on May thirteenth, saw a host somewhat smaller than the sun revolving within it. However, the light emitted around the sun's perimeter seemed more intense this time. Rays of gold and red were being sent off from either side of the top of the sun. These rays came from either side of the sun's top perimeter at opposite angles, the gold rays on the right and the red ones on the left. There were what appeared to be clouds around and behind the sun. As the colored rays flickered off these clouds, this gave them more prominence.

The relationship I now have with the Blessed Virgin because of all the events I experienced in Medugorje is something I will treasure forever. Through her intercession, I have been brought so much closer to her Son, Jesus.

New meaning has been given to my life.

Rita Schleker's Witness

(John and Rita were housed during their stay in Medugorje in the home of a family that lives at the foot of Mount Krizevac.)

For eleven days, we bathed in the loving hospitality of this family. What a joy to be submerged in Christianity! Since Our Lady came four years ago, this home has never been without a pilgrim. Sometimes these good people have housed one pilgrim and sometimes as many as twenty-five. Morning rosary and evening prayers were never omitted and happiness reigned.

In Medugorje, the priests urge one not to stand around outside the church waiting and looking for unusual signs to occur, but to go in the church and pray. That is what is important. Still, people are curious and eager to witness an unnatural phenomenon such as the sun dancing or pulsating, or the cement cross on the mountain spinning and rocking. Many people speak of such events.

On May 13, at six-ten, I was alone walking along the little

road to Saint James church when a young girl walking toward me asked: 'Did you see the sun?' 'No,' I answered. 'Well,' she said, 'look at it.' I looked with no discomfort directly at the sun which was high in the sky. The girl, standing at my side, took off her sun glasses and lowered her head, saying: 'I can't stand it.'

I was enthralled and exclaimed: 'Do you see those golden rays rising from the top left quarter to the sun? They are making an arc over the sun. Do you see the pinkish-red rays rising from the right quarter of the sun, making an arc away from the sun? Look! Do you see the bluish-green rays rising from the top of sun and filling in between the golden and pinkish-red rays?'

The sun looked like a flat, gold disc. It came toward me and when it was half way down, a host appeared in the middle of it. It kept coming closer to me until it looked to be about five feet above the electric wires. I knelt down at the roadside in awe.

The host was whiter than white and there was a cross marked on it. The host did not cover the sun completely for there was a rim of gold edging the host. It was obvious that the host moved within the sun or that the sun moved in back of the host, because the brilliant gold rim grew wider and then narrower.

I praised God and thanked him for his goodness, hoping that the host would come nearer. Then, I saw a heavy, thick white cloud sailing along the sky and coming right in the path of the sun, which had become a monstrance for the host. I begged Jesus not to let the cloud block out this beautiful sight. The cloud sailed right along in back of the sun and as it passed behind it, I could see the brilliance of the sunshine on the cloud.

A little Croatian lady, hurrying to the seven o'clock Mass, literally pulled me off my knees, saying: 'Church, church!' As I got up, I looked at my watch. It was six-forty. For a half hour, I had been engrossed in prayer, never taking my eyes off the sun and the host.

I linked arms with that sweet lady and we practically ran the rest of the way to the church. I regretted leaving my post and, as we went along, I tried to get a glimpse of the sun, but the tall poplar trees hid it from view. By the time we reached the church it was about six-fifty and the sun was high in the heavens and bright enough to blind me when I dared look at it.

Many people were standing outside the church, looking at the sun.

In Medugorje, the deep reverence for Jesus in the Eucharist was touching. Religious and laity all genuflected devoutly. Priests at the consecration of the Mass genuflected reverently and raised the Host and the chalice slowly and with dignity.

The people never tired of answering the full fifteen decades of the rosary nor of participating in the prayers in honor of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. They remained after the Mass for adoration of the cross.

"I feel the urgency of spreading the message of Mary brought to us at Medugorje, which is the gospel message of her Son, Jesus. The people of Medugorje are living this gospel message, as we are asked to do." These words of John Franklin recall those with which John Craig ended his witness: "Our group agreed that what it saw in Medugorje was the living expression of what the Church has wanted to create in parishes since the Second Vatican Council." Both quotations say essentially the same thing. What God is doing through Mary in Medugorje is giving the world an example of how the Church should be lived, of what it means in the concrete to live the gospel message.

This helps us to understand why Our Lady has been appearing for so long in this humble Yugoslavian village. The living of the gospel message has reached an extremely low ebb in our time, and this throughout the entire world. The length of time of the apparitions has made it possible for literally millions of people (the latest estimate is between four and five million) from all over the world, even the remotest places, to come to Medugorje and witness what is going on there. The people who come do not witness the apparitions, but they witness the almost unbelievable spiritual renewal that these happenings have helped to bring about. All this would not have occurred if the apparitions had lasted but a few weeks or a few months. Our loving and merciful God has given us an extraordinary grace at Medugorje.

We repeat what was said above: we are living in a time of grace during which God is calling us to repent and turn back to him. This is a time of visitation, a time of choice. At Medugorje, Our Lady had been repeating in her own words what Isaiah said to Israel in his day: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near" (55:6).

Appendix 4
Updated Information As Of May 1985

The following information updates the book as of May 1985. Several important topics are involved.

Mirjana Sees Our Lady on her Twentieth Birthday, 1985

As stated earlier, on December 23, 1982, Our Lady told Mirjana "she would be with her for the last time on Christmas." On Christmas day, 1982, Our Lady informed Mirjana that she would appear to her on each of her birthdays as long as she lives and that she would also appear to her "when something very difficult happened to her," when something "hurt her bad."

On June 14, 1985, I received a report concerning Our Lady's coming to Mirjana on the occasion of her twentieth birthday. The report was written by Mirjana at Medugorje in April 1985. Two things surprised me. Our Lady appeared to her on two consecutive days, March 18, her birthday, and on March 19. And she did not appear to her alone. Others shared the apparition with her on both occasions.

Here is the report which is dated April 1985.

> *(On March 18, her birthday.)* There were a number of people there. We started waiting for her at four o'clock in the afternoon. We prayed for fifteen minutes. Then, she *(came and)* spent fifteen minutes with us.

She greeted me as always: 'Praised be Jesus,' and I responded.

She congratulated me on my birthday and then we started our conversation.

First, she complained because of unbelievers. She said: 'They are my children and I am suffering because of them, because they do not know what is awaiting them if they do not convert themselves. Therefore, Mirjana, pray for them!'

Then, we all prayed together. She started two Our Fathers and two Glory Be's.

Then, she complained about the greed in the world and in Medugorje as well. She said: 'Woe to those who would take everything from those who are coming *(to Medugorje),* and blessed are those from whom they are taking everything.' Then we said two Our Fathers and two Glory Be's for that intention.

I asked her that we all say the 'Hail Mary' for her and she smiled at that.

Then, we talked about the secrets. I told her that I had many questions (about thirty) to ask her. She smiled and told me not to worry about them, because when she comes to answer them, I will know all the answers and she will give me that grace (sic). Otherwise, that would take too much time.

Then, I asked her about Ivan. She said that the priests should stay with us to help us, for she has placed a heavy burden on us and the suspicions of the priests *(the distrust of us the priests have?)* hurt her.

Then, I said the Hail Holy Queen.

I forgot something. When she was blessing all the holy objects and I put them next to me, she asked me to give her the rosary. She took it and started praying on it and said: 'This is the way to pray on it. Tell that to everyone.' She said that the rosary is not supposed to be a decoration, as it is for many.

(On March 19.) She appeared also on this day. The vision lasted seven minutes. There were four of us. We talked about the secrets and we prayed.

Nothing else important happened. She blessed us on both days.

Change in the site of the apparitions

Since April 2, the daily apparitions have ceased taking place in the church and Our Lady now comes to the seers in a room in the rectory. She appears there at the same time she was appearing in the church. The people in the church are alerted when the apparition begins and are asked to pray in silence for a few minutes.

Vicka's health problems

Vicka has some serious ailment (an inoperable cyst or benign tumor at the base of the brain?) for which the doctors say they can do nothing more. Sometimes, she experiences excruciating pain which completely drains her physically. At these times, she has not been able to go to the church or the rectory, but Our Lady has appeared to her in her home. When not suffering, she is her old lively and sociable self.

For quite some time, Vicka has been receiving details of Mary's life. During a twenty-five minute apparition in her home in early April 1985, she received the final details of that life. She has kept a written account of all this.

The present status of the six seers in regard to the ten secrets

As stated earlier, Mirjana received the tenth secret on December 25, 1982, and this was the last time she saw Our Lady on a regular daily basis. Ivanka has now received the tenth secret and no longer sees Our Lady every day.

On May 6, 1985, Jakov, Ivan, Ivanka and Marija - Vicka was home sick- came to the rectory and went to the room where Our Lady had been coming to them daily since April 2.

At approximately 6 p.m., she appeared to them. After two minutes Jakov, Ivan and Marija came out of ecstasy. Noticing that Ivanka was still communicating with Our Lady, they knelt down for another six minutes until Ivanka also came out of her state of rapture.

During the apparition, Our Lady entrusted the tenth secret to Ivanka and completed the information she had been giving her about the future of the world. She also told Ivanka not to come to the rectory on the following day but to remain home and wait alone for her there.

On May 7, Ivanka had an apparition in her home. It lasted approximately one hour. The seer gave the following written report of this event to Father Slavko Barbaric.

As on every other day, Our Lady came with the greeting, 'Praised be Jesus.' I responded, 'May Jesus and Mary always be praised.'

I never saw Mary so beautiful as on this evening. She was so gentle and beautiful. On this day, she wore the most beautiful gown I have ever seen in my life. Her gown and also her veil and crown had gold and silver sequins of light.

There were two angels with her. They had the same clothes. Our Lady and the angels were equally beautiful. I don't have words to describe this. One can only experience it.

Our Lady asked me if I had some wish. I told her I would like to see my earthly mother. She smiled, nodded her head and my mother immediately appeared. She was smiling. Our Lady told me to stand up. I did and my mother embraced and kissed me and said: 'My child, I am so proud of you.' Then, she kissed me and disappeared.

After that, Our Lady said to me: 'My child, this is our last meeting. Do not be sad because I will come to you on every anniversary *(June twenty-fourth)* with the exception of this year.

Dear child, do not think you have done something wrong and that this is the reason I will not be coming to you anymore. No, you did not. With all your heart, you have accepted the plans which my son and I had and you have done nothing wrong.

'No one on earth has received the grace which you and your brothers and sisters have.

'Be happy because I am your mother who loves you with her whole heart.

'Ivanka, thank you for your response to the call of my Son and for persevering and always remaining with him as long as he asked you to.

'Dear child, tell all your friends that my Son and I are always with them when they call us and ask something of us.

'What I have communicated to you about the secrets during these years, reveal to no one until I tell you to.'

After this, I asked Our Lady if I could kiss her. She nodded her head and I kissed her.

Then I asked her to bless me. She blessed me, smiled and said: 'Go in God's peace.' After this, she departed slowly with the two angels.

Suddenly, in a relatively short time, a number of important things have happened. Vicka has begun a life of suffering, evidently in reparation for the sins of the world. For quite some time, she has been receiving the story of Mary's life. She has been given the last details of this life.

Ivanka has received the tenth secret and the final information about future events in the world. And she has had her last regular daily apparition.

All these things indicate that we have reached a milestone, a new phase in the Medugorje apparitions.

Ivanka's final apparition on May 7 recalls Mirjana's last apparition on December 25, 1982. Both are touching manifestations of Mary's tender, maternal love.

Appendix 5
Updated Information As Of August 1986

Thursday Messages For The Parish

June 6, 1985

Dear children! Many people of all nationalities will come to the parish and now I am calling you to love. Love first of all the members of your own family and then you might be able to accept and love all those who are coming.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 13, 1985

Dear children! I am begging you people of this parish to pray more until the anniversary day of apparition. Your prayer may be an act of devotion and commitment to God.

I know about your tiredness, dear children, but you don't know how to give yourselves to me. These days, I beg you, make an act of total dedication to me.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 20, 1985

Dear children! For the coming feast I want to say to you: open your hearts to the Lord of all hearts! Give me all your feelings and all your problems. I want to console you in all your temptations. My wish is to fill you completely with God's peace, joy and love.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Tuesday, June 25, 1985

Dear children! I ask you to ask everyone to pray the rosary. With the rosary you will overcome all the troubles which Satan is trying to inflict on the Catholic Church. Let all priests pray the rosary. Give time to the rosary.

(Our Lady gave this message to Marija Pavlevic in answer to her question, "Our Lady, what do you wish to say to priests?")

Friday, June 28, 1985

Dear children! Today I give you a message in which I am calling you to humility. These days you have felt great joy because of all the people who came and you have spoken about your experiences with love. Now I call you to continue to speak to all those who come, with humility and with an open heart.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 18, 1985

Dear children! Today I beg you to put more blessed objects in your homes and let every person carry blessed objects on himself. Let everything be blessed so that Satan will tempt you less because you are armed against him.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 25, 1985

Dear children! I want to shepherd you but you do not want to obey my messages. Today I call you to obey my messages and then you will be able to live everything that God tells me to relate to you. Open yourselves to God and God will work through you and give you everything you need.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 1, 1985

Dear children! I wish to tell you that I have chosen this parish. I guard it in my hands like a little flower that does not want to *(that I do not want to let?)* die. I beg you to give yourselves to me so that I can offer you as a gift to God, fresh and without sin. Satan has undertaken one part of his plan and wants to possess your parish. Pray that he does not succeed because I desire to have you for myself so that I can offer you to God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 8, 1985

Dear children! Today I am calling you to pray against Satan in a special way. Satan wants to work more now that you know he is active. Dress up, dear children, in clothes of armor against Satan; with rosaries in your hands you will conquer.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 15, 1985

Dear children! Today I bless you and I wish to tell you that I love you. I appeal to you at this moment to live my messages. Today I bless you with a solemn blessing which the Almighty grants you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 22, 1985

Dear children! Today I wish to tell you that God wants to send you temptations which you can overcome with prayer. God is testing you through the work of everyday. Now pray that you overcome every temptation peacefully. Come through every test from God more open to Him, and come to God with love.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 29, 1985

Dear children! I am calling you to prayer, especially now that Satan wants to make use of the grapes of your vineyards. Pray that he does not succeed.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 5, 1985

Dear children! I thank you today for all your prayers. Pray continually and pray more so that Satan will be far from this place. Dear children, the plan of Satan has been destroyed. Pray that every plan of God be realized in this parish. I especially thank young people for the sacrifices they have offered.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 12, 1985

Dear children! I wish to tell you these days to put the Cross at the center of your life. Pray especially before the Cross from which great graces are coming. In your homes make a special

consecration to the Cross of the Lord. Promise that you will not offend Jesus and that you will not insult him, nor the Cross.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 19, 1985

Dear children! Today I am calling you to live in humility all the messages I give you. Dear children, when you live the messages do not glorify yourselves by saying: 'I live the messages.' If you carry the messages in your heart and live them everyone will realize this. So, there is no need for words which serve only those who do not *(wish to)* hear. For you it is not necessary to speak. For you, my dear children, it is necessary to live and witness by your lives.

Thank you for your response to my call.

September 26, 1985

Dear children! Thank you for all your prayers. Thank you for all your sacrifices. I want you to renew the messages that I am giving you. Heed the call to fasting because by fasting you will ensure that the total plan of God here in Medugorje will be fulfilled. That will give me great joy.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 3, 1985

Dear children! I want to say to you, be thankful to God for every grace that God gave you and for all the fruit. Be thankful to the Lord and praise Him.

Dear children, learn to be thankful in little things and then you will be able to be thankful in great things.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 10, 1985

Dear children! Today I call you to live the messages in this parish. I especially call the young people of this parish because this parish is beloved to me.

Dear children, if you live the messages you will live the seed of holiness. As a mother I call all of you to holiness, so that you may give it to others because you are like a mirror for the people.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 17, 1985

Dear children! Everything has its time. Today I invite you

to start working on your hearts. All the work in the fields is finished. You find time to clean the least important places but you leave your hearts aside. Work more and clean your hearts with love.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 24, 1985

Dear children! I want to dress you from day to day in holiness, goodness, obedience and love of God so that from day to day you can be better prepared for your Lord.

Dear children, listen to my messages and live them. I desire to lead you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

October 31, 1985

Dear children! Today I wish to call you to work in the Church. I do love you equally. I want you to work as much as you can in the Church. I know, dear children, that you can work but you do not want to because you feel that you are unworthy of the duties. You must be courageous. Like little flowers you enrich the Church and Jesus so that we can all be happy.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 7, 1985

Dear children! I am calling you to love your neighbors and to love those people from whom evil comes to you, so that in the power of love you will be able to judge the intentions of the heart. Pray and love, dear children. In the power of love you can do even those things that seem impossible to you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 14, 1985

Dear children! I, your mother, love you and I wish to urge you to prayer. I am, dear children, tireless and I call you even when you are far away from my heart. I feel pain for everyone who has gone astray. But I am a mother and I forgive easily; I rejoice for every child who comes back to me.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 21, 1985

Dear children! I wish to tell you that this time is special for you who are from this parish. In the summer you say that you have a lot of work to do. Now that there is no work in the fields, work on yourselves personally. Come to Mass because the time has been given to you.

Dear children, there are many who come regularly to Mass in spite of bad weather because they love me and they wish to show their love in a special way. I ask you to show me your love by coming to Mass and the Lord will reward you abundantly.

Thank you for your response to my call.

November 28, 1985

Dear children! I want to give thanks to everyone for all that they have done for me, especially the young ones. I beg you, dear children, to come to prayer conscientiously and in prayer you will know the majesty of God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 5, 1985

Dear children! I call you to prepare yourselves for Christmas by penance, prayer and works of charity. Don't look only at the material because then you will not be able to experience Christmas.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 12, 1985

Dear children! For Christmas I invite you to give glory to Jesus together with me. I will give Him to you in a special way on that day, and I invite you on that day to give glory and praise with me to Jesus at His birth.

Dear children, pray more on that day and think more about Jesus.

Thank you for your response to my call

December 19, 1985

Dear children! I want to invite you to love your neighbor. If you love your neighbor you will experience Jesus' love more, especially on Christmas day. God will give you a great gift if you abandon yourself to Him. I want to give to mothers, particularly on Christmas day, my maternal blessing and I will

bless the others with His blessing.

Thank you for your response to my call.

December 26, 1985

Dear children! I want to thank all of you who have listened to my messages and who have lived on Christmas day what I have told you. I want to guide you. Put aside your sins. From now on go forward in love. Abandon your heart to me.

Thank you for your response to my call.

(On Christmas day Mary appeared with the Infant Jesus)

January 2, 1986

Dear children! I invite you to decide completely for God. I beg you to surrender yourselves completely and you will be able to live everything I say to you. It will not be difficult for you to surrender yourselves completely to God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 9, 1986

Dear children! I invite you to prayer so that by your prayer you will help Jesus to acomplish all that He has planned for this parish. By offerings and sacrifices to Jesus all that He has planned will be fulfilled. Satan will not be able to do anything.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 16, 1986

Dear children! I invite you to pray. I need your prayers so much in order that God may be glorified through all of you. I beg you to listen, dear children, and to heed your mother's call because I am calling you out of love for you so that I can help you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 23, 1986

Dear children! Again I invite you to prayer of the heart. If you pray from your heart, dear children, the ice-cold hearts of your brothers will be melted and every barrier will disappear. Conversion will be easily achieved by those who want it. You must intercede for this gift for your neighbors.

Thank you for your response to my call.

January 30, 1986

Dear children! Today I invite all of you to pray in order that God's plan for you and all that God wants to do through you may be realized. Help others to be converted, especially those who will come to Medugorje.

Dear children, do not allow Satan to reign in your hearts. Do not be an image of Satan, but an image of me. I call on you to pray so that you may be witnesses of my presence. God cannot fulfill His will without you. God gave everyone free will and it is up to you to respond.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 7, 1986

Dear children! I have chosen this parish and so it is special. It is different from others and I am giving great graces to all who pray from their hearts.

Dear children, I give you messages first of all for the parish and then for all others. The messages are first of all for you and then for the others who accept them. You will be responsible to me and to my Son, Jesus.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 13, 1986

Dear children! Let this Lent be a special incentive for you to change. Start from this moment. Turn off the television and renounce other things which are useless.

Dear children, I am calling you individually to conversion. The present time is for you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 20, 1986

Dear children! My second message for the Lenten days is that you renew your prayer before the cross.

Dear children, I am giving you special graces and Jesus is giving you special gifts from the cross. Accept them and live them. Reflect on Jesus' passion and unite yourselves to Jesus in life.

Thank you for your response to my call.

February 27, 1986

Dear children! Be humble. Live in humility.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 6, 1986

Dear children! Today I call you to open yourselves more to God so that He can work through you. Inasmuch as you open yourselves to Him you will bear the fruit of it. I wish to call you again to prayer.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 13, 1986

Dear children! Today I call you to live this Lent with your little sacrifices. Thank you for every sacrifice you have brought me. Live in that way continually and with love, dear children. Help me to bring the offering of your sacrifices to God; He will reward you for them.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 20, 1986

Dear children! I am calling you to an active approach to prayer. You wish to live everything I tell you, but you do not get results from your efforts because you do not pray.

I beg you to open yourselves, dear children, and to begin to pray. Prayer will be a joy. If you begin it will not be boring because you will pray out of pure joy.

Thank you for your response to my call.

March 27, 1986

Dear children! I wish to thank you for your sacrifices and to invite you to the greatest sacrifice of all, the sacrifice of love. Without love you are not able to accept me nor my Son. Without love you cannot bear witness of your experience to others. That is why I invite you, dear children, to begin to live the love in your hearts.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 3, 1986

Dear children! I am calling you to live the holy Mass. There are many of you who have experienced the beauty of the Mass but there are some who go unwillingly. I have chosen you, dear children, and Jesus is giving you His graces in the holy Mass. Let everyone who comes to Mass be joyful. Come with love and rejoice in the holy Mass.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 10, 1986

Dear children! I wish to call you to grow in love. A flower cannot grow without water. Neither can you grow without God's blessing. You should pray for His blessing from day to day so that you can grow normally and carry out your activities with God.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 17, 1986

Dear children! You are now preoccupied with material things and in the material you lose everything that God wants to give you. I invite you, dear children, to pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit that you need now, in order that you may give witness to my presence here and to everything I am giving you.

Dear children, abandon yourselves to me so that I can lead you totally. Do not be so preoccupied with the material things of this world.

Thank you for your response to my call.

April 24, 1986

Dear children! Today I am calling you to prayer. You are forgetting that everyone is important, especially the elderly in the family. Incite them to pray. Let all young people be an example by their lives and testify for Jesus.

Dear children, I beg you to start transforming yourselves through prayer and then you will know what you have to do.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 1, 1986

Dear children! I ask you to begin to change your life in your families. Let your family be a harmonious flower which I wish to give to Jesus. Every family should be active in prayer. It is my wish that the fruits of prayer will one day be seen in the family. Only in that way will I give you as petals to Jesus in fulfillment of God's plan.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 8, 1986

Dear children! You are responsibile for the messages that I give here. The fountain of all graces is here and you are the vessels which must carry them. Therefore I am calling you to fulfill your duty with great responsibility. Everyone is responsible for carrying these messages in the measure he has received them. I am calling you to carry these gifts to others with love. Do not keep them just for yourselves.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 15, 1986

Dear children! Today I ask you to give me your heart so that I may change it and your heart may become like mine. You ask me a question: why can't we respond to your messages? You cannot respond to my messages because you have failed to give me your heart so that I may change it. You speak much but you do not act. I am calling you to act out all that I ask of you. Only in that way can I abide with you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 22, 1986

Dear children! Today I want to give you my love. You do not know how great it is and you do not know how to accept my love in many ways. I want to tell you all my love, dear children, but you cannot comprehend it. You do not understand my words with your heart and so you cannot take my love seriously either.

Dear children, accept me in your life. You will then be able to accept and greet all that I tell you and everything to which I invite you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

May 29, 1986

Dear children! Today I am calling you to a life of love toward God and toward your neighbor. Without love, dear children, you cannot do anything. Therefore, dear children, I am calling you to live in mutual love. Only in that way can you love me and accept everyone around you who will come to your parish. Everyone will feel my love through you. Therefore, today I beg you to start loving with the burning love with which I love you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 5, 1986

Dear children! Today I am calling you to decide whether or not you want to live my messages. I am calling you to become active in living and carrying my messages to others.

I wish that all of you would become the living image of Jesus and bear a witness to this unfaithful world. I wish that you

would become a light to all and that you would witness to everyone around you.

Dear children, you are not called to darkness; you are called to become a light. So be a light by the way you give witness with your lives.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 12, 1986

Dear children! I am calling you to begin to pray the rosary with a living faith. Only in that way will I be able to help you. You wish to receive many graces but you do not pray. I cannot help you if you do not undertake the task of prayer seriously.

Dear children, I am calling you to pray the rosary. This prayer is a must and you should pray it with joy. Only then will you begin to understand why I am with you for such a long time. I wish to teach you how to pray.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 19, 1986

Dear children! In these present days Our Lord has permitted me to intercede for extra graces for you. For this reason I again wish to invite you to pray. Pray without ceasing. In this way I can give you the joy that Our Lord gives me. With these graces, dear children, I wish that your suffering may be transformed into joy. I am your mother and I want to help you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

June 26, 1986

Dear children! You must strive to realize, in union with Him, an oasis of peace. I desire that you take care of this oasis so that it remains always pure. There are some who through their thoughtlessness ravage peace and prayer. I call you to testify and to help by your own way of living to see that peace is preserved.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 3, 1986

Dear children! Today I call on all of you to pray. Without prayer you cannot feel my presence, nor God's, nor the graces I am giving you. Therefore, I call you to always begin and end each day with prayer.

Dear children, I wish to lead you evermore in prayer, but you

cannot grow if you do not wish to. I invite you to let prayer have the first place.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 10, 1986

Dear children! Today I invite you to holiness. You cannot live without holiness. Overcome all sin with love. Overcome every difficulty with love.

Dear children, I beg you to live love within yourselves.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 17, 1986

Dear children! Today I invite you to meditate on why I have been with you such a long time. I am the mediator between you and God. For that reason I would like to invite you to live always, out of love, what God is expecting of you. Live all the messages that I give you in complete humility.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 24, 1986

Dear children! I am happy about all of you who are living in the way of holiness and I beg you to help, by your witness, all those who don't know how to live in the way of holiness. For that reason, dear children, your families should be the place where holiness is born. Help everybody to live in a sanctified way, especially your own family.

Thank you for your response to my call.

July 31, 1986

Dear children! Hatred creates division and blinds one to everybody and everything. I invite you to create unity and peace. Especially, dear children, act with love in the place where you live. Let love always be your only tool. With love turn everything to good that the devil wants to destroy and take to himself. Only in this way will you be completely mine and I will be able to help you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 7, 1986

Dear children! You know that I promised you an oasis of peace here but you may not be aware that around every oasis is a desert where Satan is lurking. He wants to tempt each one of you.

Dear children, only by prayer are you able to overcome every influence of Satan in your area. I am with you, but I can't take away your free will.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 14, 1986

Dear children! I am inviting you to make of your prayer a joyful encounter with the Lord. I cannot guide you unless you yourself experience joy in prayer. I want to guide you in prayer more and more, from day to day, but I do not want to force you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 21, 1986

Dear children! I am grateful for the love that you show me. You know that I love you without limit and that I daily ask the Lord to help you to understand the love that I show you.

Dear children, pray and pray and pray.

Thank you for your response to my call.

August 28, 1986

Dear children! I want you to be an example to everyone in all that you do, especially in prayer and witnessing. I cannot help the world without you. I want your cooperation with me in everything, even in the smallest things. Therefore, dear children, help me by your prayer from the heart and by surrendering completely to me. In that way I will be able to teach you and lead you along the road upon which I have set you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Mirjana's Locutions

Mirjana has had six locutions between June 1 and August 27, 1985.*(This is remarkable because the seer had experienced her last regular daily apparition on December 25, 1982. On that day Our Lady had told her that she would come to her on each of her birthdays for as long as she lived and also when "something difficult happens to her." In these instances which we are reporting, Mirjana hears Our Lady rather than sees her. Mary is giving support to Mirjana because of a heavy burden that she presently carries. These locutions followed an attempt at entrapment by the police. A girl whom they had sent to befriend Mirjana at the University in Sarajevo slipped a drug into her beverage, unnoticed by the seer, as they were dining together. Our Lady spoke to Mirjana within her heart, warning her not to touch the beverage.)* On June 1 Mirjana announced that Father Petar Ljubicic is the priest to whom she will transmit the secrets ten days before they will occur. He is to make known each event to the public three days before its occurrence.

During a locution on August 15, Mirjana received the following message.

My angel, pray for unbelievers. They will tear their hair. Brother will plead with brother. They will curse their past godless lives and repent. But it will be too late. Now is the time to do what I have been calling all to do these past four years. Pray for them.

Again on October 25, Mirjana reported that Our Lady appeared to her for eight minutes at 1:50 p.m. Father Petar was present and Mirjana reported that Our Lady prayed twice in Latin over him. After praying with Our Lady for unbelievers, the sick and poor people who live alone, the first secret was shown to her like a film running before her eyes. She became very sad and tears filled her eyes. She asked, "Must it be this way?" and Our Lady answered, "Yes."

Noteworthy Occurrences Of September And October 1985

Father Ivan was appointed spiritual director of the visionaries in replacement of Father Slavko Barbaric.

Scientific investigations were conducted by two teams of medical men and/or specialists; an Italian medical team headed by Dr. Luigi Frigerio from the Mangiagalli Clinic of Milan, and a team of French specialists under the direction of Professor Henri Joyeux of Montpellier University.

The Yugoslavian national television network presented a two-hour documentary about Medugorje on October 17.

On December 22, Father Janko Bubalo received the Vatican's coveted Sapienza Award for the best book of 1985. the book is based on an interview with Vicka, the eldest visionary, and is written in Croatian.

Events of 1986

Vicka had been asked by Our Lady if she were willing to accept three additional sacrifices and had agreed. During the apparition of January 6, she was told by Our Lady tht her apparitions would cease for 50 days and begin again on February 25. As promised, Our Lady appeared to Vicka on February 25 and thanked her for the 50-day sacrifice.

Our Lady had told Mirjana that she would come to her in a special apparition at 2:00 p.m. on February 15. When she fulfilled her promise Father Petar was present and Mirjana said that Our Lady blessed him.

On April 24 Vicka received the ninth secret. The apparition took place in her room. The Blessed Mother told her that she would not appear to her for 40 days (her second great sacrifice), thus making her next apparition June 4.

On May 2 the ecclesiastical commission appointed by Bishop Zanic met in Mostar, submitted secret ballots to the Bishop and indicated that, since the members had completed their study, they had no reason to meet again.

On June 4 Mirjana had another apparition in which she claims that Our Lady gave her the final indications on the first secret to be fulfilled.

Ivan left on June 16 for the Army to serve the customary one year. If the Madonna continues to appear to Ivan while in the service, it will add a new dimension to the events at Medugorje.

Notes

1

DO NOT FEAR, I AM SENDING YOU MY MOTHER

1. This information was gathered from a taped talk given by Father Tomislav Vlasic on August 15, 1983.

2

ON A ROCKY MOUNTAIN SIDE

1. Our description of these two June 24 apparitions is based on three sources. First, there is the book *Gospina Ukazana U Medugorje* (Tisak: "A.G. Matos", Samobor, 1983) written by the Croatian scripture scholar, Dr. Ljudevit Rupcic, O.F.M. He asked many questions of all six seers. These questions with their answers are quoted word for word (pp. 35-54). He finished writing the book at the end of 1982, which means that he interrogated the seers quite soon after the events he questioned them about had taken place. We have worked the material found in the seers' answers into the present book because it comes from the seers while it was still relatively fresh in their memories. I am indebted to Mrs. Dorothy Glojek for the English translation of these questions and answers.

Then, we have utilized an interview between Vicka and Father Tomislav Vlasic, O.F.M., that took place on March 15, 1982 and an interview between Ivanka and Father Svetozar Kraljevic, O.F.M., held in February, 1983. Both of these interviews are in Father Kraljevic's book *The Apparitions of Our Lady of Medjugorje* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1984), pp. 7-9.

When I met Father Svet, as he is called, in October 1983, he told me that he had found it very difficult to gather the facts concerning

the first eight days of the apparitions, even though he was then living in Humac which is but a few miles from Medugorje.

2. These last two quotations and almost all the facts of this second day are taken from the interview Vicka had with Father Tomislav Vlasic on March 15, 1982. See *The Apparitions*, pp. 11-14.

3. *Gospina Ukazana*, pp. 37-38.

4. This strange incident was also related by Vicka to Father Tomislav Vlasic in her March 15, 1982 interview with him.

5. See the French edition of Father Svetozar Kraljevic's book which was published under the title of *Les Apparitions de Medugorje* (France: Fayard, 1984), p.25. The French "adaptation" was published in the first part of 1984, considerably in advance of the English edition.

4

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES STEP IN

1. Most of the information concerning June 27, 1981, comes from two interviews, one that Father Svetozar had with Marinko and Dragica Ivankovic on February 27, 1983, and another which Father Tomislav Vlasic had with Father Viktor Kosir on January 26, 1982. (See *The Apparitions*, pp. 151-157 and 111-115.)

5

BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING

1. Taken from the January 26, 1982 interview between Fathers Viktor Kosir and Tomislav Vlasic. See *The Apparitions*, pp. 111-115.

2. We received a copy of these questions and answers directly from Father Svetozar Kraljevic in October, 1983. See *The Apparitions*, pp. 25-26.

6

MORE GOVERNMENT QUESTIONING

1. *The Apparitions*, p. 33.
2. *Gospina*, p. 40.
3. This whole incident is taken from *Sister Lucy's Fourth Memoir*.

7

APPARITION AT CERNO

1. There is an interesting detail concerning the words Our Lady used in giving this reply. The above information about this seventh day is taken from the report of the conversation that took place between Father Jozo Zovko and the seers immediately after their return to Medugorje from the site of the apparition at Cerno. In reporting Our Lady's answer, Mirjana simply states: "She said that she will not mind." But, Jakov added that the wording of her reply had been: "I will not, my angels." See *The Apparitions*, p. 36.

8

EXTRAORDINARY ANSWER TO THE PASTOR'S PRAYERS

1. The facts for this day and the quotations are from an interview that Father Svetozar had with Father Jozo on August 11, 1983. See *The Apparitions*, pp. 41-43.

2. Rene Laurentin - Louis Rupcic, *La Vierge Apparait-Elle a Medugorje?* (Paris: Editions O.E.I.L., 1984), p. 83.

10

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE PARISH STAFF

1. It is some 17 miles from Medugorje.

2. This is taken from a report on the apparitions written by Father Tom Forrest, C.SS.R.

11

DIVERSITY IN THE APPARITIONS

1. The eleven o'clock apparition at Mount Podbrdo, the apparition in the field and the one in Marija's room were all related to Father Svetozar by Marinko during the interview that took place on February 27, 1983. The interview can be found in *The Apparitions*, pp. 151-157.

2. *Gospina*, p. 44.
3. *Gospina*, pp. 44-45.
4. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 67.
5. *Gospina*, pp. 45-46.
6. *Gospina*, p. 38.

12

FROM THE FIELDS AND HOMES INTO THE CHURCH

1. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 109.

13

SIGNS AND WONDERS

1. This is described at length in our book *The Sun Danced at Fatima*. The updated and enlarged edition was published in 1983 by Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, N.Y. See pages 123-130. An earlier edition appeared in 1952.
2. Mount Podbrdo is a part of Mount Crnica.
3. All the above facts concerning the sign witnessed by Father Loncar can be found in *The Apparitions*. pp. 163-165.
4. *The Apparitions*, p. 60.
5. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 165.
6. *The Apparitions*, p. 60.
7. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 165.
8. The facts and quotations for the accounts of Fathers Janko Bubalo and Stanko Vasilj are taken from *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, pp. 166-167.
9. From the August 15, 1983 interview. The information concerning the stars is from the same interview, with the exception of what is said about the American priest.
10. All of the information about the great sign and the warnings comes from Father Tomislav Vlasic. Some of it is from the August 15, 1983 interview and some from a report he sent to the Pope and to the Bishop of Mostar on December 2, 1983.

14

HEALINGS AND CONVERSIONS

1. All our facts come from this interview. See *The Apparitions*, pp. 181-185.
2. *Gospina*, p. 108.
3. Father Tomislav adds this interesting bit: "Every evening the Mass we celebrate is for all of you (he gave this information in his sermon to Italian pilgrims on August 15, 1983) who have come to this church and for all the positive peace movements of the world. We pray for this every night. Many groups throughout the world have begun to pray together with us at the same time we do, in the evening between six and seven. There are many groups in the United States. Even at Fatima prayers are said at the same time."

15

MIRJANA NO LONGER SEES OUR LADY EACH DAY

1. Her birthday is March 18. Our Lady appeared to her on that day in 1983 and 1984.
2. This statement seems to imply that Our Lady will be present at Medugorje on the day the great permanent sign appears.
3. Here are Mirjana's exact words as found in the English translation of her interview with Father Vlasic that I received from Father Svetozar.

> "When I pray, then something comes to me in prayer. I really immerse myself into prayer and then it comes to me like I am speaking with somebody. Then, I express myself what should be. All this is in me talking with God. Then I continue praying again. Then again like that."

16

NEW APPARITIONS AND NEW SEERS

1. She was born on May 14, 1972.
2. Jelena said that she usually knew the answers to the questions asked and for that reason the teacher frequently did not call on her.
3. Born on October 5, 1972, she is six months younger than Jelena.
4. In both the sermon and the interview Father Tomislav was speaking specifically of Jelena, but Marijana is receiving the same kind of apparitions. The sermon was to a group of Italian pilgrims and the interview was with Dr. Julian Smyth and Dr. Diana Smyth of England.
5. This description was given in Father Tomislav's August 15 sermon. In the August 15 interview he said: "The apparitions (to these two children) are of another type. (They) do not see tridimensionally, but see it in (their) heart like a movie." In talking of the six seers, Father Tomislav frequently says that Our Lady appears tridimensionally to them, that is, they can see, hear and touch her.
6. *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*. Translated and Edited by E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Image Book Edition, 1960), pp. 99-100.
7. The comments in brackets were from an English speaking friend of Jelena who knows her very well and was present at the interview.

17

OUR LADY'S TWO THOUSANDTH BIRTHDAY

1. Sister Janja, in a talk to pilgrims on August 4, 1984, said the message was received by Ivan on May 22 or 23. It has been said that Jelena was also told about August 5 by Our Lady.

2. In a talk to Italian pilgrims on June 3, 1984, Father Tomislav Vlasic said that Our Lady also imparted additional messages "about the day of her birthday," but that he could not tell them what it was because "the Bishop said we have to wait for the confirmation of the Pope, so as not to start privately a special feast of the Blessed Mother." According to the Church's liturgical calendar, Mary's birthday is celebrated on September 8.

3. A young lady from the United States gave me the following written account of this same event:

> We were sitting outside the church around noon time on August 5. Sister (the Karminskis' friend from Potoci) who speaks both English and Croatian, had joined our group. As we were talking, a girl about 17 or 18 years old came over to Sister. Her face was beaming as she described how the Blessed Virgin had appeared on the mountain early that morning and all those camping around the church had seen her. She recounted how they had seen what she described as "strange lights" on Podbrdo and Krizevac late at night. They had spent almost the whole night praying and singing hymns. Then the apparition came at about 7 a.m....

4. This information comes from a report written by the American lad.

5. These pictures form part of a video documentary which can be obtained from Stanley Karminski, 340 Prussian Lane, Wayne, PA 19087.

18

A MOST DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

1. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 145.

2. Known as "the case of Herzegovina" which according to the Bishop emerges from the opposition of some of the Franciscan Fathers to orders of the Bishop and of the Holy See concerning the new distribution of the local clergy which is in effect meant to take the parishes from the hands of the Franciscans and give them to his diocesan priests.

19

RENEWAL IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AT MEDUGORJE

1. See the August 15, 1983 interview.

2. The expression "baptism in the Holy Spirit" comes from scripture. After his resurrection, Jesus told the apostles: "...Within a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" *(Acts 1:5)*. The baptism in or with the Holy Spirit is not a sacrament.

3. However, praying individually over people night after night without any let- up took its toll on the praying teams, for there were times when this praying went on until midnight and when they prayed over 300 people. Praying in this way over people is a draining and exhausting experience. The parish staff would have to wait until the church had been locked before it could take its evening meal! In October, 1983, I was told that the daily praying over people individually had been stopped for "over a year." During the five nights I was there, the seers prayed publicly over people only once, on a Saturday night, after the Mass and special prayers to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady. The individual praying did not go on for very long.

4. All this information, and not only the quotations, is from the August 15, 1983 interview.

5. The words within the brackets are additions or interpretations that seem in keeping with Father Vlasic's thought.

6. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, pp. 25-26.

7. The quotation is from a tape recording by John Finkbiner Studio, P.O. Box 96, Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570.

20

THE MESSAGES AND THE SECRETS

1. *The Sun Danced*, Doubleday 1983 ed., Chapters 21, 23 and 24.

2. *Message for the closing of the Marian Year*, February 18, 1959.

3. *Gospina*. p. 46.

4. *Gospina*. p. 46.

5. *Gospina*, p. 48.

6. *Gospina*, p. 48.

7. All six seers know when this sign will be given, "but cannot reveal it." *Gospina. p. 49.*

8. Eleven months earlier, in her January 10, 1983 interview with Father Tomislav Vlasic, Mirjana said that the tenth secret is "altogether bad and cannot be mitigated at all."
9. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 160.

21

LEADING THE SEERS TO HOLINESS

1. *Gospina*, p. 53.
2. *Gospina*, p. 50.

22

MESSAGES FOR THE PARISH

1. The text of the messages in this chapter are taken from a mimeographed document entitled *Messages of Life* prepared by Father Svetozar Kraljevic. We have made some slight editorial changes.

23

CATASTROPHE AND THE CRISIS OF FAITH

1. Somewhat differently than Father Svetozar Kraljevic, to whom we owe the version above, Father Rene Laurentin reports the words of the apparition: "Peace, peace...nothing but peace. Men must reconcile themselves with God and between themselves. For that they must believe, pray, fast and confess themselves." Father Laurentin says that Our Lady "repeated this message several times on the following days." *(La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, pp. 97-98.)
2. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, pp. 160-161.
3. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 160.
4. Taken from a pamphlet of his entitled *What Time is It?* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1984), pp. 23-24.

24

OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE

1. This statement is taken from Father Tomislav Vlasic's August 15, 1983 interview.
2. While I was in Medugorje in mid-October, 1983, Our Lady said: "People must take my messages seriously."
3. August 15, 1983 interview.

25

MONTHLY CONFESSION AND THE TRIDUUM OF RECONCILIATION

1. The wording of this important and frequently quoted statement comes from Father Tomislav Vlasic's August 15, 1983 interview.

26

PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS

1. Our Lady did not join the seers in the recitation of the Hail Mary at Medugorje.
2. The Bishop alluded to is the Most Reverend Pavao Zanic, Ordinary of Mostar. His diocese includes Medugorje. He established a Commission of Investigation that orginally comprised four members and was later increased to fifteen. The enlarged Commission held its first meeting on March 23, 1984.
3. This was taken from Father Svetozar Kraljevic's August 6, 1984 talk to Americans. He speaks of this same apparition elsewhere in his talk and from what he says there we learn that this apparition took place "on the hill of the first apparitions."
4. This comes from a report on the apparitions by Father Tom Forrest, C.SS.R., which was written after he had visited Medugorje in the fall of 1982.
5. *Gospina*, pp. 54-55.

28

MISCELLANEOUS MESSAGES

1. *Gospina*, p. 47.
2. *Gospina*, p. 47.
3. *La Vierge Apparait-Elle*, p. 99.
4. For what remains to be done before that conversion can take place, see *The Sun Danced*, Doubleday 1983 ed., pp. 166-193.

Epilogue

MARY OUR MOTHER

1. The first statement was made in a reply to a question by Father Rupcic. The second one comes from Mirjana's interview with Father Tomislav Vlasic on January 10, 1983.

2. He also wrote a smaller tract on the same subject entitled *The Secret of Mary*. Both works can be obtained through the Montfort Fathers, Bay Shore, New York 11706.

3. Pope John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Fatima on May 13, 1982. At the Mass which he celebrated there on that day, he delivered a remarkable homily of considerable theological significance, an important part of which has to do with consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He read the act of consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart at the conclusion of the Mass. The entire act of consecration and most of the homily can be found in *The Sun Danced*, Doubleday 1983 ed., pp. 184-187 and 199-208.

4. For the details of this rather involved issue see *The Sun Danced*, Doubleday 1983 ed., pp. 165-193.

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