

Medjugorje: A Warning

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The Remnant Press

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Introduction

Since the Second Vatican Council there has been a grave crisis of authority within the Catholic Church. The ordinary faithful have not received the firm and unequivocal teaching and guidance from their ecclesiastical superiors to which they had become accustomed. Cardinal Ratzinger has noted the extent to which individual bishops have abdicated their authority to national episcopal conferences which, only too often, have been manipulated into propagating the opinions of so-called theological experts of dubious orthodoxy. Parish priests frequently abdicated their authority to parish councils, and Rome itself has sometimes appeared to speak with an uncertain voice. But certainty is what the faithful seek, and when they do not receive it from the Magisterium they will seek it elsewhere.

Some have sought certainty in the charismatic movement which, if examined objectively, renders the Magisterium unnecessary, for what need is there of a teaching authority when each individual Christian can communicate directly with the Holy Ghost?

Other Catholics have put their faith in one of the numerous apparitions which are allegedly taking place in many countries. Once again, if heavenly guidance can be communicated directly through the sect which is witnessing the alleged apparitions, then what need is there of a Magisterium? In the years following the Council a very clear pattern of behavior has emerged among supporters of these apparitions.

It is a tendency to make belief in the authenticity of a particular apparition the criterion of orthodoxy. True Catholics believe in the apparitions, and the faith of those who do not is suspect in some way. Those drawn towards these apparitions tend to be conservative in outlook, the type of Catholic who might have been expected to defend the teaching of the Magisterium. Once such Catholics become “hooked” on an apparition all their efforts tend to be devoted to defending it and propagating it. They have thus been removed effectively from the battlefield for orthodoxy.

There can be no doubt that spurious apparitions are one of Satan’s most effective weapons in his war against the Mystical Body. The problem is, of course, to discern authentic from spurious apparitions. I certainly do not believe that any of the alleged apparitions taking place at present with the possible exception of Akita in Japan, possess a shred of credibility.

I recollect very clearly a decade or so ago that I scandalized some very devout friends by maintaining that the alleged apparitions at Palmar de Troya in Spain were inspired by the devil. I was asked how I could make such a claim in view of the piety manifested there—all night vigils, heroic acts of penance, the Rosary, financial sacrifices of staggering proportions. I knew one devout and highly educated English Catholic who sold everything he had and abandoned his profession to go and live there. Later, when Clemente, the self-styled seer, proclaimed himself to be Pope and “excommunicated” everyone who did not recognize him, this friend and others withdrew from Palmar in horror and admitted that they had been deceived. But the tragedy is that there are thousands who did not. Their faith had become identified with the authenticity of the Palmar sect. Satan had amputated them from the Mystical Body.

How can one reconcile the devotion that I have mentioned with diabolic inspiration? The answer should be self-evident. If a seer claiming to be inspired by Heaven denied the doctrine of the Trinity or advocated free love he would hardly be likely to deceive faithful Catholics. Satan will obviously seek to introduce error and separate the faithful from the Church under a veneer of piety.

Medjugorje

Several years ago I was visited by some good friends with a booklet in Croatian about some apparitions allegedly taking place at Medjugorje in Yugoslavia. They wished my wife, who is Croatian, to translate it. When I had been given a resume of the alleged messages I advised my wife not to waste a second of her time translating them as, in my opinion, they did not possess a vestige of credibility. I am glad to say that these friends now share my opinion. Since that time the alleged apparitions at Medjugorje have attracted more attention and more enthusiasm almost daily, and millions of Catholics now flock there from throughout the world. The initial opposition of the then communist government of Yugoslavia was transformed into an attitude of enthusiastic co-operation once it became clear that pilgrimages to Medjugorje provided an extremely lucrative source of foreign currency.

It is obvious that the bishops and clergy of Yugoslavia have every reason to be predisposed in favor of Medjugorje. If the visions were authentic they would be a tremendous asset to the Church in a country with so many atheists and adherents of non-Catholic religions. Not only would the income from the pilgrimages benefit their poor country, but it would provide badly needed financial help for the Church. However, as Bishop Zanic explains later, only one of the Yugoslav bishops (Archbishop Franic of Split) has expressed belief in the apparitions, and not one of the hundred diocesan clergy in Hercegovina accepts them as authentic. Only two members of the 15 man Commission which examined the events at Medjugorje, accepted the authenticity of the visions (and they were both Franciscans). The Franciscans themselves are divided on the matter, but some of the most influential among them support the position of Bishop Zanic. Those who support the authenticity of the alleged apparitions have been quite unable to suggest any credible ulterior motive to explain the rejection of their authenticity by the clergy of every rank in Yugoslavia outside the Franciscan Order.

My object in this study is simply to show that there is a case against the authenticity of the Medjugorje apparitions, a viewpoint which has been kept from most Catholics due to the vast publicity campaign in favor of authenticity conducted in the mainstream Catholic media (which derives considerable financial benefits from Medjugorje advertising). It is not without significance that the Liberal Catholic journals which have not shown the least interest in the Fatima message are enthusiastic in their support of Medjugorje. I know that it was the view of the late Hamish Fraser that Medjugorje was a means being utilized by Satan to subvert the message of Fatima. [Emphasis added, here and below.]

Before providing documentation to prove the falsity of the alleged apparitions I will give just two examples of the degree of credibility which should be given to the self-styled “seers” of Medjugorje. The “seers” and their Franciscan manipulators have consistently maintained that

during their “ecstasies” they are immobile and without communication with the outside world. A French journalist wished to test this claim, and while one “seer”, Vicka, purported to be in ecstasy, he made a stabbing movement towards her eyes with his fingers. Vicka gave a start and threw her head backwards. Fortunately, the entire incident was filmed. The girl left the room and returned a few minutes later with one of her charismatic mentors, an expelled Franciscan. She claimed that at the moment the journalist made the movement she was witnessing an apparition of the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus in her arms, and the Child slipped. “I made a movement to stop Him from falling. That’s all.”

There could hardly be a more evident case of outright lying. It is inconceivable that during an apparition of Our Lady with the Child Jesus, the Child could possibly slip. If, per impossible, this did happen, it is stretching coincidence beyond the bounds of credibility to be asked to believe that it happened at the precise moment the journalist made the movement towards Vicka’s eyes, and, finally, if she had been speaking the truth she would have moved forwards towards the apparition and not backwards!

The second incident is documented in the 1990 statement by Bishop Zanic which is printed in full in Sections 5-7. It concerns a Franciscan priest, Fr. Ivica Vego, who was dispensed from his vows and expelled from the Franciscan Order by a direct command of Pope John Paul II as a result of his immoral conduct, which involved the seduction of a nun, Sr. Leopolda. When she became pregnant they both left the religious life and began to live together near Medjugorje where their child was born. They now have two children. But prior to this he refused to accept his expulsion and continued to celebrate Mass, administer the Sacraments, and pass the time with his mistress. Why mention such a distasteful event? The reason is that the “seers” claimed that Our Lady appeared to them on thirteen occasions stating that Fr. Vego was innocent, that he was as entitled to celebrate Mass as any other priest, and that the bishop was harsh! Any reader with a true sense of being a Catholic, a *sensus catholicus*, will need to read no further to realize the full extent of the mendacity of the self-styled “seers”, a mendacity which cannot be excused simply on the grounds that they have been manipulated by their Franciscan mentors. What credibility can be given to those who claim that the Mother of God told them repeatedly that an immoral priest, expelled from his order on the instructions of the Holy Father himself, is innocent, and that the Bishop who had taken the only course open to him, was the guilty party! And how does a so-called reputable theologian, such as Fr. Rene Laurentin, who has made a fortune from books on Medjugorje react when confronted with such facts? Bishop Zanic gives us the answer. He begged the Bishop not to publish details of the incident. Bishop Zanic tells us that this has been Laurentin’s consistent position, to hide the truth and defend falsehood. Despite the fact that the truth about Ivica Vego can no longer be denied, his prayer book is still sold in Medjugorje and beyond in hundreds of thousands of copies!

One might add, almost as an afterthought, that if Our Lady had truly appeared at Medjugorje on about 26,000 occasions by the end of 1993, a claim which in itself defies credibility, she did not bother to warn the Croatian people of the coming onslaught, which they would have to undergo from fanatically anti-Catholic Serbia.

Documentation

1. Medjugorje: The Other Side of the Coin, Geoffrey Lawman, p. 6.
2. 1987 Communique of the Yugoslav Bishops Concerning the Facts of Medjugorje, p. 11.
3. Declaration of the Bishop of Mostar Concerning Medjugorje, July 15, 1987, p. 12.
4. An Extract from the Letter of the Bishop of Mostar to Mariya Davies Thanking Her for Her Translation, p. 14.
5. Visions in Alabama, Excerpted from “Letter from London”, *The Remnant*, March 31, 1989, p. 15.
6. Marija Pavlovic Contradicts Herself, p. 16.
7. The Truth About Medjugorje—A Statement by Bishop Zanic Published in 1990, p. 17.
8. Irish Bishops’ Conference Statement of June 13, 1990, p. 31.
9. “Bishops ‘leaked’ Ruling on Yugoslav Shrine, p. 31.
10. “Rome Studies New Medjugorje Report”, p. 33.
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13. Further Information, p. 39.

1. MEDJUGORJE: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

By Geoffrey Lawman Co-founder of *Approaches*; Co-editor of *Apropos*; and Editor of *Fatal Star*, the autobiography of Hamish Fraser

We are hearing more and more about Medjugorje, the Yugoslavian village where, it is said, Our Lady has been appearing almost daily to some or all of six young visionaries ever since 1981. The natural question, as with all such claimed apparitions, is “Are they authentic?” To this there are three possible answers: “Yes,” “No,” and “We’d better wait for the Church’s verdict.” The third is clearly the wisest answer for any Catholic who recognizes the Church’s teaching authority and the limitations of his own private judgment.

Yet equally it is part of our tradition to revere Our Lady in the context of her numerous authenticated apparitions, and, historically speaking, popular devotion to any new apparition has often spread and become as it were “established” well before the Church gave its final approval.

We cannot therefore object to devotees of Medjugorje trying to enlist our support for phenomena which they strongly believe to be of God, provided their publicity is balanced and honest and they are ready to leave the last word to the Teaching Church. But they, for their part, must be equally ready to face the questions of other Catholics, possibly as devoted to Our Lady as themselves, but who have serious doubts about the events in question.

A New Type of Apparition?

One reason for questioning the events at Medjugorje is that they are so strikingly unlike all previous Marian apparitions. Which other apparitions have gone on almost daily for over 12 years and are still going on? Which others were announced a month in advance (at a charismatic congress in Rome)? Which others have been so well publicized internationally as to attract (it is claimed) 5 million pilgrims to date? These 3 features may not in themselves constitute arguments against the authenticity of the alleged apparitions (though one may well wonder what Our Lady could have found to say that needed some 26,000 appearances!), but it is clear that Medjugorje is following a pattern quite different from that of earlier (and approved) apparitions—*Lourdes*, *La Salette*, *Pontmain*, *Fatima* or *Beauraing*, for example.

A ‘Holiness Explosion’

Supporters point to the devotional and spiritual impact of the occurrences on both villagers and pilgrims, and it is true that the apparitions have repeatedly urged greater assiduity in prayer and fasting and regular confession, together with Bible reading, Eucharistic devotions, etc., and that these recommendations have been enthusiastically followed. However welcome this is, we should remember that it is not in itself any guarantee of holiness or even of orthodoxy, let alone evidence that the apparitions are authentic. The Church’s history shows numerous cases of heretical groups noteworthy for intense devotion, prayer and fasting (the *Fratricelli* of the 13th century, for example). One may perhaps question the prudence of the “Lady’s” subsequent extension of fasting, even partial, from 1 to 2 days per week (for growing teenagers!) and her

unrealistic recommendation of up to 3 hours of prayer daily. And the frequent practice of “laying on of hands” and “the baptism of the Spirit” suggests that the “holiness explosion” claimed for Medjugorje is as much charismatic as Catholic.

Graver Reasons for Doubt

Three further, and far more serious, characteristics of the Medjugorje phenomenon—disobedience, lying and false doctrine—form the essential grounds for the view that Our Lady has not, and could not have, appeared there at all.

Disobedience: The diocesan bishop, Bishop Zanic of Mostar, has on several occasions given legitimate instructions to the Franciscan priests active in Medjugorje parish, which they have consistently disobeyed. He has ordered certain priests to leave the parish, and they have stayed. He has asked that the occurrences should not be publicized, and that pilgrimages should not be organized or welcomed (until his canonical enquiry was complete). These orders have been ignored. But the most flagrant and (to my mind) conclusive case is that involving Frs. Prusina and Vego, two Franciscans being disciplined by their superiors (and who have since been expelled from the Order). Bishop Zanic had ordered them to leave the parish. “Our Lady”, questioned by the “visionaries”, is stated to have said on two occasions (December 19, 1981 and January 20, 1982) that the bishop was “in the wrong” and that the Franciscans “should stay put”! “Our Lady” is thus shown as inciting disobedience to a lawful order of a bishop.

Lying: I can understand the indignation this word will cause to convinced Medjugorjists.

Yet I honestly do not see how otherwise to describe certain behavior on the part of the visionaries Ivan and Vicka and of Fr. Vlastic: Vicka’s alternate denials and admissions that she was keeping a day-to-day chronicle of the events (and her concealment of large sections of it from the bishop’s commission); the unbelievable perjury of Fr. Vlastic, swearing on the cross in the bishop’s presence that he knew nothing of Vicka’s diary (though he had earlier supplied extracts of that very diary to Fr. Grafenauer); young Ivan’s “message” regarding the great sign to come “in the sixth month”, written and signed by him and lodged in sealed envelopes with the canonical commission, but which he retracted nearly 3 years later when the “messages” were opened and shown to be invalid. Ivan, by then twenty years old, agreed that the “Lady” had not objected when he wrote the “message” originally, conveniently delaying her admonition for 3 years until the day before he admitted his “mistake”! Only lack of space dissuades me from continuing this distasteful and saddening list. A whole study could be devoted to the subject, particularly if one includes the *suppressiones veri* and *suggestiones falsi* purveyed by Medjugorje’s chief propagandists, Frs. Laurentin, Bugalo, and Co.

False Doctrine: Properly doctrinal statements are rare among the interminable reported words of the “Lady”, but a single example of a doctrinal falsity ought to be enough to discredit any apparition. Here are two examples, both dating from 1983. In January, Mirjana told Fr. Vlastic how “Mary” was distressed by the lack of unity between Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, since there was only one God: “You are not a believer if you do not respect the other religions, Muslim and Serbian (*i.e.*, Orthodox). You are not Christians if you do not respect them.” [This is false doctrine: we owe proper respect to non-believers, but none at all to their false religion; this

would be a betrayal of Christ and His Church.] Even Fr. Vlasic was taken aback by this, but to his further questions—Mirjana could only reply by repeating herself: “...lack of unity among the religions. You must respect each person’s religion,” adding “Keep your own for yourselves and your children.” This Masonic syncretism in a supernatural message is quite inadmissible; it rules out the missionary charity whereby we try to win our neighbors over to Our Lord.

The second example is from April 1983. “Our Lady” is supposed to have dictated to Helena (a charismatic ‘mystic’, aged 10 or 11 years, who does not “see” the visions but hears what is said) a prayer of consecration to her Immaculate Heart. Bear in mind that these words are of the “Lady’s” composition, but are intended to be addressed to her. In them we find the following:

1. ...give me the grace to love all men as you loved Jesus Christ...
2. ...give me the grace to be merciful towards you...
3. ...if, by chance, I should lose your grace, I ask you to restore it to me.

To love all men ...yes, God said we may all achieve that height of charity. But to love them as Mary loved Jesus (her God, King and Savior as well as Son), as in petition 1, is impossible and scandalous; it amounts to making gods out of our fellow-creatures. Petition 2 is just stupid, not to say insolent; she who is: “full of grace,” the Queen of Heaven, has no need of our mercy. Of petition 3 one could at least object that grace is never lost by chance, but only through sin. The exercise as a whole is not impressive; whatever “Spirit” inspired it was clearly not the Holy Ghost.

Other Reasons for Doubt

A fuller critique of Medjugorje would go into other doubtful aspects which I can only mention in passing: the unedifying expatiation of “the Lady” by the Franciscans in their dispute with the bishop over the allocation of parishes; the pretentious pseudo-science deployed to authenticate the “ecstasies” of the “visionaries” (including the use of an electroscope to measure the intensity of “spiritual energy” developed during “apparitions”!); the rather suspect discrepancies in the testimonies as to what actually happened during the “miracle of the sun” of August 1981; the sentimental banality of so much of the interminable stream of oracles uttered by the “Lady”, and the unlikely vulgarity that has marked some of the “apparitions” (outbursts of laughter, “Our Lady” touched, and even caressed by visionaries and pilgrims.) And Bishop Zanic has voiced his own suspicion that the “visions” are less likely to be hallucinations than well-rehearsed play-acting. Such a suggestion is bound to enrage supporters of Medjugorje; the fact remains that if the ever-present local Franciscans had left the young people alone and the world charismatic movement had followed suit -in other words, if the bishop had been obeyed—the whole question of authenticity could have been resolved long back.

Misleading Publicity

There is one aspect of Medjugorje which I find particularly unsatisfactory; I refer to some of the material put out by the London Medjugorje Centre. It would be too much to expect, for example, that their introductory leaflet, *The Facts About Medjugorje*, would enter into all the minutiae of such a controversial affair, but even in such a short document one would at least have expected a

more balanced account than this—one which was just to Bishop Zanic, and which showed some awareness of the doubts raised by the apparitions. One is surprised to find no mention in it of such important issues as disobedience, lying and unacceptable doctrine, even if only to refute them.

Here are some of the facts that *The Facts About Medjugorje* does not choose to tell us:

- that the diocesan canonical commission of enquiry has found (by 11 voices to 4) that the apparitions are not authentic.
- that Bishop Zanic is speaking as the responsible bishop of the diocese (and therefore in somewhat more than “a private capacity”) when he dismisses the apparitions as not authentic.

[See text of his July 25 sermon at Medjugorje.]

- that if Rome and the Yugoslav Bishops’ Conference have put the findings of his canonical enquiry into “cold storage”, the most likely explanation, to any objective observer, is the enormous influence of the international propaganda campaign orchestrated by a pro-Medjugorje pressure-group.
- that the local Franciscans “counseling” the “visionaries” are virtually all connected with the charismatic renewal movement (*i.e.*, a sect of Protestant, “Pentecostalist” inspiration, busy “colonizing” the Church since 1967). The same is true of the ‘leading theologians’ cited by the leaflet: Laurentin, Urs von Balthasar, and Faricy are all avowed charismatics. As for the “several other Yugoslav bishops” who, the leaflet claims, “fully accept Medjugorje as a precious gift from God,” the only name that readily comes to mind is that of Archbishop Franic of Split, an enthusiastic charismatic; the others, even the initially favorable Cardinal Kuharic of Zagreb, seem now to have adopted a waiting posture. Why did the London Medjugorje Centre feel it necessary to conceal this heavy charismatic involvement?

Two other statements in this leaflet call, I feel, for comment. Firstly: “The Holy See usually waits at least until apparitions are over before making any pronouncement.” True ...but has it ever before been faced with apparitions that continue for 12 years and show no sign of stopping? What better way of putting off any definitive verdict until these “apparitions” achieve a sort of de facto respectability through their sheer indefinite continuance?

And secondly: “Unless and until the Church condemns Medjugorje ...we enjoy the right to have as much to do with it as we like.” Even if its messages clash with Catholic teaching (as I have tried to show above)? Even if they incite priests and visionaries to reject the Church’s proper authority?

No, the leaflet, *The Facts About Medjugorje* presents in my view a most unsatisfactory and one-sided account, which cannot help but mislead inquirers who have no access to the fuller picture. One would like to excuse this as the result of enthusiastic devotion and inadequate research—pray God this is so—but the fact remains that, objectively, it is a travesty of the truth in important respects, and as such should be withdrawn.

The Threat to the Church

Some readers may well be surprised at the severity of my criticism. To them, the word “Medjugorje” conjures up Our Blessed Lady, humble and hopeful pilgrimages, all that is best in Marian devotion and spirituality. I assure such readers that I could have attacked much harder and adduced even more evidence of the negative aspects of Medjugorje. But what I have written above is already sufficient to support my conviction that it is a dangerous and un-Catholic thing.

It divides Christians—those who accept its pseudo-spiritual humbug from those who insist on a sterner, purer spirituality—even to the point of driving a wedge between fellow-bishops: on the one side Bishops Franic and Ianucci, on the other Bishop Zanic.

It devalues and discredits the cult of Mary, and thus robs modern Catholicism of its finest spiritual flower. How do we expect Marian devotion to survive a “Lady” of interminable verbosity who submits to indiscriminate “patting”, incites her hearers to disobedience; and even stages a pantomime “transformation-scene” between herself and Satan? An earlier generation of Catholics would have blown this absurdity away in a gust of Chestertonian laughter, but we seem to have lost, our sense of the ridiculous in the last 20 years.

And, with the cult of Mary, Medjugorje weakens the message of Fatima, with its cardinal insistence on the conversion of Russia and of Communists as the prerequisite for any peace and progress. Medjugorje talks airily of peace, but ignores the very precise recommendations of Our Lady of Fatima and the disastrous consequences that will follow if these are not complied with.

And, with the cult of Mary, Medjugorje weakens authority in the Church, by its resistance to the legitimate authority of its own bishop, by its partisan espousal of the cause of the dissident Franciscans in their quarrel with the diocese, It could even be argued that the long duration of the phenomenon constitutes an incipient “alternative magisterium”, in the sense that we shall have much less need of hierarchies, a Teaching Church for our guidance if “Our Lady” is to appear daily to give us our instructions direct from Heaven ...a disquieting prospect for all our bishops and for the Holy See itself.

Here I must rest my case, reminding readers that in presenting arguments against the Medjugorje apparitions I am merely availing myself of the same right as that claimed by its supporters when recommending it. Both they and I are speaking in our private capacities. As is customary and proper in these cases, I willingly give the assurance that I do not intend hereby to anticipate the Church’s final verdict in any way. I merely hold the opinion, again in my private capacity, that the most probable conclusion is that the matter of that verdict exists already, in the shape of the findings of Bishop Zanic’s commission, filed away in the offices of the Yugoslav Bishops’ Conference and the Vatican, and will be re-worded and promulgated when the Church decides that the right moment has come.

2. 1987 COMMUNIQUE OF THE YUGOSLAV BISHOPS CONCERNING THE FACTS OF MEDJUGORJE

Verbatim from *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, February 23, 1987

We publish below the text of a communique published in the Official Bulletin of the Diocese of Zagreb, 1, 1987, p. 35, signed by His Eminence Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, President of the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference, and Most Rev. Pavao Zanic, Bishop of Mostar-Duvno, concerning the facts of Medjugorje.

In conformity with the canonical norms concerning the discernment of alleged apparitions and private revelations, the diocesan commission instituted for this purpose by the Bishop of Mostar, Ordinary of the place, has conducted an inquiry into the events of Medjugorje.

In the course of the investigation it emerged that the events went far beyond the diocese in question. Consequently, on the basis of the above-mentioned norms it seemed fitting to continue the investigation on the level of the Episcopal Conference with the institution of a new Commission for that purpose.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was informed. It expressed appreciation for the work carried out under the responsibility of the local ordinary, and it encouraged the continuance of the work at the national episcopal level.

The Episcopal Conference, therefore, is establishing a commission to continue the investigation of the events at Medjugorje. While awaiting the results of the commission's investigation and the Church's judgment, pastors and faithful should observe an attitude of prudence customary in such situations.

Therefore it is not permissible to organize pilgrimages and other manifestations motivated by the supernatural character attributed to the facts of Medjugorje.

Legitimate devotion to Our Lady, recommended by the Church, must conform to the directives of the Magisterium and especially those contained in the Apostolic Exhortation *Mariali Cultus* of February 2, 1974 (*cf.* AAS, 66, 1974, pp. 113-168).

Zagreb, January 29, 1987

+ Pavao Zanic
+ Franjo Card. Kuharic,
President of Yugoslav Bishop of Mostar Episcopal Conference

Declaration of the Bishop of Mostar Concerning Medjugorje, July 15, 1987

After a version of this Declaration, translated into English from an Italian translation and not Croatian, had been circulating for some time, the Bishop asked Fr. Hugh Thwaites, an English Jesuit, to have an accurate translation made from the original Croatian. The task was undertaken by my wife Marija, who is Croatian, and my son Adrian, who has a Cambridge degree in Serbo-Croatian.

Brothers and Sisters,

Today in Medjugorje, on the occasion of administering the Sacrament of Confirmation, you are perhaps expecting me to say a few words concerning those events about which the whole world is talking. The Church must concern herself with them, and whatever is of concern to the Church, she refers to particular individuals and commissions. You know that at the moment this subject is being discussed by the Commission which was convened by the Conference of Yugoslav Bishops, because the Church cannot expose her credibility lightly before the twentieth-century world, which seeks to discredit and criticize her, so that it can say: "There you are—there is Jesus Christ for you."

I can assure you that I prayed, studied, and kept silent for six years. Others have prayed too, and I thank them for it. In every Holy Mass that I have said Medjugorje was present in my intentions. In my daily Rosary I prayed to Our Lord, and to the Holy Ghost, to give me light from God. This has helped me to form a firm and certain conviction concerning everything that I have heard, read or experienced.

There is a great deal of praying and fasting going on here (in Medjugorje), but it is in the belief that all the events are truly supernatural. However, to preach falsehood to the faithful concerning God, Jesus, and Our Lady—that merits the depths of Hell.

In all my work, prayers, and studies I had one aim before me—to discern the truth. With this aim, as early as 1982, I formed a four member commission which later, with the help of some bishops and fathers provincial, I expanded to fifteen members drawn from nine theological centers from seven dioceses and four provinces, and two leading psychiatrists who were enabled to consult their colleagues. They worked for three years. The Holy See was informed about their work, and the events. This Commission of the Conference of Bishops of Yugoslavia continues to concern itself with the same problem.

However, there were impatient people who went ahead before the judgment of the Church, and declared that miracles and supernatural events were taking place. They preached on private revelations from the altar, something which is not permitted until the Church declares such revelations to be authentic. That is why the various authorities demanded that pilgrimages should not be organized, that the Church's judgement should be awaited. This was first done on March 24, 1984 when the Commission of Medjugorje warned against it, but, unfortunately, without effect. Then, in October of the same year, the Conference of Bishops declared that there should be no more officially organized pilgrimages to Medjugorje. By "officially organized" is meant those who gather or come in a group. That had no effect either. Then the Congregation for the

Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, on May 23, 1985, sent a letter to the Conference of Italian Bishops asking them to try to reduce the number of organized pilgrimages, and likewise to minimize all forms of propaganda. That too bore no fruit. Finally, when the second commission was formed Cardinal Franjo Kuharic and the Bishop of Mostar, in the name of the Conference of Bishops of Yugoslavia, declared publicly on January 9, 1987: “For this reason it is forbidden to organize pilgrimages or other manifestations motivated by the supernatural character attributed to the events in Medjugorje.” This pronouncement came from the highest level in the Church and must not be ignored as if it were of no significance.

Ever since the first news appeared concerning the unusual events in this diocese, the Bishop’s Office followed the reports carefully, and collected everything that could serve in the search for truth. The Bishop allowed the seers and religious involved full freedom, and even defended them from political and press attacks. We taped all the conversations, collected chronicles and diaries, letters and documents. The Commission of our—professors of theology and physicians studied all this for three years. The three year work of the Commission concluded as follows: two members voted in favor of the truth and supernatural nature of the apparitions. One member abstained from voting. One accepted that something had happened at the beginning. Eleven voted that there had been no apparitions—*non constat de supernaturalitate*.

I am firmly convinced that all the members of the Commission worked conscientiously and examined everything which could have aided their search for truth. The Church cannot risk her credibility, and often, in similar cases, she has studied events like these carefully and rebuked groups who gathered in places where it had been established that the events were not supernatural. Let us remember Garabandal in Spain, San Damiano in Italy, and dozens of similar places in the past few years. The seers at Garabandal claimed that Our Lady promised a great sign for the whole world. Twenty-five years have passed since then, and still there is no sign. If Our Lady had left a sign it would be clear to all what this is about.

It was said that Our Lady started to appear at Podbrdo on Mount Crnica. When the police stopped people going there she appeared in people’s homes, on fences, in fields, in vineyards, and tobacco fields. She appeared in the church, on the altar, in the sacristy, in the choir-loft, on the roof, in the bell-tower, on the roads, on the road to Cerno, in a car, on a bus, in schools, at several places in Mostar and Sarajevo, in monasteries in Zagreb, in Varazdin, in Switzerland, in Italy, then again at Podbrdo, in Krizevac, in the parish, in the presbytery and so on. This does not list even half the number of locations where apparitions were alleged to have taken place, so that a sober man who venerates Our Lady must ask:

“My Lady, what are they making of you?”

By Divine law I am the pastor in this diocese, the teacher of the Faith, and the judge in questions concerning the Faith. Since the events in Medjugorje have caused strife and division in the Church—some people believing, others not believing—because there are those who have refused to submit themselves to the authority of the Church, and because the recommendations and decisions of the above mentioned authorities, commissions, congregations of the Bishops’ Conference had no effect, I the bishop of Mostar, answerable before God for discipline in this diocese repeat and confirm earlier decisions of ecclesiastical bodies, and I forbid pilgrimages to

come here and attribute a supernatural character to these events before the Commission of the Bishops' Conference completes its work.

I turn to you, O Immaculate Virgin and Mother, Mother of God, and Mother of the Church, Mother of the faithful who seek, pray to, and love you. I, your servant, the Bishop of Mostar, turn to you, and before the whole world declare my deep and constant faith in all the privileges God bestowed upon you according to which you are the first and most excellent of His creatures. I express my profound and unswerving faith in your intercession before Almighty God for all the needs of your children in this vale of tears.

I declare my profound and constant faith in your love towards us sinners, that love to which you have testified by your apparitions and assistance. I myself have led pilgrimages to Lourdes. It is precisely with the strength of this faith that I, your servant the Bishop of Mostar, before the great multitudes who have called upon you, discern and accept your great sign which, after six years, has become clear and certain. No special sign is necessary for me, but it was necessary for those who believed in a falsehood. The sign you have given is that for six years you remained silent continually whenever they prophesied that there would be an apparition on the mountain which would be permanent and for all to see. "It will be soon, quite soon, just be patient a little longer." They were saying this as early as 1981. Then they claimed that it would be on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, then at Christmas, then for the new year and so on.

Thank you, Blessed Lady, for manifesting by your six year silence whether or not you have spoken here, whether or not you had appeared or given messages, revealed secrets, or promised a special sign. Most holy Virgin, Mother of Christ and our Mother, intercede for peace in this restless region of the Church, the Diocese of Mostar. Intercede especially for this village, this parish where your holy name has been mentioned countless times in messages. Accept, most holy Virgin, in reparation, the sincere prayers of those devout souls who are far from fanaticism and disobedience within the Church. Help us all to come to the real truth. Beloved, humble, and obedient Maiden of God, help Medjugorje to follow with a firm step the shepherd of the Church on earth, so that we all may glorify you and thank you in truth and love. Amen.

Pavao Zanic, Bishop of Mostar

Letter to Mrs. Davies from the Bishop of Mostar

Thank you very much for getting in touch with me. Thank you especially for the translation of my statement about Medjugorje, and thank you for taking the correct attitude over this great source of confusion. God knows how this will all end, not well, you can be sure of that. The Church is divided. Factions are at war in the name of the Queen of Peace. I, who saw the beginning of this falsehood, of this lie, have before my very eyes a great deal about which it is impossible to write, or to describe, for various reasons. A huge amount of money is involved, and so the propaganda has no bounds. In my office there are some fifty books about Medjugorje, a vast number of cassettes, newspapers, and magazines, and new material is arriving all the time, and yet the position I have taken hurts them. For an average Catholic the first question to ask is: "What does the Ordinary of the place think about this matter?" The position which I have taken

brings many people to their senses. Of course the fanaticism of some is incorrigible, and no argument avails in their cases.

Archbishop Franic has caused me dreadful problems, although the mere fact that he thinks something does not mean that it must be true. One of the first questions asked by the sectaries of Medjugorje is: “How is it that Archbishop Franic believes?” I, for my part, say to them, that there are thirty-five bishops in Yugoslavia, and that he is the only one who believes, so that argument is worthless. For them, however, it is enough that one Archbishop believes.

I am firmly convinced that no responsible person will dare to defend the apparitions. The contrary arguments are too strong. It is only necessary to be aware of them.

3. VISIONS IN ALABAMA

Excerpted from “Letter from London”, by Michael Davies, *The Remnant*, March 31, 1989

I have excerpted from some cuttings, unfortunately not dated, concerning a recent visit to Alabama by Marija Pavolovic, one of the so-called seers of Medjugorje. Miss Pavolovic was in Alabama for 53 days, and readers will certainly be wondering whether she had any visions during her visit. Miss Pavolovic claims that she did. How many, you may be wondering?

Fifty-three of course! One a day. She had come to Birmingham to donate one of her kidneys to her brother in an operation performed at the University Hospital, and she deserves our admiration for this fine gesture. During the operation, while unconscious under an anesthetic, she claims to have had a vision—which must be a first in the history of apparitions.

During her stay Miss Pavolovic stayed with a Mr. Terry Colafrancesco who, it appears, works full time for a non-profit organization called Caritas which he established in 1986 to promote Medjugorje: “Since then he has let his business, Country Landscaping, go dormant.” Mr. Colafrancesco purchased a 90-acre field adjacent to his property for \$400,000. In that field there is a pine tree. Mr. Colafrancesco mowed a path from his home to the tree, mowed around the tree, and placed a Crucifix and a Madonna on the site. He asked Miss Pavolovic to have a vision under the tree, and she duly obliged. It is somewhat remarkable that Mr. Colafrancesco had been able in advance to distribute information about the date and time that Miss Pavolovic would have her vision under the pine tree on his newly acquired property. Thousands of pilgrims are now visiting the field, much to the delight of the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel. The Shelby County Sheriff’s Deputy, a gentleman by the name of Gene Hamby, predicted, while directing a steady stream of cars to the field, “It’s just beginning.”

A Mr. Cyril Auboyneau, Miss Pavolovic’s translator, confirmed that Colafrancesco asked for a vision in the field: “Terry wanted a vision in the field under that tree—he prayed about that. So we asked Marija to ask Our Lady if she would appear in the field on Thanksgiving Day. Our Lady said she would appear in the field.”

Well, what can one say? I am astounded that anyone with a modicum of intelligence can give one second's credence to anything connected with Medjugorje, apart from the statements of Bishop Zanic.

4. MARIJA PAVLOVIC CONTRADICTS HERSELF

As Bishop Zanic makes clear in the next section, Marija Pavlovic has proved beyond any possibility of doubt that no confidence whatsoever can be placed in her veracity. Fr. Tomislav Vlastic, the Svengali figure who has been the principal manipulator of the alleged seers, established a bizarre community in Parma, Italy, with an enigmatic German lady named Agnes Heupel. In this community young men and women would live together, which, Bishop Zanic comments, is something unheard of in the history of the Church. It should be noted that, like his fellow Franciscan, Fr. Vego, Fr. Vlastic had also made a nun pregnant. When their child was born at the beginning of 1977, he did not leave the order to marry the woman named Mada, but begged her not to expose him as the father, assuring her that if she kept the matter secret, she would be like Mary, and God would bless her! She complied with his wishes initially, but later, feeling abandoned, revealed the whole story to Bishop Zanic. As was the case with Fr. Vego, Fr. Laurentin resorted to a cover-up, as he evidently felt that the credibility of the seers could be endangered if the immorality of their spiritual director became known. He went as far as claiming that a Franciscan named Pehar, who had left the order and gone to live in the U.S.A., was the father of the child.

The founding of the Vlastic/Heupel community was a cause of scandal even to some devotees of Medjugorje. Fr. Vlastic decided that his critics would be silenced if it could be shown that he had acted in obedience to a command from Our Lady. On April 21, 1988 Our Lady duly "revealed" the fact that the community had been established at her express command to Marija Pavlovic. In July of the same year great consternation was caused among the Medjugorists when, possibly as a result of jealousy of Agnes Heupel, Pavlovic swore before the Blessed Sacrament that her previous statement had been false, and that the Vlastic/Heupel community was in no way endorsed by Our Lady. Even Fr. Laurentin would find it hard to cover-up the fact that Pavlovic must have been lying on at least one occasion. The full text of the July 11, 1988 retraction follows:

I feel morally bound to make the following statements before God, Our Lady, and the Church of Jesus Christ:

(1) The message of the text *An Invitation to the Marian Year* and the deposition which bears my signature is that I brought Our Lady's answer to Br. Tomislav Vlastic's question. That answer was supposedly: "This is God's plan." In other words, it follows from these texts that I transmitted to Br. Tomislav Vlastic, Our Lady's confirmation and express approval of this work and of the program set in motion in Italy with the Medjugorje prayer group.

(2) I now declare that I never asked Our Lady for any confirmation whatsoever of this work begun by Br. Tomislav Vlastic and Agnes Heupel. I never expressly asked Our Lady whether I should take part in this work and I never received from Our Lady any instruction connected with

the group, apart from her instruction that each of us should be free to make a choice for his or her own life.

(3) From the texts and depositions which bear my signature it appears that Our Lady suggested that the community and the program of Br. Tomislav Vlastic and Agnes Heupel are God's way for myself and the others. I now repeat that I never received from Our Lady nor gave Br. Vlastic or anybody else such a statement or instruction from Our Lady.

(4) My first statement in its published form in Croatian and Italian does not correspond to the truth. I personally had no desire to make any written statement. Br. Tomislav Vlastic advised me, stressing the point again and again, that I, as a seer, ought to write a deposition which the world expected.

(5) I must, moreover, declare that the contents of the letter as set out and my having signed it give rise to a number of questions. For the time being, I can give to all possible questions only this one answer, which I give, I repeat, before God, Our Lady, and the Church of Jesus Christ: everything which might be understood as a confirmation and approval of this work of Br. Tomislav Vlastic and Agnes Heupel by Our Lady through myself is absolutely untrue and no less untrue is the idea that I spontaneously conceived the wish to write down that deposition.

(6) I consider myself morally bound to repeat the following statements before God, Our Lady and the Church: After seven years of daily visions, after my most intimate experience of Our Lady's kindness and wisdom, in the light of all that I can remember of Our Lady's advice and of Our Lady's answers to the questions which I personally put to her, I can say publicly that the idea that Heaven's plan and the message of Our Lady to the world at Medjugorje have as a holy consequence and a process desired by Our Lady this Work and the program begun in Italy by Br. Tomislav Vlastic and Agnes Heupel is unsustainable.

It must, however, also be said that the daily apparitions are continuing. I sign this declaration before the Holy Sacrament, and destine it for all those devoted to the "Work" of Our Lady in Medjugorje. Marija Pavolovic, July 11, 1988

5. THE TRUTH ABOUT MEDJUGORJE: PART 1

A Statement by Bishop Pavao Zanic, Bishop—Published in 1990

1. The truth regarding the events in Medjugorje is being sought out by a Commission of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia (BKJ). Their work is progressing slowly. Therefore with this statement I wish to help the Commission in coming to a decision as soon as possible. Propaganda in favor of Medjugorje is being rushed in order to place the Church and the world before a fait accompli. This has been the intention of the defenders of Medjugorje from the beginning. It must be admitted that they have succeeded, because the other side is either working too slowly or remaining silent. For these reasons and due to the motivation that I have been given from many from all over the world who realize that the truth has been trampled upon, I have decided to make another statement according to my duty and my conscience, and help the Commission.

With this statement I wish to awaken the consciences of those who defend Medjugorje. Their path is simple, wide and downhill all the way, while mine is difficult, thorny and uphill. The Church and Our Lady have no need of falsehoods. Jesus says: “The truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32). “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice” (Jn 18:37). For a short description of the falsehoods about Medjugorje we would need 200 pages, but for now all I will give is this short summary without a scientific approach. I am somewhat uneasy because of the fact that in some statements my name is in the forefront, yet from the beginning of the “apparitions” I have been in the center of the events due to my episcopal position and duties. I am sorry as well for having to mention some “unpleasant things,” but without them the arguments lose their strength. However, the most unpleasant things will not be mentioned.

2. A characteristic attitude: Marina B., a tourist guide for Atlas Travel, brought a priest from Panama to my office in August 1989. His name: Presbitero Rodriguez Teofilo, pastor of Nuestra Senora de Lourdes. With him came Carmen Capriles—a journalist, Gerente General of the IATA agency, and Avertida Alberto Navarro, Apartado 1344 Zona 7, Panama. Marina presented herself as a tour-guide, translator for English and a convert of Medjugorje. The priest asked me for the reasons why I do not believe in the “apparitions”. I told him that I have at least 20 reasons not to believe, of which only one is necessary for those who are sober and well instructed in the faith to come to the conclusion that the apparitions are not of the—supernatural. He asked me to please tell him at least one reason.

I told him about the case of the ex-Franciscan priest Ivica Vego. Due to his disobedience, by an order of our Holy Father the Pope, he was expelled from the Franciscan religious order OFM by his General, dispensed from his vows, and suspended *a divinis*. He did not obey this order and he continued to celebrate Mass, administer the Sacraments and pass the time with his mistress. It is unpleasant to write about this, yet it is necessary in order to see of whom Our Lady is speaking. According to the diary of Vicka and the statements of the “seers”, Our Lady mentioned 13 times that he is innocent and that the bishop is wrong. When his mistress, Sr. Leopolda, a nun, became pregnant, both of them left Medjugorje and the religious life and began to live together near Medjugorje where their child was born. Now they have two children. His prayer book is still sold in Medjugorje and beyond in hundreds of thousands of copies.

I asked Marina to translate this in English. Marina cannot be blamed for having fallen into a community which is concealing the truth. She spontaneously responded according to the practice in Medjugorje: “Do we have to tell them these ugly things?” I responded by saying that if you had not held back and covered these “ugly events” these people from Panama would have found out earlier and they would not have had to travel to Medjugorje for nothing. It is an injustice and a sin to hide this truth, even though it be unpleasant, it must be said.

3. The Marian theologian Rene Laurentin behaves in the same manner. He came to visit me around Christmas 1983, and I offered him dinner. He asked me why I do not believe in the apparitions. I told him that according to the diary of Vicka, and the words of the other “seers”, this “Lady” has been speaking against the bishop. Laurentin quickly responded: “Don’t publish that, because there are many pilgrims and converts there.” I was scandalized by this statement of

this well-known Mariologist! Unfortunately this has remained Laurentin's position: to hide the truth, and defend falsehoods. He has written around ten books on the topic of Medjugorje and in almost all of them, the truth and Bishop Zanic are under fire. He knows well what people like to hear. Therefore, it was relatively easy for him to find those who would believe him. "*A veritate quidem auditum avertent, ad fabulas autem convertentur*"—"They will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths" (2 Tim 4:4). The "seers" and defenders of Medjugorje led by Laurentin, from the very outset have seen that the modern believer in a communist country very quickly believes in everything "miraculous", in apparent miraculous healings and apparent messages from "Our Lady".

4. The main players on which Medjugorje rests are retired Archbishop F. Franic, R. Laurentin, L. Rucpic OFM, Amorth, Rastrelli S.J., and some Franciscans and charismatics from all over the world. Many books have been quickly published, as well as articles, brochures, films and souvenirs. On the move are tourist agencies, pilgrimages, prayer books written by two Franciscans Vego and Prusina who were expelled from the Franciscan Order, published in many languages in 600,000 copies, fanatical prayer groups that are inspired by the apparent messages of Our Lady and the greatest motivator of all—money. No one even mentions that which throws doubt on the "apparitions". The bishop has been warning everyone, but the "machinery" has been breaking forward. There have been mentioned 50 miraculous healings, then 150, 200, 300 and so on. Laurentin chose 56 dossiers and sent them to the "Bureau Medical de Lourdes". Dr. Mangiapan responded in their Bulletin of April 1986, that these dossiers have no practical value, and they cannot be used or considered as serious proofs of the apparitions in Medjugorje. Much has been written about the healing of Diane Basile. I sent the dossier to Dr. Mangiapan who studied the case and then took the position: "*opinion plus que reservee*". It is a case of sclerosis multiplex. More will be written about this later in a book.

5. The credibility of the "seers"—Mirjana Dragicevic. One month after the beginning of the "apparitions" I went to Medjugorje to question the "seers". I asked each of them to take an oath on the cross and demanded that they must speak the truth. (This conversation and oath was recorded on tape.) The first one was Mirjana: "We went to look for our sheep when at once ..." (The associate pastor in the parish interrupted and told me that they actually went out to smoke, which they hid from their parents.) "Wait a minute Mirjana, you're under oath. Did you go out to look for your sheep?" She put her hand over her mouth. "Forgive me, we went out to smoke." She then showed me the watch on which the "miracle" occurred because the hands of the watch had gone haywire. I took the watch to a watch expert who said that the watch had certainly fallen and become disordered. After bringing the watch back to her I told her not to mention that a miracle occurred. Yet, on cassettes taped later on, she went on to speak of how a miracle occurred with the watch and that initially they had gone out to search for their sheep.

Later on, she claimed that Our Lady stated that all faiths are equal. To what extent can we believe Mirjana?

6. Vicka Ivankovic is the main "seer" from the beginning, and through her the creator of Medjugorje. Fr. Tomislav Vlastic, OFM, has launched the main portion of falsehoods regarding Medjugorje. He presented himself to the Pope in a letter May 13, 1984 as follows: "I am Fr. Tomislav Vlastic, the one according to Divine Providence who guides the seers of Medjugorje."

It would have been better for him that he withdrew himself into the desert and that he remained silent, because his past speaks enough about him. Vicka spoke and wrote much, and in so doing she fell into many contradictions. Prof. Nikola Bulat, a member of the first Commission, questioned her and wrote a 60-page study on her. He numbered all the illogicalities and falsehoods of her diary. Here I will only mention the bloody handkerchief. Word spread around that there was a certain taxi driver who came across a man who was bloody all over. This man gave the taxi driver a bloodied handkerchief and he told him to: "Throw this in the river." The driver went on and then he came across a woman in black. She stopped him and asked him to give her a handkerchief. He gave her his own, but she said: "Not that one but the bloody handkerchief." He gave her the handkerchief she wanted and she then said: "If you had thrown it into the river the end of the world would have occurred now." Vicka Ivankovic wrote in her diary that they asked Our Lady if this event was true and she said that it was, and along with this, "That man covered with blood was my son Jesus, and I (Our Lady) was that woman in black."

What kind of theology is this? From this it appears that Jesus wants to destroy the world if a handkerchief is thrown into a river and it is Our Lady who saves the world!

7. On January 14, 1982, Vicka, Marija and little Jakov came to visit me. Vicka began to speak quite nervously because she was speaking falsehoods. She said: "Our Lady sent us to you to tell you that you are too harsh with the Franciscans..." In what way? "We don't know!" Two Franciscan chaplains in Mostar, Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina, whom the bishop sought to remove from Mostar because of disorder and disobedience towards the faithful of the newly established cathedral parish in Mostar, defended themselves before their superiors by saying that they would not leave Mostar because Our Lady, through Vicka, told them not to leave. This was mentioned to me by a member of the Franciscan Provincial council. I asked Vicka at our meeting: "Did Our Lady mention anything about the Mostar chaplains, Vego and Prusina?" "She did not, we don't know them," responded all three. Our conversation lasted 30 minutes and I taped all of it. I brought up the question of the chaplains of Mostar several times and they always responded: "We don't know them." Later on, I found from Vicka's diary that they knew the chaplains very well. It was clear to me that they were lying, yet I did not want to mention this to them in order to maintain their confidence during our conversations.

8. On April 4, 1982, Vicka and Jakov came to visit me "...sent by Our Lady." The chaplains of Mostar, Vego and Prusina were expelled from the Franciscan Order OFM in January of that year by the superiors of their Order. Many followers and "Our Lady" defended the expelled chaplains. During our conversation Vicka very excitedly began: "The last time we were with you we didn't tell you everything and for this reason Our Lady scolded us. We spoke of many things and therefore we forgot..." "What did you forget?" "Our Lady told us to tell you that those chaplains Vego and Prusina are priests and therefore they can celebrate Mass just as other priests." "Wait a minute. Did Our Lady tell you this before our last meeting?" "Yes, that's why she sent us to you. Last time I spoke of many other things and I forgot to mention this." During that previous meeting I asked her directly several times if Our Lady mentioned anything about the two chaplains. It was clear to me that Vicka was lying and this was proof enough for me not to trust her statements. Marija and Jakov also participated in this lie.

9. Towards the end of January 1983, Fr. Grafenauer, a Jesuit priest, came to me with the intention of searching out the phenomenon of Medjugorje. He listened to 20 cassettes and after having listened to them he said that he would not go to Medjugorje because he concluded that Our Lady is not there. Upon my insistence he went to Medjugorje and after a few days he came back as a “convert” of Fr. Vlasic. He brought some documents, threw them on the table and said: “Here’s what Our Lady wishes to tell you!” I understood this as a plot to overthrow the bishop with the help of Our Lady. The documents he brought were a compilation of Vicka’s diary, the parish chronicle and handwritten documents. For this reason it is difficult to establish where they were first written. Vicka and those who defend Medjugorje hid this from the bishop for more than a year. Here are a few quotes:

Dec. 19, 1981. “Our Lady said that the bishop is to blame for the disorder in Hercegovina. She also said that Fr. Ivica Vego is not to blame, yet that the bishop has all authority. Our Lady said that he (Vego) should remain in Mostar and not leave.

January 3, 1982. All the “seers” together asked Our Lady about Fr. Ivica Vego. Our Lady answered: “Ivica is innocent. If they expel him from the Franciscan Order, may he remain courageous ...Ivica is innocent.” Our Lady repeated this three times.

January 11, 1982. We asked again about the two chaplains of Mostar, and Our Lady repeated twice that which she mentioned earlier regarding them. Note: January 14, 1982 Vicka was at the Chancery office with the bishop and at that meeting she stated that she did not know Vego.

January 20, 1982. The children asked what Fr. Ivica Vego and Fr. Ivan Prusina were to do now that they had been expelled from the Order. Our Lady answered: “They are innocent. The bishop was harsh in his decision. They can stay.”

April 15, 1982. Vicka asked Our Lady a question. “Could you generally tell me everything about Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina?” Our Lady smiled at the first and then she said: “They are innocent.” She repeated twice that: “The bishop has made a mistake ...let them remain in Mostar ...they can say Mass sometimes but they should be careful to stay away from attention until things calm down. They have no faults...” April 16, 1982. Yesterday while we were with Our Lady we asked her if we could pray an Our Father for them (Vego and Prusina). She answered immediately: “Yes you can,” and she prayed with us. When we finished the prayer she smiled and said to me: “Those two are constantly on your mind.” I answered: “You’re right.”

April 26, 1982. Our Lady: “The bishop has no real love of God in his heart. Regarding the bishop, may Ivica and Ivan remain calm. What the bishop is doing is contrary to the will of God, yet he can do as he pleases, but one day justice such as you have never seen shall be revealed.”

10. Vicka never denied that Our Lady said these things or that she wrote these things down in her diary. The assurance and authenticity of this can be best confirmed by a cassette taped by Fr. Grafenauer during his talks with Vicka and Marija. He left taped copies of the cassette in the parish of Medjugorje, with the bishop and also with the Bishops’ Conference in Zagreb. The cassette should be heard!

A conversation with Vicka: “The bishop has the duty to judge whether or not this is Our Lady...” said Fr. Grafenauer.

Vicka: He can judge as he wants, but I know it’s Our Lady. Graf: The Church says of those who are confident in themselves, that this itself is a sign that Our Lady is not in question here.

Vicka: Let those who are doubtful remain doubtful, I’m not. Graf: This is not a good thing ...you once told the bishop that he should pay more attention to Our Lady than to the Pope.

Vicka: Yes I did. Graf: This means that the bishop should listen to you more than to the Pope.

Vicka: No, not me. Graf: But the bishop doesn’t know what the phenomenon is and perhaps it is not Our Lady.

Vicka: Yes it is Our Lady. Graf: You told the bishop that he is to blame and that those two (Vego and Prusina) are innocent and that they can perform their priestly duties.

Vicka: Yes I did. Graf: Can they hear confessions? Did Our Lady mention this?

Vicka: Yes. Graf: If Our Lady said this and the Pope says that they cannot...

Vicka: The Pope can say what he wants. I’m telling it as it is! Graf: See, this is how one can come to the conclusion that this is not Our Lady ...when the Pope says no, they cannot celebrate Mass, and they cannot hear confessions, and then on the other hand, Our Lady says they can do both, this cannot be!

Vicka: I know what is right (What Our Lady said). Graf: This cannot be true. I would put my hand into fire to testify that this is not Our Lady speaking. When a person has a greater gift there also exists a greater danger that the devil could be at work upon this person.

What a degrading humiliation of Our Lady! From these statements she is destroying obedience in the Church, obedience to the bishop, to the heads of the OFM Order, and to the Holy Father. She is defending Vego!

6. THE TRUTH ABOUT MEDJUGORJE: PART 2

11. The apparition in Cerno. Cerno is a village not far away from Medjugorje. The eighth day after the beginning of the apparitions in Medjugorje there was an “apparition” near Cerno. The “seers” told Fr. Jozo Zovko, the pastor of Medjugorje at the time, of this happening the evening of the event.

They mentioned that Our Lady said four or five times that she would appear three more days, that is, on July 1, 2, and 3. This was taped on cassette publicized by Fr. Ivo Sivric, OFM. The cassette was reproduced. A few years later Fr. Janko Bubalo published a book titled: *A Thousand Meetings with Our Lady*. This is a book of conversations with Vicka. Vicka does not mention

this event, therefore Fr. Bubalo asked whether or not Our Lady said “only three more days.” Vicka responded that she does not remember!

It is evident that Vicka is speaking falsehoods and that Our Lady cannot say that which Vicka is saying. Vicka is fabricating these statements. Should this remain unknown to the rest of the world? Evil (such as speaking falsehoods about Our Lady) must not be done in order to obtain a good (such as pilgrimages, prayers, etc.).

12. “Seer” Marija Pavolovic. Here is a written account of the taped conversation between Fr. Grafenauer and Marija:

Graf: Did Our Lady say that the bishop is to blame? Marija: Yes.

Graf: Did she say that Vego and Prusina were not to blame? Marija: Yes.

Graf: When Our Lady says that the bishop is to blame this immediately appears suspicious and we could conclude that ...this is not Our Lady speaking. The seers are apparently ...spreading word around that the bishop is to blame. Marija: Our Lady told us this.

Graf: This is causing revolt in Hercegovina and these are not good fruits. People will be angry with the bishop and will defame his reputation. How can Our Lady do such things? The Church knows ...well that Our Lady is good and that she would never do such ...things. Marija: Our Lady told us this.

Archbishop F. Franic, Laurentin and many others know all this, yet they remain silent. What kind of theology can accept these statements by Our Lady through the declarations of the “seers” that their Teacher, Pastor and Liturgist—the bishop, who has legally received his duty from Christ through the Church—has no love of God in his heart, that he is declared a sinner throughout the world, that he should convert and that prayers will be said in Medjugorje for this intention? There were even statements made that Jesus Himself would pray for the bishop so that the bishop would believe and then take better action in favor of the events in Medjugorje. To say that the bishop is to wait for Our Lady’s judgment is an absurdity. It is an offense against Our Lady the Mother of the Church. God knows that I am not without sin, and that Our Lady could criticize me, yet God alone is the judge. I have never been reprimanded or warned by the Holy See for my episcopal service.

13. The creator of Medjugorje, Fr. Tomislav Vlasic, amongst other things has published and distributed in many languages a seventeen page booklet titled: *A Calling in the Marian Year*, Milano, March 25, 1988. This regards the founding of a prayer group for young men and women (from Medjugorje) who would live together at Parma in Italy, something which has been unheard of in the history of the Church. They would be the ones who would save the world. Our Lady apparently gave Fr. Vlasic and Agnes Heupel (a German woman supposedly healed in Medjugorje) the inspiration to establish and to lead this community together in a manner similar to Sts. Francis and Clare, as described by Vlasic. In order for this action to succeed, Fr. Vlasic asked Marija to add “her witnessing” on three pages. She is a member of this community and on April 21, 1988 she wrote: “*Sento il bisogno...*”—I feel the need ...As can be concluded, Our Lady

has given a set program to this community of the “Queen of Peace” and she leads this community through Fr. Vlastic and Agnes who give messages to the community. “I have been in the community for a month and a half. I have apparitions and Our Lady leads me in the mystery of suffering which is the foundation of this community. I must write down everything and publish this once Our Lady tells me to. I have understood God’s plan which he began through Mary in the parish of Medjugorje.” This quote is taken from pages 15 and 16 of Fr. T. Vlastic’s text.

The defenders of Medjugorje quickly understood that this community of young men and women living, sleeping, working and praying together in the same house would eventually destroy themselves and Medjugorje. Therefore, they sent their Provincial, Fr. Jozo Vasilj to Parma. He went together with the Bishop of Parma, Bishop B. Cochi and Fr. T. Vlastic to the Congregation in Rome. They were told there that the Church cannot allow such a community to exist and then Fr. T. Vlastic was ordered to dissolve the community and to return to Hercegovina. Vlastic did not obey immediately, yet he returned later. This is what was explained to me by Fr. Jozo Vasilj regarding the community.

14. The same Marija Pavolovic made another public declaration on July 11, 1988. On a single sheet of paper distributed in the same manner as the statement of April 21, 1988 (referred to in paragraph 13). In this statement she retracted her claim that Our Lady has given her approval to the Vlastic/Heupel community in Parma. She explained that Fr. Vlastic had pressurized her into making this statement which did not correspond to the truth. (The full text of this statement is provided in Section 4.)

15. Marija does not deny that she made her first statement. Fr. T. Vlastic sought statements from her many times and this obviously turns out to be manipulating one of the “seers”. So we can conclude that Marija has consciously spoken falsehoods on the first or second occasion. She has lied and this she attributes to Our Lady. It is evident that she (Marija) is a toy in Fr. Vlastic’s hands. This was clear to me even earlier, yet up till now I didn’t have material proof to back this up. Fr. T. Vlastic has manipulated all the “seers” in the same fashion. Under this type of manipulation Marija saw how Our Lady cried when someone mentioned the bishop at a prayer meeting: “From Our Lady’s eye flowed forth a great tear. The tear ran down her face and disappeared into a cloud under her feet. Our Lady began to cry and she ascended to Heaven crying” (August 22, 1984). An obvious fabrication by Fr. T. Vlastic intended to frighten the bishop.

Why don’t the defenders of Medjugorje mention these two statements of Marija? Must these “ugly” things be hidden from the world because there are many “conversions” in Medjugorje? Laurentin writes in his book *Dernieres Nouvelles 3*, on page 27, that a certain monsignor asked Marija to pray for a message from Our Lady for his priest. Marija answered: “Our Lady said that they should read Laurentin’s book and spread it around!”

It is a terrible sin to attribute one’s own lies to Our Lady. When the world learns of this, who will believe them anymore? They have been discredited. No one can destroy this material evidence. It will be reproduced and spread by word of mouth. I know well that there are many who disregard such material. They accept the events of Medjugorje irrationally, with great emotion and with

personal interests. They are blind, but these documents will remain a part of the history of the Church and of Mariology.

16. The “seer” Ivan Dragicevic. Regarding the “great sign”, Vicka mentions this 13 times in the diaries, it is mentioned 14 times in the Parish chronicle, 52 times on the cassettes, and on numerous occasions in talks with the bishop. In the spring of 1982, I asked the “seers” to write everything they knew about the sign without making the “secret” public. The way I suggested they do it was to write down information on paper in duplicate. Then this would be sealed in an envelope and a copy would remain with them, and one with the bishop.

When the “sign” occurs, then we would open the envelopes and see whether or not the “sign” was predicted. Fr. Tomislav Vlastic, pastor of Medjugorje at the time, told the “seers” to say that Our Lady said not to write anything down for anybody, and so they didn’t. Ivan Dragicevic was in the Franciscan minor seminary at Visoko, Bosnia at that time and he wasn’t informed of this on time. Two members of the first Commission, Dr. M. Zovkic and Dr. Z. Puljic (now bishop of Dubrovnik), went to visit Ivan in Visoko. They gave him a sheet of paper which was somewhat greenish in color with questions typed out on it. Ivan wrote down the content of the “sign”, dated the document and signed it in their presence without a word or any sign of fear. A few years later, Laurentin wrote that Ivan told him personally that he wrote absolutely nothing down on that sheet of paper and that he tricked the two members of the Commission. On March 7, 1985, three members of the Commission went to ask Ivan if what Laurentin writes is true. Ivan said it was true and that they could freely go ahead and open the envelope in the Chancery office because in it they will only find a white sheet of paper. They came back to Mostar where the Commission was having a meeting and before all the members, they opened the envelope. In the envelope on a greenish sheet of paper they found written the content of the sign: Our Lady said that she would leave a sign. The content of this sign I reveal to your trust. The sign is that there will be a great shrine in Medjugorje in honor of my apparitions, a shrine to my image. When will this occur? The sign will occur in June.”

Dated: May 9, 1982. Seer: Ivan Dragicevic

After having heard this lie, the members of the first Commission wanted to end all further work, yet they stayed on. Within a few days of this event Fr. Slavko Barbaric, OFM, took the “seers” somewhere and instructed them all, including Ivan, to write a declaration that Ivan did not disclose the sign!

Ivan sent messages from Our Lady to the bishop. On April 24, 1984 Our Lady said the following regarding the bishop:

“My Son Jesus is praying for him so that he (the bishop) would believe and therefore take better action in favor of Medjugorje.” She added: “How would he react if my Son were to appear on earth? Would he then believe?”

Regarding the Commission, Our Lady says only the following: “Pray, pray, pray! Think over and live the messages I have given and you will see why I have come.”

Ivan Dragicevic, Medjugorje

17. "Tell the bishop that I seek a quick conversion from him towards the happenings in Medjugorje before it is too late. May he accept these events with plenty of love, understanding and great responsibility. I want him to avoid creating conflicts between priests and to stop publicizing their negative behavior. The Holy Father has given all bishops the duty to fulfill certain tasks in their respective dioceses. Among these, the parishes in Hercegovina. For this reason I seek his conversion towards these events. I am sending my second-last warning. If what I seek does not come about, my judgment and the judgment of my Son await the bishop. This means that he has not found the way to my Son Jesus." Our Lady told me to give you this message. With greetings, Bijakovic, June 21, 1983

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic brought this document to me, which he more than likely wrote himself in a moment of exaltation.

18. Ivan kept his own diary of the apparitions for a couple of years. This has not been made public as Vicka's has not, nor the writings of the others. These are original fonts of the events, yet they are full of naive statements, clear falsehoods and absurdities. They are good proof of the fact that the "seers" do not see Our Lady or receive messages from her. These messages were written by someone else and they were given to Ivan for him to sign as his own. When Fr. Grafenauer brought excerpts from Vicka's diary to me, I later on asked Vicka to bring her diary to me. She wrote to me on May 7, 1983: "I have found out that excerpts from my diary are being distributed ..." This was a very important point which the Commission accepted as good argument that the diary was written by Vicka herself or that she considered it her own. Later on, Fr. T. Vlasic also came to this conclusion, and therefore in 1984, he declared before the Commission and myself, that Vicka did not write that letter to me but rather, that a Franciscan did (probably Vlasic himself) and that he gave it to her to sign! There are many similar examples of manipulation, but none have such clear cut evidence as this.

19. Secrets and secrecy. From the beginning of the "apparitions", in order to evade the detection of discrepancies in their accounts, the "seers" have obviously been instructed to claim that "Our Lady" speaks differently to each of them. When the "secrets" were fabricated, each was to have his/her own (60 in total) and no one was to reveal them to anyone. Mirjana and Ivanka received a letter from Our Lady which nobody was to read. In the beginning there were no moments of ecstasy nor avoiding the community. They admitted that they were consulted, they asked "Our Lady" if they could write down the content of the "great sign" on paper and seal it in an envelope. "Our Lady" responded: "NO!" Ivan though, wrote down the sign and later on he said (which has been taped as well) that "Our Lady" did not scold him for doing this. The secrets were to be given to a priest (a Franciscan). Why were they not given to the Commission, the bishop, or to the Pope? In the first months they often said that the "great sign" would come: very soon, quickly, and so on ...When the first year ended, they changed their tone. Vicka wrote "Our Lady's life," for a year and a half, and this is a great secret which shall be published "when Our Lady permits." The Commission asked for this diary about Our Lady, yet "Our Lady" did not comply with their demand. Can the Commission just see the diary without taking it or opening it? No, it cannot! This turns out to be a plot to make fools out of all those who are naive enough to wait for this sign until the end of the world. I have already declared earlier, and now I repeat

the same declaration, that if Our Lady leaves a sign which the “seers” are speaking of, I’ll make a pilgrimage from Mostar to Medjugorje (30 km) on my knees and beg the Franciscans and the “seers” for forgiveness.

20. Slander against the bishop. “The bishop also believed in the beginning.” This is not true! While the communists were persecuting the Franciscans, the “seers” and pilgrims, I defended all of them and therefore I did not change my mind “because of threats by the Republic commission or because the diocesan priests sought this from me.” This is simply fabricated slander by many. While I was publicly defending the imprisoned Franciscans, Fr. Jozo Zovko said during the investigations that the bishop is a “wolf and a “hypocrite”. These are the exact words written down in his sentence. Zovko’s lawyer, N.N. asked through a colleague what I had done to Zovko to deserve such heavy accusations. Fr. T. Vlastic often put “Our Lady’s” words into the mouths of the “seers”, such as “Our Lady’s” affirmation that Satan (in this case the bishop) is out to destroy her plan. He wrote this more clearly in a letter to friends in the Vatican. I complained about this accusation—that he had called the bishop Satan, in front of Vlastic and his Provincial. He did not deny my objection but rather, he justified his words by saying that he wrote this while under the influence of extreme emotion. A person can say something while under emotion, but this cannot be written down and translated into foreign languages.

7. THE TRUTH ABOUT MEDJUGORJE: PART 3

21. By their fruits. The most common argument of the defenders of Medjugorje is that the fruits of the events in Medjugorje prove that Our Lady is appearing there. Those who know a little more than the pilgrims who come to Medjugorje say: The fruits of the staunchest defenders of Medjugorje show that they themselves do not believe in the apparitions. If all the “ugly things” could be made public then surely the answer would be clearly negative to everyone.

Yet, Laurentin, Rupcic, Valsic, Barbaric and others meticulously hide the truth. If the defenders of Medjugorje come across someone who is skeptical of the apparitions, they quickly isolate this person, accuse him of something or declare him mad (J.L. Martin). The majority of the pious public has naively fallen victim to the great propaganda, the talk of the apparitions and of healings. These people themselves have become the greatest propaganda for the events. They do not even stop to think that the truth has been hidden by deliberate falsehoods. They are unaware that not even one miraculous healing has occurred that could have been verified by competent experts and institutions such as the “Bureau Medical de Lourdes”. No one knows of any healed from Hercegovina. Everyone knows that little Daniel, old Jozo Vasilj, Venka Brajic and others cited in the first books about Medjugorje were not healed.

22. Promises of healings are characteristic of the events. When they don’t occur as promised, then they are denied because they were never taped or written down on paper. There have been many promises that have ended tragically. What interests us is whether or not “Our Lady” is giving these promises, or whether or not they are thought up by the “seers”.

The tragic end of Marko Blazevic as described by the retired archbishop of Belgrade, Archbishop Turk, says much regarding “promises” of healing. The archbishop writes May 22, 1984, that he was received as a patient of the Cardiology clinic at the Belgrade hospital. The

archbishop was given the bed that was previously occupied by Marko Blazevic of Buna, near Mostar, who was to go in for an operation. Mr. Blazevic told the archbishop and many other patients, doctors and hospital staff that Our Lady had promised, through the “seers”, that the operation would succeed. A nun who assisted in the operation room, wrote to me later that Blazevic’s wife and his daughter spoke to her with a fanatical type of faith in “Our Lady’s promise.” A certain doctor was also convinced in this promise. The patient did not wake up after the operation. During the operation, a group of patients prayed fervently outside the doors of the operating room. Many spoke of this incident which left many very disappointed and ashamed before people of other faiths and atheists. Fr. T. Vlastic, in his typical fashion of hiding the truth, succeeded in convincing the daughter of the late Mr. Blazevic to go to the bishop to tell him that Our Lady only told them to pray, not that she promised them that the operation would succeed. I told her not to make a liar out of her late father or liars of the others to whom he spoke.

23. The Franciscan and diocesan clergy. The relations between the Franciscan and diocesan clergy regarding pastoral duties in the parishes of Hercegovina were established by a Decision of the Holy See in 1899 by the suggestions of the Franciscans themselves and then Bishop Paskal Buconjic, OFM. According to this Decision the parishes were to be divided equally into two groups of 50% of the faithful between the clergy. Since there were no diocesan clergy at the time, the parishes that rightfully belonged to them were, in 1923, left to the Franciscans *ad nutum S. Sedes*. Bishop Cule, the first diocesan bishop of Mostar, in 1948 was sentenced to 11 years and 6 months in jail. He served eight and a half years of this sentence before being released. After his jail term the number of diocesan clergy began to rise. In 1968, the Holy See ordered the Franciscans to hand over five parishes to the diocesan clergy. They barely gave two parishes. In 1975 after many years of talks and consultations a Decree of the Holy See was issued regarding the division of parishes in Hercegovina. The Franciscans publicly and collectively denounced this Decree even though they administer to over 80% of the faithful in the diocese of Mostar. In 1976, due to disobedience, the hierarchy of the Franciscan Province along with then Provincial Silic, lost their authority and since then, the Province has been without its independence, and the General of the Order rules directly over the Province *ad instar*. Another penalty was that in 1979, the Franciscans from Hercegovina were not allowed to participate in the election of the General. The first point mentioned by the new General of the Order to his brothers in Hercegovina was: “the development or creation of obedience to, and cooperation with the bishop in Hercegovina.” Disobedience prevails today as before, and “Our Lady” from the beginning has been defending disobedient Franciscans. Vicka writes in her diary of the apparitions, that Our Lady said that the bishop is to blame for all the disorder in Hercegovina (see no. 9). This is repeated many times. The Franciscans themselves are divided. The Franciscan opposition that defends Medjugorje succeeded in toppling their own *ad instar* superiors who had developed good relations with the bishop, and they installed a group that defends Medjugorje. The new Provincial *ad instar*, Fr. Jozo Vasilj, did not succeed in creating peace and order amongst his brothers so he escaped to the missions in Zaire and won’t come back! (Fruits?) He has been replaced by the Vice Provincial and the General has called for obedience from all or else the Province shall be abolished. “It is time that everyone take their own personal responsibility before judicial sanctions are made or the Province is abolished” (*Acta Ordinis F.M.* fasc. 1/89). The Province will not receive its own hierarchy until the Decree is completed. Three visitors of the OFM Order who came to the Province in 1988, said that there

is not one Franciscan in the Province who is in favor of completing the Decree. This opinion is exaggerated yet still important.

24. This is only a portion of the “good fruits” of the events. The pilgrims, though, only know that the bishop “hates the Franciscans.” There are a good number of Franciscans in the Province who cooperate well with the bishop and these Franciscans do not believe in the apparitions either. Some of them have never set foot in Medjugorje.

A number of good Franciscans have begged me to write something so that, together, we could start a battle against the lies of Medjugorje, because they believe that “God will punish us Franciscans severely because we have spread lies and falsehoods throughout the world and made money from them.”

Of the one hundred diocesan priests in the dioceses of Hercegovina, not one believes in the apparitions. Of the 42 bishops of Yugoslavia (ordinaries, auxiliaries and retired), only one has been outspoken in declaring his belief and has defended the events. Of the 15 members of the first Commission, which was formed by the Bishop of Mostar with the help of the bishops and provincials from Yugoslavia, 11 of the members said that there is nothing supernatural in the events of Medjugorje, 2 (Franciscans) claimed that the apparitions are authentic, 1 member said that there was something *in nucleo* (in the beginning) and 1 abstained. Contrary to what has been spread by the defenders of Medjugorje, the Holy See has never asked for, seen, or passed a judgment on the three year work of the Commission. Neither did the Holy See abandon the bishop.

25. From the beginning of the events I warned the Franciscans that they must wait for the judgment of the Church, so that together we can search for the truth. The leaders of the events though, had as their aim to bring the masses as soon as possible to Medjugorje, obtain a lot of money for propaganda and use Our Lady for their battle against the bishop. They fabricated miracles regarding the sun. Many pilgrims damaged their eyes from staring into the sun. They cited 50, 150, 200 and 300 healings and they spoke of all sorts of things seeing that the faithful believed everything they said, especially when Archbishop F. Franic and Laurentin were there to back them up. The faithful in Medjugorje look upon the events as they are instructed, as is the case in all other places of apparitions be they true or false. The marveling and excitement here has been regarded at times as leading to great blindness and fanaticism.

26. The Italians know well the “story” of Gigliola Ebe Giorgini, the foundress of the false order of “Pia Opera di Gesu Misericordioso.” Separated and remarried civilly, she spent time doing quackery. She gathered young women for her order and she received and earned great amounts of money. She had two priests in her service and many houses. She led a double life and had false stigmata which she made herself. Her “sisters” followed her fanatically and they called her Mamma Ebe. She had male vocations as well, but some who left her later on declared that she led an immoral life. She had many jewels and gold, two yachts, 32 furs, etc. Many in the Church objected to her way of life, while others fanatically defended her, citing good fruits. She even received praise from two bishops. Twice during the night police raided her room in the mother house and they found her in bed with one of her seminarians. A scandal broke out and she was sentenced twice to many years in prison along with a Franciscan who was her confessor. The

press wrote for years about this scandal. An illicit film was made as well, yet her followers fanatically and blindly defended her even when the order fell apart. According to them, she was a Saint who attracted many vocations and this was argument enough for many that from the “fruits” she was obviously inspired by God! Religious blindness is extremely hard to cure. Fanaticism brought the beginning of the heresies in the Church, today it is the foundation of sects.

The Protestant pastor Rev. Jim Jones developed a great charitable organization in southern Chicago and he gathered great sums of money and many fanatical followers of his sect. In order to be freer in their work, about 1000 of them went to Guyana. South America where they established “Jonestown” as their new home. They established a dictatorship and fanatical obedience to their “Messiah”. Much was written about terrible things that went on. about the immorality of Jones and how some tried to escape the community but were caught and killed. Then they were without money. Rumors spread that the American army would intervene, so Jones ordered them to retreat to the jungle. Seeing no way out, he called on everyone to give up their lives in order to travel to eternity. Over 900 of them came with cups to a huge pot in order to drink poison and then fall dead. What gave them the strength to commit suicide? Fanaticism! Yet when the Christian faithful hear of apparitions and miracles they easily accept these events as facts without being at all critical of the events. They are then caught up in their blindness and fanaticism. Whatever is spoken is believed automatically, such as, that ordinary rosaries in Medjugorje turn to gold! And people actually believe this!

27. This blindness towards the events in Medjugorje has also caught some priests and bishops. Many priests from Italy, (such as Amorth, Restrelli and others), easily could have heard that the bishop, the Commission, the bishops of Yugoslavia, a portion of the Franciscans and all the diocesan priests do not believe in the events. Yet, they avoided the truth, even though I received everyone who inquired about the events and gave them my time. I’m particularly surprised at the lack of collegiality by some bishops. Nobody has to accept my judgment, but everyone is obligated by conscience to study well the events of Medjugorje before taking a position, especially if that person has a position of authority in the Church, as bishops do.

What have they done to you Our Lady! For nine years they have been dragging you along as a tourist attraction. They have been speaking with you whenever it pleased them, as if you were a bank teller. They have fabricated messages, and they say that you come and appear there, but beyond their own arguments they have nothing to prove that what they say is true. The whole world is in expectation of a “great sign” and the naive still wait and believe. Unfortunately this false sensation will bring great disgrace and scandal upon the Church. Those who lead the events are not converting even though the threat of the abolition of the Province by the General hangs over them.

This is only a small compilation of that which I would like to write about. I hope that I will have the opportunity to expand further, with precise documentation and publish a book on these events.

28. There are many prayers and pious activities in Medjugorje. Some say that there have been conversions as well. I have received indeed many truly touching letters, and I feel sorry for those

who will sooner or later be disappointed. But there has also been fanaticism, superstition and misinformation in the events of Medjugorje. I have also received many rude accusations in the mail which I cannot mention, all in the name of the “Queen of Peace”. That which is positive in these events cannot justify the falsehoods and lies that have been spread in order to win the world over for God. Jesus said: “I have come into the world to give witness to the truth” (Jn 18:37). The Church would easily be able to attract the masses if it dropped the sixth commandment, if divorce were allowed, if it let everyone believe and do what they wanted. But, Jesus died on the Cross for the truth, and the Martyrs gave up their lives for the truth. St. Paul writes to his faithful: “If anyone preaches to you a gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:9). Today, many prayer groups all over the world pray from Fr. Ivica Vego’s prayer book and meditate over the supposed messages of Our Lady as if these things were more important than the Bible and the teaching Magisterium of the Church. I do believe despite these events, that Our Lady shall beg the necessary graces for the Church in order for it to live Christ’s truth.

I know that there will probably be many sincerely pious souls that will misunderstand me and consider me an enemy of Our Lady. I have been to Lourdes many times and to other shrines of apparitions that the Church has recognized. What I am doing is defending the truth, defending the Church, and I pray to God that I be able to give up my life for this.

29. Those who have written about Medjugorje have sold their books well and have made great profits. Unfortunately, those who have written critically, haven’t fared as well because they have come across an organized boycott. For the other side of the story, people should read:

Sivric, Dr. Ivo, OFM. (A Franciscan born in Medjugorje and now living in St. Louis, MO, USA), *La Face Cachee de Medjugorje*, tome I, 1988, p. 400 (Edizione Francese), Editions Psilog, C. p. 300, St-Francois-du-Lac, Quebec, Canada JOC IMO. Tel. (514)568-3036. Idem, *The Hidden Side of Medjugorje*, Vol. I, 1989. Ed. Psilog, St-Francois-du-Lac, Quebec (English version).

Gramaglia, PA. *L’Equivoco di Medjugorje: Apparizioni Mariane o Fenomeni di Medianita?* Claudiana, Toronto, Canada, 1987, pp. 172.

Jones, E.M., *Medjugorje: The Untold Story*, South Bend, IN, 1994, pp. 144.

Pavao Zanic
Bishop of Mostar

8. THE IRISH BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE STATEMENT, 1990, AND THE BISHOPS ‘LEAKED RULING’ ON THE YUGOSLAV SHRINE

The Irish Bishops’ Conference, June 13, 1990

The Irish Bishops' Conference issued a 5 point statement on the subject of Medjugorje. Point 4 stated "Until the Church gives its decision no one is entitled, on behalf of the Church, to presume a favorable judgment regarding the apparitions in Medjugorje. That is why the Church does not approve pilgrimages and other manifestations organized on the presumption that a supernatural character can be attributed to the facts of Medjugorje."

"Bishops 'Leaked Ruling on Yugoslav Shrine"

Under this headline the *Universe* of January 13, 1991 carried the following report from Rome by their correspondent Ronald Singleton.

The Yugoslavian Bishops' Conference, according to a leaked report, has concluded that there is nothing supernatural about the phenomena at the Marian Shrine of Medjugorje.

The bishops have allegedly decided that the sanctuary, visited by more than 10 million pilgrims since 1981, "has no revelation to offer." They are said to have urged help to be given to Bishop Pavao Zanic of Mostar, the diocese which embraces Medjugorje, in dealing with the phenomena.

The Yugoslav Episcopal Conference prepared a report for the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which its Prefect, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, the Church's chief Moral Watchdog, had already studied.

The bishops held a special session at the end of November in Zagreb to discuss the developments in Medjugorje.

At the start of the meeting the bishops said they were going to hear evidence and, if necessary, publish pastoral directives. But after the meeting they decided against issuing any statement.

Rome's impeccable news agency ASCA made the claims from what it says is a leaked report, which has been published by leading newspapers. Milan's daily *Avenire* linked to the Italian Episcopal Conference, has given the report a prominent position.

There has so far been no official Vatican response to the ASCA report and no official comment from the Doctrine Congregation. However a spokesman said: "The report can be considered to be a 'leak in information, an 'indiscretion', a portion of the bishops' report lifted from the whole.

It is unlikely that there will be Vatican comment, and, eventually, its public ruling on the Medjugorje shrine may simply be to announce that it has taken note of what the Yugoslavian Bishops have concluded.

The Zagreb November conference was attended by representatives of the 23 dioceses. Reportedly, 19 bishops approved the findings, with one abstention, and three absentees' votes uncast.

The allegedly leaked report published in Italian newspapers reads:

The bishops have followed events at Medjugorje in contact with the local bishop, the local diocesan commission, and the special commission of the conference. On the basis of research, it cannot be affirmed that the events are supernatural apparitions or revelations.

In the meantime the constant gathering at Medjugorje of faithful from all parts of the world, and urged by motives of faith, requires the attention and care of the bishops.

Therefore our conference, in the spirit of ecclesiastical communion, is disposed to help the resident bishop to organize pastoral work in Medjugorje in favor of a correct liturgical pastoral activity, thereby to forestall and impede phenomena not conforming to the spirit of the Church.

9. ROME STUDIES THE NEW REPORT AND THE MEDJUGORJE INDUSTRY

Rome Studies New Medjugorje Report

This was the heading of a report in the Catholic Herald of January 25, 1991, from their correspondent Viviane Hewitt in Rome, with the additional information that “The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is now said to have imposed a ban on further information on the issue of Medjugorje ...The report coincides with a new campaign by some Italian bishops against pilgrimages to Medjugorje, pending a Vatican ruling.”

The Medjugorje Industry

In a letter to Fr. Hugh Thwaites, dated August 17, 1987, Bishop Zanic stated bluntly that Our Lady does not appear at Medjugorje, that there are no miracles, and that the “messages” cannot come from Our Lady: “They are the fruit of a fabrication, fraud, and disobedience to the Church. It is about big money and personal interest too.” When he wrote this letter in 1987 the good bishop can scarcely have imagined the extent to which what can only be described as the Medjugorje industry would expand by 1993. It must now be considered primarily as a multi-million dollar business operation, particularly in the United States.

The amount of money made by travel operators would be impossible to calculate. Many of the so-called Medjugorje centers are, in reality, quasi travel agencies. Section 3 describes the manner in which a certain Terry Colafrancesco paid for Marija Pavlovic to bring her brother to Birmingham, Alabama for a kidney transplant in 1989. In 1986 he had founded an organization named Caritas to promote the Medjugorje messages. Colafrancesco will have been pleased but not surprised when Pavlovic agreed obligingly to help her benefactor by having a vision on Thanksgiving Day of that year in the field that he had bought for \$400,000, and on precisely the day that he had announced in advance. Since then Colafrancesco has not looked back.

Sacrificial Giving

Colafrancesco's organization Caritas has expanded considerably, and in 1993 he was appealing for more than one and a half million dollars to build a "Medjugorje Tabernacle". On page 15 of his May-June Newsletter, which has a circulation of 150,000, he described the proposed tabernacle as follows:

The "Tabernacle of Our Lady's Messages" is a 32,000 square-foot building that will house the six different ministries at Caritas. It will have three floors, all dedicated 100 percent to Our Lady of Medjugorje. Through this tabernacle will flow the messages of Our Lady through the printing, producing and shipping of newsletters, tapes, booklets, textbooks, flyers, researching the messages and researching history, etc., all over the United States as well as into sixty-five foreign countries.

In order to build his tabernacle Mr. Colafrancesco would like \$1,600,000. He requests his readers to "pray to the Holy Spirit" before reading his fundraising "pitch", which bears an uncanny, or perhaps not so uncanny, resemblance to techniques employed by Protestant T.V. evangelists who spread a gospel composed almost entirely of admonitions to make sacrificial donations. Mr. Colafrancesco warned his readers that the building of the tabernacle would be "in jeopardy" unless many of them were moved to help. Those who might be in doubt about donating are told to pray to Our Lady as he has heard from many people who "after prayer felt Our Lady urging them to do so." Satan, it would appear, would do anything to persuade Catholics not to donate to the tabernacle. "We know times are difficult for many of you, but they are going to get more difficult and Our Lady's plan is what will reverse that in the long run. We are at a point in construction where decisions have to be made to proceed to the next steps and we need your response immediately. The people of this nation and the world need the security of Our Lady, not savings." The alleged tens of thousands of messages of Our Lady which are to be housed in Mr. Colafrancesco's tabernacle are almost invariably truisms of such utter banality that any ten-year old could compose them:

Dear children, today I invite you to live in humility all the messages which I am giving you. Do not become arrogant, living the messages and saying, "I am living the messages. If you shall bear and live the messages in your heart, everyone will feel it so that words, which serve those who do not obey, will not be necessary. For you, dear children, it is necessary to live and witness by your lives. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Dear children. Thank you for dedicating all your hard work to God even now when He is testing you through the grapes you are picking. Be assured dear children, that He loves you and therefore He tests you. You just always offer up all your burdens to God and do not be anxious. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Can one seriously imagine the Mother of God appearing on earth four to six times a day if she has nothing more profound than this to say?

Celestial Book Reviews

Mr. Colafrancesco sells the first two volumes of the *Poem of the Man God* at \$35.00 dollars each. It would appear that sales had been adversely affected by Cardinal Ratzinger's admonition that the book should not be read. Mr. Colafrancesco consulted Marija Pavlovic whom he describes as "a close personal friend." Miss Pavlovic demonstrated her friendship yet again with a promptness equal to that she had displayed in arranging the Thanksgiving Day apparition for her benefactor. Miss Pavlovic used her direct line to Heaven to consult Our Lady concerning the book, and was assured that we are free to read it. I understand that her actual words were: "It makes for good reading." Mr. Colafrancesco assures us that there is "no question that she spoke to Our Lady". As is proved conclusively in Section 4, Pavlovic is a self-confessed liar.

"Remarkable Things" and "Miracles"

Mr. Colafrancesco claims that Our Lady speaks directly to his Caritas community through her daily messages. Each morning they read a randomly chosen message which results in "remarkable things" such as the following "remarkable thing" which concerned a retreat for children in "the Field" (note the upper case "F"):

An area Catholic grade school had planned a retreat day at Caritas and the Field (the site of Our Lady's apparition to visionary Marija Pavlovic in November 1988). Several hundred children from kindergarten through the eighth grade joined the Caritas community and staff for our daily rosary as well as assisting at a Mass they had planned for the Field. That day at morning prayer, before the students arrived, we opened up the following message: April 29, 1983—
Concerning a group of young people as they leave for their pilgrimage: "I wish that you pray throughout your trip and that you glorify God. There you will be able to meet other young people. Convey the messages which I have given you. Do not hesitate to speak to them about it."

Not only does the Caritas community experience "remarkable things", but cites what it claims are "miracles" at Medjugorje. An account of a "Eucharistic Miracle" appeared in the May-June 1993 Newsletter. A non-Catholic lady accompanied a Caritas from Birmingham pilgrimage to Medjugorje. Pilgrimages to Medjugorje have, of course, been forbidden by the Bishop, the lawful authority in the diocese, and so every organized pilgrimage there constitutes an act of disobedience to lawful authority. This Protestant lady was annoyed that she could not receive Holy Communion. Non-Catholics are permitted to receive Catholic Holy Communion only on very rare occasions with specific permission after a number of stringent conditions have been fulfilled. But, it would appear, Our Lady was more concerned at the displeasure of the Protestant than with adherence to the law of the Church, and so she arranged for the lady to receive Communion in circumstances which Mr. Colafrancesco describes as miraculous:

When distribution for Communion came, the first priest off the altar came toward the group leader. He and the others around him expected to be given the Eucharist, but instead the priest walked through the crowd which opened up. The leader, as well as the group, watched stunned as everyone was passed by while the

priest walked directly to the spot where the woman was sitting in the pew. He held up the Eucharist for her to receive. The leader and the group and she herself stared in disbelief at what they were seeing. Though it was but a moment, it seemed the hesitation lasted for minutes. While she sat there and Jesus in the Eucharist was held up before her, she hesitated at first, not being sure, then willfully (sic) received Him. Everyone around her who was not weeping were (sic) fighting back their (sic) tears because all knew the priest could not have seen her until he was before her, much less known that she was not a Catholic. Only a few months later, the pilgrim who did not want to become a Catholic, received the Holy Eucharist a second time as a new Catholic.

Millions are Deluded

What is most alarming about the Medjugorje phenomenon is the number of Catholics who have been deluded into believing it. It would be a serious matter if a few thousand or even a few hundred Catholics were wasting their time and their money, and giving their credence and their cash to a fraud that detracts from the dignity of Our Lady, presenting her as possibly the most garrulous woman in history. But millions of people have now visited Medjugorje and are now supporting the ever-expanding Medjugorje industry. Every month *Twin Circle* and the *National Catholic Register* publish what amounts to a Medjugorje color supplement with a monthly message such as the following for August 1993:

Dear Children,

I want you to understand that I am your Mother, that I want to help you, can call you to prayer. Only by prayer can you understand and accept my messages and practice them in your life. Read Sacred Scripture, live it and pray to understand the signs of the time. This is a special time, therefore I am with you to draw you close to my heart and the heart of my Son, Jesus. Dear little children, I want you to be the children of the light and not of the darkness. Therefore live what I am telling you. Thank you for having responded to my call.

This particular issue listed no less than 177 Medjugorje Centers throughout the U.S.A. which included, of course, Caritas of Birmingham together with Medjugorje Information Centers, Peace Centers, Resource Centers, Message Centers, Ventures, Centers for Love, Centers for Peace (many of these), Messengers of Peace, Queen of Peace, Hearts for Peace, Pilgrims for Peace Video Ministry, Mary's Touch by Mail, Friends, Coalitions, and Book Centers. There is no little irony in the fact that the area in Bosnia where Our Lady is alleged to have appeared with the title of "Queen of Peace" is a center of one of the most vicious wars of this century, of which she gave not the least warning in tens of thousands of messages.

There are now many Medjugorje newsletters serving the needs of the industry, including the Medjugorje News which is circulated throughout Canada. It reports in its issue number 5 in 1993 that 20,000 people came to hear the "seer" Ivan when he came to Marmora in Ontario, where Our Lady is also alleged to appear to children and adults of various ethnic backgrounds, including a member of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. It is claimed that Angels and deceased

members of families appear there and converse! The literature which circulates among Medjugorje devotees lists literally hundreds of apparitions of Our Lady allegedly taking place throughout the world, including twenty-five in Ireland alone. News of every new apparition is greeted with uncritical enthusiasm by many thousands of devotees. One can only say that whatever all this represents it is not Catholicism.

The appearance of Ivan in Ontario indicates the current policy of the Medjugorje “seers”, *i.e.*, that due to the war in Bosnia the people cannot come to the seers, the seers will come to the people. One can refer with complete accuracy to a Medjugorje “road-show”. It has even reached Kent, the county in England where I live. The Autumn 1993 issue of *The Children of Medjugorje* (published in Scotland) recounts the appearance of Ivan at “The Medjugorje Ecumenical Day of Prayer” on August 28, 1993 at the Carmelite Priory at Aylesford in Kent. The customers came expecting an apparition, and:

The mother of Jesus appeared in “an indescribable light, wearing a grey dress with a white veil over her dark hair”, according to the visionary, 27 year old Ivan Dragicevic. Her eyes are blue and she has rosy cheeks, he told the gathering of 5,000 Christians. Ivan said that Mary “was joyful and prayed over all of us with outstretched hands. She blessed us all.” He added that, “She then prayed for peace in a special way for a long time.” The Virgin gave no special message having given one for the world only three days before in Medjugorje. She simply said, “Go in peace, my dear children”, before departing in the light of a shining cross.

Ivan’s script could well have been written by Walt Disney! The report was accompanied by a picture of Ivan wearing pajamas and kneeling by a radiator looking extremely pious. The message given at Medjugorje on March 25, 1993, to which Ivan referred, reads as follows:

Dear Children, I want you to understand that I am your Mother, that I want to help you and call you to prayer. Only by prayer can you understand and accept my messages and practice them in your life.

Read Sacred Scripture, live it, and pray to understand the signs of the time. This is a special time. Therefore I am with you to draw you close to my heart and the heart of my Son, Jesus.

Dear little children, I want you to be children of the light, not the darkness. Therefore, live what I am telling you.

Thank you for your response to my call.

Speedy Condemnation Needed

It would seem that the Vatican is delaying its announcement that nothing supernatural has occurred at Medjugorje for fear of the reaction among its devotees, but the longer it delays the announcement, which must inevitably come, the greater will be the number of those devotees and the greater their disillusionment. When the announcement comes many souls will be lost to

the Church as they will prefer the authority of spurious messages to the authority of the Magisterium. It is therefore imperative that all who have a true devotion to Our Lady do everything possible by praying and by writing to persuade the Holy See to publish the verdict of the former Yugoslav Bishops' conference without further delay (see Section 6). They should also try by prayer and by persuasion to convince those who have been duped by the propaganda of the Medjugorje industry that the whole scandalous affair represents, as Bishop Zanic expressed it, "the fruit of a fabrication, fraud, and disobedience to the Church. It is about big money and personal interest too."

10. A NEW BISHOP OF MOSTAR

Bishop Zanic has resigned as Bishop of Mostar and was replaced by Bishop Ratko Peric who had spent ten years in Rome as Rector of the Pontifical Croatian College in Rome. Rumors have been circulated that Bishop Zanic was forced to resign by the Pope who did not approve of his intransigent opposition to the veracity of the Medjugorje apparitions. Had this been the case the Holy Father would have appointed a successor more open to the possibility of their veracity. On the contrary, Bishop Peric is, if anything, more adamant concerning their falsity than was Bishop Zanic. This should be more than adequate to make the position of the Pope clear. In the October 1993 issue of his diocesan journal, *Crkva na Kamenu (The Church on the Rock)*, Bishop Peric directed an open letter to St. Francis of Assisi in which he complains to the Saint that his spiritual sons, the Bosnian Franciscans, are quite disobedient. The same issue contains a long interview with the new bishop in which he makes it clear that his opposition to the false devotion is as great as or greater than that of Bishop Zanic. A partial translation of the interview appeared in the February 1994 issue of *Fidelity*. Bishop Peric testified that his predecessor had been open to the veracity of the apparitions in the beginning. He pointed out that Bishop Zanic would evidently have been predisposed to believe in the alleged apparitions. He continued:

What bishop wouldn't be delighted that the Virgin Mary should be appearing in his diocese? Especially Bishop Zanic, a very Marian bishop, who as a priest and later as a bishop made eleven pilgrimages to various Marian shrines all over Europe: Lourdes, Fatima, Syracuse, etc. And then for the Gospa (Our Lady) to have mercy on him and begin to "appear" in his own backyard as if to bring an end to all his wanderings all over Portugal.

But after a few months, when he heard the small fibs and large lies, insincerities, inexactitudes, and all sorts of fabricated stories from those who claimed that the Gospa was appearing to them, he became totally convinced that it was not a matter of supernatural apparitions of the Gospa. Then he started to bring out the truth and to expose the falsehoods. The greatest satisfaction of his ten years of hard work was when the bishops of Yugoslavia at their spring meeting at Zadar on April 10, 1991, dutifully declared: "On the basis of studies it cannot be affirmed that supernatural apparitions and revelations are occurring." This is an exceptionally clear ecclesiastical ruling, and is a rebuttal of the claims of all those who claim to have seen the Gospa everywhere and at any time since 1981.

The verdict of the Bishops' Conference is for me an authoritative instruction, responsive and binding unless another kind of verdict is brought. But until now there has been no other

(ecclesiastical) judgment. If, after serious, solid, and professional investigation, our Bishops' Conference had the courage to declare that Medjugorje's apparitions are not supernatural, in spite of massive stories and convictions to the contrary, then that is a sign that the Church, even in the 20th century "upholds the truth and keeps it safe" (1 Tim. 3:15). I affirm this unequivocally (my emphasis).

Further Information

Jones, E. Michael, *The Medjugorje Deception: Queen of Peace, Ethnic Cleansing, Ruined Lives*; also the video or CD *Visions on Demand*, available at culturewars.com.

Two devastating critiques can be obtained from Br. James, S.D.B., Sts. Peter and Paul Church, 650 Filbert Street, San Francisco, CA 94133. They are *Critique: Medjugorje and Brother Thomas* and *Doubter in Medjugorje*.

Siviric, Dr. I, OFM (a Franciscan born in Medjugorje, and now living in the USA), *The Hidden Side of Medjugorje*, 400 pages, available from Editions Psilog, CP 300, St-Francois-du-Lac, Quebec, Canada, JOC JJVIO.