



## MEDJUGORJE: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A TALK BY FR JIM MULLIGAN



St Paul's Catholic Church, Harefield ... Friday, January 26th 2024 at 7.00pm

# The apparitions of Our Lady at Medjugorje

The Medjugorje phenomenon is known throughout the world. Millions visit Medjugorje each year and the details surrounding these claimed apparitions have been investigated with a scrutiny more intense than for any other event in Church history.

It is claimed that on June 24, 1981, at about 6pm, six young parishioners from Medjugorje (a village in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the former Republic of Yugoslavia) Ivanka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Vicka Ivankovic, Ivan Dragicevic, Ivan Ivankovic and Milka Pavlovic, saw on the hill Crnica (on the place called Podbrdo) an apparition, a white female form with a child in her arms. Surprised and scared, they did not approach.

The next day at the same time, June 25, 1981, four of them, Ivanka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Vicka Ivankovic and Ivan Dragicevic, felt strongly drawn towards the place where, the day before, they saw the One who they had recognised as Our Lady. Marija Pavlovic and Jakov Colo joined them. The group of Medjugorje visionaries was formed. They prayed with Our Lady and talked to Her. From that day onward, they had daily apparitions, together or separately. Two present on the 24th June 1981, Milka Pavlovic and Ivan Ivankovic, never saw the apparition of Our Lady again.

The following became the Medjugorje visionaries: with specific prayer intentions assigned to each:

Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo was born on March 18th, 1965, in Sarajevo. She had daily apparitions until December 25th, 1982. On that day, entrusting to her the tenth secret, Our Lady told her that for the rest of her life she would have one yearly apparition, on March 18th. Since August 2nd, 1987, on each second day of the month, she hears interiorly Our Lady's voice and prays with her for unbelievers. Sometimes she also sees her. Mirjana is married, she has two children, and she lives with her family in Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided her: for unbelievers, those who have not come to know the love of God.

Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez was born on June 21st, 1966, in Bijakovici, in the parish of Medjugorje. She was the first one who saw Our Lady. She had daily apparitions until May 7th, 1985. On that day, confiding to her the tenth secret, Our Lady told her that for the rest of her life, she would have one yearly apparition on June 25th, the anniversary of the apparitions. Ivanka is married, she has three children, and she lives with her family in Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided her: for families.

Vicka Ivankovic-Mijatovic was born on September 9th, 1964, in Bijakovici, in the parish of Medjugorje. She still has daily apparitions. Our Lady entrusted nine secrets to her. Vicka is married, has one child and lives in Krehin Gradac near Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided her: for the sick.

Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti was born on April 1st, 1965, in Bijakovici, in the parish of Medjugorje. She still has daily apparitions. Through her, Our Lady gives her message to the parish and the world. From March 1st, 1984, to January 8th, 1987, the message was given every Thursday, and since January 1987, on every 25th of the month. Our Lady entrusted nine secrets to her. Marija is married and she has four children. With her family, she lives in Italy and in Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided her: for the souls in purgatory

Jakov Colo was born on March 6th, 1971, in Sarajevo. He had daily apparitions from June 25th, 1981 to September 12th, 1998. On that day, entrusting to him the tenth secret, Our Lady told him that for the rest of his life he would have one yearly apparition, on Christmas Day. Jakov is married, he has three children, and he lives with his family in Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided him: for the sick.

Ivan Dragicevic was born on May 25th, 1965 in Bijakovici, in the parish of Medjugorje. He still has daily apparitions. Our Lady entrusted nine secrets to him. Ivan is married and he has three children. With his family, he lives in the USA and in Medjugorje. The prayer intention that Our Lady confided him: for young people and for priests.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE MEDJUGORJE APPARITIONS



The first photo of the Medjugorje visionaries.

Photo taken on the hillside of Podbrdo, Medjugorje on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1981.

In Western Herzegovina in the area bordering Croatia, just south west of the city of Mostar, in the former republic of Yugoslavia on June 24<sup>th</sup> 1981, the Feast Day of St John the Baptist, all has fallen more quiet than usual. This is a holy day of obligation and work on the stony and thorn-strewn farmland and the patchy network of vineyards has stopped in this staunchly Catholic community. Following a violent thunderstorm in the morning the stultifying heat throughout the day threatened to split the rocks in the mountainous terrain of the region of a remote village with an unpronounceable name. The name of the village – or more correctly collection of hamlets – is Medjugorje..

A welcome cool descends in the early evening and something then happened which was to forever change the life of the region, the lives of millions, and result in unprecedented reverberations throughout the Catholic Church.

It is claimed that the mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, appeared that evening on a thorn and bramble-covered rocky hillside to a disparate group of young Medjugorje villagers – and that since then her

appearances continue. From that June evening (despite a harsh and brutal campaign by the Communist authorities in the early years to quash the phenomenon) Medjugorje has become known all over the world and this saga of possibly the most impressive claims of apparition in Church history has been investigated with a scrutiny and intensity hitherto unknown in the Church.

Medjugorje is a village in the extreme western part of Bosnia-Herzegovina just south of Mostar. The name Medjugorje means 'Between the Mountains'. The parish/village is a grouping of five hamlets: Medjugorje itself [now expanded beyond recognition since the beginning of the apparitions], Bijakovići, Vionica, Miletina and Šurmanci. Although located in the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Medjugorje is populated by Croats. Christianity was well established in the region before the end of the seventh century.

In the middle ages the Franciscan Order came on pastoral work and the Franciscans have been in sterling service in the region ever since – not least during the four centuries of domination by the Ottoman Empire and consequently Islam. The Turkish domination ended in 1878 when this area became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a new era of religious freedom for the Croats began. The parish of Medjugorje was founded in 1892 and administered by the Franciscans. Following the traumas of the Second World War the politics of the region changed again with Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina falling under the Communist rule of the artificial state of Yugoslavia. The holding together of the Catholic faith under the harsh atheistic Communist state in Croatia and Western Herzegovina was something heroic.

Years before the drama of Medjugorje began it seems intimations of the extraordinary events-to-be in Medjugorje had been around. This is particularly indicated in the construction of a huge concrete cross on the larger of the two hills overlooking the hamlets. Originally named Šipovac (Rosehip Hill), its name was changed to Križevac (Hill of the Cross) after the erection of a large reinforced-concrete crucifix there in 1933. The driving force behind the construction of the cross on Križevac was the then parish priest of Medjugorje, Fr Bernardin Smoljan, a priest of determination and tenacity, who enthused and cajoled his parishioners into the awesome task

carrying stones, steel, cement and wood up the rocky, thorn-strewn 1,500ft high hill to erect the impressive 30ft high cross on the summit to commemorate the 1900th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Apparently the women of the village responded initially more enthusiastically than the men! The cross was completed early in 1934 and the first Mass offered on Križevac on March 15th, 1934. The following is written on the cross:

*TO JESUS CHRIST, THE REDEEMER OF THE HUMAN RACE,  
AS A SIGN OF OUR FAITH, LOVE AND HOPE  
IN MEMORY OF THE 1900th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASSION OF  
JESUS*

Almost every able-bodied person in the parish climbed the hill on the day of consecration and of this first Mass, which was celebrated at the foot of the cross by Fr Grgo Vasilj. Since then it has become a tradition to celebrate Holy Mass at the base of the cross on the first Sunday after September 8th, the Sunday dedicated to celebrating the Exaltation of the Cross. One of the consequent blessings Medjugorje villagers believe bestowed was that the devastating hailstorms, which hitherto frequently destroyed the vineyard harvests, ceased completely.



The first Mass on Križevac, celebrated on March 15th, 1934.

Our Lady told the visionaries that the cross on Križevac was in God's plan for Medjugorje.



**The visionaries: Left to right Mirjana Dragičević, Vicka Ivanković, Ivanka Ivanković, Ivan Dragičević, Marija Pavlović Front: Jakov Čolo**

# The Ten Secrets

## Given to the Medjugorje Visionaries

At the beginning of the apparitions Our Lady promised ten secrets to each Medjugorje visionary. These secrets pertain to events to happen in the future. Three of the visionaries, Ivanka, Mirjana and Jakov, already have been given all ten secrets, while the other three, Ivan, Marija and Vicka, each have nine.

Whether the secrets are the same for each visionary is not known.

Mirjana was the first visionary to receive all ten secrets. Mirjana knows the date on which events forecast in each of the secrets will occur. Our Lady asked Mirjana to choose a priest to reveal the secrets to the world. Mirjana chose a Croatian Franciscan priest, Father Petar Ljubicic. Ten days before the first secret is to be revealed Father Petar will be given a parchment containing a listing of the ten secrets. When Father Petar receives the parchment he will be able to read only the first secret. During those ten days, Father Petar, along with Mirjana, is to spend the first seven days in fasting and prayer. Three days before the event takes place he is to announce it to the world.

Following this, at the appropriate time, Father Petar will be able to see and read the second secret, and then the third, etc.

However, recent statements from Mirjana indicate that it may not necessarily be that Father Petar Ljubicic will be the priest who reveals the secrets to the world.

Mirjana has relayed the following in respect of the secrets given to her:

The third secret relates to a visible sign which will appear on the site of the first apparitions (Apparition Hill—Podbrdo) in Medjugorje. The sign will serve as a testimony confirming the veracity of the apparitions. It will be something beautiful, indestructible and permanent.

The secrets may herald great changes to come to the world but none of the visionaries approach the secrets with fear.





The visionaries during apparitions

## **An interview with Medjugorje visionary Marija Pavlović-Lunetti**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2008**



**Marija Pavlović-Lunetti**

Marija Pavlović-Lunetti travelled from Italy to St Mary and St Michael's Church in Commercial Road in London's East End on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2008. At 6.40pm she had her daily apparition with Our Lady in Our Lady's Chapel in the church and, following the Vigil of Pentecost Mass that evening, gave her testimony on the Medjugorje apparitions to the congregation. Later in the evening she generously gave the following interview to the parish priest, Fr James Mulligan:

**JM:** It's been a busy day for you Marija. Thank you very much indeed for agreeing to this interview. I will try to not go over ground that you have been through a million times before. You haven't been very well recently. I believe you had an accident.

**Marija:** *Yes, back in January. I was knocked down on a ski slope when we were on holiday. A young boy ran into me. My husband says I act as a magnet for people.*

**JM:** Well you certainly act as a magnet, but in the best possible way. Look at the crowds here tonight! How old are your children now?

**Marija:** *The oldest, Michaele, is almost fourteen and the youngest, Giovanni, is five. The children are staying with their grandparents tonight. Tomorrow I will be back in Italy.*

**JM:** All boys. What soccer team do they support?

**Marija:** *Milan. Not Inter Milan. We live in Monza.*

**JM:** Oh! Well. I was hoping it might be Juventus...

Marija, after all this length of time of apparitions you must now feel that you have established a personal relationship with Our Lady.

**Marija:** *Well, yes and no. I have a relationship with Our Lady of course, but in many ways everything is as on the first day of apparitions. I feel so small, so insignificant and unworthy in the face of the awesomeness, the immensity of this.*

**JM:** Nevertheless, the freshness of the dialogue and the evidence of the personality of Our Lady are very engaging for those who read about the apparitions. For example she comes across with a sense of humour at times. In the early days of the apparitions when you, the visionaries, asked her how long she would keep appearing she replied: "Why, am I boring you already?"

**Marija:** *Yes, yes. And I think back to Christmas 1981 when Our Lady appeared to us with the baby Jesus. And the baby Jesus kept winking at us and hiding behind His mother's veil! When I was describing this to pilgrims I was told off by some who said polite Croatian girls do not wink! Also, once when we were all very young, and we were praying with Our Lady during an apparition, someone made a mistake and said the wrong words and everyone else started to laugh - as young people will do. Then, we were afraid that we might have offended Our Lady, but she just smiled and we all carried on with the prayers.*

*These small things sometimes are very important for us because it shows how much that Our Lady cares. Once, when my family was on holiday, my children wanted to stay as long as possible on the beach in the summer evenings. However, when the time of apparition came, I would gather everyone up beforehand for prayers. After the first evening Our Lady said to me: "Enjoy your holiday. While you are here I will appear to you later in the evenings."*

JM: Marija you, the visionaries, have seen heaven, hell and purgatory.

*Marija: Yes we have. We saw as in a vision - although Vicka and Jakov were taken there physically. Heaven is an immense space full of light. Not like the light on earth. A special light. The souls there were full of joy and peace. They wore pastel-coloured robes – blue, grey, pink and yellow. All were the same age; not young, not old, none fat, none thin.*

JM: Men and women? Did you recognize anyone?

*Marija: Yes, men and women. I did not recognize anyone.*

JM: Did the men have beards?

*Marija: You know I don't even remember. What I remember is the joy I saw on all faces.*

JM: Purgatory?

*Marija: We didn't see anyone in purgatory. Everything was ashen grey. We could sense suffering and hear crying. Not physical suffering but spiritual suffering. Our Lady said that the souls in purgatory have much need of our prayers.*

JM: I hesitate to ask you about hell.

*Marija: Well, we saw hell. I think Our Lady showed us hell to underline that it is a reality. And no soul goes to hell other than through choice. The soul chooses hell. We saw a huge sea of fire. A young, very beautiful girl went into this fire. We saw her come out looking something of a wild beast.*

JM: The secrets I won't ask you about because, well, secrets are secrets. However, one item to do with the future of Medjugorje, that doesn't fall within the secrets, is that you have been told by Our Lady that a basilica will be built on Apparition Hill.

*Marija: Not a basilica. A chapel. Our Lady told me that one day a chapel should be built, not at the first apparition sites, but further down on Podbrdo. All in time. It is*

**JM:** Well, maybe that's Our Lady being humble because I'm sure that one day there will probably be a basilica in her honour in Medjugorje.

**Marija:** *Yes, maybe the chapel will be in the basilica. For me, though the church building is not so important. It's the 'church within' that's important.*

**JM:** Nevertheless people love to worship in beautiful churches. This church for example, St Mary and St Michael's, was built in the 1800s when there was great poverty here in East End London. Poor people gave their pennies to have this place of worship.

**Marija:** *Yes and it really is very beautiful. I have had a good look. I also saw your Michelangelo Pieta replica. It's wonderful.*

**JM:** It was put in place only yesterday. It came from Italy...

Something I have noticed about the Medjugorje visionaries is a lack of fear, a lack of anxiety. That is very reassuring to many. And you, yourself, you seem so calm, so serene.

**Marija:** *I'm more so since meeting Our Lady. Above all I try to focus on the eternal life. This life on earth passes in a second's flash. That has been for me the great change within myself. Through prayer I always try to focus on the eternal life, the real life.*

**JM:** This calmness certainly helps in communicating your testimony about the apparitions. I saw this with the crowds here tonight. Yet, you had once thought of religious life as a nun?

**Marija:** *Yes, I had ambitions to be a Benedictine nun. I remember the Mother Superior of the convent I used to visit said to me: "Marija, you are very welcome here if you wish to come, but remember you may not be able to give this testimony, these talks, as a nun."*

**JM:** I notice all of the Medjugorje visionaries talk about the importance of the Eucharist.

**Marija:** *Yes, the Holy Mass should always be at the centre of our lives. The Holy Mass is something Our Lady always talks about.*

**JM:** Also, Our Lady has spoken to you about the blessing a priest gives.

**Marija:** *Our Lady told me that if priests really fully understood the power of a priest's blessing then priests would bless all day long.*

JM: Vicka in particular has said that following all this time with Our Lady she has come to believe that nothing happens to us by pure chance, by mere coincidence. Is that also your understanding?

*Marija: Yes, I believe that all the major things that happen to us happen by Divine providence. How we cope with this is up to our own free will. If we accept God's will then we grow spiritually.*

JM: On the subject of the monthly message that you give from Our Lady on the 25th of each month you have been quoted as saying that you often despair at how inadequate you feel to communicating it.

*Marija: When I see the words it seems to me that the wonder and power of the encounter with Our Lady is just not there at all.*

JM: You were very close to the late Father Slavko.

*Marija: He was my spiritual adviser and I don't think he can ever be replaced. He first came to investigate but became 100% a believer that Our Lady is appearing in Medjugorje. He was a person who converted every day, as Our Lady recommends. He was in our house three times on the day before he died. When he died I was distraught. I asked Our Lady: Why? Why? Why? Our Lady said that it was God's will. On the day after he died, 25th November 2000, Our Lady said to me: "Your brother Slavko has been born into heaven and intercedes for you."*

JM: Well, thank you again Marija for coming here. We are greatly blessed.

*Marija: Our Lady came here tonight. She was wearing a grey dress and white veil as usual. She prayed over us all in the church and blessed us. I think anywhere Our Lady appears is specially blessed. It is never the same again.*



**Marija Pavlović-Lunetti**

## The Risen Saviour Sculpture, Medjugorje



**Droplets of water continuously cascade down the bronze of the statue of the Risen Saviour.**

This phenomenon of the droplets of water has been attracting quite some attention over the years since it began in 2002. Whether in frozen conditions, or in the summer months when everything around is parched dry, the flow of droplets of water continues. It has ceased to flow for some days on various occasions, and for three weeks in September 2010. The occasions when it ceases to flow appear to have nothing to do with moisture content in the surrounding vicinity, as on some of these occasions quite heavy rainfall has taken place. Metallurgists, structural engineers, geologists, geophysicists and meteorologists have all considered this enigma but no explanation has been forthcoming. The Medjugorje visionaries have not commented on this.



**Our Lady of Medjugorje by Carmelo Puzzolo**