

Bishops In Medjugorje And About Medjugorje in 2002

MARCH 2002

Msgr. Nguyen Quang Tuyen, Bishop of Bac Ninh (Vietnam)

Msgr. Nguyen Quang Tuyen, Bishop of Bac Ninh, along with his secretary and Msgr. Nguyen Chan Hung, Administrator of Hai Phong from Vietnam, were in Medjugorje from March 16 to 18, 2002. They came to Europe for the regular Ad Limina visit to the Holy Father in Rome, and then went on pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrines of Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje. They came to Medjugorje because they are convinced that Our Lady appears here.

Msgr. Nguyen Quang Tuyen told us: "In Vietnam, people know very little about Medjugorje, but the priests and bishops know much, because they read books. Coming to Europe, to Rome, we decided to visit the places where Our Lady appeared, like Fatima, Lourdes and Medjugorje. We wanted to come to this place where Our Lady calls to conversion, and especially to pray the rosary. When we go back to Vietnam, we will speak about Our Lady's call to conversion, especially her call to adore the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and to pray for peace."

MAY 2002

Msgr. Silas S. NJIRU, Bishop of Meru (Kenya)

From May 6 to 10, 2002, Msgr. Silas S. Njiru, Bishop of Meru (Kenya), came for a private visit to Medjugorje. This is what he told us about Medjugorje:

Msgr. Silas S. Njiru: "Medjugorje is really worldly known. Wherever I come, in my country, in the USA or in Europe, people talk about Medjugorje! I am here, because I venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary. I am profoundly impressed by the faith of people in the Church. It is a strong faith. I especially see many young people. I see that many people go for confession and ask to be reconciled with God. Today, this is a real miracle. People told me that for many years they did not go to Church, and since they have been to Medjugorje, they go regularly for Mass. This is a real miracle for me.

Whoever has been here cannot remain silent.

Sincerely, what is happening here is beyond the apparitions alone. In Africa, we also have people who have apparitions. They are possible and present. I ask myself one question: If God allows apparitions, why is he doing this? To deepen our faith, to bring us to conversion... I am happy if there are apparitions, but we have to go beyond them. Our faith has to be renewed, because if this is not happening, they have no meaning. If the faith is growing, then it is good."

medjugorje
JULY 2002

MSGR. Julio OJEDA PASCUAL, OFM, Bishop of San Ramon (Peru)

Msgr. Julio Ojeda Pascual, OFM, the Bishop of San Ramon in Peru, came to Medjugorje from July 4 to 6, 2002. This is what he told us about Medjugorje:

MSGR. JULIO OJEDA PASCUAL, OFM: "I am happy and touched for having had the occasion to come to this country. I heard about the apparitions for the first time from the newspapers that were given to us by Fr. Gerard and other Franciscan priests living in Peru. For me, it meant nothing more than other strange names and I was sceptical, but I have noticed conversions and this is what impressed me most of all. I have come here thanks to the Franciscans from Zagreb (Croatia) who invited me to visit them. There was an occasion to come to Medjugorje and I did it. I see so many people coming here; people who want to come closer to Jesus through Mary. Let us thank God for having given us Mary, whom we venerate as Mother of God, and who always leads us to Jesus.

Nature is so beautiful here, vegetation and mountains, there are so many rocks; it is an impulse for a spiritual experience. It is like the image of the man, the sinner, who is maybe as hard as a stone, and from whom vegetation can germinate with the help of the grace of God.

I believe in the grace of prayer for the spiritual path of man towards God. These pilgrimages can obtain the grace of more workers in God's harvest. The harvest is big but there are few labourers. Many people go to these places out of spiritual motives, others come out of curiosity. Instead of finding satisfaction for their curiosity, they find something else: they find an example. There are many conversions here, which can lead to spiritual vocations: priestly vocation, religious vocation, active lay vocation...

When I come back home, I will tell what I have seen and experienced: People really come with the intention to make a pilgrimage. There is an atmosphere of pilgrimage, order and prayer. I do not see anything negative.

I am positively impressed. We have seen people praying in deep recollection. The ambience is good.

May the Mother of God always be with us, and not only in exceptional days of pilgrimage. Let us be faithful in our daily life to all of that, faithful to what the Mother of God leads us."

MSGR. Gerard Anton ZERDIN, OFM, Bishop Coadjutor of San Ramon (Peru)

Msgr. Gerard Anton ZERDIN, OFM, a missionary and the Bishop Coadjutor of San Ramon, Peru, was in Medjugorje from July 4 to 6, 2002. Msgr. Zerdin initially comes from the Franciscan Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Zagreb, Croatia. This is what he told us about Medjugorje:

MSGR. Gerard Anton ZERDIN, OFM: "We read about THE Medjugorje apparitions in newspapers, we received people who showed us some materials, and we were especially touched by the desire of people to come closer to God, to use every occasion to come closer to God. They have seen that a door towards God was open and they came closer, asking for grace, wanting to transform their lives. This is a great value. This is what we want: to come always closer to God through the sacraments, to be transformed, to become better, to be more Christian.

I came once to Medjugorje for a couple of hours with a pilgrimage of Altar Boys from Zagreb. It was really short. This time I stay two days.

We have come to see, but even more to experience. Yesterday, we were at Holy Mass, today we went to the Apparition Hill to meditate on our vocation, on our missionary work; we went to ask God, to ask Our Lady to

send us missionaries, labourers that we need, so that the Word of God may spread until the end of the world.”

AUGUST 2002

Msgr. Jean-Vincent ONDO, Bishop of the Diocese of Oyem (Gabon)

Msgr. Jean-Vincent Ondo, Bishop of the Diocese of Oyem in Gabon, came on a private visit to Medjugorje with his friends during the International Youth Festival 2002. He came here already when he was a priest. This is his first coming since he was ordained a bishop.

Msgr. Jean-Vincent Ondo : “When I came for the first time, I came with a family. Today, I am here again with a family. It is a private thing. We came here because we want to pray and to live what Our Lady tells us. I am a Christian. What is happening here happens in our dioceses: rosary, adoration prayer... What is especially beautiful is the great number of those who come here, while in our dioceses we have smaller groups.

Concerning the apparitions, the presence of Our Lady, I would say that it is difficult to give a precise opinion after only a few days that I have spent here. I do not have all the elements needed for discernment. What I can say is that something is happening here. I had the grace to meet the visionary Marija and to be present during her prayer. Something is happening that goes beyond my reasoning. An analytical intelligence always wants to explain everything, but I think that we simply have to admire all that is happening. Our Lady challenges us here. To those who doubt, She may shed some more light with time...

Our coming here is oriented towards the living of our faith and not towards seeking something unusual. I am enthusiastic to see Christians coming from all horizons and speaking one and the same language – the language of prayer.

This is not the first experience of this kind in the world. There were apparitions in Fatima and in Lourdes. Now everyone talks about Medjugorje. If these experiences existed in the past, they may exist in the present and in the future. Our little delegation from Gabon, people with whom I have come here, speaks about Medjugorje but does not make any publicity. People know that Medjugorje exists. Some regularly receive newspapers about Medjugorje.

Here, Our Lady reveals herself as the Queen of Peace. God alone knows how many hearts are troubled. We seek that peace, which comes from God alone. I had the occasion to meet many pilgrims. I felt the distress of their hearts. They have come here to confide their sufferings to Mary in the hope of finding inner peace. I believe that those who come here are not tourists, but they come in the hope of finding rest in Mary.

There is nothing different here than what we can see and experience in our dioceses. What I can see is that young people in their parishes feel too much of lukewarmness. When they come to this kind of meetings, they discover a living, warm, awakened Church, and they are happy and joyful to be together. I believe that we have to be careful about how we receive these young people, these children, so that those who have experienced something here do not remain on the level of strong feelings. It should become a strong experience of faith, which will help them to continue to grow in faith when they leave Medjugorje."

OCTOBER 2002

Msgr. John WARD, Franciscan Capuchin, the Retired Archbishop of Cardiff/Wales (Great Britain)

A Franciscan Capuchin, Msgr. John Ward, the retired Archbishop of Cardiff/Wales (Great Britain), came on pilgrimage to Medjugorje from October 1st to 6th, 2002, with a group of pilgrims from Great Britain. On October 3rd, he joined his Franciscan brothers in the celebration of the passing away of St. Francis.

Msgr. John Ward spent most of his time in the confessional.

Msgr. George Hamilton PEARCE, Retired Archbishop of the Fiji Islands

Msgr. George Hamilton Pearce, retired archbishop of the Fiji Islands, came with a group of American pilgrims on a private visit to Medjugorje at the end of September / beginning of October 2002. He has already been in Medjugorje in the eighties and in the nineties: he believes in the apparitions and in the authenticity of Our Lady's messages. Msgr. Pearce is a religious, member of the Congregation of Marist Fathers. Since retiring from active Episcopal service, he lives and serves in the Archdiocese of Providence, Rhode Island, USA, where - in the cathedral - he leads a Marian prayer group.

Msgr. George Hamilton Pearce: "I have no doubt about the authenticity of Medjugorje. I have been here three times already and I say to any priest who asks about it: just go and sit in the confessional, and you will see miracle after miracle after miracle... through Mary's intercession

and the power of God. We were told: "By their fruits you will know them". Certainly, the heart and soul of the Medjugorje message is the Eucharist and the sacrament of the reconciliation.

I have no doubts whatsoever. This is the work of God. As I said: you cannot but believe when you stand a little time in the confessional. Signs and wonders are merciful gifts of God too, but this is the greatest of all miracles for a priest to see the people around the altar of the Lord. I have been in several shrines, I have spent quite a bit of time in Guadalupe, I have been about eight times at Fatima, and also in Lourdes, it's the same Mary, the same message, but here at Medjugorje this is the "now" word of Our Lady for the world. There is so much anguish and suffering. Our Lady has been with us all the way through, and in a special way in Medjugorje.

We had many humorous remarks from the Pope John Paul II. Somebody asked him why he had not been to Medjugorje yet, and he answered: "It has not been approved yet!" Mirjana told us this morning that he told her that, if he were not Pope, he had been to Medjugorje long ago! We have a little group in the Cathedral in Providence, where I am. They call it "Little St. James". They meet every evening; they have exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, benediction and Holy Mass.

I would say: come in the spirit of an open mind, in prayer, entrust your journey to Our Lady. Just come and the Lord will do the rest."

Msgr. Pearse LACEY, Retired Bishop of Toronto (Canada)

Msgr. Pearse Lacey, the 85-year old retired bishop of Toronto (Canada), was in Medjugorje from October 12 to 19, 2002, with a group of Canadian pilgrims. He came once already on pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Queen of Peace, in 1987. On Sunday, October 13th (the day of Our Lady of Fatima, as

he himself underlined), he presided the English pilgrims Mass in concelebration with about 20 priests. On arrival in the sacristy, his first question was: "Is Our Lady still appearing?" Msgr. Lacey underlined that he believes that Medjugorje is a continuation of Fatima.

Msgr. Pearse Lacey: "I came to Medjugorje in 1987. Things were much more primitive then than they are today, but the Spirit is still here and the presence of Our Lady is all about. You can't move anywhere that you don't sense the marvellous grace of God affecting the lives of people. I have met people that are here because they are on drugs, on alcohol. I have met people with tragic situations in their lives and the miraculous way in which God is reflecting, manifesting Himself. One of the priests told me that he was hearing confessions, he eventually stopped and left, and they drew him back! The magnitude of the confessions is enough if you want to be satisfied with the presence of God here. Unbelievable. For me, that's Medjugorje.

When I was in Toronto, eighty Canadian bishops had lunch with the Pope. Some of the working Monsignors from the Vatican were there. One of them mentioned the word "Medjugorje". I said: "You believe in Medjugorje?" He said: "No!" It was like a firecracker going off on me, because I have run into this kind of silliness! Twenty million people have come here! Even a blind man could see this! I told him: "The Holy Father is sitting right here, he believes, ask him!" He retorted: "That's his private opinion!" I think it is scandalous in many ways... How God puts up with us sometimes, I don't know! God can do anything. Our Lady's apparitions are no problem for me. Fundamentally, it is a question of belief. We can't inflict faith and devotion on people. Mostly you can show it by your own example. This is the freedom that God has given to all of us. He wants us to respond out of faith and love. Time will move on, God will burry them all, including me!

The basic message of Medjugorje is absolutely solid. We are living in 2002, but men and women are still made of body and soul, we all have traces of the original sin. Our needs are the same as in the times of the apostles and in any generation. Basically, we are the children of God and our cries are as huge as in any generation. Therefore, the message has to be the same! We cannot do without God. This is the marvellous thing about Medjugorje. This is an oasis of God, this is the life of the Church as it should be. Tradition is not a dirty word, although it seems so to some people! The life of a priest consists in bringing people back to God, people who have wandered away because they thought religion was irrelevant. Thank God that he is God and provides places like this. I have been to other places, but Medjugorje is the shining light today in our society."

DECEMBER 2002

Cardinal SCHÖNBORN, Archbishop of Vienna (Austria), About Medjugorje

On December 1, 2002, in a catechesis given in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, Cardinal Schönborn said the following about Medjugorje:

"I do not wish to express an opinion on Medjugorje from the point of view of a judgment of the Church. There is, however, one thing I can observe, over and over again, namely, that this is a place where an intensive mission-station of heaven obviously exists, where thousands upon thousands of people find prayer, confession, conversion, reconciliation, healing and deeper faith."

