

Bishops in Medjugorje and About Medjugorje in 2006

May 2006

Mons. Franjo Komarica, Bishop of Banja Luka (BiH)

On the 25th of April 2006, Mons. Franjo Komarica, Bishop of Banja Luka, stated in the Večernji list (Zagreb daily newspaper, Croatia):

“Before the war, I paid several official visits to Medjugorje. For a considerable time now, Medjugorje is a world phenomenon that has outgrown the limits of the local diocese. Responsibility for the judgment of the Medjugorje phenomenon must rest with the Holy See, while the local bishop has the right and the duty to take care of the correct liturgical and pastoral life of his diocese as a whole, which includes the parish of Medjugorje.” (Večernji list, 25.04.2006)

Mons. Emilio Ogñénovich, retired Archbishop of Mercedes-Luján (Argentina)

Mons. Emilio Ogñénovich, retired Archbishop of Mercedes-Luján (Argentina) visited Medjugorje from the 25th to the 31st of May, 2006. Mons. Emilio Ogñénovich said the following about Medjugorje:

“Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of ignorance within the Church about the great supernatural reality that is happening in Medjugorje, at the heart of the modern world. What fills me with hope, are the words of John Paul II who told us, both priests and bishops, to accompany pilgrims to Medjugorje, because here they are praying, converting, fasting and changing their lives. The Church needs some more time to state its position in relation to Medjugorje, just as in its wisdom, it took time to state its position towards Fatima and Lourdes.

Concerning Medjugorje, I will share my own personal conviction with my fellow bishops in the Bishops Conference of Argentina, and also with our cardinal, Mons. Bergoglio, who was very happy when I told him that I was going to Medjugorje. If you ask me for my opinion about Medjugorje, I will tell you that it can be compared to a mother, a pregnant woman in the sixth month of pregnancy, who impatiently awaits the moment to see her child born, but nobody can hasten it, because the right moment will come in its own good time."

July 2006

Mons. Joseph Vianney Fernando, President of the Bishop's Conference of Sri Lanka

Mons. Joseph Vianney Fernando, Bishop of the Kandy diocese in Sri Lanka and president of the Bishop's Conference of Sri Lanka came on a five-day pilgrimage to Medjugorje in July 2006. On Friday, July 21, he celebrated Holy Mass in English and gave a homily.

"I have desired to visit Medjugorje ever since the apparitions began. In 1983, two years after the apparitions began, I became a bishop. I heard consistent reports from those visiting Medjugorje, who spoke in glowing terms of their truly tremendous spiritual experiences. "You have to go there, you have to see..." they would say to me. Many agencies asked me to come. If I had given in, instead of being bishop *of* Kandy, I would have been bishop *off* Kandy! A friend of mine, a priest in Palestrina near Rome, told me: "Next time you come to Europe, you have to visit Medjugorje. Our Lady wants you to come..." That touched me very much. I had only 6 days altogether. He told me that we needed at least 3 days for the visit. He arranged everything.

We went up Apparition Hill and prayed the Rosary, and we spent a further 2 hours praying in different places. I concelebrated Mass... I came for Adoration... I believe that it is a place that has been touched by the divine. Otherwise, you cannot understand the kind of immediate spiritual atmosphere that the senses experience. I say this as a humble pilgrim, not as a bishop.

One of the things that I was told was that I would be hearing confessions. How wonderful! This is Our Lady's work. Secularism is spreading very quickly. Values are changing. Our Lady always comes to give the message of conversion... of sacrifice. I think it was badly needed.

Just observe what is happening in the world: Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, India, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, East Timor... God must be deeply concerned about this situation. At the Cross, Jesus gave us Mary as Our Mother...

Jesus told us very clearly that peace cannot come through violence but through sharing and fraternal love. He promises us peace at its very deepest level. There is a beautiful English song: "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me".

August 2006

Mons. Domenico Sigalini, Bishop of Palestrina near Rome

Mons. Domenico Sigalini, Bishop of Palestrina near Rome, spent three days on pilgrimage in Medjugorje. Mons. Sigalini was consecrated Bishop only fifteen months ago. He was the last bishop to be appointed by Pope John Paul II. Before his Episcopal ordination, for ten years he was the delegate for pastoral work with youth. Last summer in Cologne, during the World Youth Days, he was one of the bishops who gave catechesis in this context.

On August 1st, Mons. Domenico Sigalini assisted in the opening of the 17th International Youth festival in Medjugorje. On the morning of August 2nd, he gave catechesis to the young people.

Mons. Jérôme Gapangwa Nteziryayo, Bishop Emeritus of Uvira (Congo)

Mons. Jérôme Gapangwa Nteziryayo, Bishop Emeritus of Uvira (Congo), who has already visited Medjugorje on several occasions, was one of the concelebrants of the evening Eucharistic celebration on August 5th.

Mons. Antal Majnek, OFM, bishop of Mukachevo (Ukraine)

Mons. Antal Majnek, OFM, Roman Catholic bishop of Mukachevo (Ukraine) visited Medjugorje from the 7th to the 10th of August, 2006. This was Mons. Majnek's third visit to Medjugorje. He is open to the ongoing events here, while back in his own diocese, he supports the prayer movement which is greatly appreciated by the many pilgrims who come to Medjugorje from his diocese.

September 2006

Mons. Robert W. Finn D.D., Bishop of Kansas City-Saint Joseph, Missouri, USA

Mons. Robert W. Finn D.D., Bishop of Kansas City-Saint Joseph, Missouri, USA, paid a private visit to Medjugorje, together with a group of pilgrims, from the 2nd to the 5th of September 2006. Each day he concelebrated the English Mass for the pilgrims in St. James' church, and he concelebrated the evening Masses as well. He also heard confessions and visited the prayer places in Medjugorje together with other pilgrims.

He outlined the impression made upon him during the pilgrimage, saying that, as a bishop and as a believer, he witnessed the Sacraments being celebrated both solemnly and fervently. "In the celebration of the Holy Sacraments I see the proof and the confirmation of the faith of God's people, and I also see that the Spirit of God is at work here", Mons. Finn said.

October 2006

Mons. Luigi Bommarito, Archbishop Emeritus of Catania (Italy)

Mons. Luigi Bommarito, Archbishop Emeritus of Catania (Italy), was in Medjugorje from the 5th to the 7th of October 2006, together with a group of pilgrims from Italy. This was his second visit to Medjugorje.

Mons. Harry Joseph Flynn, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA)

Mons. Harry Joseph Flynn, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA), together with a group of pilgrims from Minnesota, visited Medjugorje for the first time from the 6th to the 8th of October 2006. Mons. Flynn met the Franciscans serving Medjugorje Parish and spoke with them about the pastoral aspects of the work with the pilgrims, and especially with those who come from his own archdiocese, where numerous prayer groups have been established, groups that have reintroduced Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament into their parishes. He said that he has come to Medjugorje to pray.

(Published in the St. Paul-Minneapolis archdiocesan newspaper, The Catholic Spirit, October 19)

"Some years ago when I was first a bishop in Louisiana, it must have been 1988, I was making my first "ad limina" visit to the Holy Father in Rome.

The other bishops of Louisiana were with me and, as what the custom of John Paul II, we were invited in to enjoy a lunch with him. There were eight of us at the table with him.

Soup was being served. Bishop Stanley Ott of Baton Rouge, La., who has since gone to God, asked the Holy Father: "Holy Father, what do you think of Medjugorje?"

The Holy Father kept eating his soup and responded: "Medjugorje? Medjugorje? Medjugorje? Only good things are happening at Medjugorje. People are praying there. People are going to Confession. People are adoring the Eucharist, and people are turning to God. And, only good things seem to be happening at Medjugorje."

That seemed to have ended the discussion and we went on to another topic. But, I will long remember the very skillfully cautious response of our Holy Father.

A Pilgrimage Adventure

Just two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to visit Medjugorje. A good friend for more than 50 years, Jim McHale from Connecticut, has been wanting to go to Medjugorje for some time. His wife was not inclined to go at this time for many reasons but mostly because she is preparing for the marriage of their daughter in New York City.

We flew from Minneapolis to Amsterdam, from Amsterdam to Prague and from Prague to Split in Croatia. We remained in Croatia for two evenings before we traveled up the mountain to Medjugorje in Bosnia along the Adriatic Sea.

It is quite an adventure in arriving in this little mountain village which has apparently become famous because of the alleged apparitions that take place there.

We were fortunate enough to have made contact with Stephanie Percic from Minneapolis. Stephanie was making her 100th pilgrimage to Medjugorje and leading a group of people from the Twin Cities, Crookston and Duluth and some from other parts of the country.

Having been there so many times, Stephanie is well-known to the villagers. Certainly that helped us a great deal in getting about.

The drive from Split into Medjugorje is a beautiful one, indeed. The road snakes around the Adriatic Sea and up the mountain. At times it might seem a bit perilous but the beauty is overwhelmingly inviting.

We arrived in the village on a Friday afternoon. There were 30,000 to 40,000 pilgrims there for the weekend. I was quite impressed with them all.

They were from all over the world -- countries throughout Europe, the United States, Ireland, Canada and the Philippines. Italy was well represented also.

On Saturday morning we heard one of the visionaries speak and I must say that everything that he said was very solid.

Someone in the audience asked him a question about "Communion in the hand."

His answer was very direct and very simple. "DO what the church permits you to do. You will always be safe."

The great moment, for me, was the hearing of confessions every afternoon from 5 p.m. until 10 or 10:30 p.m. There were 46 priests hearing confessions in various languages. What a great grace that is onto itself: "People turning toward God."

I just walked around and looked at the lines. There were 26 confessional stations in which there was a priest and then 20 more priests

hearing confessions in temporary stations. This happened also on Sunday afternoon from 5 p.m. until about 8:30 p.m. I heard confessions in English, and it was a great grace for me and a wonderful experience.

The Chapel of Adoration was most edifying. People came in quietly to adore the Eucharistic Lord and to pray. Everything seemed to have been so orderly and quiet, as were the groups of people in the streets and on the hills saying their Rosary and praying.

I celebrated the noon Mass on Sunday in English. The church was packed to overflowing. There are pews outside on all three sides of the church in which people can hear the Mass but they cannot see it. Once again the faith of so many people touched me deeply.

A Yearning Within

This past week we celebrated the feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch. In his letter to the Romans, Ignatius wrote: "Within me is the living water which says deep inside me: 'Come to the Father.'"

There is something of that yearning in all of those pilgrims who visited Medjugorje.

Somehow there is something deep within them which keeps crying out, "Come to the Father."

They do this through devotion. They do it through their love for Mary. They do it through their love for Jesus Christ. "Come to the Father" is deep within each of one us.

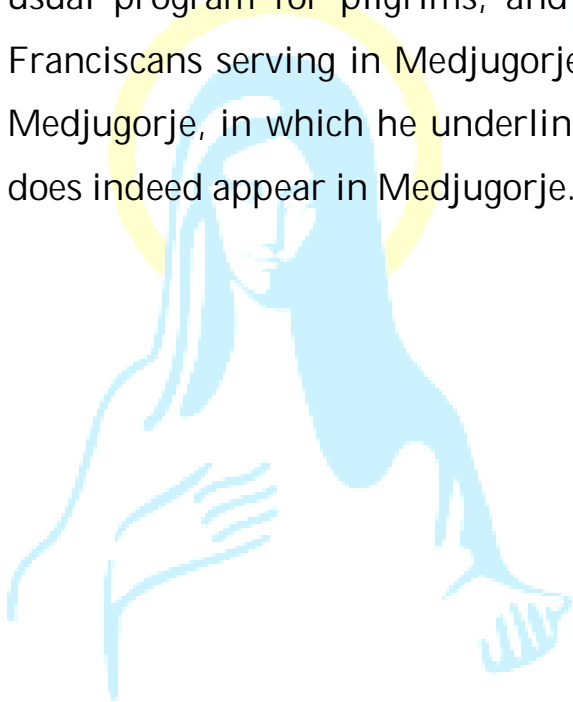
On Monday morning, our pilgrimage was coming to a close. I celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Eucharist for the pilgrims who were led by Stephanie Percic. So many of them were from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and I was impressed by their strong faith and their promise of prayer for the entire archdiocese.

...All in all, after the journey to Medjugorje, I keep pondering the words of John Paul II as he was eating his soup on that day sometime in 1988:

"Medjugorje? Medjugorje? Medjugorje? Only good things seem to be happening at Medjugorje. People are turning to God."

Mons. Michael Pearse Lacey, retired auxiliary bishop of Toronto (Canada)

Mons. Michael Pearse Lacey, retired Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, made his fifth private pilgrimage to Medjugorje from the 11th to the 16th of October 2006. He accompanied a group of pilgrims from Canada. He followed the usual program for pilgrims, and heard confessions. Mons. Lacey met the Franciscans serving in Medjugorje and he gave an interview to Radio "Mir" Medjugorje, in which he underlined the fact that he believes that Our Lady does indeed appear in Medjugorje.



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