

MEDJUGORJE IN LIGHT OF THE POPE'S VISIT TO SARAJEVO

The Pope has come and gone from Sarajevo, and he did not visit Medjugorje as many had hoped he would due to the Pope's obvious goodwill toward the events in the parish of Medjugorje. We remember that the Croatian president, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, immediately preceding the Pope's coming to Sarajevo testified before an assembly of politicians and priests that Pope John Paul II in their last conversation said that on the occasion of his visit to Sarajevo he wanted also to visit Medjugorje. The local bishop Dr. Ratko Peric was also present for this testimony and did not say a word at that.

What the Pope said behind the scenes to the assembled church leaders in Sarajevo is not known and most likely will not be known. What is known is his question about who is the provincial of the Franciscan Province in which the parish of Medjugorje is located. Also known is his mentioning the name of Medjugorje with a smile on the occasion of his arrival in Sarajevo, at the supper in the Catholic School of Theology and at his departure from Sarajevo. In general no great stir came from all that.

Spirits were upset only after the usual papal general audience on the Wednesday immediately after the Sarajevo visit. According to reports of the news agencies, the Pope on that occasion among other things said: "In the course of the war pilgrimages of the faithful to the Marian shrine in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not stop as also not in other parts of the world, especially in Loreto, in order to request the Mother of Nations and the Queen of Peace to intervene in that suffering region." These words of the Pope were interpreted by many as his indirect recognition of the Medjugorje events.

It is difficult to say what the Church will undertake regarding the Medjugorje events in the near and distant future. Since the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia no more exists, there is no longer a commission which was established by it with the charge of accompanying the events in the parish of Medjugorje. The Church therefore will, to be sure, have to do something. Medjugorje in the meantime will proceed on its course and that sentence of Sacred Scripture which says a tree will be known by its fruits will be realized.

THE POPE, MEDJUGORJE AND THE PROVINCIAL OF THE HERCEGOVINA FRANCISCANS

The visit of Pope John Paul II to Bosnia-Herzegovina April 12 - 13, 1997 was a visit which many had hoped would end with a visit of the Pope to

Medjugorje, since in several references he had expressed such a desire. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Nevertheless, the Pope did not forget Medjugorje.

At the Sarajevo airport April 12 the very first to await the Pope's arrival were the bishops and provincials of Bosnia-Herzegovina. When the provincial of the Sarajevo Province, Fr. Peter Andjelovic, as the first of the provincials approached the Pope to greet him, the Pope asked him the question, "Medjugorje?". He pointed to Dr. Fr. Tomislav Pervan, the provincial of Herzegovina who said, "I am from Mostar and Medjugorje." The Pope nodded his head with satisfaction and twice repeated, "Medjugorje, Medjugorje". All TV viewers who watched the presentation of the Pope's arrival also saw it.

While the Pope prayed with those gathered in the Sarajevo cathedral he prayed twice referring to the Queen of Peace for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many of those present interpreted it as having recourse to the Queen of Peace from Medjugorje.

After supper in the Sarajevo Catholic School of Theology Fr. Tomislav took advantage of the occasion to personally present the Pope with the newest photo-monograph on Medjugorje which the Franciscans who work in the parish of Medjugorje had sent to him. On that occasion he spoke to him briefly about Medjugorje. The Pope did not say anything, but by the expression on his face, he accepted both the former and the latter with satisfaction and interest.

On the occasion of the Pope's departure from the Sarajevo airport Fr. Tomislav Pervan by way of greeting said, "Holy Father, we are expecting you in Medjugorje." The Pope answered with a smile, "Medjugorje, Medjugorje" as was visible also on TV screens.

THE PRESIDENT OF CROATIA, MEDJUGORJE AND THE POPE

According to the Dayton peace accord the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina should one day enter a confederal relationship. One of the essential ways of attaining that goal is joining together on the economic level. Therefore the Croatian President, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, on March 15, 1997 participated in the re-opening for production of the local aluminium factory in Mostar.

After the festivities in Mostar the Croatian President, by his own expressed desire, came to visit the Shrine of the Queen of Peace in Medjugorje. He was welcomed on the part of the local people by the Provincial of the Franciscan Herzegovina province, Fr. Dr. Tomislav Pervan, and the Medjugorje parish pastor, Fr. Ivan Landeka. Moved by the meeting at the shrine and the cheers of the large gathered crowd of over 30,000 people that came to greet him from all parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mr. President stayed for a talk with the assembled priests. Present were not only the priests that work in Medjugorje, but also priests from the surrounding parishes. Present at the same time, as also in Mostar, were the local bishop Dr. Ratko Peric and a group of 15 of the highest ranking officials of the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Among other things, Dr. Franjo Tudjman also said the following: "Again I repeat that on the occasion of my last conversation with him Pope John Paul II said that, on the occasion of his visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina, he would like also to visit Medjugorje."

The latest news says that the Pope, nevertheless, will not visit Medjugorje on April 13. But, it's good to know that he wished to.

STATEMENTS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II ABOUT MEDJUGORJE

These statements are not verified by the Pope's seal and signature but are brought to us by persons in whom we may trust. Because of this we have inserted them under the title of "Documents".

1. In a private conversation with the visionary Mirjana Soldo the Pope said: "If I were not Pope I would already be in Medjugorje confessing." (1987).
2. Mons. Maurillo Kreiger, former bishop of Florianopolis (Brazil), visited Medjugorje four times. His first visit was in 1986. He writes as follows: "In 1988, I was with eight other bishops and thirty three priests on spiritual retreat in the Vatican. The Holy Father knew that many of us were going to Medjugorje afterwards. After a private mass with the Pope, before leaving Rome, he said, without having been asked anything, "Pray for me in Medjugorje". On another occasion, I told the Pope "I am going to Medjugorje for the fourth time". He concentrated his thoughts and said, "Medjugorje, Medjugorje, it's the spiritual heart of the world". On the same day I spoke with other Brazilian bishops and the Pope at lunch time and I asked him: "Your holiness, can I tell the visionaries that you send your blessing?" He answered: "Yes yes", and embraced me.

3. To a group of doctors, who work for the defence and protection of the life of the unborn, the Pope said on the 1st of 1989, "Yes, today the world has lost the sense of the supernatural. In Medjugorje, many seek and re-find this sense in prayer, fasting and confession."

4. On November 11, 1990, the Korean national weekly newspaper ("Catholic News") published an article by Msgr. Angelo Kim, President of the Korean Bishops' Conference: "Prior to the conclusion of the last Bishops' Synod in Rome, the Korean bishops were invited to a lunch with the Holy Father. On this occasion, Msgr. Kim addressed the Holy Father directly and said, "Father, thanks to you, Poland was able to liberate itself from Communism". To this, the Holy Father responded, "No, this is not my merit. This is the work of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as She had predicted in Fatima and in Medjugorje."

Archbishop Kwangju said to the Holy Father, "In the town Nadju in Korea, the Blessed Virgin is crying ..." The Pope replied, " ... There are bishops, as in Ex-Yugoslavia, who are against it ... but it is important to become conscious of the great number of people who are responding to Her call, the number of conversions... All this is emphasized in the Gospel. All these facts have to be examined seriously."

The above-mentioned paper made the following statement, "This does not concern the decision of the Church. This is a comment made by our Holy Father. It can be said without exaggeration that one should not underestimate this ..."

(Excerpt from: "L'Homme Nouveau", February 3, 1991)

("Naša ognjišta", XXI., 3, Tomislavgrad, 1991, p. 11)

5. The Archbishop Kwangju said to the Pope: " In Korea, in the town of Nadju, Our Lady cries..." The Pope answered " There are Bishops, like in Yugoslavia for example who are against this....,but it's important to look at the great number of people who are answering the her invitations, the amount of conversions...all this is underlined in the Gospel, all these facts have to be seriously investigated."(L'Homme Nouveau, 3. February 1991.)

6. The Pope said to Fr. Jozo Zovko on the 20th July 1992: "Busy yourself with Medjugorje, look after Medjugorje, don't tire. Persevere, be strong, I am with you. Watch over, follow Medjugorje."

7. The Archbishop of Paraguay, Mons. Felipe Santiago Bentez, in November of 1994 asked of the Holy Father, the Pope if he was right to give approval to the faithful gathering in the spirit of Medjugorje, especially with

the priests of Medjugorje. The Holy Father answered: "Approve all that is related to Medjugorje".

8. In the unofficial part of the meeting of Pope John Paul II with the Croatian delegation of Church and State held in Rome on the 7th of April 1995. the Holy Father amongst other things said that there was some possibility of renewing his visit to Croatia. Together with this he mentioned the possibility of arriving in Split, and from there on to the shrine of "Marija Bistrica" and Medjugorje. ("Slobodna Dalmacija", 8th of April 1995, page 3.)

OUR LADY ABOUT POPE JOHN PAUL II

1. According to the testimony of the visionaries, May 13, 1982 on the occasion of the assassination attempt on the Pope, Our Lady said, "His enemies tried to kill him, but I have protected him."
2. Through the visionaries on June 26, 1982 Our Lady sends her message to the Pope, "Let him be considered as the father of all people and not just of Christians; let him tirelessly and courageously announce the message of Peace and Love among men."
3. Through Jelena Vasilj who had an internal locution September 16, 1982 Our Lady pronounced about the Pope, "God has given him permission to defeat Satan."

She requests of all and especially of the Pope "to spread the message that I have received from my Son. I desire to entrust to the Pope the word with which I have come here to Medjugorje: Peace; he should spread it to all parts of the world. . .he should unite Christians by his word and his preaching. Let him mainly among youth spread the messages that he has received from the Father in prayer. God inspires him then.

Taking into consideration the difficulties of the parish regarding the bishop and the commission for investigation of the events in the parish of Medjugorje, Our Lady said, "Church authority should be followed . . . however, before it pronounces its judgment it is necessary to progress spiritually. It will not pronounce its judgment hastily. It takes place as with a birth that is followed by baptism and confirmation. The Church will confirm that which is born of God. We should go and progress in the spiritual life, impelled by this messages."

4. On the occasion of the Pope's visit in Croatia Our Lady said, "Dear children!

Today I am united with you in a special way, praying for the gift of the presence of my beloved son in your home land. Pray, little children, for the health of my dearest son, who is suffering, and whom I have chosen for these times. I pray and intercede before my Son, Jesus, so that the dream that your fathers had may be fulfilled. Pray, little children, in a special way, because Satan is strong and wants to destroy hope in your heart. I bless you. Thank you for having responded to my call." (8.25.1994)



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