

THE BISHOPS OF TUSCANY TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE REALITY OF THE REPORTED VISIONS OF MARY IN MEDJUGORJE

[Since 1981, apparitions of Jesus' mother to a few witnesses at Medjugorje have been reported. The vision has given countless messages. The apparitions are controversial and not recognised by the Church. Endless trouble and distress was brought to the bishop who is responsible for the area, Zanic and then Peric. The bishop faced slander and threats and open disobedience for holding the apparitions were not genuine.]

By the Bishops of Tuscany

During the "ad limina Apostolorum" visit of Bishops of the Region of Tuscany, from April 16-20, 2007 we had a meeting at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the Secretary Monsignor Angelo Amato, who, while talking with us about the apparitions of Medjugorje, invited us to make public the homily of the Bishop of Mostar of June 15, 2006 given at St. James Parish in Medjugorje (see below), to make clear the religious phenomenon connected to this place.

According to this invitation we are making it known and above all we ask the priests to read it carefully and to draw the necessary consequences for the correct enlightenment of our faithful.

From the homily of His Excellency Msgr. Ratko Peric,

Bishop of Mostar, at Medjugorje, June 15, 2006,

on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

III. — "Apparitions".

First of all, the fact that a person makes a humble Confession and receives Holy Communion in this parish church and that this person feels spiritually well due to God's forgiveness, each and every believer will recognize and give due praise to God for this, who is the source of all graces. At the same time, this person will take care not to proceed from this state of grace towards an illogical and inconsistent conclusion: "I made a Confession. I feel good and now I am converted. Therefore the Madonna is appearing in Medjugorje!" This type of believer and penitent is nonetheless obliged to go to confession, receive the other sacraments, observe the Commandments, whether any private apparitions are recognized or not.

Secondly, I would be an irresponsible minister of the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, if today I were not to publicly advise, from this place and on this occasion as well, to all those interested throughout the world, that in this local Church of Mostar-Duvno, there exists something similar to a schism. A number of priests that have been expelled from the Franciscan OFM Order by the Generalate of the Order, due to their disobedience to the Holy Father, for years now have been forcefully keeping a few parish churches and rectories along with church inventory. They have not only been illegally active in these parishes, but they have also administered the sacraments profanely, while others invalidly, such as Confession and Confirmation, or they have assisted at invalid marriages. This type of anti-ecclesial behaviour is shocking to all of us. At the same time, this scandal of sacrilegiously administering the sacraments, especially of the Most Holy Body of Christ, must shock all the faithful as well who invalidly confess their sins to these priests and participate in sacrilegious liturgies. We pray to the Lord that this scandal and schism be uprooted as soon as possible from our midst.

Thirdly, I am truly grateful to the Holy Father the Pope, to John Paul II of blessed memory and to the reigning Benedict XVI, who have always respected the judgements of the bishops of Mostar-Duvno, of the previous as well as the current bishop, regarding the so-called "apparitions" and "messages" of Medjugorje, all the while recognizing the Holy Father's right to give a final decision on these events. The judgements of the bishops, after all the canonical investigations made thus far, can be summarized in these following points:

1 - Medjugorje is a catholic parish in which liturgical and pastoral activities are carried out, just as in all the other parishes of this diocese of Mostar-Duvno. No-one except the official Church authorities is then authorized to attribute the formal title of “shrine” to this place.

2 - On the basis of Church investigations of the events of Medjugorje, it cannot be determined that these events involve supernatural apparitions or revelations. This means that till now the Church has not accepted, neither as supernatural nor as Marian, any of the apparitions.

3 - Priests who canonically administer this parish of Medjugorje or those who come as visitors, are not authorised to express their private views contrary to the official position of the Church on the so-called “apparitions” and “messages”, during celebrations of the sacraments, neither during other common acts of piety, nor in the Catholic media.

4 - The Catholic faithful are not only free from any obligation to believe in the authenticity of the “apparitions” but they must also know that church pilgrimages are not allowed, whether official or private, individual or group, or from other parishes, if they presuppose the authenticity of the “apparitions” or if by undertaking them attempt to certify these “apparitions”.

5 - As the local Bishop, I maintain that regarding the events of Medjugorje, on the basis of the investigations and experience gained thus far, throughout these last 25 years, the Church has not confirmed a single “apparition” as authentically being the Madonna. The fact that during these 25 years there has been talk of tens of thousands of “apparitions” does not contribute any authenticity to these events, which according to the words of our current Pope, who I encountered during an audience on 24 February this year, commented that at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith they always questioned how all these “apparitions” could be considered authentic for the Catholic faithful. They particularly do not seem to be authentic when it is known beforehand that these so-called “apparitions” will occur:

To one of the “seers” on the 18th of March every year, but along with this she will also receive an “apparition” on the 2nd of each month, with “messages” which you can expect, according to the established procedures;

The second will receive an apparition on every day of the year, and if this were not enough, an added special “apparition” on the 25th of each month along with a type of press release, which once again you can foresee and expect;

The third will receive an “apparition” on the 25th of December, on Christmas day, along with a message similar to the ones already mentioned;

The fourth will receive an “apparition” on the 8th of September every year along with a specific message;

The remaining two will receive the same, every day along with “messages” that can be anticipated since they are variations on the same theme. This fact and the flood of so-called apparitions, messages, secrets and signs, do not strengthen the faith, but rather further convince us that in all of this there is nothing neither authentic nor established as truthful.

Therefore I responsibly call upon those who claim themselves to be “seers”, as well as those persons behind the “messages”, to demonstrate ecclesiastical obedience and to cease with these public manifestations and messages in this parish. In this fashion they shall show their necessary adherence to the Church, by neither placing private “apparitions” nor private sayings before the official position of the Church. Our faith is a serious and responsible matter. The Church is also a serious and responsible institution!

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the greatest possessor of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who through the same Holy Spirit conceived in her body and gave birth to the Second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, who gives us his Most Holy Body and Blood for eternal life, may He - who is the Way, the Truth and the Life — help us so that the truth of the Blessed Virgin, his Mother and Mother of the Church, Seat of Wisdom and Mirror of Justice, may shine forth in brightness in this parish and diocese, without even a hint of incredibility, yet all in accord with the constant teachings and practice of the Church. Amen.

