

EXCERPTS ON HOW PROFITABLE MEDJUGORJE VISIONARIES CLAIMS HAVE BEEN FOR THEM

Has the Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady, Queen of Peace been appearing in Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia since 1981? Six young people have reported these visions and the vision are reported even today. Vicka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic, Ivan Dragicevic, Ivanka Ivankovic and Jakov Colo are their names.

Here are excerpts from Christian Order Magazine
February 2012

EXORCISING MEDJUGORJE

Material motivations

Related in the ensuing article, the sixteenth-century case of Magdalena of the Cross is essential reading for those who argue that even Satanic inspiration could not keep the fraud alive for so long. At least one of the "seers" or their extended family would have broken ranks and spilled the beans, they say. Yet even without a preternatural element, with so much money at stake, both personally and corporately, it would take a brave person to fess up to such an epochal deception tied to myriad vested interests. Fr Philip Pavich, an American Franciscan who worked for eleven years in Israel before securing a transfer to Bosnia to be close to Medjugorje, is in no doubt about this powerful motivation to maintain the Big Lie.

"I believed the apparitions when I came. If anybody wanted it to be true, I did," he once told writer Bill Sammon. Watching people go partially blind by staring at the "miracle of the sun" and observing "professional visionaries" who are "living off the profits" of the booming tourist trade opened his eyes to the truth. "Medjugorje has spawned 400 visionaries in the United States," said Pavich, "They got 'em in every state. It's a ridiculous, pandemic situation. It's totally out of control. I mean, it is a sick visionary world. Canada, the United States, Australia ... everybody that has touched Medjugorje has spawned a whole new petri dish of visionaries."

Pavich grew especially disenchanted with the six original visionaries. "Oh man, they bring home lots of money. People get unbelievably. It's like a cult. They're like little cult leaders, little cult characters. And they collect, man, big time. They've got second houses; they've got perks. They're professional visionaries who are living off the profits."

"Some wealthy Croat tour leader will put down 80,000 bucks, build a house for a visionary, and then she'll sucker her pilgrims into coming by saying 'When you come you'll get to stay with a visionary'," said Pavich, who noted the beauty of the visionaries' houses. "They're a scandal to a lot of people because they (the visionaries) are in on the take — big time. ... They don't work, they never work. They just collect money."

Indeed they do, whenever and wherever they can, also enriching others in the process. One of the "seers," Marija Pavlovic Lunetti (married with four children and living in Milan) is now a regular at "Caritas" in Birmingham, Alabama. Run by former landscaper Terry Colafrancesco, she has her regular visions in a bedroom or a field on his farm — with the retina-burning "miracle of the sun" thrown in — pulling crowds and cash for Terry. A 20 March 2011 report by the Birmingham News revealed all:

Colafrancesco, who said he met with a sympathetic Pope John Paul II in Rome in 1997, doesn't worry about church approval. "Our Lady does not have time to go through commissions for these messages and secrets," he said. "This is above that right now. It's for the whole world."

... [Marija] makes occasional public appearances, talking to pilgrims and sometimes having her daily visions under a pine tree in a pasture next to a Virgin Mary statue. She has most of her visions privately in the house, with Caritas officials offering recaps of the message, which can often be as simple as "pray, pray, pray."

Since 1988, Lunetti has had more than a hundred of her visions on the Caritas property. That makes it a car-friendly version

of a Medjugorje pilgrimage for Americans from Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Michigan and elsewhere.

Pilgrims are encouraged to pray the rosary daily in the field where Lunetti has had past visions. They also browse in the Caritas bookstore.

Caritas has just spent more than \$8 million on expansion at its main building on Shelby County 43 about six miles off U.S. 280 near Chelsea. The four-story Tabernacle of Our Lady's Messages contains a massive publishing operation that produces 500,000 booklets a week sent worldwide to promote the visions. "We're getting ready for a huge evangelization of the whole world," said Colafrancesco, who writes many of the booklets under his pen name, "A Friend of Medjugorje." Colafrancesco on Thursday pointed out a new \$2.2 million binding machine churning out booklets. "We pay as we go," he said. "We don't borrow money."

Despite the recession, annual donations to Caritas have tripled from a few years ago, to between \$3 million and \$4 million, he said.

Caritas has upgraded its website, www.mej.com, to handle world traffic. "When the secrets are released, the whole world's going to want to get in," Colafrancesco said.

Ah yes, the obligatory "secrets"! How short-lived false apparitions would be without them!

One of the most intriguing attraction for tourists is the notion that Mary told the children - who ranged in age from 10 to 16 when the visions began - that she would impart to them ten secrets that cannot be revealed to the world until she gives them a sign. The two visionaries who know longer see apparitions already know the ten secrets. The remaining four visionaries only know nine.

As Fr Pavich said some years ago: "They're playing a game. Now they're on nine secrets for 10 years already. I don't like it. I mean, why don't they bingo out and finish the ten secrets? Because if they did, then the jig is up."

Quite. And since we are dealing with hot-blooded Croatians, when the jig peters out, it could get very messy back home for Marija, Vicka, Ivan and the gang.

"If this thing falls apart," warned Pavich, "there's gonna be murder around here. They've invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in real estate that demands a flow of pilgrims and if they don't come" — Pavich whistles — "I don't wanna be around here. The locals have milked this thing for millions of dollars; therefore, they have a very big vested interest. For them this is a lifeline, a boomtown, an industry driving the whole thing."

Pavich is not exaggerating. In an interview on the Medjugorje phenomenon with Die Tagespost, the chairman of the German Mariological society, dogmatic theologian Professor Manfred Hauke recalled a chilling precedent:

Medjugorje is often cited as an "oasis of peace" during the civil war at the beginning of the '90s. Yet there are also uncomfortable facts that disturb the harmonious view. When revenue from the pilgrimage industry went down in 1992, there were press reports in the wake of a violent conflict among three family clans that served pilgrimage businesses. In a "cleansing action" about 140 inhabitants of Medjugorje were killed, while 600 others had to flee. "This was all kept secret from the outside world, since it naturally could not be brought into accord with belief in the Queen of Peace" (R. Franken, *A Journey to Medjugorje*, 2000, p, 45).

Millionaire "seer"

Contrary to the view of badly misled Medj advocate Fr Amorth, the "visionaries" have indeed grown rich alongside these brutal vested interests. "None of the seers were ever enriched thanks to the apparitions," insists Fr Amorth. "Whoever can provide documentary proof to the contrary, let him do it; otherwise, shut up."

The Italian website L' Impertinent abAteo picked up this gauntlet thrown down by Fr Amorth. After research based on "clear and incontrovertible" documentation, it produced a report detailing the small fortune "seer" Ivan Dragicevic has

made (in cahoots with travel agencies) from his "visions."

"Pilgrimage to Medjugorje with accommodations at the home of Ivan Dragicevic!" advertises "206 Tours," setting out the specific dates from May to September 2012 when Ivan is in residence (the 'off season', October-April, he now spends in America). The pilgrimage package includes: "Conversations with Ivan in the chapel of our house; Breakfast and dinner served by Ivan and Family; Ivan will lead the group on Apparition Hill to pray and meditate; There will be many opportunities to talk with Ivan during your stay." In addition, the "Dragicevic family will do their best to make as much as possible your stay pleasant and comfortable."

Careful scrutiny of this tourist operation revealed that a separate entity, "Prayer Experience" (run by Ivan and his wife), sells the selected tour package through the agency "206 Tours." Consequently, on the basis of a stated maximum of 28 pilgrims per pilgrimage, multiplied by the number of available dates (10), L' Impertinent abAteo, calculated a Dragicevic profit of \$171,360 — "Not to mention the offerings that pilgrims and visitors will leave the beloved 'seer'." This first part of the investigation more than suffices to refute Fr Amorth's false contention. Part two, on Ivan's real estate wheeling and dealing, is the coup de grace. Anyone with some idle time to kill can view the full report at L' Impertinent abAteo. Here is the final reckoning, based on public records of the State of Massachusetts:

In just 5 years the "seer" Ivan Dragicevic has bought properties worth a total of 1,566,000 U.S. dollars, equivalent to 1,470,953 euros. ... The average American, in 5 years would have earned \$198,508 gross, 195,336 euros gross almost 10 times lower than the amount spent by the "visionary".

The other "seers" and their relatives also possess properties (pensions) in Medjugorje, and also advertise "travel packages."

With the greatest respect to the otherwise admirable Fr Amorth, when it comes to Medjugorje, perhaps he should take his own advice and just zip it. Why defend the indefensible? The truth will always out, as complicit Vatican functionaries have repeatedly discovered in recent times.