

Bishop Zanic - campaigner against the lying "visions" of Medjugorje

The Bishop responsible for Medjugorje where six young people claimed to be getting regular messages from Jesus's mother in visions banned the claims. He received a lot of hate from people and disobedience from the visionaries in return. Disobedience to a bishop is against the Catholic faith except when the bishop starts to say the faith is wrong.

In 1981, on June 24th, a strange report heralded the beginning of the Medjugorje industry. Six children reported seeing a shape standing up a hill. The next day four of these with a few others went back to the hill and they got a closer look at the figure who said she was the Virgin Mary. Soon the Lady began to appear to them in the parish Church of Medjugorje. The seers are: Vicka Ivankovic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic, Ivan Dragicevic, Ivanka Ivankovic and Jakov Colo. She gave them ten secrets which prophesy the future. Only some of the visionaries report seeing the Lady on a daily basis. The Lady stopped appearing to the rest except on special occasions. The visions have been condemned by two diocesan bishops, bishops of Mostar who alone have been declared by Rome and "infallible" Catholic tradition to have the authority to pronounce upon the vision. The bishop in the Catholic system is the successor of the apostles while the pope is the successor of the apostles and also one specific apostle, Peter. The authority of the apostles to run the Church both in discipline and in caring for the faith has been transmitted to the bishops in an apostolic succession that can be traced back to the apostles which is why laypeople cannot ordain bishops.

Medjugorians make out that the bishops are acting in bad faith which justifies their ignoring them. But even then they have to be obeyed for that is what the rule about obedience is for: making you do what you are told even if you think the bishop is wrong or in bad faith for the sake of unity and order in the Church. If you keep thinking the bishop is wrong or deceiving and that entitles you to disobey, there is no point in him asking for your obedience. Jesus would then have been a fool for setting up the apostles and bishops to lead the flock.

Fr Michael O Carroll who is a member of the Pontifical Marian Academy and of the French Society for Marian Studies is a promoter of Medjugorje. He has joined with the devious Fr Rene Laurentin to do it and his praise for him knows no bounds.

Fr O Carroll's book is called Medjugorje, Facts, Documents and Theology and was published by Veritas of Dublin.

He quotes the official doctrine of the Church of Rome as expressed by Benedict XIV: "It should be known that the approval given by the Church to a private revelation is nothing but permission granted, after an attentive inquiry, to make known the revelation for the enlightenment and good of the faithful. Even when these revelations are approved by the Church they should not be given the assent of Catholic faith. Nevertheless they should be given an assent of human faith, following the rules of prudence by which such revelations are probable or believable for pious reasons..."

Without prejudice to the integrity of Catholic faith a person may withhold his assent to such revelations and withdraw from them provided he does so with due modesty, not without reason and without contempt" (page 9). In a Church decree issued in 1877 by the Congregation of Rites in Rome it was stated, "The Apostolic See has neither approved or condemned such apparitions or revelations but merely permits Catholics to believe in them – where they have the support of credible witnesses and documents – with a purely human faith".

[Note: The Catechism of the Catholic Church, article 66-67, reads: Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries...Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history...Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment." Comment: Medjugorje with its ten secrets is by default trying to surpass!]

Is Zanic a Liar?

Chapter 6 of Fr O Carroll's book relates Bishop Zanic's objections to Medjugorje and attempts to refute them.

I find it impossible to believe O Carroll that the bishop really thought the messages about conversion and peace were absurd (page 108).

The bishop disbelieved in the visions because the Virgin said that her last appearance was to take place in 1981 but she kept

on appearing.

The reply to this is that the visionaries were asked to move the apparition into the Church and Mirjana said that there was no point for the visions were to end next Friday which was the third of July 1981 (110). Fr Jozo Zovko asked her if the Virgin said that and she said they assumed it for they read it in a book and it happened in Lourdes. It is improbable that they all assumed such a thing and did not ask the Virgin. Why didn't the Virgin tell them they were wrong in case enemies of the apparition would spread disbelief over it? They decided to end the hoax and changed their minds after they announced the end. That is the logical explanation. The Bishop is accused of being wrong when he said that a number of priests were there during the allegedly last apparition but the book says only Jozo was there. That is difficult to believe. There would have been more priests than that especially when the bishop had no objection to the vision at that time.

A tape made of an interview with the visionaries has Mirjana admitting that the Virgin told her the visions would end that Friday. The vision was unable to make up her mind if she wanted to go to the Church instead of the hill Podbrdo (The Medjugorje Deception, page 79). The real Virgin would have been able to make up her mind. She would have known of the suggestion to appear in the Church before it was mentioned to her so she would have had time to think.

The bishop stated that Fr Zovko was one of those who were behind the hoax and the book says that Zovko was once strictly opposed to the apparitions (Medjugorje, Facts Documents, Theology, page 111). That is certainly a lie for when he is so supportive now of a false apparition it is hard to believe he would have opposed a real one. His opposition would have been necessary in case anybody would trace the origin of the apparitions to him so it was an act to cover his tracks.

The bishop said that Fr Vlastic was one of the hoaxers who started the whole thing too. The book simply gives the astonishing argument that he was thirty kilometres away from Medjugorje at the start as a sufficient refutation! (111).

The bishop said first that nobody was influencing the children and later that they were like robots. But the reason for this change of heart is not stated and that is unfair. When the children began saying the Virgin was criticising the bishop and taking the side of the suspended Franciscans it was clear to the bishop that the children were being manipulated.

Page 114 argues that it was ridiculous for the bishop to say that the visions were from Satan for there were so many prayers, confessions and conversions because of them. Do the conversions and prayers and self-sacrifices of the Hare Krishnas prove that they are right?

The same page confesses that the Virgin did not resolve the dispute between the Franciscans and the bishop except how she has kind of resolved it by calling on all to convert and live in peace (114). This is the answer to the fact that the apparition promised that this would be fully rectified (112). But it is then claimed by the book that it would have been fixed but for the bishop's impatience (113). So, much for not judging. Sometimes people in power have to be impatient and can make mistakes and be misinformed. The Virgin made a promise and it failed. And calling to conversion is no way of solving a dispute.

The bishop said that the blame for the religious division in his diocese rested wholly with the Franciscans (115). O Carroll says that there was no problem when the order served Hercegovina when their bishop fled from the Turks and set up a diocese or when they allowed secular clergy in. He gets sarcastic and asks if they are expected to wish they did not exist. That is his answer to the bishop. But the past has nothing do with what is happening in Zanic's time. If the bishop is in authority the Franciscans have to be to blame.

Page 115, asks why the Virgin cannot accuse the bishop of being rash when that is what he is. But she has her Holy Spirit. Why can't he discreetly make this seen? It is better for her to say nothing and not to judge and to let people be guided by the Spirit and find out for themselves. There was no evidence for the reality of the apparitions at this time meaning that she had no right to ask the world to take her word for it. She was the one that was rash.

Page 116 responds to the bishop's assertion that Vicka said in August 1981 that a big sign would be performed soon and that they must be patient so that is a lie for it never took place. O Carroll says that in prophetic style even a thousand years can be described as one day and that soon could be a long time for us. The only excuse for such a view is the fact that the Bible often said that this and that was near and it never happened and hasn't taken place yet. God would not wrap up prophecy in such empty and confusing language. Christians change the meaning of words when prophecies fail. The Bible never justifies this practice. The Christians ignore the fact that when God speaks to us the purpose is to make us understand. He talks to us as if he were looking at things from our point of view. You interpret things according to how the audience understood them for the speaker would be trying to make the audience understand. Soon then means soon. The Virgin never explained that soon did not mean soon and she was not reciting scripture but giving messages so why would she use soon in the scriptural sense? There is no evidence that the visionaries knew at that time of arguments like O Carroll's. That is why O Carroll cannot give us a quote or anything to justify his interpretation. The bishop is the intelligent one in this matter. A woman called Mara Jerkovic made a statement about the sign and the bishop had regard for her testimony for it was

unfavourable. O Carroll writes her off as a gossip (117). He gives no evidence that she really is one or cannot be trusted.

The visionaries told the bishop that the Virgin confirmed that a story that a bloody handkerchief would have brought the last judgment on the world had it not been given to her was true (83). O Carroll makes no attempt to refute this so it must be true. It refutes the apparitions for the story is silly in the extreme.

The apparition's behaviour was bizarre. The Virgin was roaring with laughter one time she simply said she would sort out the dispute between the Franciscans and the diocese. There was nothing funny in it. The Lady then told the visionaries to laugh. At least, that was their explanation to the people who saw them laughing (81-82). This sounds like the vision was a joke or a hallucination. They would not have laughed with the Virgin if they saw anything but at her. Perhaps they thought she was mad. O Carroll passes over that too. He ignores anything embarrassing.

The bishop and the two Franciscans, Vego and Prusina, were in disagreement. The bishop suspended them from their priestly duties. Page 89 says the Virgin said, "The bishop has none of the real love of God for those two." This is quoted by Zanic but O Carroll does not question its authenticity. Though an apparition cannot criticise a bishop as an apparition cannot have the same authority as Jesus gave the Church, she might have said, "The bishop lacks some of the real love of God for those two." That was better than completely demonising the bishop.

Page 119 says that the bishop regarded Vicka, Grafenauer and Vlasic as the witnesses to the infamous diary of Vicka in which the messages were recorded that she is so ashamed of now. All three claimed that there was no diary. Vlasic swore on the cross that this was so and that he had never seen it. Was he a perjurer? Grafenauer stated that he had not the courage to tell the bishop that he never saw the book until much later (118). I would take this as proof that he did see something. Why not correct the bishop immediately? The bishop is accused of lying and saying that this man was a witness to the diary even after he was corrected. But how do you know that Grafenauer did not see the diary and regretted mentioning it? The man was a supporter of the apparitions.

Grafenauer is unreliable for he made a recording of a dialogue with Vicka in which she says that the Virgin opposed the pope in banning Vego and Prusina from hearing confessions. Still, he supported the apparitions after a strong initial opposition to them.

The bishop is criticised for condemning the apparitions because of the number of visionaries.

Apart from the six there are forty-seven other claimants. O Carroll says that they might all be genuine but argues that the visions to the six are real so if the rest are frauds that does not harm the case for the six (121). None of the forty-six were tested by science.

The visionaries were proven to have lied to the bishop. The Lady stood up for a priest who was accused of fathering a child by a nun and it was later found that the accusation was true. The bishop of the diocese where the apparition happens is the one who has to decide if anything supernatural is happening and if it is from God and yet this Lady counsels disobedience. Catholic doctrine going back to the time of Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century insists that whoever disobeys a legitimate order of the bishop separates himself from Christ and the Church. Catholics might say that the bishop is wrong and should not be obeyed but apparitions are subordinate to Church authority. Mary would not appear in a diocese if it would lead to trouble with the bishop. She certainly would not threaten the bishop with divine vengeance as the visionaries reported she had done on June 21st 1983 in which she said he has to convert to belief in the events of the Medjugorje parish or else. That was an attempt to bias the bishop in the apparitions favour by scaring him. The real Virgin could not do that for the Church leaves it up to each person to decide even when it approves of an apparition if that apparition really was from God.

FINALLY

The feet of the Virgin Mary have never touched Medjugorje.

The logic in this book should be applied to similar cases. Let it stand as a warning that people can be so persuasive and seem sincere and still be leading you astray. It shows the madness of letting religious figures like Jesus and Mary have the final say in what you decide to do.

It is easier to prove that an apparition is false for only one mistake tells the tale than to prove that it is true and has the hallmarks of a divine origin for faith itself demands complicated evidence.

Medjugorje offends the Catholic faith and refutes it if it is genuine for it demands belief and if the Catholic faith is true then Medjugorje is false. The Bible says that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. It says that Jesus was the perfect man and intercessor and saviour and there is no need for the Med Virgin to be another mediator. Medjugorje is certainly

more convincing than the gospel accounts of the risen Jesus appearing to the disciples. Hoax or not, it is clearly proof that something that is without authority from Jesus though it uses his name has done better than he ever could. Evangelicals cannot use the gospels to prove or give convincing evidence for Christianity when something has went into competition with their Jesus and won.

A Christian writer tells us, "When one analyzes many of the alleged miracles that accompany Marian apparitions, they seem to be of a different kind than those found in Scripture. This is true of biblical miracles as a whole, as well as the miracles in Jesus' public ministry. When did Jesus ever make the sun dance or crosses spin? All of His miracles were done in the context of ministry. Biblical miracles had a strong practical aspect. Many of the miracles associated with Marian apparitions seem dramatic and sensational; attention-getting if you will -- the kind of miracles that Jesus consistently refused to perform (Matt. 12:38-39). This is a good reason to at least suspect the source of these miracles."