

revelations, yet not through convincing arguments based on the truth, but through the self-praise of personal conversions and by statements such as one ‘feels good’. How can this ever be taken as proof of the authenticity of apparitions?” (Quoted on p. 242)

Our author’s firm conviction that the seers of Medjugorje cannot compare with the integrity and holiness of the children of Fatima and that the former has led to the sorry neglect in the Church of the Message of Our Lady of Fatima so repeatedly approved by the Popes—is indisputable. Mr. Foley’s book also constitutes a plea that the “genuine enthusiasm” and any positive measure of real devotion to the Mother of God resulting from Medjugorje “should be harnessed to the ordinary Marian ‘channels’ which exist in the Church, particularly those involving Fatima”. There is one minor error on page 164 where the “Beast” in the Apocalypse is identified as the Antichrist. However, there is no mention of the Antichrist in the Book of Revelation. He rather appears in the Letters of St. John and St. Paul.

Cardinal Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, has announced that a Commission with expanded members will soon be formed to review the alleged apparitions at Medjugorje as well as review pastoral provisions for the thousands of pilgrims who visit there each year. He stated that, “This Commission will be under the Bosnian Bishops Conference” as is the usual practice with alleged apparitions.

Those who believe that Medjugorje has proved to be one of the biggest hoaxes in the history of the Catholic Church will find it difficult, if not impossible, to envisage any other verdict than that of the negative

judgments already issued in formal statements by Medjugorje’s Bishops Zanic and Peric and that contained in the 1991 Zadar Statement of the entire Bishops’ Conference.

There are two matters which readers of **UNDERSTANDING MEDJUGORJE** will not find fully treated in this important volume. One regards the swarm of false visionaries who have disturbed the peace and unity of the post-conciliar Church in many countries (especially the U.S.) and who trace their inspiration precisely to the events of Medjugorje. It would have been interesting to see identified the important Vatican prelates who have exerted pressure over many years to keep the Medjugorje apparitions from being considered definitively condemned by the Catholic Church.

James Likoudis is a well-known author on sex education, catechetics, and liturgy, and the author of a trilogy of books dealing with Eastern Orthodoxy. His latest work is “Eastern Orthodoxy and the See of Peter” which gives an account of his reconciliation to the Church from Greek Orthodoxy in 1952 and contains various articles dealing with doctrinal issues raised by Eastern Orthodox polemicists. His Website: WWW.CREDOBUFFALO.COM

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

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Medjugorje Evaluated In New Study

James Likoudis

British author Donal Anthony Foley, a well-known author on Marian apparitions, has written *Understanding Medjugorje: Heavenly Visions or Religious Illusion* (Theotokos Books, P.O.Box 8570, Nottingham, England) [books@theotokos.org.uk].

English-speaking readers will find it an excellent summary of the evidence for and against the authenticity of the apparitions alleged to have taken place 25 years ago in the village of Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia. Medjugorje has been the subject of passionate controversy ever since the visionaries first claimed to see the Blessed Virgin on 24 June 1981. The result: 30 million Catholics visiting the site of the apparitions and presuming their authenticity contrary to the repeated judgments of the two Bishops of Mostar-Duvno who have studied the events.

The historical background of the apparitions is given, noting the destructive consequences of World War II atrocities of Croatian atrocities against the Serbs and the more recent Communist oppression of the Croats under Tito who died in 1980. The psychology of the population of Medjugorje and surrounding communities still plagued by murderous vendettas -as well as the mentality of rebellious Franciscan Friars together with the young “seers” who came under their commanding influence, may have been seriously affected. In other words, conditions were ripe for the appearance of Medjugorje’s “Queen of Peace” in the apparitions claimed

by “young adults” living in a troubled environment “exposed to the corrupting influences of the modern world, including television”. As the author also perceptively observes, “We are not dealing with a normal Catholic culture here, but one with a strange and checkered history, comprised of heretical sects, pagan religion, seemingly endless violence, and a long running dispute between official Church authority and local Franciscans.” (p. 24)

Our author notes the profound influence exerted by the Charismatic Movement in certain of its questionable aspects on the local Franciscan priests promoting the visionaries’ apparitions. Moreover, it was the world-wide Charismatic Renewal and some of its leaders (especially priests Fr. Rene Laurentin, Fr. Edward O’Connell, Fr. Robert Faricey) who from the very beginning gave full support to Medjugorje’s authenticity as the fulfillment of charismatic “prophecy”) and helped publicize it by a “rush of books” and pamphlets throughout the Catholic world. The publicity engendered would all contribute to the financial benefit of airlines, travel agents organizing pilgrimages, the disobedient Franciscans led by Fr. Josef Zovko, and the seers themselves.

The grave doubts concerning Medjugorje expressed by many critics (E. Mike Jones, Michael Davies, Fr. Robert Fox, Fr. Vittorio Guerera, Fr. Ivo Siric, O.F.M.) and other observers as well as simple faithful are amply reinforced in the author’s calm and systematic examination of the seers’ credibility, the duration of the apparitions (some 30,000 “messages” still going on 25 years after and with no end apparently in sight!), and the relation of the seers and their Franciscan

supporters to Church authority. There remains the question as to what validity can be given the “Queen of Peace’s” appearance in 1981 when but 10 years afterward (from 1991 to July 1992) Croatia (declaring its independence) would see horrific ethnic/genocidal conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and with villagers in the area around Medjugorje slaughtering one another. The outbreak of this war occurred after the Yugoslav Bishops’ Conference published their April 10 1991 Zadar Statement declaring that after 10 years of alleged visions it could **not** be affirmed that “supernatural apparitions and revelations” had taken place.

There are other troubling issues that our author treats in some detail. He notes that the advocates of Medjugorje have too often ignored the 17 tape recordings of the interviews with the seers that took place immediately after the alleged visions. These recordings of June 27, 28, 29, and 30, 1981, reveal such inconsistencies, contradictions, and bizarre comments in the seers’ testimony that even Fr. Zovko himself was led to first deny the authenticity of Our Lady’s appearance! These first tape recordings are, moreover, at odds with later interviews held with the seers. Our author notes the weight of evidence indicating that the influence of the demonic in the apparitions cannot be excluded. The seers did see something but could the Vision have been rather of Satan disguising himself as the holy Virgin? Certain grotesque aspects of “her” reputed appearance to the seers and the negative fruits of the “apparitions” would suggest it. There are the unbelievable and absurd contents of some of the “messages”, lies, false predictions and healings, the rampant disobedience to the

Bishops of Mostar and even moral lapses occurring among some of the Franciscan priests, the kidnapping and beating of Bishop Peric by fanatical Medjugorje supporters, and Our Lady declaring 13 times with respect to the case of the Franciscan Fr. Vego who was ordered expelled from his order by the Vatican for seducing a nun that the Bishop (Pavao Zanic) was “wrong” in the matter.

Bishop Pavao Zanic who was the local Bishop at the start of the reputed apparitions was unshakeable in declaring repeatedly that “I am sure that Our Lady does not appear...The ‘Messages’ cannot be of our Virgin. They are the fruit of a fabrication, fraud, and disobedience to the Church.” The present Bishop of Mostar, Ratko Peric, has been equally opposed to the authenticity of Medjugorje as a supernatural event. He summed up well what he considered to be the negative fruits of Medjugorje, and has deplored the development of a veritable schism in his diocese:

“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.” (June 15, 2006 *Homily in administering the sacrament of Confirmation/ Catholic News Service*).

“The numerous absurd messages, insincerities, falsehoods and disobedience associated with the events and ‘apparitions’ of Medjugorje from the very outset, all disprove any claims of authenticity. Much pressure through appeals has been made to force the recognition of the authenticity of private