

Bogus Attack on Pope Moves from *Amoris Laetitia* to Subsequent Pastoral Guidelines

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

AFTER PRESENTING AN ARTICLE on the moral soundness of the the document [*Amoris Laetitia*](#), the author was applauded for doing a good job using the document itself to demonstrate its moral rectitude and loyalty to both scripture and tradition. However, it was argued that the article, "[*Cardinal Burke Still At It, Causing Confusion on an Already Settled and Clear Issue*](#)", failed to take into account the subsequent "acts" of various Bishop's Conferences, Conferences that drafted various Pastoral Guidelines, some of them very liberal, and the pope's responses to them. These diverse guidelines, and papal responses to them, supposedly reveal the pope's true intent as a liberal reformer committed to a modernist liberal agenda, which is the cause behind his subtly introducing heresy into *Amoris Laetitia* by way of purposeful confusion. The pope has been assailed for these Episcopal Guidelines and supposed responses to them and the author lambasted for failure to cover them, as if they were approps for an article limited to the moral rectitude of the document *Amoris Laetitia* itself – the *document* and *subsequent acts* intended to implement its propositions are different topics. Thus, in this article, the author will take up the issue of subsequent "acts" that followed in the wake of the document to demonstrate the claim that *Amoris Laetitia* introduces heresy by way of confusion, is as bogus as the claim that the pope's subsequent responses are proof of his intent to introduce heresy by way of confusion.

Moreover, it will be demonstrated that the most confused

people are the ones making the claims about the pope causing confusion; their confusion not only pertains to the post-synodal exhortation, it carries right on up to and includes the various Episcopal Guidelines being drafted to implement *Amoris Laetitia* in the various dioceses throughout the world. Some of the confusion is due to a seeming inability to integrate and adequately recall the set of systematic data presented in *Amoris Laetitia* as explained in the previous article. This intellectual, perhaps moral limit is related to a further inability to comprehend meaning or due to a willful desire to remain ignorant so that the detractors can continue their tirade against the Vicar of Christ. Under the guise of reverence and loyalty to the truth, some of these vehement detractors appear to be among the most disloyal and erroneous "Sons of the Church". [Cardinal Ratzinger](#), while serving as Prefect of the [Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith](#) (CDF), captured the latter idea:

"It is necessary to be strong in faith and to resist error even when it masquerades as piety."

The culprit is brought into stark relief when Sacred Scriptures shed their light on the theme of error masquerading in piety: false apostles masquerading as "apostles of Christ."

*"And what I do I will continue to do, **in order to end this pretext** of those who seek a pretext for being regarded as we (the apostles) are in the mission of which they boast. For **such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles of Christ**. And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. So it is not strange that his **ministers** also masquerade as ministers of righteousness" ([2 Corinthians 11: 12-15](#)).*

Before continuing, it must be pointed out, that the author is NOT referring to traditionalists who have sought union and are in union with the See of Peter, like the good priests of [The](#)

[Priestly Order of St. Peter \(FSSP\)](#); he is referring to those who have separated themselves, those who consider the Vicar of Christ to be some type of false prophet, who consider him to be an ersatz pope, those who teach that the Chair of Peter is vacant and who reject ecumenical council Vatican II. Those who like [Bishop Williamson](#) (head of the SSPX Resistance excommunicated for ordaining a bishop in 2015), argue that the Vatican headed by Pope Francis is a “cuckoo’s nest”:

*“Wherever the remainder of the true nightingales (traditionalists) are visibly gathered, in whatever makeshift nest, they are in the Church, **they are the true visible Church**, and their beautiful song testifies to anyone who has ears to hear that **the cuckoos are nothing but cuckoos who have stolen the Catholic nest which they presently occupy,**”*

The [SSPX Resistance](#) believe that the SSPX (from which they broke) has compromised too much with Rome (esp. about Vatican Council II) in order to be brought back into union, (something that has NOT been achieved), *SSPX Resistance* holds that Rome is the “enemy” of the Catholic “Faith”:

*“Unless the Society’s (SSPX) leadership is shaken out of its **dream of peace with Conciliar Rome** as revealed by them, then the last worldwide bastion of Catholic Tradition risks being on its way to surrendering to **the enemies of the Faith**. Maybe bastions are out of date.*

Sedevacantists (supposed Catholics who [generally] believe and teach that there has not been a valid pope since Pius XII) object to supposed errors that have infected the Church since Vatican Council II, but rather than work for internal reform through a process of cooperation, they exacerbate the problem by rejecting every pope since John XXIII and the Ecumenical Council that he called into being. The movement, in its most illustrious form began with Archbishop Lefebvre who started the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) in 1983. **Originally**

schismatic and favoring sedevacantism, SSPX has since modified its views. Like a Protestant sect, SSPX has spawned other dissident groups that have either held it to be too lenient or too lax.

For example, The [Society of Saint Pius V \(SSPV\)](#) was formed when Archbishop Lefebvre expelled Frs. Clarence Kelly, [Anthony Cekada](#), Daniel Dolan and Eugene Berry from the SSPX due in large part because Lefebvre instructed them to accept new members previously ordained to the priesthood according to the revised rites of Pope Paul VI. These priests were also opposed to Lefebvre's insistence that they use the 1962 edition of the Roman Missal, which was issued by Pope John XXIII. [Fr. Dolan later admitted](#) that while still a member of the SSPX, he believed that the See of Peter was vacant:

*" As a seminarian at Ecône (SSPX Seminary in Switzerland) back in the autumn of 1973, he had already come to the conclusion that the only logical explanation for evil of the New Mass and the errors of Vatican II was that **Paul VI**, due to personal heresy, had lost the pontificate. Ever since, he has steadfastly held that position regarding Paul VI and his successors, and never once acknowledged them as popes in the Canon of his Mass. This explanation for the situation after Vatican II later came to be known popularly as "sedevacantism" (from the Latin term for the interregnum between popes) – "the seat is vacant"*

Other groups that broke off from the SSPX include [SSPX Resistance](#), quoted above, various sedevacantist groups such as the highly suspect [Holy Family Monastery](#) in Fillmore, New York run by an [ersatz monk](#) who, like many who accuse others of heresy, [teaches heresy himself](#); at least that is what some other sedevacantists say about him. Still others have come back into union with Rome such as the FSSP, also mentioned above. Groups like the FSSP and others such as the Fraternity of [Saint Vincent Ferrer](#) in principle accept the Second Vatican

Council, as well the Novus Ordo Mass, which they regard as a *legitimate* but somewhat imprudent compromise with the the modern world. Thus, with the approval of the Holy See, they continue to celebrate the Tridentine Mass while being in union with Rome.

In summary, traditionalists are a broad group of diverse Catholics, some of whom have separated themselves from communion with Rome and others who have sought after and obtained communion after splitting from the SSPX or affiliated societies. It is the former group that this article is critical of, critical because they have dared to be critical first, critical of the papacy, of the liturgy, and of the church's evangelization efforts in the modern world; most egregious is the issue they have with the pope, thinking it little offense to call him a heretic, schismatic, moron, false-prophet, you name it; they like to call Pope Francis, "Bergoglio". If they think they have a right to demean, twist and distort the truth, to be critical of the pope, than they should accept criticism themselves and learn to grow accustomed to it and to a whole lot more which is coming their way for obstinate refusal to accept the Vicar of Christ; for sins against the papacy; sins against unity; since against truth, which they claim to uphold; for the sin of scandal and, like the Pharisees, for the sin of leading others into schism and error.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves" ([Matt 23:15](#)).

What are the acts subsequent to *Amoris Laetitia* that these so-called traditionalists are referring to as proofs that Pope Francis intends heresy? They are Bishop's Guidelines written by various bishops and Bishop's Conferences throughout the world for the purpose of localizing and implementing the

teaching contained in *Amoris Laetitia* at the diocesan level. First they reject *Amoris Laetitia* by falsely claiming that it contains error or at least confusion that leads to error.

When they lose this argument, they resort to subsequent acts uncharitably and falsely claiming that the pope has supported mortal sin by admitting public adulterers to Holy Communion because of his approval of the Maltese Bishop's Guidelines, the acceptance of the Guidelines for his own diocese, the Diocese of Rome, which they claim admit divorced-remarried adulterers to Holy Communion and other such subsequent Guidelines, Guidelines that they claim are proof of the pope's intent to teach heresy by means of so-called "confusion, which they claim is stealthily woven into the fabric of *Amoris Laetitia*.

We have reviewed, studied, examined, and analyzed the document many times and not once have we spotted error or been confused, nor has Cardinal Mueller, the current Prefect for the CDF. After demonstrating its adherence to truth in the above linked article that shows in detail that *Amoris Laetitia* is firmly rooted in both Scripture and long-standing Tradition, after pointing this out, instead of gracefully admitting their error, radical proponents of traditionalism rather than admitting their error, deflect it. They continue their merciless onslaught by claiming that it is clear that "Bergoglio" stealthily planned to teach heresy as verified by his subsequent approval of mortal sin in various Bishop's Guidelines. **What was implicit in the document they claim, is explicit in the subsequent Guidelines.**

It is true, some of these Guidelines do contain moral error, error that is due to liberal interpretations that permit adulterous divorced-remarried couples to receive Holy Communion under certain conditions as in the Diocese of Malta. The errors contained in these Guidelines have been blamed on the pope rather than on the bishops themselves. If some admit that the bishops are to blame, they then castigate the

pope for purposefully causing “confusion” that has enabled such errors to be promulgated by some bishops. They fail, however, to realize that not only are several of their claims erroneous, (for example, that the Diocese of Rome Guidelines permit adulterers to receive Holy Communion) but that it is they, the accusers, who are the primary purveyors of the “confusion”, confusion that has enabled liberal-minded bishops to pursue their erroneous theology contrary to both scripture and tradition and the true intent of *Amoris Laetitia* wherein it is stated several times that its interpretation can neither “prescind from the Gospel” nor the constant tradition of the Catholic faith, including John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio*.

The more **liberal minded bishops have been aided in their drafting and implementation of erroneous Guidelines by the barrage of mistrust and confusion engendered by the traditionalists.** That is, if they had fallen in-line behind the pope, like Cardinal Mueller and other loyal bishops and Cardinals, if they had clarified the difference between dogmatic and pastoral theology and properly interpreted the document, **they would have significantly reduced the ability to operate under the penumbra of confusion.** That is, if there was unity by promoting clarity, there would be little disunity facilitated by claims of confusion spearheaded by a few radical traditionalists. **If instead of confusion, they would have promoted unity, the liberal bishops would have little room to operate.** As it is, [the traditionalist approach has provided their supposed liberal enemies, on the opposite end of the theological spectrum, a wide swathe for operation contrary to the wishes of the magisterium as expressed by Cardinal Mueller, Prefect of the CDF:](#)

“Adultery is always a mortal sin and the bishops who create confusion about this must study the doctrine of the Church...Amoris Laetitia must “clearly be interpreted in the light of the whole doctrine of the Church. [...] It is not

right that so many bishops are interpreting 'Amoris Laetitia' according to their way of understanding the Pope's teaching. This does not keep to the line of Catholic doctrine."

"The magisterium of the Pope is interpreted only by him or through the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The Pope interprets the bishops, it is not the bishops who interpret the Pope, this would constitute an inversion of the structure of the Catholic Church."

"To all those who are talking too much, I urge them to study first the doctrine on the papacy and the episcopate of the two Vatican Councils. ... The bishop, as teacher of the Word, must himself be the first to be well-formed so as not to fall into the risk of the blind leading the blind...The Church can never justify a situation which is not in accordance with the will of God."

Again, what are these acts of the pope that some traditionalists have adopted as a more advanced strategy to forward their contention that the pope is a heretic? These acts include the guidelines produced by the Bishops of Malta, the German Bishop's Conference, and especially the Bishops of Argentina and those of the Diocese of Rome, headed by the pope himself. It is claimed that in all these dioceses, church teaching about divorced and remarried couples living in adulterous relationships are being violated because in these dioceses divorced-remarried adulterers living in objective sin are being admitted to the sacraments.

While there is some truth to this statement; it is not true that the pope is supporting these initiatives nor is it true that any of the accusations are even correct. Neither the Argentine Bishops nor the Bishop of Rome permit access to the

Eucharist by divorced-remarried people living in adultery as the traditionalists and their erstwhile allies have loudly and boldly proclaimed. In other words, the traditionalists are wrong in every case, wrong when they say the pope is supporting liberal guidelines, and wrong when they say some guidelines teach heresy when in fact, they do not! Although some do teach herey, these are *not* supported by the pope; the ones that the pope does support such as the Argentine bishops and those of his own diocese hold to the truth about marriage contrary to what many traditionalists and other ideological outlets have reported. They are either ignorant themselves or hide behind a veil of obfuscation (exactly what they accuse the pope of doing) dependent on other's ignorance, subversion of facts, and regular mis-reading of documents as will be shown document by document in the following article.

1st Anniversary Flashback; Cardinal Burke Still Causing Confusion

[\(New Era World News](#) – Follow Up Tomorrow)

This article was written earlier in the year but serves as a flashback on this First Anniversary of the attempt to force Pope Francis to answer to his detractors. Newera is looking forward to releasing a provocative, demonstrative and current update on the issue tomorrow.

CARDINAL BURKE SEEMS TO HAVE TROUBLE letting go of an issue that has already been settled. Earlier this year [Cardinal Mueller](#), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) stated that “There’s no problem

with doctrine in ‘*Amoris Laetitia*’ (AL). The Cardinal also stated that:

“The document is “very clear” on doctrine, and that making the discussion public is harmful to the Church.”

Nonetheless, on the eve of March 24, 2017 Cardinal Raymond Burke, after several previous public cannonades, was still at it. If the pope is not good enough for him why should the highest doctrinal authority in the Church, beside the pope himself, mean anything to him either? Thus, on that Friday evening, Cardinal Burke presented a talk at [Saint Raymond of Peñafort](#) parish in Springfield, Virginia, during which he stated that “correction” by the Four Cardinals would be forthcoming if Pope Francis fails respond to the *dubia* presented to him by what might *in jest* be a dubious group of cardinals.

The pastor of the parish, Fr. John De Celles, asked about the *dubia*:

Fr. De Celles: There are a lot of rumors circulating about the dubia, which you and four other esteemed cardinals sent to the Holy Father about divorce, marriage, and communion and the like. Do you know if there will be a response to the dubia from our Holy Father or from the CDF?

Cardinal Burke: I sincerely hope that there will be because these are fundamental questions that are honestly raised by the text of the apostolic...the post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia. And until these questions are answered, there continues to spread a very harmful confusion in the Church and one of the fundamental questions is in regards to the truth that there are some kinds that are always and everywhere wrong – what we call intrinsically evil acts – and so, we cardinals are, will continue to insist that

we hear a response to these honest questions.”

Fr. De Celles: *If there is no response, will, what will your response be, the Four Cardinals?*

Cardinal Burke: *Then we simply will have to correct the situation, again, in a respectful way, that simply can say that, to draw the response to the questions from the constant teachings of the Church and to make that known for the good of souls.*

“In summary, [the five dubia suggest that “Amoris Laetitia” may have altered traditional Catholic teaching on the following matters:](#)”

- the indissolubility of the sacramental marriage bond;
- the existence of absolute moral norms prohibiting intrinsically evil acts;
- that one can find oneself in an objective situation of grave habitual sin by living in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law;
- that circumstances or intentions can never transform an intrinsically evil act into a subjectively good one or into a defensible choice;
- that there can be no “creative” role for conscience to authorize legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms.

According to the [Jesuit Review](#),

*“The dubia are not really expressions of doubt or questions but rather **assertions that “Amoris Laetitia” appears to have***

abandoned or altered key teachings of Catholic tradition, especially as they have been expressed most recently by St. John Paul II in his encyclical letter "Veritatis Splendor" (1993).

This does appear to be the case. The key word is "appears". After reading the document, we begin to wonder if the Cardinal has ever read the document; certain that he has, Newera analysts are left awestruck, did we read the same document?

We are left awestruck because after reading the document, nothing "appeared" contrary to the teachings of Catholic tradition. In fact, **Pope Francis strains to make it clear in numerous places throughout the document and esp. in the so-called "troublesome" Chapter Eight that nothing stated in AL about the discernment process that is integral to pastoral theology should be interpreted in such a way that contradicts the long held teaching of the Church on marriage nor may it be interpreted in such a way that prescinds from the Gospel (para 297, 300, 307, 308, 311).** Did the Cardinals miss these statements?

To elucidate the point about Francis' clarity, a chronological list of clarifying statements contained in the original document (Chapter Eight) is provided. To begin, according to the AL,

*"The Synod Fathers stated that, although the Church realizes that **any breach of the marriage bond "is against the will of God"** she is also "conscious of the frailty of many of her children" (para 291).*

Pope Francis begins the so-called difficult chapter by reaffirming the perennial truths of the faith pertaining to the marriage bond and hints at the pastoral dimension that must be taken into account **while upholding the perennial truths, because, according to the pope "any breach of the marriage bond "is against the will of God."** Moreover, the

Church

"... constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, "the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children to enlighten those who have lost their way or who are in the midst of a storm" (para 291).

Again, he clearly states that the Church in addition to protecting the marriage bond from any breach, is also leading all of her children to "*perfection*". Since all men and women are at a different place along the path that leads to God, the Church must meet them where they are at. As witnessed by St. Paul, she must "become all things to all men with the view of winning them to Christ" ([1 Cor 9:22](#)). If the Church and her ministers fail to do this, they will *not* bring anyone to Christ, which is their evangelical mission. She must be especially vigilant about those who have "lost their way"; Like her beloved spouse, Jesus Christ, His bride must leave the secure to seek out the lost but not in anyway that negates the truth about marriage as already clearly stated at the outset of the chapter.

"What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: And coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance" ([Luke 15:4-7](#)).

Perhaps this pastoral approach taught by the Lord Himself, is too difficult for some who would rather wear medals and debate theological issues while drinking wine and smoking cigars or

for another group, the so-called, “self righteous”. While debating theology and enjoying a good cigar are wholesome activities, they are deficient if *not* followed by the difficult task of pastoral work, of seeking out, reassuring, and accompanying the lost while gently guiding them *after* touching their hearts with mercy and compassion rather than cold correction and instant rebuke, which, *more often than not*, turns them away. NO! This is not the way of Jesus Christ, nor is it the way of Pope Francis; anyone who thinks otherwise will have difficulty understanding *Amoris Laetitia*.

Francis continues:

*“The Fathers also considered the specific situation of a merely civil marriage or, with due distinction, even simple cohabitation, noting that “when such unions attain a particular stability, legally recognized, are characterized by deep affection and responsibility for their offspring, and demonstrate an ability to overcome trials, they can provide occasions for **pastoral care** with a view to the **eventual celebration of the sacrament of marriage**” (para 293).*

Notice that Francis indicates that when civilly married people or even those in “simple cohabitation” have a relationship that is “stable” and are characterized by “deep affection” and “responsibility for their offspring” they can provide an “occasion for pastoral care”, not for the sacraments *but* for pastoral care (that might lead to the sacraments). In other words, divorced-remarried couples who are acting maturely and give signs that they might want to mature in the faith should be approached; they should be approached however, not to introduce them to the Sacraments, but with a view of giving them pastoral care that might lead to “*eventual celebration of marriage*”. In other words, these people are to be met and encountered, **not to condone their sin, but to bring them to a deeper relationship with Christ and eventually to Christian marriage**. This seems very clear, and it sets the tone for the

remainder of the so-called difficult chapter.

To provide further clarity Francis remarks:

“In this pastoral discernment, there is a need “to identify elements that can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth”.

In other words, the pastor is *not* to make excuses and look past sins or worse, to condone them; rather, he is to identify elements that can foster evangelization; that is look for positive behaviors that he can build upon while gently correcting them and leading them to deeper communion with Christ and with each other. Clearly, if they need “spiritual growth,” they must be doing something wrong!

It is the pope’s desire to lead such people from a sinful to a sanctified relationship:

“We know that there is “a continual increase in the number of those who, after having lived together for a long period, request the celebration of marriage in Church.”

A pastor will meet a broad variety of cases; however, according to Pope Francis,

*“Whatever the case, “all these situations require a constructive response seeking to **transform them into opportunities that can lead to the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel.**”*

Did Cardinal Burke miss this? Whatever the case, these relationships “require” “transformation.” They are “opportunities” that can lead to marriage in “CONFORMITY WITH THE GOSPEL”. This is the second time the pope has mentioned the need to conform to the Gospel. He is concerned that the Church reinstate sinners in some way possible, in some way

that will lead to fuller participation and *eventual* reception of the sacraments. He does *not* want to cast sinners away like the New England Puritans did, but to embrace them and win them over as Christ did. He wants to do this **not be excusing their sins but by acknowledging their sins and also acknowledging anything good in their relationship and building upon it.**

He makes this point about excusing sin clear (para 297):

“Naturally, if someone flaunts an objective sin as if it were part of the Christian ideal (radical homosexual who argues God made him this way), or wants to impose something other than what the Church teaches (for example civil-remarriage), he or she can in no way presume to teach or preach to others; this is a case of something which separates from the community” (cf. Mt 18:17).

Again, clearly, anyone who teaches that objective sins are licit cannot be a teacher or a preacher; **this is a case of “something which separates from the community”**. Can it get any clearer than this? Although good pastors will look for ways to accompany their parishioners, *esp.* sinful ones always with an eye to something to build upon as mentioned above, *no one can excuse objective sin and the flaunting of it.* **This is NOT acceptable and Francis is straightforward about the matter.**

He then points out at the end of para 297 that **people who have contracted civil marriage**, who are divorced and remarried or simply living together **are living wrongly**, are NOT living up to God’s expectations. Therefore he says that they need help to “*understand the divine pedagogy of grace*” and the need “*assistance so that they can reach the fullness of God’s plan for them*” because obviously **their living arrangement is not up to God’s plan!**

In para 298 he reiterates:

“It must remain clear that this is not the ideal which the Gospel proposes for marriage and the family.”

Nonetheless,

*“Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and **encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel.**”*

Obviously, if they need to be encouraged along the path of the Gospel, they are failing; nonetheless, they should be incorporated into the community, somehow, and encouraged to grow like the rest of the sinners who occupy the pews.

Pope Francis does NOT indicate that priests should accept divorced and remarried people into the community and then forget their sinful state.

*“Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation **according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop**” (para 300).*

These couple must be “accompanied” so that they can be “helped”, helped to understand why **their relationship precludes them for receiving Holy Communion “according to the teaching of the Church.”** The pope does *not* say they may be excused by some aberrant pastoral excuse, but he does say they must be developed according to the TEACHING of the CHURCH. For those who want to argue that the additional clause and “guidelines of the bishops” permits admission to Holy Communion; it is simply responded that those guidelines must also be consistent with the teaching of the Church as [Cardinal Muller, Prefect of the CDF is now making clear](#). Aberrant liberal bishops will have to be corrected if their guidelines

run contrary to the teaching of the Church, that is the job of the CDF.

For Cardinal Burke to act as if confusion is something new, because some bishops are permitting civilly remarried people *etc.* to receive Holy Communion, is surprising. Aberrant bishops have caused confusion for 2,000 years. THIS IS NOTHING NEW. Catholics have seen this type of abuse even with an Ecumenical Council, why should supposed confusion of a Post-Synodal Exhortation cause any surprise? In fact, confusion is being exacerbated by prelates like Cardinal Burke who keep insisting there is massive confusion where there would be little to none if they would "zip it." Liberal aberrant bishops will open the door to sin no matter what they are told; a key ingredient to their success is supposed "confusion".

You are reading a review of Chapter Eight. Do you honestly see any confusion so far? Cardinal Burke is helping manufacture confusion, perhaps due to a failure to synthesize dogmatic and pastoral theology. This happens to many people, *esp.* learned ones who spend too much time in their heads and have failed to integrate their minds with their hearts, wisdom with mercy and compassion. If the eminent cardinal had closed ranks behind the pope and interpreted the document as a pastoral exhortation that holds the objective truth about marriage in tact, as it does, aberrant bishops would have less room to operate; Cardinal Burke is opening the doors wide to deviance by continually advancing the theme of confusion.

After saying that divorced and remarried couples should be helped to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church, the pope further drives home the divorced-remarried couple's error by calling them to an "examination of conscience" followed by "*repentance*" (para 300). **Why a call to penance if not a presumption that they are sinning?** Again, crystal clear!

Clearly, such people cannot be admitted to Holy Communion because according to (para 300), they need to form a “*correct judgement*” of their situation. Until they do so and repent, they are, according to the pope, “*hindered*” from “*the possibility of fuller participation in the life of the Church*”. While guiding an aberrant couple to discern the state of their relationship before God, **no priest is licitly permitted to admit them to the sacraments**. To make the point abundantly clear, Pope Francis states (para 300):

“This discernment can NEVER PRESCIND FROM THE GOSPEL DEMANDS OF TRUTH and CHARITY AS PROPOSED BY THE CHURCH.”

Did Cardinal Burke just happen to miss this too, perhaps one of the more powerful statements in AL?

Francis’ loyalty to the Magisterium, to the Gospels and Tradition become even clearer as he limits the parameters involved to even qualify a couple as candidates for the whole the process of discernment:

*“For this discernment to happen, **the following conditions must necessarily be present**: humility, discretion and love for the Church and her teaching, in a sincere search for God’s will and a desire to make a more perfect response to it” (para 300).*

In other words, the very possibility of beginning dialogue between pastor and parishioner, dialogue that is intended to place persons on the path of sanctification that *might* lead to the sacraments *if* they do things correctly; the very possibility of this dialogue is contingent upon persons being, “humble”, having “love for the Church” and “her teaching”; it is further contingent upon the couple’s having a “sincere search for God’s will” and a willingness to respond “more perfectly” to it. If these qualifying marks are missing, discernment leading to the sacraments cannot even

begin; at least this is what the pope states; do you read something else? What did Cardinal Burke read?

Pope Francis drives this requirement home by stating that these attitudes are “*essential*” (para 300). They are essential to “avoid misunderstanding” and the “grave danger” that might lead a priest to think that he can grant “exceptions” (para 300). Thus, any priest thinking that pastoral theology dispenses him from the constant teaching of the Church in these matters is not only “misunderstanding” what the pope is teaching and what the Church teaches, he is also involving himself and his parishioners in “grave danger”.

Some how Cardinal Burke seems to think that Pope Francis is excusing sin due to ignorance or any number of particular and contingent circumstances. This is patently false. ***Nowhere does Pope Francis say ignorance outright excuses***; what he does say is that ***ignorance “mitigates”***. In fact, this is the title of the next section of the Exhortation:

“Mitigating Factors in Pastoral Discernment”

Pope Francis begins this section by making the simple moral point, simple for anyone educated in moral theology, that even sinners can experience grace, at least *prevenient grace* that leads them to the sacraments. He even states that “More is involved than mere ignorance” (para 301).

When reading this section, the reader must *not* do as some Protestant Divines do, that is cherry-pick or fail to read the document as a systematic whole, fail to remember everything that was clearly stated previously. At this point, the document moves from *dogmatic* or *speculative theology* into the the more difficult realm of *moral casuistry* or *practical-pastoral theology*, the point where the rubber meets the road so to speak, the point where theory must be applied to practice. Thus, **at this point it necessarily becomes more**

obtuse. The obtuseness of the exercise should be expected by anyone with a background in either moral theology or moral philosophy, even a pagan like Aristotle understood the difference; he also taught that the second part, that is the practical part, is the more difficult of the two – this is the simple reason why the document grows more difficult at this point; however, it must not be forgotten that **Francis has already stated at least twice, that a valid interpretation of AL cannot prescind from the Gospel or teaching of the Church.**

Again, throughout this section, the pope speaks about **mitigating circumstances**; he does *not* excuse objective sin, but stresses subjective mitigating circumstances due to the nature of a faulty or malformed conscience, a malformed conscience that is supposed to be corrected in the process of “accompaniment” by the pastor explained in the previous section. As regards mitigating circumstances due to subjective states, we find Jesus, Himself, clearly teaching this in the Gospels:

“And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes”
([Luke 12:47-48](#)).

Jesus position is clearly that of His Vicar. Persons who are invincibly ignorant of the truth, or for any other valid reason fail to comprehend it, reasons such as socialization, psychological immaturity, psychological manipulation by association *etc*, such persons who commit sins despite their ignorance *etc* are still guilty of an objective wrong; however, the subjective moral culpability is lessened; how much it is lessened depends on the circumstances which only God alone is master of, a fact that led Francis to once say, “who am I to judge?” Only God and perhaps the person himself can judge such things; it is the job of the pastor to enter into a

relationship to better grasp the subjective state of his parishioners.

Without this approach, without such a relationship, the whole process of discernment breaks down and all that is left is a black and white judgement based upon objective facts of dogmatic theology; this is what it means to be dogmatic, or closed minded, closed to deeper truths about the *acting person*, deeper truths that affect their relationship to their sin and his or her moral culpability. These are facts, necessary facts for the successful process of pastoring souls entrusted to a priest's care. Cardinal Burke seems oblivious to such facts; he prefers to make everything black and white. In this, he is acting more like a judgemental pharisee than a "good shepherd serving his people in the image of Jesus Christ who gave his life for his sheep, a good shepeherd who knows them well enough to call them each by name ([John 10:3](#)).

Again, to make his point clear, Francis states that

"In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage."

"A lukewarm attitude, any kind of relativism, or an undue reticence in proposing that ideal, would be a lack of fidelity to the Gospel and also of love on the part of the Church for young people themselves. To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being" (para 307).

It is hard to see how Cardinal Burke missed this along with the score of other similar clear pronouncements throughout the Chapter made by Pope Francis. The pope emphatically stresses the point that he wants to "avoid all misunderstanding". To

do so he *again* states that what he is teaching in no way desists from the “full idea of marriage.” Moreover, he anathematizes “*relativism*” and “*undue reticence*” to the “*full ideal of marriage.*” *Again* he states, that contingent circumstance, that pastoral understanding, compassion *etc*, “**never imply dimming the light to the fuller ideal (to the fullness of truth) or proposing less**” than Jesus taught.

The Church, he says is

*“...a Mother who, while clearly expressing her **objective teaching**, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street” (that is in the pasture where her ministers must encounter the dirt of sinners lives) (para308).*

Again, he states, again and again, that the Church must hold to her “objective teaching”

Pope Francis closes the so-called difficult chapter by restating one more time the commitment to objective truth; however, he teaches that there is one thing greater than the truth, that is love, the summit of Christ’s teaching and of His life; it was love that sent Him to the cross and love that redeemed the world (“[Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends](#)“). No one sent Jesus to the cross; He freely chose the path of salvific suffering, and He chose out of love for sinful humanity. This is the central point Francis wants to make and indeed does make. It is difficult to comprehend how Prelates like Cardinal Burke miss it?

*“Although it is quite true that concern must be shown for the integrity of the Church’s moral teaching, special care should **always be shown to emphasize and encourage the highest and most central values of the Gospel**, particularly the primacy of charity as a response to the completely gratuitous offer of God’s love.*

*" It is true, for example, that **mercy does not exclude justice and truth**, but first and foremost we have to say that **mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth.**"*

In this Francis is seconded by the Sacred Scriptures:

'If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

*And now there remain faith (from which wisdom grows), hope, and charity, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity**" ([1 Cor. 13:1-13](#)).*

Equally impressive is the story of Jesus' dialogue with the rich young man ([Matt 19:16-22](#)). Jesus does *not* simply announce the truth and leave the young man to accept it or reject it. Rather, Jesus engages in a process to bring the young man forward. "Jesus, as a good shepherd, personally leads the young man step by step to the truth

Francis, like Jesus, insists upon two unique but integral aspects of evangelization: First is the proclamation of truth and then the gradual formation of people to internalize and live it. Thus, when the *Pharisees* (dogmatic theologians – men without mercy- [Matt 9:13](#)) questioned Jesus about divorce ([Matt 19:3-9](#)), He communicated the objective facts; He proclaimed the truth: Marriage is indissoluble and exclusive. However,

when he interacted with the *Samaritan woman*, He placed *less* emphasis on the truth and *more* on her personal life journey, a journey that involved her with six men. After engaging her, He told her,

“Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered, and said: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: Thou hast said well, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly” ([John 4: 16-18](#)).

Jesus does not break the conversation, but engages her until she (and then many others) finally accepts Him as the Messiah ([John 4:38-42](#)):

“Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: He told me all things whatsoever I have done? So when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired that he would tarry there. And he abode there two days. And many more believed in him because of his own word. And they said to the woman: We now believe, not for thy saying: for we ourselves have heard him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

See what truth in the context of a little encounter and dialogue can do? Pope Francis is exemplifying these two aspects of evangelization, the need to hold to the truth that never “prescinds from the Gospel” and the more difficult process of discernment and engagement whereby alienated people are gradually led , step by step, to communion so that they can eventually be one with Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

FOLLOWUP ARTICLE TO FOLLOW TOMORROW

US Forces Facing Russian Troops in Syria, Will they Cooperate to Defeat ISIS?

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN Donald Trump gave many signs indicating a possible rapprochement with Russia in order to forward the war against terrorism. Since his election, political observers have been watching carefully to assess movements relative to this implicit commitment. As the data roles in, it is now possible to make some preliminary remarks based on actions taken by the new president during his first sixty days in office. Before doing so, it is helpful to review a [New Era Forecast](#) issued a month ago (February, 21).

FORECAST:

*“The United States and Russia will continue down a path of rapprochement but not without significant interference, which can be expected from all ends of the political and social-cultural spectrum. Constant, well orchestrated, and confusing series of events can be expected as agents from both the left and right proceed to push confrontation with Russia to a boiling point. Nonetheless, in the long run, the shadow government will fail as it has consistently failed and been out maneuvered in its foreign policy initiatives for the past decade – we have no discernible reason to believe that this chain of events will cease unfolding. **The shadow-government is being opposed by more than Mr. Trump.**”*

The real question is what will Mr. Trump do? Will he continue down the road of his immediate predecessors, or be bold enough to set America on a new course?

Following that forecast, it was stated that *if* the new president continued with the *foreign policy* of the Bush and Obama administrations (as he *appears* to be doing), if he pursued the same path as his predecessors ([a path favored by Neocon War Hawks and Liberal Globalists](#)), American Foreign Policy would continue its downward slide and America would continue suffering one foreign policy embarrassment after another while earning the ire of other nations around the globe. President Obama was never able to disengage from war or to defeat ISIS; Trump however, has vowed to obliterate them, *implicitly* with Russian cooperation. It is this cooperation, above all else, that makes him an enemy of the Neocons (even though they are for the most part Republicans) and their Liberal allies deeply imbedded in ruling establishment.

The Trump Team is facing stiff opposition not only from an entrenched bureaucracy but from die hard members of the armed service committee and intelligence community who still view Russia through the lens of Soviet Communism or who are so committed to global liberalism that Russia (whom they realize is increasingly becoming a Christian nation-state, a purveyor of traditional family values, and an avowedly anti-liberal global power) must be stopped. Thus, if Trump plans to improve relations with Russia, he will be vehemently opposed by those who continue to insist upon the ideological export of liberal (economic and moral) American values, those who view themselves as patriots whose sacred duty is to confront the nefarious Russian Bear whose commitment to national sovereignty and Christianity is a threat to their global hegemony and the advancement of their Liberal Global Agenda.

Therefore, it was also stated,

“If Mr. Trump moves too quickly, he will not be able to withstand the tumultuous tsunami that is being gathered for a melancholy day of release; he must first cultivate relationships among international leaders (something he has done too little of) who have a very different view of America and American Foreign Policy than that being fed to him by Neocon war-hawks such as Sen. John McCain”, a man who keeps discrediting himself by accusing anyone opposed to his myopic interventionist military policy as “working for Vladimir Putin”, even if the others he assails are US Senators themselves.

Finally, it was also stated in February that

“It is not time for fisticuffs, so yes, Newera tends to believe that Mr. Trump has come out with a (foreign policy) rope a dope in Round One, at least partially so. If he is able to eventually pound ISIS into oblivion with Russian cooperation, he will build up a tidal wall of good-will and support composed of many international components that spell peace, a peace woven into a wall that will be able to withstand any Tsunami the Deep State can bellow in his direction.”

However, it was warned:

“If President Trump collapses before the bellowing winds and succumbs to the mounting global pressures of liberalism, if he fails to deliver on his campaign promises and follows the

lead of Neocon war-hawks like Sen. John McCain, New Era foresees an abject failure on the horizon and the ultimate collapse of American Foreign Policy and the waning of American influence."

Unfortunately, Mr. Trump appears to be following the foreign policy of the Neocon and Liberal establishment. Consequently, **the honeymoon given him by foreign nations is coming to an end.** They have waited to see if he would deliver on his promises to treat all nations fairly, to cooperate with Russia to defeat terrorism and to start a new page in American history battling liberalism and seeking an Era of Peace. *Apparently,* he will do none of these things and continue the foreign policy of his predecessor built on the back of American military might.

World leaders have been looking on and refraining from imminent action while holding things in suspension waiting to see what Trump would do. They are no longer waiting; instead, **global trends are reverting back to where they were before Trump took office,** the international movement against liberalism has recommenced. As forecast, **the United States will either cooperate with this movement and be a purveyor of peace or it will suffer continued embarrassment.** New Era holds to this forecast with the caveat that **the United States might be pulled into the peace initiative in spite of its current bravado bolstered by an enormous military buildup.** [President Trump has not decreased but has already increased the military budget by \\$54 billion](#) and is beefing up the American military presence around the globe to the ire of China, Russia, Turkey and many third world nations. The remainder of this article is concerned with US foreign policy in the Middle East and how it is alienating Turkey and leading to a surprise *tete a tete* between **US and Russian forces NOW within a grenades distance of each other on the battlefield of North-Central Syria** where **THEY ARE BOTH BATTLING ISIS-ISIL-ISLAMIC STATE AT THE SAME TIME AND IN THE SAME PLACE.** This unexpected rubbing

of shoulders in Syria offers a glimmer of hope that might signify the beginning of an ongoing cooperation. Don't hold your breath however, Sen. John McCain happens to be in the mix:

McCain "made a secret trip to a Kurdish-held region in northern Syria last weekend to speak with US military officials, rebel fighters, and leaders in the region."

On Wednesday, (March 23) Julie Tarallo, a McCain spokesperson confirmed the mission, with the following TWEET

This via a McCain spokeswoman:

"Senator McCain traveled to northern Syria this week to visit U.S. forces deployed there and to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing operations to retake Raqqa. Senator McCain's visit was a valuable opportunity to assess dynamic conditions on the ground in Syria and Iraq. President Trump has rightly ordered a review of U.S. strategy and plans to defeat ISIL. Senator McCain looks forward to working with the administration and military leaders to optimize our approach for accomplishing ISIL's lasting defeat."

What is Happening in Syria and How it Might Affect Relationships with Russia and Turkey

President Obama alienated Turkey with his ongoing support of the **Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)**, whom the Turks view as an ally of the **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)**, which operates in Turkey and is designated by Ankara as a terrorist organization. **President Trump is headed down the same road.** Foreign Policy Magazine [notices the trend](#). On March 21 they pointed out that warhawks and top US commanders regard the YPG as "[the only viable option for ousting the Islamic State \[Daesh\]](#)." If the YPG represents the only viable

solution, clearly **Washington has ruled out cooperation with Russia, the most obvious solution.**

Following its own initiative, an initiative ostensibly calculated to *Make America Look Great Again*, the Pentagon is deploying 1,000 troops to assist the **Syrian Defense Forces (SDF)** to battle the Deash in Raqqa. The SDF, is a Kurdish dominated militia established in 2015 and sponsored by the United States to help establish a Kurdish enclave in Northern Syria. The SDF is composed primarily of Kurds fighting under their own banner of **People's Protection Units (YPG)**. More specifically, it might be said that **the YPG is a Kurdish dominated militia, which is fighting alongside the American backed SDF who are opposed to radical Islamic terrorists and also to the Russian-backed Syrian government of Bashar al Assad.** Currently the SDF is planning to engage in an all-out assault on Raqqa, the capital and stronghold of ISIS-ISIL or the Islamic State. According to [The Foreign Policy Group](#) (FP)

“Even as the Trump administration weighs its options, the U.S. military is ramping up for the assault, drawing up plans to deploy up to 1,000 more American soldiers to Syria in support of the YPG and allied forces, known collectively as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which [have advanced](#) mere miles from the city (of Raqqa). Pentagon officials [assess](#) that the roughly 27,000 Kurds in the 50,000-strong SDF are the more effective, experienced fighters.

The [New York Times](#) (March 15) corroborated this report by FP:

“The U.S. military has drawn up early plans that would deploy up to 1,000 more troops into northern Syria in the coming weeks, expanding the American presence in the country ahead of the offensive on the Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa.”

“The deployment...would potentially double the number of U.S. forces in Syria and increase the potential for direct U.S. combat involvement in a conflict that has been characterized by confusion and competing priorities among disparate forces.”

The plan to deploy 1,000 more troops is meant to bolster a previous deployment of United States Marines already ordered by President Trump. On March 9, the [Guardian](#) reported on the deployment of several hundred US Marines to Syria:

“A few hundred marines with heavy artillery have been deployed to Syria in preparation for the fight to oust [Islamic State](#) from its self-declared headquarters of Raqqa, a senior US official said on Wednesday.”

“The marines moving into [Syria](#) are positioning howitzers to be ready to help local Syrian forces, said the official, who was not authorised to discuss the deployment publicly.

There are already approximately 500 U.S. Special Operations forces in Syria operating alongside the SDF. They are complemented by an additional 250 Army Rangers and 200 US Marines. **The additional 1,000 U.S. troops will most likely be part of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit** that are part of a

“... [flotilla of ships loaded with 2,200 Marines that is now steaming toward the region](#) – and the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, of which 2,500 recently arrived in Kuwait.”

Regarding this deployment, [Turkish Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim](#) cautioned US leaders:

“If (Washington) insists on carrying on this operation

with terror organizations (Kurds whom the Turks consider as terrorists and public enemy number one), our relations will be harmed – that is clear.”



Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim

Prime Minister Yildirim’s statement is especially meaningful in the context of the [Astana Meetings](#) previously hosted by Russia, Iran and Turkey (in Astana, Kazakhstan), which have resulted in a military coalition consisting of Turkey, Russia, and Iran, already operating in Syria where they are acting as a peacekeeping force. Rather than joining the peace initiative, the US continues following its own foreign policy thereby driving Turkey further away from Washington. In fact, **this latest US maneuver, might also compromise US relationships with the United Nations**, which is beneficiary of Russian efforts at Astana: The Russian, Turks and Iranians provided the military backbone which brought the contending parties to the UN sponsored meeting of diplomats in Geneva (Feb 2017).

[The cooperating powers all agreed to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Syrian nation](#), implying that **they will uphold the right of Syria as a sovereign nation**, a nation entitled to determine for itself who its leaders will be and who will be invited to fight alongside it against common enemies.

*“The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey, in line with the Joint Statement of their Foreign Ministers made in Moscow, on December 20, 2016 and the **UN Security Council resolution 2336**...”reaffirm their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian and democratic state.”*

Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia emphasized this point:

The talks in Astana are “an important contribution to... a comprehensive political settlement in Syria which will continue in wider activities in Geneva.”

The prospect of ongoing US support of Kurds, esp. in Northern Syria, is seen in Ankara as a threat to Turkish security, a threat seemingly ignore by Donald Trump, a threat that drives Turkey deeper into a meaningful coalition with Russia.

To make the scenario extremely interesting, Russia is also backing the Kurds also to the ire of Turkey who is simultaneously fighting side by side with Russia as agreed to by the Astana Accords. The whole complicated situation is growing ever more complex. Turkey has been assisting Syrian Government forces (Assad’ forces backed by Russia) as they move toward **Manbij a city held by US backed Kurds; therefore the US has deployed troops there to oppose a Turkish offensive.** As reported by the [New York Times](#) :

“In recent weeks, U.S. Army Rangers have been sent to the city of Manbij west of Raqqa (in NW Syria) to deter Russian, Turkish and Syrian opposition forces all operating in the area, while a Marine artillery battery recently deployed near Raqqa (70 miles SW) has already come under fire, according to a defense official with direct knowledge of their operations.”

It is interesting that Syrian forces supported by the Syrian government engaged in warfare with Islamic terrorists in their own country are referred to as *“opposition forces”*. Opposition to whom, to the United States? If the Russian-Turkish backed Syrian army is fighting ISIS (Islamic State) and is called the *“opposition”*, who is the United States fighting?

Turkey finds itself in a quandary, it is assisting Russia who is supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. At the same time, it is a NATO member and thus a US ally. The United States has been backing rebel forces against Assad and supposedly, at the same time, also fighting Islamic terrorists such as ISIS and Daesh whom the Russians and Turks are also fighting. **Turkey has indicated that it would commit ground troops to help US backed forces topple Raqqa but that eventuality is contingent upon US relinquishing its support of the Kurds (YPG) whom the Russians are also supporting.**

Moreover, as a result of the Russian brokered Astana Accords, Syrian rebels, that is those that are Syrian and *not* Islamic terrorists imported from throughout the Middle East, Syrian rebels who were opposed to Assad are now working with the Assad government to oust radical Islamic terrorists, which means if the terrorists are defeated there are virtually no indigenous forces of any considerable size left opposing the Syrian government; who will the United States support then? That is who will the United States support in Syria once ISIS or the Islamic State is defeated? **Ostensibly, the Kurds will have the backing of both the United States and Russia**, the preferred diplomatic position for both countries *vis a vis* Turkey. That is, **it is better for the United States to have strained relations with Turkey over the Kurds if Russia also has strained relations with the Turks and for the same reason!** Turkey will just have to get use to it – the US and Russia are apparently headed down a course leading to some type of cooperative agreement even if it is happening *willy nilly*.

The unexpected might be occurring, viz., Russia and the US are being pulled together by supporting the Kurds in Syria albeit at risk of exacerbating relations with Turkey. Sarah El Deeb is one of the few to recognize the unexpected. As reported in the [Chicago Tribune](#):

“Ankara (that is, Turkey) has effectively unified Russia and

the U.S. in the goal of limiting Turkish expansion in the north (North Syria where the Kurds live). Syrian experts say Ankara has lost influence to realize its aim of pushing the Kurdish forces back to the east of Manbij across the Euphrates. Moreover, Washington is pushing ahead with partnering with the Kurdish-led forces in the planned attack on Raqqa, despite Turkish opposition."

According to [Ragip Soylu](#) a reporter for [New Turkey](#), Turkey's efforts to disrupt the US-Kurd alliance

"...has been tossed away as the Russian military and U.S. Special Forces moved last week in Syria's Manbij to prevent Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from attacking the city,"

Russia has taken an unexpected stance on Manbij, instead of advancing on the city, THEY ARE WORKING TO PREVENT any further Syrian-Turkish advance deeply desired by the Turks. They are now involved in the mutual defeat of ISIS. At the moment they, the United States and Russia, are involved in planning an assault on ISIS in Raqqa and mutual support of the Kurds; the latter to the chagrin of the Turks

Complex as it is to discern, **the future is perhaps beginning in Manbij and Raqqa**, as [U.S. Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend](#), of the anti-ISIS coalition has said:

"All the forces acting in Syria have converged within hand-grenade range of one another. We encourage all forces to remain focused on the counter-ISIS fight and concentrate their efforts on defeating ISIS and not toward other objectives that may cause the coalition to divert energy and resources away from Raqqa."

In other words, the US is not focused on toppling the Assad government (at least not now and possibly not again in the

future). **The mission is for once clear: defeat ISIS.** This is **something both the Americans and Russians can agree upon.** The Russian are *not* looking for war between its allies, Turkey and Syria, versus the US forces in Manbij or Raqqa. **Turkish and Syrian troops moving toward Manbij were halted** due to a [deal brokered by Russia that established a "buffer zone"](#) between the Kurds and advancing Turk-Syrian forces. This zone is intended to **protect the Kurds** in Manbij and to keep Russian backed Syrian and Turkish troops out of conflict with the United States, *esp.* since they are all, as US General Townsend has stated: *"within hand-grenade range of one another."*

Unfortunately, [Turkey has not honored the zone:](#)

"On Thursday, Syrian government media said Turkish shelling killed a number of its troops. Kurdish officials said Turkish advances continued even despite the buffer zone."

Turkey, long a backer of terrorism throughout the Middle East, is now suffering a bout of what appears to be irremediable consternation. Since **the United States and Russia are now face to face in Syria**, since **the United States and Russia are both supporting the Kurds** in Syria, since **the United States and Russia are both fighting ISIS** in Syria simultaneously and at the same exact location, **it will be difficult for Turkey to play anymore deceptive games designed to advance its own agenda and keep the two superpowers apart.** The Turks however have at least three allies in this game, *viz.*, the US Neocons, global liberals, and Israeli Zionists who will do anything to hinder real peace by keeping the two apart!

Nonetheless, will the United States begin to coordinate efforts with Russia to

(1) Protect Manbij, a city held by US backed Kurdish-led forces thereby increasing tensions with Turkey but lessening them with Russia (for the US that is)?

(2) Somehow pacify or restrain Turkey – something much easier if they cooperate – thereby bringing Turk dreams for a renewed Ottoman Empire or at least an Arab World under Turk domination to naught and as a result bring Turkey's leaders to their senses?

(3) Defeat ISIS in a mutual effort to “*bomb the shit out of them*” as Trump promised during his campaign – Raqqa represents the possibility of fulfilling a campaign promise and of moving towards normalizing relations with Russia, although in a very unexpected way as explained above.

Or will the US act to salvage its relations with Turkey thereby lessening support for the Kurds and increasing tensions with Russia? Quite possibly Turkey will have to make a choice, that is, to seek a deeper alliance with the United States or Russia; either way, it will have to come to grips with the Kurds whom neither is likely to abandon. The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel (Saudi Arabia also stands to lose, but not as much as Israel) who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over these years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in this situation; it has already [violated Syrian airspace this past week.](#)

“The Syrian military said the Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria).”

“The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.”

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria,” said the statement.”

The United States might not be fighting Syria at the moment but Israel is apparently trying to keep Syrian ally Iran from sending weapons to Hezbollah stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?](#)

“Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel, a former director of counter-terrorism in the Israeli prime minister’s bureau, said conflict with Hezbollah was inevitable as the group sought ever more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, heavy rockets and tactical weapons, but he believed Assad had seriously misread the situation.”

“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that clashes in [Syria](#) will stay with us for the next three to six years.”

“Discussing Russia’s role in Syria, he added more controversially: “Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel.” That was, he said: “Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission.”

Although Israel favors continued conflict, as long as its enemies are killing each other and as long as Syria is potentially neutralized along with its ally Iran, although Israel favors such things, New Era is forecasting eventual peace – if the US and Russia actually cooperate to defeat ISIS – which means something will have to give in Israel, perhaps something significant.

Israeli-Russian Relations Tested Over Syria as US and Russian Backed Forces Near Each Other

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

AT THE END OF FRIDAY'S ARTICLE, "[Are United States and Russia Headed for Cooperation Despite Neocon-Liberal Objections?](#)", it was concluded that, "The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel...who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over recent years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in response to possible US-Russian cooperation in the battle over ISIS about to unfold in Raqqa (Syria); will they fight each other or cooperate? Chances are high that they will cooperate, but signs are being genratd that indicate that they might not. Nonetheless, the question remains, "How will Israel respond to unexpected cooperation?" If events that occurred earlier last week are any indication, the Israelis do

not like what is unfolding, they have already [violated Syrian airspace and fired missiles in Syria](#) just a few days ago. In response, the Syrian military said that

“The Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria).”

*“The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to **release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.**”*

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria”, ‘said the statement.’”

The United States might *not* be fighting against Syria *at the moment* but Israeli operations in Syria indicate that the Zionists are apparently engaged in operations against them as well as their ally, Iran who is legally transiting weapons across Syria to Hezbollah soldiers stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, at least, that is the Israeli version of the story. [Professor Eyal Zisser](#), a Syrian expert who teaches at Tel Aviv University in Israel, discussed an agreement made between Vladimir Putin and PM Netanyahu (June 7, 2015) in which the Russians supposedly gave their word that military equipment being transferred from Iran to Hezbollah is solely for purposes of waging war against ISIS; it would *not* therefore, be employed in any type of attack on Israel.

Thus, according to the Syrian accounts, **Israel targeted Syrian military positions combating ISIS** (not weapons being shipped to Hezbollah). Either way, [Israel violated international law](#) and the right of Syria to national sovereignty. Do weapons used against Syria transited through Turkey permit Syria to

violate Turkish airspace and bomb Turkish infra-structure?
The airspace of sovereign nation is supposedly protected by international law.

“According to the set principles governing international law, a state has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the sky above its territory. Without permission, it is absolutely forbidden for foreign military planes to enter the territorial airspace of other states.”

Therefore, the [Syrian Foreign Ministry drafted a complaint to the UN](#) in which they stated

“Syria calls on the UN Secretary General and the President of the UNSC to condemn this blatant Israeli aggression, to force Israel to stop supporting terrorism in Syria, to implement all UNSC resolutions on counter-terrorism, including resolution No. 2253, to withdraw from the whole occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 4th, 1967, and to implement resolution No. 497 for 1981”

Israel has its own interpretation of events to justify its action: Iran is transferring weapons to Hezbollah to be used against israel. Here is a taste of Israeli justification from its [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) who stated that Israel [would continue to act](#) militantly to prevent transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah:

“Our policy is very consistent: when we identify attempts to transfer advanced weapons to Hezbollah, and we have the intelligence and operational feasibility – we work to prevent this.”

This is an open admission, what appears to be a braggadocio admission, followed by a dose of strained logic:

“That’s how it’s been and that’s how it will be, we have

determination, and the proof is that we are acting, and everyone has to take this into account,” he added.

In other words, the morality of the act is to be judged by the fact that Israel can get away with it, “the proof is we are acting” and “everyone has to take this into account.” This is not a reasonable or moral justification; it is nothing more than a “might makes right” argument, the rule of the jungle that governs animal interaction; it can only be hoped that this is not *how* Zionists view gentiles?

*“Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they (the Jews) themselves **did not enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled.**”*

This type of justification *might* have worked in the past, but more and more people are waking up to the dignity of the human person (all persons); this is a rationale that people seeking peace and a two-state solution are growing tired of – being a citizen of Israel does *not* give anyone any type of hyper-human-status that empowers them to trample on the rights of others.

If this is really representative of Netanyahu’s logic, the Israeli PM is acting hypocritical. Israel would not permit foreign jets to invade their airspace and then annihilate targets without a media blitz fired around the globe amid a veritable storm of moral objections. **The PM has just opened the doors to Syrian and Iranian jets flying into to Israel to obliterate what they perceive to be security threats to be used on targets in their own countries or that of their allies.**

Apparently, Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump](#)

[administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?](#)

*“Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel, a former Director of Counter-Terrorism in the **Israeli Prime Minister’s Bureau**, said conflict with Hezbollah was inevitable as the group sought ever more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, heavy rockets and tactical weapons, but he believed Assad had seriously misread the situation.”*

*“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that **clashes in Syria** will stay with us for the next three to six years.”*

*“Discussing Russia’s role in Syria, he added more controversially: “**Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel.**” That was, he said: “**Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission.**”*

This is a former Israeli Brigadier General’s perspective, but others are interpreting and reporting it differently. In fact, after the Israeli attack, the Russian government almost immediately summoned Gary Koren, the Israeli Ambassador, and requested an explanation – something they have not done following previous Israeli violations in Syria). Rather than smooth things over for the Israeli side, Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli Defense Minister, following the Netanyahu line, [exacerbated them](#):

*“The next time the Syrians use their air defence systems against our planes **we will destroy them** without the slightest*

hesitation.”

As if to say that Israel has a right to annihilate targets in other countries, but these countries somehow act wrongly if they defend themselves as if the Zionists were some type of privileged people and the and the rest of the world is made up of outcasts. Israel has run into a Western nation that will not follow its script. Russia, apparently, will *not* allow itself be pushed around by the playground bully or be intimidated by empty chutzpah. Contrary to PM Netanyahu and Brig. Gen. Nitzan Nuriel, Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari, Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, stated that

*“[Putin sent a clear message](#),” he said. “The fact is that **the Israeli ambassador (to Russia) was summoned for a conversation... and was told categorically that this game is over.**”*

Jaafari also [stated](#) that “*Syria will no longer sit by while Israel blatantly attacks its forces*”; implying that the response will be greatly amplified if an Israeli attack occurs again.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, however, took a more pragmatic and realistic approach that moves beyond rhetoric to make decisions based upon actions. After stating that Russia expects Israel to honor agreements made between Putin and Netanyahu during the latter’s state visit to Moscow earlier this month, he stated that Russia

“...will judge (Israel) not by their statements, but by their actions, to what extent our Israeli partners are sticking to these agreements.”

If these type of actions continue, a Russian response can be expected. In this regard, [Syrian President Bashar Assad told visiting Russian legislators](#) that Syria is depending on Russia

to avert further Israeli attacks and to help Damascus avoid a “full-blown conflict with Tel Aviv”. This does *not* appear to be something Syria desires and which it is trying to avoid, nor is it something desired by Russia.

At the June 7 meeting (discussed above) between Netanyahu and Putin, host [Vladimir Putin concluded](#):

“Russia and Israel can take pride in our high level of partnership, fruitful cooperation and far-reaching business contacts”

According to the [Jerusalem Post](#),

*“Since then, that partnership has continued to grow, but the **looming crisis in Syria** threatens to upset this dance.”*

If the Israelis keep their word and discontinue bombing runs in Syria, the risk of confrontation with Russia will be minimized and most likely become non-existent (at least at this time). What the Jerusalem Post is referring to is the current situation in Syria where both US and Russian troops and their allies are all [within a grenade’s distance of each other](#), each wanting to defeat ISIS, which is now isolated in its Syrian capital, Raqqa. The offensive against this city is slated to begin in a few days; at this moment it is unclear how Russian and American forces will interact in this crucial campaign. Israel is a staunch US ally but has also entered into serious negotiations and agreements with Russia, will they risk their recent gains?

The entire scenario discussed above is contingent upon US and Russian cooperation or conflict in Syria. Will they cooperate [to defeat ISIS at Raqqa and to craft a mutual-plan to support the Kurds in Northern Syria](#) and Iraq? If they fail to do so, if the United States or Russia have other plans in Syria, plans that would exacerbate rather than ameliorate

American-Russian relations, the entire situation changes from a possible peace scenario to one of increased conflict, as will be discussed tomorrow.

US Special Forces Facing Russian Troops in Syria, Will they Cooperate to Defeat ISIS?

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN Donald Trump gave many signs indicating a possible rapprochement with Russia in order to forward the war against terrorism. Since his election, political observers have been watching carefully to assess movements relative to this implicit commitment. As the data roles in, it is now possible to make some preliminary remarks based on actions taken by the new president during his first sixty days in office. Before doing so, it is helpful to review a [New Era Forecast](#) issued a month ago (February, 21).

FORECAST:

“The United States and Russia will continue down a path of rapprochement but not without significant interference, which can be expected from all ends of the political and social-cultural spectrum. Constant, well orchestrated, and confusing series of events can be expected as agents from both the left and right proceed to push confrontation with Russia to a boiling point. Nonetheless, in the long run, the shadow government will fail as it has consistently failed and

*been out maneuvered in its foreign policy initiatives for the past decade – we have no discernible reason to believe that this chain of events will cease unfolding. **The shadow-government is being opposed by more than Mr. Trump.***

The real question is what will Mr. Trump do? Will he continue down the road of his immediate predecessors, or be bold enough to set America on a new course?

Following that forecast, it was stated that *if* the new president continued with the *foreign policy* of the Bush and Obama administrations (as he *appears* to be doing), if he pursued the same path as his predecessors ([a path favored by Neocon War Hawks and Liberal Globalists](#)), American Foreign Policy would continue its downward slide and America would continue suffering one foreign policy embarrassment after another while earning the ire of other nations around the globe. President Obama was never able to disengage from war or to defeat ISIS; Trump however, has vowed to obliterate them, *implicitly* with Russian cooperation. It is this cooperation, above all else, that makes him an enemy of the Neocons (even though they are for the most part Republicans) and their Liberal allies deeply imbedded in ruling establishment.

The Trump Team is facing stiff opposition not only from an entrenched bureaucracy but from die hard members of the armed service committee and intelligence community who still view Russia through the lens of Soviet Communism or who are so committed to global liberalism that Russia (whom they realize is increasingly becoming a Christian nation-state, a purveyor of traditional family values, and an avowedly anti-liberal global power) must be stopped. Thus, if Trump plans to improve relations with Russia, he will be vehemently opposed by those who continue to insist upon the ideological export of liberal

(economic and moral) American values, those who view themselves as patriots whose sacred duty is to confront the nefarious Russian Bear whose commitment to national sovereignty and Christianity is a threat to their global hegemony and the advancement of their Liberal Global Agenda.

Therefore, it was also stated,

“If Mr. Trump moves too quickly, he will not be able to withstand the tumultuous tsunami that is being gathered for a melancholy day of release; he must first cultivate relationships among international leaders (something he has done too little of) who have a very different view of America and American Foreign Policy than that being fed to him by Neocon war-hawks such as Sen. John McCain”, a man who keeps discrediting himself by accusing anyone opposed to his myopic interventionist military policy as “working for Vladimir Putin”, even if the others he assails are US Senators themselves.

Finally, it was also stated in February that

“It is not time for fisticuffs, so yes, Newera tends to believe that Mr. Trump has come out with a (foreign policy) rope a dope in Round One, at least partially so. If he is able to eventually pound ISIS into oblivion with Russian cooperation, he will build up a tidal wall of good-will and support composed of many international components that spell peace, a peace woven into a wall that will be able to

withstand any Tsunami the Deep State can bellow in his direction."

However, it was warned:

"If President Trump collapses before the bellowing winds and succumbs to the mounting global pressures of liberalism, if he fails to deliver on his campaign promises and follows the lead of Neocon war-hawks like Sen. John McCain, New Era foresees an abject failure on the horizon and the ultimate collapse of American Foreign Policy and the waning of American influence."

Unfortunately, Mr. Trump appears to be following the foreign policy of the Neocon and Liberal establishment. Consequently, **the honeymoon given him by foreign nations is coming to an end.** They have waited to see if he would deliver on his promises to treat all nations fairly, to cooperate with Russia to defeat terrorism and to start a new page in American history battling liberalism and seeking an Era of Peace. Apparently, he will do none of these things and continue the foreign policy of his predecessor built on the back of American military might.

World leaders have been looking on and refraining from imminent action while holding things in suspension waiting to see what Trump would do. They are no longer waiting; instead, **global trends are reverting back to where they were before Trump took office,** the international movement against liberalism has recommenced. As forecast, **the United States will either cooperate with this movement and be a purveyor of peace or it will suffer continued embarrassment.** New Era holds to this forecast with the caveat that **the United States might be pulled into the peace initiative in spite of its current bravado bolstered by an enormous military buildup.** [President Trump has not decreased but has already increased the military budget by \\$54 billion](#) and is beefing up the American military

presence around the globe to the ire of China, Russia, Turkey and many third world nations. The remainder of this article is concerned with US foreign policy in the Middle East and how it is alienating Turkey and leading to a surprise *tete a tete* between **US and Russian forces NOW within a grenades distance of each other on the battlefield of North-Central Syria** where **THEY ARE BOTH BATTLING ISIS-ISIL-ISLAMIC STATE AT THE SAME TIME AND IN THE SAME PLACE**. This unexpected rubbing of shoulders in Syria offers a glimmer of hope that might signify the beginning of an ongoing cooperation. Don't hold your breath however, Sen. John McCain happens to be in the mix:

McCain "made a secret trip to a Kurdish-held region in northern Syria last weekend to speak with US military officials, rebel fighters, and leaders in the region."

On Wednesday, (March 23) Julie Tarallo, a McCain spokesperson confirmed the mission, with the following TWEET

This via a McCain spokeswoman:

"Senator McCain traveled to northern Syria this week to visit U.S. forces deployed there and to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing operations to retake Raqqa. Senator McCain's visit was a valuable opportunity to assess dynamic conditions on the ground in Syria and Iraq. President Trump has rightly ordered a review of U.S. strategy and plans to defeat ISIL. Senator McCain looks forward to working with the administration and military leaders to optimize our approach for accomplishing ISIL's lasting defeat."

What is Happening in Syria and How it Might Affect Relationships with Russia and Turkey

President Obama alienated Turkey with his ongoing support of

the **Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)**, whom the Turks view as an ally of the **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)**, which operates in Turkey and is designated by Ankara as a terrorist organization. **President Trump is headed down the same road.** Foreign Policy Magazine [notices the trend](#). On March 21 they pointed out that warhawks and top US commanders regard the YPG as "[the only viable option for ousting the Islamic State](#) [Daesh]." If the YPG represents the only viable solution, clearly **Washington has ruled out cooperation with Russia, the most obvious solution.**

Following its own initiative, an initiative ostensibly calculated to *Make America Look Great Again*, the Pentagon is deploying 1,000 troops to assist the **Syrian Defense Forces (SDF)** to battle the Deash in Raqqa. The SDF, is a Kurdish dominated militia established in 2015 and sponsored by the United States to help establish a Kurdish enclave in Northern Syria. The SDF is composed primarily of Kurds fighting under their own banner of **People's Protection Units (YPG)**. More specifically, it might be said that **the YPG is a Kurdish dominated militia, which is fighting alongside the American backed SDF who are opposed to radical Islamic terrorists and also to the Russian-backed Syrian government of Bashar al Assad.** Currently the SDF is planning to engage in an all-out assault on Raqqa, the capital and stronghold of ISIS-ISIL or the Islamic State. According to [The Foreign Policy Group](#) (FP)

*"Even as the Trump administration weighs its options, the U.S. military is ramping up for the assault, drawing up plans to deploy up to 1,000 more American soldiers to Syria in support of the **YPG and allied forces, known collectively as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**, which [have advanced](#) mere miles from the city (of Raqqa). Pentagon officials [assess](#) that the roughly 27,000 Kurds in the 50,000-strong SDF are the more effective, experienced fighters.*

The [New York Times](#) (March 15) corroborated this report by FP:

“The U.S. military has drawn up early plans that would deploy up to 1,000 more troops into northern Syria in the coming weeks, expanding the American presence in the country ahead of the offensive on the Islamic State’s de facto capital of Raqqa.”

“The deployment...would potentially double the number of U.S. forces in Syria and increase the potential for direct U.S. combat involvement in a conflict that has been characterized by confusion and competing priorities among disparate forces.”

The plan to deploy 1,000 more troops is meant to bolster a previous deployment of United States Marines already ordered by President Trump. On March 9, the [Guardian](#) reported on the deployment of several hundred US Marines to Syria:

“A few hundred marines with heavy artillery have been deployed to Syria in preparation for the fight to oust [Islamic State](#) from its self-declared headquarters of Raqqa, a senior US official said on Wednesday.”

“The marines moving into [Syria](#) are positioning howitzers to be ready to help local Syrian forces, said the official, who was not authorised to discuss the deployment publicly.

There are already approximately 500 U.S. Special Operations forces in Syria operating alongside the SDF. They are complemented by an additional 250 Army Rangers and 200 US Marines. **The additional 1,000 U.S. troops will most likely be part of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit** that are part of a

“... [flotilla of ships loaded with 2,200 Marines that is now steaming toward the region](#) – and the U.S. Army’s 82nd

Airborne Division, of which 2,500 recently arrived in Kuwait.”

Regarding this deployment, [Turkish Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim](#) cautioned US leaders:

“If (Washington) insists on carrying on this operation with terror organizations (Kurds whom the Turks consider as terrorists and public enemy number one), our relations will be harmed – that is clear.”



Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim

Prime Minister Yildirim’s statement is especially meaningful in the context of the [Astana Meetings](#) previously hosted by Russia, Iran and Turkey (in Astana, Kazakhstan), which have resulted in a military coalition consisting of Turkey, Russia, and Iran, already operating in Syria where they are acting as a peacekeeping force. Rather than joining the peace initiative, the US continues following its own foreign policy thereby driving Turkey further away from Washington. In fact, **this latest US maneuver, might also compromise US relationships with the United Nations**, which is beneficiary of Russian efforts at Astana: The Russian, Turks and Iranians provided the military backbone which brought the contending parties to the UN sponsored meeting of diplomats in Geneva (Feb 2017).

[The cooperating powers all agreed to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Syrian nation](#), implying that **they will uphold the right of Syria as a sovereign nation**, a nation entitled to determine for itself who its leaders will be and who will be invited to fight alongside it against common enemies.

“The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian

*Federation and the Republic of Turkey, in line with the Joint Statement of their Foreign Ministers made in Moscow, on December 20, 2016 and the **UN Security Council resolution 2336**...”reaffirm their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian and democratic state.”*

Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia emphasized this point:

The talks in Astana are “an important contribution to... a comprehensive political settlement in Syria which will continue in wider activities in Geneva.”

The prospect of ongoing US support of Kurds, esp. in Northern Syria, is seen in Ankara as a threat to Turkish security, a threat seemingly ignore by Donald Trump, a threat that drives Turkey deeper into a meaningful coalition with Russia.

To make the scenario extremely interesting, Russia is also backing the Kurds also to the ire of Turkey who is simultaneously fighting side by side with Russia as agreed to by the Astana Accords. The whole complicated situation is growing ever more complex. Turkey has been assisting Syrian Government forces (Assad’ forces backed by Russia) as they move toward Manbij a city held by US backed Kurds; therefore the US has deployed troops there to oppose a Turkish offensive. As reported by the [New York Times](#) :

“In recent weeks, U.S. Army Rangers have been sent to the city of Manbij west of Raqqa (in NW Syria) to deter Russian, Turkish and Syrian opposition forces all operating in the area, while a Marine artillery battery recently deployed near Raqqa (70 miles SW) has already come under fire, according to a defense official with direct knowledge of their operations.”

It is interesting that Syrian forces supported by the Syrian government engaged in warfare with Islamic terrorists in their own country are referred to as “*opposition forces*”. Opposition to whom, to the United States? If the Russian-Turkish backed Syrian army is fighting ISIS (Islamic State) and is called the “*opposition*”, who is the United States fighting?

Turkey finds itself in a quandary, it is assisting Russia who is supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. At the same time, it is a NATO member and thus a US ally. The United States has been backing rebel forces against Assad and supposedly, at the same time, also fighting Islamic terrorists such as ISIS and Daesh whom the Russians and Turks are also fighting. **Turkey has indicated that it would commit ground troops to help US backed forces topple Raqqa but that eventuality is contingent upon US relinquishing its support of the Kurds (YPG) whom the Russians are also supporting.**

Moreover, as a result of the Russian brokered Astana Accords, Syrian rebels, that is those that are Syrian and *not* Islamic terrorists imported from throughout the Middle East, Syrian rebels who were opposed to Assad are now working with the Assad government to oust radical Islamic terrorists, which means if the terrorists are defeated there are virtually no indigenous forces of any considerable size left opposing the Syrian government; who will the United States support then? That is who will the United States support in Syria once ISIS or the Islamic State is defeated? **Ostensibly, the Kurds will have the backing of both the United States and Russia**, the preferred diplomatic position for both countries *vis a vis* Turkey. That is, **it is better for the United States to have strained relations with Turkey over the Kurds if Russia also has strained relations with the Turks and for the same reason!** Turkey will just have to get use to it – the US and Russia are apparently headed down a course leading to some type of cooperative agreement even if it is happening *willy nilly*.

The unexpected might be occurring, viz., Russia and the US are being pulled together by supporting the Kurds in Syria albeit at risk of exacerbating relations with Turkey. Sarah El Deeb is one of the few to recognize the unexpected. As reported in the [Chicago Tribune](#):

“Ankara (that is, Turkey) has effectively unified Russia and the U.S. in the goal of limiting Turkish expansion in the north (North Syria where the Kurds live). Syrian experts say Ankara has lost influence to realize its aim of pushing the Kurdish forces back to the east of Manbij across the Euphrates. Moreover, Washington is pushing ahead with partnering with the Kurdish-led forces in the planned attack on Raqqa, despite Turkish opposition.”

According to [Ragip Soylu](#) a reporter for [New Turkey](#), Turkey’s efforts to disrupt the US-Kurd alliance

“...has been tossed away as the Russian military and U.S. Special Forces moved last week in Syria’s Manbij to prevent Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from attacking the city,”

Russia has taken an unexpected stance on Manbij, instead of advancing on the city, THEY ARE WORKING TO PREVENT any further Syrian-Turkish advance deeply desired by the Turks. They are now involved in the mutual defeat of ISIS. At the moment they, the United States and Russia, are involved in planning an assault on ISIS in Raqqa and mutual support of the Kurds; the latter to the chagrin of the Turks

Complex as it is to discern, **the future is perhaps beginning in Manbij and Raqqa**, as [U.S. Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend](#), of the anti-ISIS coalition has said:

“All the forces acting in Syria have converged within hand-grenade range of one another. We encourage all forces to

remain focused on the counter-ISIS fight and concentrate their efforts on defeating ISIS and not toward other objectives that may cause the coalition to divert energy and resources away from Raqqa.”

In other words, the US is not focused on toppling the Assad government (at least not now and possibly not again in the future). **The mission is for once clear: defeat ISIS.** This is **something both the Americans and Russians can agree upon.** The Russian are *not* looking for war between its allies, Turkey and Syria, versus the US forces in Manbij or Raqqa. **Turkish and Syrian troops moving toward Manbij were halted** due to a [deal brokered by Russia that established a “buffer zone”](#) between the Kurds and advancing Turk-Syrian forces. This zone is intended to **protect the Kurds** in Manbij and to keep Russian backed Syrian and Turkish troops out of conflict with the United States, *esp.* since they are all, as US General Townsend has stated: *“within hand-grenade range of one another.”*

Unfortunately, [Turkey has not honored the zone:](#)

“On Thursday, Syrian government media said Turkish shelling killed a number of its troops. Kurdish officials said Turkish advances continued even despite the buffer zone.”

Turkey, long a backer of terrorism throughout the Middle East, is now suffering a bout of what appears to be irremediable consternation. Since **the United States and Russia are now face to face in Syria**, since **the United States and Russia are both supporting the Kurds** in Syria, since **the United States and Russia are both fighting ISIS** in Syria simultaneously and at the same exact location, **it will be difficult for Turkey to play anymore deceptive games designed to advance its own agenda and keep the two superpowers apart.** The Turks however have at least three allies in this game, *viz.*, the US Neocons, global liberals, and Israeli Zionists who will do anything to hinder real peace by keeping the two apart!

Nonetheless, will the United States begin to coordinate efforts with Russia to

(1) Protect Manbij, a city held by US backed Kurdish-led forces thereby increasing tensions with Turkey but lessening them with Russia (for the US that is)?

(2) Somehow pacify or restrain Turkey – something much easier if they cooperate – thereby bringing Turk dreams for a renewed Ottoman Empire or at least an Arab World under Turk domination to naught and as a result bring Turkey's leaders to their senses?

(3) Defeat ISIS in a mutual effort to “*bomb the shit out of them*” as Trump promised during his campaign – Raqqa represents the possibility of fulfilling a campaign promise and of moving towards normalizing relations with Russia, although in a very unexpected way as explained above.

Or will the US act to salvage its relations with Turkey thereby lessening support for the Kurds and increasing tensions with Russia? Quite possibly Turkey will have to make a choice, that is, to seek a deeper alliance with the United States or Russia; either way, it will have to come to grips with the Kurds whom neither is likely to abandon. The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel (Saudi Arabia also stands to lose, but not as much as Israel) who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over these years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in this situation; it has already [violated Syrian airspace this past week.](#)

“The Syrian military said the Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria).”

“The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.”

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria,” said the statement.”

The United States might not be fighting Syria at the moment but Israel is apparently trying to keep Syrian ally Iran from sending weapons to Hezbollah stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?](#)

“Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel, a former director of counter-terrorism in the Israeli prime minister’s bureau, said conflict with Hezbollah was inevitable as the group sought ever more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, heavy rockets and tactical weapons, but he believed Assad had seriously misread the situation.”

“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that clashes in [Syria](#) will stay with us for the next three to six years.”

“Discussing Russia’s role in Syria, he added more controversially: “Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel.” That was, he said: “Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission.”

Although Israel favors continued conflict, as long as its enemies are killing each other and as long as Syria is potentially neutralized along with its ally Iran, although Israel favors such things, New Era is forecasting eventual peace – if the US and Russia actually cooperate to defeat ISIS – which means something will have to give in Israel, perhaps something significant.

Medjugorje (Part 5 of 5): Spiritual Guides Disobedient, Excommunicated, Unchaste

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS of the Medjugorje “Seers” have scored a “trifecta”; all three of them have been laicized, excommunicated, or suspended *a divinis*. Father Tomislav Vlastic was the third spiritual adviser of the Medjugorje “seers” to be suspended from his ministry (2009). The second was, Father Jozo Zovko, who was suspended by Bishop Peric in 2004. Father Iveca Vego holds the infamous dishonor of being the first; he was suspended on Jan. 29 1982, six months after the apparitions began at Medjugorje. Nonetheless, he continued to exercise his priestly ministry in defiance of the Bishop of Mostar. Vego refused to comply until after the Vatican got involved and the other two were implicated on various

charges serious enough to warrant suspension and excommunication before the Curia took up Vego's case in 2009.

Father Iveca Vego

According to Bishop Zanic, Father Ivica Vego, a Franciscan priest among the first confidants and spiritual directors of the "seers", was dispensed from his vows and expelled from the Franciscan Order in January (1982) by his superiors in the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) after which the bishop appealed to the *Vatican Congregation for Religious* to have him reduced to the lay state.

According to [Bishop Zanic](#), eventually Ivica Vego's behavior, which included persistent and flagrant disobedience and immoral sexual conduct (the seduction and impregnation of a nun named Sister Leopolda) caught up with him.

"By an order of the Holy Father the Pope, he was thrown out of his Franciscan religious order OFM by his General, dispensed from his vows, and suspended "a divinis".

Nonetheless, like other Franciscan Friars stationed at Medjugorje both before and after him, Vego disregard the canonical sentence and continued to hear confessions and to offer Mass.

"He did not obey this order and he continued to celebrate Mass, distribute the sacraments and pass the time with his mistress."

Why mention such a distasteful event? The reason: **the "seers" claimed that Our Lady** appeared to them on thirteen occasions during which she **stated** in one way or another that **Father Vego was innocent**, that he was as entitled to celebrate Mass as any other priest, and that the bishop was a harsh overlord. The most egregious aspect of the whole affair is the supposed attitude of the Virgin Mary, who according to Vicka, sided with the disobedient Franciscans.

On December 19, 1981 [Vicka wrote in her diary](#):

*“Our Lady said that **the bishop is to blame** for the disorder in Hercegovina. She also said that Fr. Ivica Vego is not to blame, yet that the bishop has all authority. Our Lady said that he (Vego) should remain in Mostar and not leave.”*

On April 15, 1982 Vicka reported that the Virgin stated that Father Vego and another Franciscan priest likewise suspended by the bishop, had the Gospa's permission to both say Mass and hear Confessions.

*“Vicka asked Our Lady a question. ‘Could you generally tell me everything about Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina?’ Our Lady smiled at the first and then she said: ‘They are innocent.’ She repeated twice that: ‘**The bishop has made a mistake . . . let them remain in Mostar . . . they can say Mass** sometimes but they should be careful to stay away from attention until things calm down. **They have no faults.**’”*

On April 26, 1982 Vicka stated that Our Lady said:

*“**The bishop has no real love of God in his heart.** Regarding the bishop, may Ivica and Ivan remain calm. **What the bishop is doing is contrary to the will of God,** yet he can do as he pleases, but one day justice such as you have never seen shall be revealed.”*

Then, on January 3, 1982, all the “seers” together asked Our Lady about Fr. Vego. She answered:

*“Ivica is innocent. If they expel him from the Franciscan Order, may he remain courageous . . . **Ivica is innocent.**” She repeated this three times.*

Vicka has never denied that the Gospa spoke these words. Their authenticity is confirmed by a cassette recording taped by Rev. Grafenauer SJ during interviews he conducted with [Marija](#) and [Vicka](#). Rev. Grafenauer provided copies to the parish of Medjugorje and to the the bishop; he also provided an additional cassette for the Yugoslavian Bishops' Conference. The cassette contains the following

dialogue:

Grafenauer: "You told **the bishop** that he **is to blame** and that those two [Vego and Prusina] are innocent and that they can perform their priestly duties?"

Vicka: "Yes I did."

Grafenauer: "Can they hear confessions? Did Our Lady mention this?"

Vicka: "Yes".

Grafenauer: "If Our Lady said this and the Pope says that they cannot..."

Vicka: "The Pope can say what he wants, I'm telling it as it is"
[Original: Nek Pope govori, kako ja kazem onak jest].

Grafenauer: "See, this is how one can come to the conclusion that this is not Our Lady... when the Pope says no, they cannot celebrate Mass, and they cannot hear confessions, and then on the other hand, Our Lady says they can do both, this cannot be!"

"**Vicka:** I know what is right [What Our Lady said]."

Grafenauer: "This cannot be true. I would put my hand into fire to testify that this is not Our Lady speaking. When a person has a greater gift there also exists a greater danger that the devil could be at work upon this person."

[Ogledalo Pravde. Biskupski ordinarijat u Mostaru o navodnim ukazanjima i porukama u Međugorju (The Diocesan Curia of Mostar on the Alleged Apparitions and Messages of Medjugorje), Mostar, 2001, pp. 22-23]

An excerpt of the dialogue with the “seer”, Marija:

Grafenauer: “Did Our Lady say that the bishop is to blame?”

Marija: “Yes”.

Grafenauer: “Did she say that Vego and Prusina were not to blame?”

Marija: “Yes”.

Grafenauer: “When Our Lady says that the bishop is to blame this immediately appears suspicious and we could conclude that this is not Our Lady speaking. The seers are apparently spreading word around that the bishop is to blame”.

Marija: “Our Lady told us this”.

[Msgr. P. Žanić, [The Truth About Medjugorje](#), § 12]

To make matters worse, on **21 June 1983** another seer, [Ivan Dragicevic](#), wrote a letter to the bishop, which contained a warning from Our Lady given during an apparition. Significantly, *Father Ivica Vego was present at this apparition as he often was* (He was also present when the Virgin Mary supposedly dropped the baby Jesus, to be examined elsewhere).

Ivan wrote:

“Excellency. These are the thoughts that she (the Virgin Mar) told me: ‘Tell the Bishop that I seek a quick conversion from him towards the happenings in Medjugorje, before it is too late. May he accept these events with plenty of love, understanding and great responsibility. I want him to avoid creating conflicts between priests and to stop publicizing their negative behaviours.’”

*“The bishop is the spiritual father of all the parishes in Hercegovina. For this reason I seek his conversion towards these events. I am sending my second-last warning. **If what I seek does not come about, my judgement and the judgement of my Son await the Bishop. This means that he has not found the way to my Son Jesus.**”*

Although Vicka remained defiant, when Leopolda became pregnant, they both left the religious life and began to live together near Medjugorje where their child was born. They now have four children. Finally, on **October 30, 1984, as mentioned above, Vego was suspended a divinis and reduced to the lay state ([by the Vatican Congregation for Religious](#)) and dismissed from the Order (by the General Curia in Rome).**

Since Vego was encouraged by the Gospa of Medjugorje to be disobedient (as recorded in the diary of Vicka and statements of the visionaries), by a “Gospa” who continually proclaimed his innocence while also claiming that the bishop was in error; since Vego was encouraged by such a Gospa (who by implication also disagreed with the pope who affirmed his suspension), the question about the authenticity of these messages is becoming increasingly clear. It becomes sharper still with consideration of another confidant of the seers, Father Jozo Zovko.



Father Jozo Zovko OFM

Jozo Zovko was born March 19, 1941 in the province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Medjugorje devotees like to point out that Father Jozo was imprisoned **after** the supposed apparitions began. Police records, however, reveal a much different story: "Father Jozo, was considered a political enemy *not* for his support of the seers; rather, he was considered an enemy of the State because of his alleged support for the Croatian Ustasa. Like the condemned [liberation theologians](#) of Latin America, many Franciscans, including Father Jozo, were thought guilty of supporting Catholics vigilantes who took up arms in the name of Christ.

Police reports dating back to 1977, well **before** the beginning of the apparitions, indicate that Father Jozo supported the Croatian "*Ustasa while serving as Pastor at Posušje* (related documents are quoted in [Misterij Međugorja](#))."

Connection between Franciscans and Ustasa Results in State Officials Mistrusting of Franciscans

Before the Communist breakup under M. Gorbachev, Bosnia was a province of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was the pearl in an otherwise rusty crown of Communist states. Yugoslavia offered Western consumer goods, exported high quality modern mechanical products including the Yugo automobile, and was a highly desired tourist attraction boasting splendid cities, beautiful mountain lakes, an inspiring coast, and spectacular mountain scenery.



Dubrovnik in Southern Croatia



Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

Nonetheless, there was much discontent, esp. in Catholic Croatia where Catholics regularly suffered oppression and heinous treatment at the hands of their Serbian Communist overlords, which sparked a covert nationalist undercurrent known as the Ustasa, a group of Catholic

insurrectionists that took up arms against the Communist Government and government officials. Poland, another country situated in Eastern Europe, also faced a hostile Communist regime; however, **unlike the Ustasas, the Poles rallied peacefully under the banner of Solidarity**, a social movement inspired by bishops and cardinals opposed to violence in favor of peaceful protest fueled by prayer and sacrifice, the traditional Catholic form of resistance ever since the first martyrs peacefully witnessed for the faith and had their blood spilled throughout the anti-Christian Roman Empire. Things were quite different in Croatia where a minority of zealous insurrectionists decided to resolve the issue through more violence. At the center of the turmoil was a small relatively unknown town named *Medjugorje*, the subject of an intensive study conducted by **Dutch sociologist Mart Bax**. Bax invested nearly sixteen years researching this small town, which became an international pilgrimage destination sparking unprecedented growth and globalization after it was reported that the Virgin Mary was appearing there.

According to [Jonathan Levy](#), an attorney working for victims of the Ustasa, who reported on Bax's findings:

*'Medjugorje was a small agrarian hamlet in Herzegovina prior to 1981, notable only for being **near the site of a massacre of Serbs by Croats in 1942**. The Croats who allied themselves with Nazi Germany took revenge on the Serbs under whose rule the Croats had chafed after WWI. The Croats formed the paramilitary Ustasa organization and with the help of Roman Catholic clergy (like the [Franciscan Liberation Theologians of Latin America](#)) sought to purge Croatia and Bosnia of the hated Serbs who were Orthodox Christians. Operating from Medjugorje, the Ustasa rounded up the local Serbs and slaughtered several hundred Serbs disposing of them in a ravine at a place called Suramanci.*

It is not the intent of this article to judge the guilt of the Communists, Orthodox Serbs or Croat Catholics, but only to demonstrate that the some Croats were provoked into insurrection by their maltreatment and that their activities were give support by some

members of the Franciscan community who should have been counseling peace, prayer, and sacrifice as the bishops of Poland were doing just North of them. Josip Tito's Communist government was determined to rid Bosnia of what they referred to as the "Ustasa" or "fascist" opposition esp. throughout Croatia, a predominantly Catholic region. By 1957 it appeared that Tito had crushed the Ustasa opposition. However,

*"Blood feuds continued in Bosnia. Likewise the **Franciscan Order** which had openly sided with the Ustasa during World War II, eventually returned to their churches and monasteries...In 1972, the **Franciscans** built a new church in Medjugorje. By 1981 when the Virgin Mary appeared to six children there, the Franciscans were (also) locked in an administrative dispute with the Bishop of Mostar over control of the village church and their activities."*

*"Bax reminds us that Bosnia Herzegovina was the locale of 400 years of war between the Turks and Austrians; the area became a checkerboard of separate ethnicities, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. **The founding of Yugoslavia in 1919 did little to quiet the region as the Serbs dominated the government. Croats were discriminated against and formed bands of Ustase, the Serbs retaliated by forming paramilitary bands known as Chetniks. The Second World War turned Bosnia into a huge battlefield where Croats and Muslims aligned with the Germans and fought Serbs and Communist Partisans. The Partisans were victorious and the Ustase eliminated, but by the late 1970's the Croats including those in Medjugorje were again forming Ustase bands.**"*

Thus, it is not surprising that Father Jozo was a suspect of the Communist authorities, *not* for his connection to the seers, but rather for his connection to Catholic nationalists that posed a threat to the Serb dominated Communist government. On **October 21, 1981** Vicka appealed to Our Lady to assist Fr. Jozo who was awaiting sentence from the court (the Medjugorje event could easily be interpreted as an

anti-Communist ploy with the Franciscans suspected of complicity – it was more likely a financial ploy or part of a Communist plan to subvert the Catholic faith and bring it into line with the evolutionary spirituality of the New Age favored by high adepts in the Communist Party such as L. Breznev and then later M. Gorbachev who favored a one world religion as a central thread of the program to move socialism forward to its next stage of historical development (this complex subject is taken up throughout the pages of [Trinitarian Humanism](#)” in which the author discusses the New Age leanings of M. Gorbachev and his affiliation with the New Age Movement), which is NOW unraveling as Medjugorje appears to be. Nonetheless, in 1981, the Gospa of Medjugorje stood with the friars, including Father Jozo. The seers pleaded with her:

“Dear Gospa, I know that you do not have the spirit of vengeance, but try nevertheless to bring certain people to reason, so that they might judge impartially.”

The Gospa responded:

*“Jozo looks well and he greets you warmly. Do not fear for Jozo. **He is a saint**, I have already told you.”*

It is hard to understand how the Virgin Mary, the perpetually obedient “Handmaid of the Lord”, could refer to Fra Jozo as a “saint”. In reality this Franciscan was habitually and blatantly disobedient to his superiors and had already been suspended three times, a first time by bishop Zanic on **August 23 1989** (diocesan letter Nr. 622/89) and a second time by bishop Peric on **June 14, 1994** (diocesan letter Nr. 423/94).

Here is a list of disciplinary actions taken against Jozo Zovko through 2009 ([for more detail visit Official Documents of Medjugorje](#)):

*August 23, 1989 Fr. Jozo was **suspended** by Bishop Zanic*

Jozo refused obedience and appealed to the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples. **The Congregation confirmed his suspension** (Feb 15, 1990) and requests he domicile in a convent far removed from Medjugore.

Jozo refuses to comply.

July 25, 1991 The Franciscan Provincial of Hercegovina requests the Bishop Zanic to transfer Jozo to the convent of Siroki Brijeg, less than 30 miles from Medjugorje.

The bishop rejects the request.

Nonetheless, Jozo shows up in Siroki Brijeg. Despite protests from Bishop Zanic, Father Jozo continued to administer the Sacraments in Siroki Brijeg.

August of 1993 Bishop Peric is installed as the new bishop of Mostar and Jozo remains non-compliant and insubordinate.

November 11, 1993 The Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples contacts the Minister-General of the Franciscan order and confirms Jozo's suspension; nonetheless, Jozo continued to boldly exercise his priestly ministry within the vicinity of Medjugorje.

December 29, 1993 the Franciscan Province of Hercegovina informs bishop Peric that Jozo has been appointed as a Parish Administrator in Siroki Brijeg. The bishop responds and expresses his bewilderment. Seven months later, the bishop undertakes a canonical visit to Siroki Brijeg and finds out that Jozo is hearing confessions in spite of his suspension. Two days later **the bishop formally suspends Jozo again** according to [Canon 1378, par 2](#). and notifies his Superior in the Franciscan Order. **Jozo disregards the suspension.**

June 11, 1998 During his ad limina-visit to Rome, Bishop Peric informs the Holy See of the situation.

2002 The Franciscan Provincial in Medjugorje promotes Jozo to Medjugorje devotees as a "devout priest" who "on invitation gives spiritual retreats on the island of Jakljan and in Medjugorje." The provincial was bold enough to make such licit public promotions

while failing to mention anything about Jozo's suspension or irregular status.

*June 26, 2004 Bishop Peric suspends Jozo for a third time on account **obstinate disobedience**. The bishop invites Jozo to the diocesan Curia to present him with documents detailing his unauthorized and illegitimate pastoral activities and others related to his 'moral' life.*

Jozo again refuses to obey.

*February 9, 2009 Jozo's personal assistant, Vesna Cuzic, informs all Medjugorje devotees, that Jozo will be unavailable for spiritual direction for the remainder of the year due to a need for convalescence while renovating buildings **on the island of Badija-Croatia**.*

Apparently, following the suspension of Fr. Tomislav Vlastic by the Vatican in 2008, a new commission took up Fr. Jozo's case. Fr. Jozo's superiors then finally complied with the bishop's requests: They confirmed his suspension by Bishop Zanic (1989) and sent him to a remote island of Badija **far from Medjugore** – if he is still hearing confessions etc. is another issue.

Conclusion

St. John of the Cross asserts that Our Lord "through His public revelation, has given all that is needed for salvation."

"We must suspect those apparitions that lack dignity or proper reserve, and above all, those that are ridiculous. This last characteristic is a mark of human or diabolical machination."

The priests advisors and spiritual confidants of the supposed seers certainly present a host of problems for Medjugorje. Their disobedience is a hallmark of willful pride and fraudulent practices. The children have been caught in numerous prevarications, and they, both priests and seers, implicate Our Lady in their designs making her to be the cause of their disobedience, which, according to the seers themselves, was supported by Our Lady even in the face of ecclesial pronouncements by both bishops and the Pope himself.

The theme of *disobedience, sexual aberrance*, and a new wrinkle –

cultic *New Age Spirituality* – will be examined in Article Six wherein another Franciscan Friar, Spiritual Director, and Confidant of the “seers”, Father Tomislav Vlastic, is examined for all three of these transgressions.

In closing it is well to remember that Our LADY IS QUEEN MOTHER” OF THE “NEW ISRAEL”, A POWERFUL POSITION FROM WHICH SHE INTERCEDES FOR GOD’S PEOPLE AND DISPENSES GRACE NECESSARY FOR SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION, SHE HAS NOT HOWEVER BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THE POWER OF THE KEYS, THAT POWER HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED SOLELY TO PETER AND THE BISHOPS IN UNION WITH HIM.

[Go to Article Six: Tomislav Vlastic Laicized Medjugorje Spiritual Guide & New Age Master of “Manipulation”](#)

Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates (Part 4 of 5): Mirjana Soldo

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

ARTICLES ONE THROUGH THREE presented the historical background of the “*Medjugore Saga*” detailing the fractured relationship between the Diocesan Bishops and rebellious Franciscan Friars that dot the pages of the still unfolding drama. They also presented sketches of the two Diocesan Bishops and the first group of three seers, Ivan, Vicka and Mirjana, who have each received nine of the purported ten “secrets” confided to them by their “Gospa”. This current article and the following fifth article, presents the final three seers who are grouped together because each has each received *all* ten “secrets” and

now experience only periodic monthly and occasional other visits from the Gospa.



Mirjana Dragicevic – Soldo

Mirjana Dragicevic was born in Sarajevo on March 18, 1965, to Jozo and Milena Dragicevic. She lived in Sarajevo and attended school there. Like all of the other seers, Marijana is currently married; she and her husband Marco and two daughters live in Medjugorje.

Mirjana had daily apparitions from June 24, 1981 until December 25, 1982, when they ended. On this date, Mirjana received her 10th and final secret. She was the first seer to receive all 10 secrets. She is also the one to whom the Gospa entrusted the responsibility to reveal the ten secrets at an unspecified future date.

Since her final daily apparition (December 1982), the Gospa appears to Mirjana **only once a year on her birthday (March 18)**. At first Marijana stated that the apparitions would occur on her birthday **for the rest of her life**. Shortly thereafter, Mirjana began to experience **interior locutions** during which the Gospa asked her to **pray for non-believers**. Our Lady began appearing to Marijana in external visions (apparitions) on a more regular basis: once a month, on **August 2, 1987**. Thus, since August, 1987, the Gospa has been appearing to her on the **2nd day of every month** to pray with her for all unbelievers.

These apparitions however, were all private and remained so for almost ten years until Mirjana let it be known that the Gospa wanted these apparitions to be open to the public. Thus, on **February 2, 1997** Mirjana received her first public apparition in fifteen years. Since that time, on the second of every month thousands of pilgrims once again gather around Mirjana to “be with Our Lady” and to join them both in prayer for non-believers. During these times, the Gospa

also presents a monthly message. These monthly “messages” are **similar to monthly messages confided to Marija Pavlovic on the 25th of every month** ([Article Three](#)).

Before proceeding, this means that Our Lady was not satisfied with only one monthly message; [the messages, although trite](#), are apparently so important that one, the message given to Marija Pavlovic, was insufficient, two a month must be given in addition to the 40,000 already confided over a thirty year period and the 90+ other messages given every month of the year. The Gospa appears every day of the year with a different messages given to Ivan, Vicka and Marija. It is true that daily apparitions occur every evening at 6:40 PM in Medjugorje. Marija, however, lives in Italy and Ivan in the United States necessitating different messages for each.

The Gospa also appears to the seers at different times (a time other than 6:40) if they are traveling or for other unusual circumstances. For example, Ivan hosts a prayer groups on Monday and Friday nights; on these night the Gospa appears to him at 10 PM. She also appears to the other three, Marijana, Jakov, and Ivanka one day a year and also, as indicated above, to Mirijana on the second day of each month.

Mirjana’s annual visit occurs **March 18th**, **Jakov’s** is **December 25th** and **Ivanka’s** is **June 25th**. In summary then, there are 3 different daily messages (except when all three are together in Medjugorje) supplemented by 2 monthly messages and 12 yearly messages given by the Gospa to the seers, approx. 1,131 messages per year.

Hotel Business

Like Ivan Dragicevic and Marija Pavlovic, Miranja also own and operate a hotel catering business in Medjugorje. [Italian TV-Rai News reported](#) (June 16, 2011) that

“Given the large flux of pilgrims, Mirjana has recently expanded her hotel with a new wing.”

The new wing or guesthouse, named, *Mirjana i Marko*, opened in the spring of 2011. The *Mirana i Marko Guesthouse*, which offers extended double and triple suites, is located between Mirjana's own house and one owned by Ivan Dragicevic's parents. [Rooms can be booked online](#) along with an advertisement carrying messages from Our Lady in [violation of the Zadar Declaration reviewed in Parts Two and Three](#)

Unlike Ivan or any of the others, Mirjana is the only seer to have obtained a college degree from the University of Sarajevo. Marijana has indicated that Our Lady might still be appearing to her if she had forgone college:

[In an interview with Fr. Tomislav Vlastic](#) on January 10, 1983, Mirjana stated:

*"I asked Her (Our Lady) why She would no longer appear to me, after such a long time, and She explained that because I had decided to continue my schooling, I must **learn to live my life without Her direct help and advice**. She told me that **I'm no different from any other young person**, any other girl, and that I must live accordingly" (even though the Virgin Mary appears to her 13 times a year).*

Problems Telling the Truth

[According to Bishop Zanic](#), Mirjana has some difficulty telling the truth:

*"One month after the beginning of the "apparitions" I went to Medjugorje to question the 'seers'. I asked each of them to take an oath on the cross and demanded that they must speak the truth. (This conversation and oath was recorded on tape). The first one was Mirjana: **"We went to look for our sheep when at once..."** (The associate pastor in the parish interrupted and told me that they actually went out to smoke, which they hid from their parents). **"Wait a minute Mirjana, you're under oath. Did you go out to look***

for your sheep?"

She put her hand over her mouth, "forgive me, we went out to smoke." She then showed me the watch on which the "miracle" occurred because the hands of the watch had gone haywire... I told her not to mention that a miracle occurred. Yet, on cassettes taped later on, she went on to speak of how a miracle occurred with the watch and that initially they had gone out to search for their sheep."

Related to her penchant for fabricating false episodes, Mirjana believes that now is the time to share her broader story with the whole world. In her [first book](#), **MY HEART WILL TRIUMPH**, released in the USA on August 15, 2016 she claims that on the final day of her daily apparitions Our Lady not only confided the ten secrets, but that She also presented them on a *mysterious parchment* covered with veiled words, which only Mirjana could understand, that is, only Mirjana could grasp their real meaning. Before departing, the [Gospa said to her](#)

"Now you will have to turn to God in faith like any other person, I have chosen you; I have confided in you everything that is essential. I have also shown you many terrible things. You must now bear it all with courage. Think of me and think of the tears I must shed for that. You must remain brave. You have quickly grasped the messages. You must also understand now that I have to go away. Be courageous."

[According to Mirjana](#), the mysterious parchment is written in such a way that [only she can perceive and understand it](#): Following is an excerpt from an interview with Mirjana (June 1988):

Q: "Where is the parchment now?"

"In my room. When I got all the ten secrets, I was always afraid that I might forget something. I was not sure about myself to remember all those dates. It gave me trouble all the time. So one

day, while I was having the vision, Mary simply gave me that, we call it foil, that parchment. It is neither a paper or a tissue or fabric – just like an old pigment parchment. So all ten secrets are nicely written on it and so I keep that paper in the drawer with the rest of my papers. I showed it to a cousin of mine and she just saw a letter. She did not see any secrets, she just saw it as a letter. And I showed it to, I think it was my aunt. I showed it to her and she just saw certain poems. Nobody sees the same. Only me, only I can see the secrets, so there is no danger – **I don't have to hide it, to conceal it. I can keep it on the table because nobody is able to read it, the secrets.**

Information about parchment is located at 21:20

Corroborating this hard to believe episode provided by Mirjana, reputable theologian [Rene Luarentin](#) wrote that she told him:

*“Our Lady gave me just a special sheet on which the ten secrets are written. It is made by a material that can not be described. It seems like paper but it is not paper. It seems like cloth but is not cloth. It is visible. **You can touch it but you can not see the writing.** When the time will come, I will present the sheet to the chosen priest. He will receive the grace to read **only the first secret**, and later the others. My cousin, an engineer in Switzerland, examined it but did not succeed in identifying the material.*

SOURCE: [René Laurentin, *Le apparizioni di Medjugorje continuano. Proroga di misericordia per un mondo in pericolo?*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1986, p. 33. English edition: *Appearitions at Medjugorje Prolonged: A Merciful Delay for a World in Danger*, Riehle Foundation, 1987]

[Laurentin](#) also reported the following episode:

*“I met her (Mirjana) on 1 January 1986, at the rectory. I asked her about that mysterious note which seems to constitute an objection. Calmly **she confirmed the existence: I can read it, the others can not.** I asked: You showed it to your cousin. Why didn’t you show it to the priests in your parish? This question has not received a response either by her or by the Fathers. [Ibid., p. 36]*

Like the Book of Mormon which no one has ever seen, apparently this one is preparing to disappear too:

Concerning this, Mirjana was interviewed in Medjugorje by both Father Laurentin and Father Petar Ljubicić. In which they stated

“We questioned her also about that kind of parchment, neither paper nor cloth, on which the ten secrets are supposed to be invisibly written. Could she show it to us?

*Mirjana: “In case the Committee requests it, **I would need to ask Virgin Mary for permission first.***

“She doesn’t have the document with her. She left it in a drawer in Sarajevo.”

*Mirjana: “I can read it...**But a cousin of mine, who found it in my house, believed she could read something, but it was not what was written on it.***

SOURCE: [R. Laurentin, Dernières nouvelles de Medjugorje, No 9, O.E.I.L., Paris, 1990, p. 18]

Like Joseph Smith who claimed to have transcribed the [Book of Mormon from mysterious golden plates](#) allegedly given to him by the angel

Moroni from which he derived the *Book of Mormon*, Mirjana claims to have received ten secrets from the Gospa. Afterward, Smith returned the plates to the angel before few others could view them. Mirjana has protected herself in a similar fashion. **No one has seen the parchment except a few potential witnesses** such as her children and cousin (who should be questioned about the parchment). Other than that, no bishop or committee member, not even Laurentin himself, has seen the alleged parchment. According to Mirana, **it cannot be revealed unless the Gospa gives "permission"**, presumably, not even if the pope should request it. This is a convenient way to keep the parchment from ever being examined. Perhaps, Mirjana, like Smith, will return it to its heavenly source? Perhaps the mystical parchment is like the sheep, a story fabricated by the so-called "seer", which can only get her into deeper trouble.

Unfortunately, these fabrications do not help Mirjana nor the Medjugore cause; they are violations of Article B-Subsection 1 of the [Positive Criteria](#) established by the CDF to evaluate the authenticity of apparitions:

Article B: Particular circumstances relative to the existence and to the nature of the fact, that is to say:

Subsection 1: *Personal qualities* of the subject or of the subjects (in particular, psychological equilibrium, **honesty** and *rectitude of moral life*, sincerity and **habitual docility towards Ecclesiastical Authority**, the capacity to return to a **normal regimen** of a life of faith, etc.)

Although Mirjana was told that her daily visits would end in 1982, she apparently could not return to a "normal regimen"; instead, she took up the hotel-motel business and began receiving apparitions again on a regular monthly basis, apparitions that have continued unabated since they resumed in 1987 and then went public in 1997.

Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates (Part 3 of 5): Seers Continued

[New Era World News](#)

PART TWO OF THIS SERIES presented Ivan Dragicevic, one of the three purported Medjugorje seers still receiving daily visits from a being whom the seers claim to be the Virgin Mary. In this part, we will consider two other seers still receiving daily visits to be followed by the other group of three who no longer receive daily visits in the fourth part.



Marija Pavolovic

Marija was born April 1st, 1965, in the village of Bijakovici, Medjugorje. Like Ivan and Vicka, Marija has received only nine of the secrets and thus still has daily apparitions. **Through her, the Virgin Mary gives a message to the world on the 25th of every month.** Like the others (except Vicka) Marija is married; she has four children. Like Ivan Dragicevic, she has dual residence; Marija and her husband, Paolo Lunetti, live in Monza, Italy situated in the Diocese of Milan; throughout the year they visit Bijakovići, the village where Marija was born in the parish of Medjugorje.

In 2010, Marija founded the **Antares Association** for the purpose of raising money for the construction and maintenance of a hotel facility

named the “Magnificat”, which was built on her property in Bijakovici. Money can be wired to the “Antares Association” through Banca Prossima, located near her residence in Milan, Italy.

The Italian newspaper *L’ Arena*, carried an article about Marija and the Magnificat project in which it was stated that:

“With the support of trusted persons Marija founded the Antares association, recognized by the local government, through which she intends to support the building of the center of hospitality and spirituality. It was conceived as a large conference room, chapel and rooms for seminars, courses and retreats, and accommodation for up to 120 people, with a staff dedicated to the practical needs and the assistance of the pilgrims.”

Ignazio Ingrao, Vatican correspondent for the Italian weekly *Panorama*, was more direct in his report:

“Marija Pavlovic lives in Monza with her husband Paolo Lunetti and four sons, but in Medjugorje she opened the hotel Magnificat. Formally it is a “center of hospitality”, actually a four-star hotel with 54 elegantly furnished rooms, all with baths.



The “Magnificat” (in the photo, a view from above) was opened in June 2012.

In 2011 Marija hosted a fund raising event for the Magnificat Center that was recorded on video. The event MC begins the evening by stating (at 35 second mark)

“It’s a great feeling to be here tonight for this charity dinner: a

convivial evening to raise funds for the building of a prayer center at Medjugorje. A prayer center born thanks to the inspiration of Marija herself. It's a center that will host prayer groups, families, even individuals, who want to spend a week, a few days, a month, in the spirit, along with Our Lady" (translation according to [Marco Corvaglia](#)).

Then, at the 2:24 mark he pushed the "envelope":

*"At your place setting you'll find an envelope. We're giving the proceeds from the dinner to **the** charity, and then we'll have a drawing, a very generous drawing with a surprise first prize. Then, with the envelope, anyone who wishes can make another offering, voluntarily, from the heart, there's no obligation. If you'd like to make another offering for the center, you are free to do so."*

As was stated in [Part Two](#), when exploring Ivan Dragicevic's financial exploits, there is nothing wrong with holding a fundraising event hosted by a Catholic layman or woman for the purpose of funding his or her own charitable project. The problem here, however, is not so simple. In this case **the project and its funding are directly related to the Medjugorje events** and generate profits from them in violation of [Article C of the "Negative Criteria"](#) developed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) for evaluating the authenticity of apparitions.

*According to Article C, investigators are to look for "Evidence of a search for profit or gain strictly **connected to the fact.**"*

That is, financial gain in itself is licit; however, if it is connected to the "fact" (the apparition itself) it is to be interpreted in a negative light as evidence speaking against the

validity of the apparitions having a supernatural origin in God. In the brochure below, the hotel Magnificat is advertised with a statement that associates it directly with the seer and to the “fact”.

17



PARTENZE SPECIALI con SOGGIORNO

presso il Centro di Spiritualità “MAGNIFICAT”

situato a Bjakovic, frazione di Medjugorje ai piedi della Collina Crnica dove ebbero luogo le prime apparizioni nel 1981.

NUOVA PROPOSTA
per coloro che già sono stati a Medjugorje e desiderano approfondire e meditare i Messaggi di Maria proseguendo nel proprio Cammino Spirituale.



Codice	Partenze	Viaggio in	Quota
4A/2	5 - 8 Aprile	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 530
5A/3	13 - 17 Maggio	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 560
4A/9	24 - 27 Maggio	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 530
3A/5	19 - 21 Giugno	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 455
4A/12	16 - 19 Agosto	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 530
4A/16	13 - 16 Settembre	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 530
4A/20	11 - 14 Ottobre	Aereo (da Malpensa)	€ 530
TN/6	23 - 27 Maggio	Bus (da Torino)	€ 375
ME/12	6 - 10 Giugno	Bus (da Milano)	€ 350
MS/15	25 - 29 Luglio	Bus (da Milano)	€ 310
ME/22	12 - 16 Settembre	Bus (da Milano)	€ 350
ME/25	10 - 14 Ottobre	Bus (da Milano)	€ 350
ME/29	29 Nov. - 3 Dic.	Bus (da Milano)	€ 350

Quota iscrizione € 30

Durante questi Pellegrinaggi il programma di massima a Medjugorje prevede:

Partecipazione a:

- LITURGIE SERALI
- ADORAZIONE SERALE (quando prevista)
- SALITE AL PODBRDO E AL KRIZEVAC
- CONFERENZE O SEMINARI SU TEMI SPECIFICI
- MOMENTI DI PREGHIERA COMUNITARIA
- MOMENTI DI PREGHIERA E MEDITAZIONE PERSONALE

La gestione del Centro “Magnificat” verrà diretta e coordinata dall’Associazione Antares” voluta da Marija Pavlovic, la veggente di Medjugorje che ancora oggi ha l’apparizione giornaliera della Vergine Maria e che spesso sarà presente nel centro per dare la sua testimonianza.

Il contenuto delle catechesi, delle Conferenze e dei Seminari sarà definito e realizzato con l’ausilio di Sacerdoti che assicureranno l’ortodossia degli insegnamenti e della pastorale e l’obbedienza alle norme canoniche della Chiesa.

The “Magnificat”, as presented by the Italian travel agency, Rusconi Viaggi. On the right in **bold** it states that “**Marija Pavlovic** still has daily appearances and often will be present in the center to give her testimony.”

Thus, the pastoral letter prohibiting donations in support of projects supported by the seers given on June 16, 2011 by [Msgr. Giuseppe](#)

[Versaldi, Bishop of Alessandria](#) in the of Arch-Diocese Vercelli (which neighbors Milan where Mirja resides), is very understandable:

“As also in the Diocese of Alessandria some faithful and faith groups are involved in the events that have happened in Medjugorje since 1981, and go on pilgrimages there and meet here (in Italy) to practice their devotion to Mary and since recently in these meetings there is an alleged seer... I ... ask the priests to not allow, during celebrations within our churches (in the bishop’s diocese), offerings to be given to private persons (even if they are alleged seers), intended for private works, in order to avoid exploitation and suspicion.”

[La Chiesa e Medjugorje. Precisazioni del Vescovo, “La voce alessandrina. Settimanale di informazione e opinione della Diocesi di Alessandria”, No 23, 17 June 2011, p. 12]

After studying the Medjuorje events and related projects [Monsignor Andrea Gemma](#), experienced exorcist and former Bishop of Isernia-Venafro (1990-2006), stated that Medjugorje is:



“.At Medjugorje everything happens for the sake of money: pilgrimages, overnight stays, the sales of trinkets. In this way, abusing the good faith of the poor people who go there with the idea of meeting the Madonna, the false seers have set themselves up financially, they have married and live a wealthy life, to say the least.”

Congruent with the bishop’s observation, renowned Mariologist and Medjugorje advocate [Rev. René Laurentin](#) noted that **Marija**

“...had gone from the poorest family among all the visionaries to a

condition of wealth that led her to a very different culture and to an easy and brilliant life [*“Eco di Medjugorje”, No 84, July 1991, p. 6*].

Before proceeding, it is necessary to state that when the [Bishop of Mostar announced his negative assessment](#) pertaining to certain Franciscan Friars and others pertaining to pilgrims coming to Medjugorje from 1981 through 87, **they were canonically binding**. It was *not* until *after* the CDF asked the Yugoslav Bishop’s Conference to oversee the matter that these diocesan rulings were superseded by the [“Zadar Declaration”](#) promulgated by the Yugoslav Bishop’s in 1991. Nonetheless, at every interval up to that date the [Franciscans remained disobedient](#), as did the seers who supported them with the “Gospa” herself backing the Franciscans against the valid juridical pronouncements of the Bishop of Mostar. Consequently, hosts of pilgrims were also disobedient perhaps due to poor council or from ignorance of the Church’s clear directives, which remained buried under a sea of propaganda to the contrary.

In this regard,

Bishop Gemma, quoted above, continues:

“The more fanatical faithful, in fact, aren’t listening to the Church, which – I repeat – has, from the beginning, warned about the mendacity of the Medjugorje apparitions.”

Related to this disobedience is a militant Medjugorje [“cult”](#) located in Birmingham, Alabama that calls itself “Caritas”. The Virgin Mary has supposedly appeared in one of the bedrooms in the home of the Caritas founder (over one hundred times) who claims the [Virgin Mary personally knighted him](#). In 2011 Caritas spent over \$8 million to expand its main building, press operation, bookstore and tabernacle. Neither the tabernacle nor the visions are recognized by the Diocese of Birmingham.



Pilgrims process in front of Main Building on the Caritas grounds in Birmingham, Alabama

Interestingly, Marija, has visited Caritas at least twelve times since its inception in 1988 even though it has been [identified as a “cult”](#). According to Father Svetozar Kraljevic, OFM, parish of Medjugorje, Caritas in Birmingham, Alabama should be avoided:

“Dear brothers and sisters, Here in Medjugorje, in the name of the priests who are working in the parish with pilgrims who are coming from all over the world, I express my deep concern for the organization called CARITAS from Birmingham, Alabama.”

According to [EWTN](#):

“Caritas of Birmingham is a controversial organization. Our local bishop has stated in the daily newspaper that it is a “business” and his priests do not have permission to celebrate Mass there. With such a negative standing with Church authority in the Diocese of Birmingham, I believe you can reach your own conclusion about the wisdom of pursuing any interest in the organization.”

The same communique from the CDF that prohibited Ivan Dragicevich from appearing in the United States applies to Marija as well. As stated in [Part Two](#), **“Recently, Ivan’s apparitions were proscribed in the United States.** On October 21, 2013 at the request of Cardinal Gerhard Muller (current Prefect of the CDF under Pope Francis), Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano ([Apostolic Nuncio to the United States](#)) [forwarded a letter](#), regarding Medjugorje and Medjugorjian seer Ivan Dragicevic, to Msgr. Ron Jenkins, Secretary of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The nuncio iterated the CDF’s acceptance of the 1991 Yugoslavian Bishop’s Conference ruling ([The Zadar Declaration](#)) as normative (binding) until the CDF makes its own final determination.

*“As you are aware, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is in the process of investigating certain doctrinal and disciplinary aspects of the phenomenon of Medjugorje. For this reason, **the Congregation has affirmed that, with regard to the credibility of the “apparitions” in question, all should accept the declaration, dated 10 April 1991 (The Zadar Declaration).**”*

In 1996 [Secretary of the CDF, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone](#), like the Papal Nuncio, made it clear that the CDF made its own the 1991 Yugoslavian Bishop’s pronouncement (the Zadar Declaration), which stated:

*“On the basis of the research that has been done, it is not possible to state that there were apparitions or supernatural revelations....It follows, therefore, that **clerics and the faithful are not permitted to participate in meetings, conferences or public celebrations during which the credibility of such ‘apparitions’ are taken for granted.**”*

In this same letter conveyed to the USCCB the nuncio expressed his “wishes to:

“...inform the (US) Bishops that one of the so-called visionaries of Medjugorje [sic], Mr. Ivan Dragicevic, is scheduled to appear at certain parishes around the country, during which time he will make

presentations regarding the phenomenon of Medjugorje.”

“It is anticipated, moreover, that Mr. Dragicevic will be receiving ‘apparitions’ during these scheduled appearances.”

In other words, the issue is still under scrutiny; nonetheless, **both the seers and the public often accept the credibility of the apparitions as taken for granted, when the Church has ruled that they cannot be taken for granted.**

Consequently, Marija makes regular circuit visits to Caritas, which has raised significant money associated with her visits, visits that began in 1988 when she first arrived to have an apparition for the Fourth of July. She came in 2008 and 2009 as well as 2013 for Fourth celebrations that were **all capped with advertised appearances and messages from Our Lady** (after the Zadar declaration and Archbishop Bertone’s Letter). During her frequent visits (at least 12), Marija leads pilgrims in the rosary while kneeling beneath a mammoth oak tree before a statue of the Blessed Mother until she stops praying and glances heavenward as if talking to the Virgin Mary – **this is certainly a presumption of credibility, a taking of visitations “for granted”** without any *caveat* or off-setting disclaimer as would be required to make such apparitions and attendant messages valid.

If Dragicevic’s meetings were prohibited due to a presumption of truth and because, **“It is (was) anticipated that Mr. Dragicevic will (would) be receiving ‘apparitions’ during these scheduled appearances”**, so too are Marija’s proscribed because the same criteria apply to all the “seers”.

Nonetheless, Caritas Director, Terry Colafrancesco, like the Franciscans in Medjugorje, remains militant and defiant. Instead of obediently acquiescing to episcopal authority, he prefers to blame the Church, rather than himself, for causing “confusion”. Rather than humbly admitting that he is causing confusion by contradicting the

Church, he brashly and falsely states that it is the Church that is causing confusion; in this case [he is referring to the letter sent by the CDF](#) to the American bishops.

“They are creating confusing signals.”

If Terry referred to [Canon Law](#) and to the Holy Bible ([1 Cor 14:33](#)), he would find that **Church authority is intended to promote peace and order for the good of the faithful**; he would find that **the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of Peace**, which is a fruit of love ([Galatians 5:22](#)), that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church ([Ephesians 2: 19-22](#)). It is concupiscence ([James 4:1](#)) and the devil that lies thereby causing confusion ([John 8:44](#)). People who claim greater authority than the Church, people who claim to be conduits of peace and accuse the Church of causing confusion and resultant discord, people such as these *“serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly; and by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent”* ([Romans 16:18](#)). Following people such as these leads to disobedience and bondage. Obedience, on the other hand, leads to peace and triumph over the devil:

*“For your **obedience is published in every place. I rejoice therefore in you.** But I would have you to be wise in good, and simple in evil. And **the God of peace crush Satan under your feet speedily**”* (Apostle Paul to the [Romans 16:19](#)).

In claiming that the Church is causing confusion, Colafrancesco is unwittingly claiming that the bishops are being led by the devil, but that he, he more than the bishops themselves, is inspired by God. He is unwittingly claiming that **his defiance** of the bishops, more than obedience to their directives, **is the source of peace and unity**. Yet, the scriptures clearly state that he who hears the bishops hear Christ. In this regard, John the Apostle states:

*“We are of God. **He that knoweth God, heareth us.** He that is not of God, heareth us not. **By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.**”* ([1 John 4:6](#))

Again, St. Paul speaking of apostolic authority: “*And even if I should boast a little too much of our authority*” ([2 Corinthians 10:8](#)) boldly states:

*“We destroy arguments and every pretension raising itself against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive in obedience to Christ** and we are ready to punish every disobedience”* ([2 Corinthians 10:5-6](#)).

Again, St Paul, [Hebrews 13:17](#):

“Obey your prelates, and be subject to them.”

Most poignantly, when Jesus tells the apostles to go forward without “purse, nor scrip, nor shoes” he assures them,

*“**He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me**”* ([Luke 10:16](#)).

That this statement refers to the apostles is clear from [Luke 22:35](#) where speaking to the Apostle Peter, Jesus states:

‘When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, did you want anything?’

Apostolic authority does *not* sit well with Colafrancesco; instead of obedience that would preserve him from error and therefore preserve the peace intended by God, he prefers to spew falsehoods as if he were the authority on the Virgin Mary. According to Colafrancesco,

*“If they’re (the bishops) going to push this, there’s going to be so many people they’ll have to excommunicate...**They can’t stop us from having devotion. They’ll have to condemn Medjugorje. Unless it’s condemned, the faithful can have devotion.**”*

Apparently, Colafrancesco refuses to accept the authority of local

bishops in Medjugorje, the Yugoslav Bishops' Conference and the Holy See itself. His simple excuse, **they are creating confusion** and unless Medjugorje is condemned the faithful can have devotion.

This is a partially true statement, as are most statements by the devil who subtly mixes truth with lies ([Genesis 3:1-5](#)). Sometimes it is more subtle to tell a half-truth while leaving the false information out. It is as important to listen to what is NOT said as it is to what is said. **It is true as Colafrancesco states, viz., the faithful can have devotion**; however, by providing only a partial truth, the statement is erroneous. The faithful may have devotion, **IF** it is *not* taken for granted that Our Lady is appearing or that her messages are true; this is the part of the Zadar Declaration that Colafrancesco left out. The people running Caritas take it for granted, take it as true that Our Lady is appearing and that her messages are true, take it for granted that supernatural events are occurring in Medjugorje and in Birmingham. Thus, they refuse to add the required disclaimers; instead Colafrancesco prefers to make implicit threats about schism, viz.,

“If they’re going to push this, there’s going to be so many people they’ll have to excommunicate.”

If people have to be excommunicated it is due to continued defiance of Church directives. No one at all will be excommunicated if they accept and are obedient to episcopal directives pertaining to Medjugorje and Caritas.

It appears that Colafrancesco, thinks that the apparitions occurring in his house and in Medjugorje some how trump the apostles and the magisterium. He therefore appears to have little or no intention of accepting a negative decision or placing any type of required limits on his disobedient claims and the way they are advertised. Fortunately, in spite of what he might think, **Colafrancesco is not an authority** on the matter as he makes himself out to be. It is the bishops, and they alone, who have been delegated power for the peaceful ordering and governance of God's

people ([Matt 18: 16-20](#)). Even, if he is an authority, that hypothetical fact would change nothing – he is not an apostle!

All of this an **Mirija continues as a guest in his house**, even more confusing, the Virgin Mary also appears in his home to give regular messages. Is she condoning his disobedience as she did that of the Franciscans as detailed in [Part One](#)?



Vicka Ivankovic

With the exception of Vicka, all the supposed “seers” are married and have children. Like several of the others, Vicka lives in Medjugorje and receives pilgrims at her family home.

Vicka seems, at times, to be so caught up in what she is saying that she appears to disregard what others are saying as demonstrated in the following video, which captures her appearance as a guest on the RTE Late Show in Ireland. The host continually found himself in a quandary and had to eventually excuse himself as the one being rude; he could not get a question in because she could not or would not close her mouth to stop talking. Vicka has this loquacious quality, which is also strangely manifest in the Virgin of Medjugorje who, unlike the Mary of Sacred Scripture (who quietly reflected on things – [Luke 2:19](#)), can’t seem to stop talking; she has given over 40,000 messages everyday for over thirty years, most of them repeats of previously stated themes.

The rudeness begins at 40 seconds (and continues throughout) when Vicka pushes a gentle phrased question aside (a question that she

never answers) and then proceeds to control the interview. Finally the host gets a question in at 5:12 only to be rebuffed again. He tries again at 8:58 (“can..can..ca. ah”); by this time the whole scene is growing increasingly embarrassing.

Perhaps her non-empathetic extroverted loquaciousness accounts for her being identified as the leader of the pack. [According to Bishop Zanic](#), Vicka:

“...is the main “seer” from the beginning and through her the creator of Medjugorje, Rev. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, has launched the main portion of falsehoods regarding Medjugorje. He presented himself to the Pope in a letter May 13, 1984 as follows: “I am Rev. Tomislav Vlašić, the one according to Divine Providence who guides the seers of Medjugorje.”

*“Vicka spoke and wrote much, and in so doing she fell into many contradictions ([Proverbs 10:19](#)). Prof. Nikola Bulat, a member of the first Commission, questioned her and wrote a 60 page study on her. He numbered all the illogicalities and falsehoods of her diary. Here I will only mention **the bloody handkerchief**. Word spread around that there was a certain taxi driver who came across a man who was bloody all over. This man gave this taxi driver a bloodied handkerchief and he told him to: “throw this in the river”. The driver went on and then he came across a woman in black. She stopped him and asked him to give her a handkerchief. He gave her his own, but she said: “not that one but the bloody handkerchief.” He gave her the handkerchief she wanted and she then said: “If you had thrown it into the river the end of the world would have occurred now.”*

“Vicka Ivanković wrote in her diary that they asked Our Lady if this event was true and she said that it was, and along with this, “that man covered, with blood was my son Jesus, and I (Our Lady) was that woman in black.” What kind of theology is this? From this it appears that Jesus wants to destroy the world if a handkerchief is thrown

into a river and its Our Lady who saves the world!"

Like Ivan, Vicka is profiting off of the apparitions. In 1994, Father René Laurentin admitted:

*"Ivan now owns a beautiful new house, which will allow him earn a living by hosting pilgrims. This is already the source of income for Mirjana, Ivanka, **Vicka** and soon Jakov.*

[René Laurentin, Dernières nouvelles de Medjugorje, No 13, O.E.I.L., Paris, 1994, p. 24]

The profit motive helps to account for the longevity of the messages: It is quite clear that in the absence of a recognition by the Church, if the alleged apparitions and the messages ended, it would lead to a gradual decline in interest in Medjugorje.

"Well, here is the problem: if the apparitions ceased, the visionaries (and many of their relatives) would find themselves deprived of their current sources of income.

[René Laurentin, Dernières nouvelles de Medjugorje, No 13, O.E.I.L., Paris, 1994, p. 24]

Another problem that has surfaced recently ([Feb 8, 2017](#)) is a claim by **Sister Emmanuel Maillard** from Bosnia that, "According to Vicka the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is **VERY** close."



[Medjugorje website Chere-Gospa](#), has published a report that says Sister Emmanuel has received information that "according to Vicka the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is **VERY** close."

Given the fact that the seers have reported a series of every

increasing chastisements contained in the ten secrets and that the chastisements have not begun yet, it is interesting that NOW Our Lady is talking about the "Triumph", presumably the Fatima Triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, that supposedly follows upon the conversion of Russia.

By this time, Feb 2017, it has become quite obvious that Russia is going through a conversion process (explore [New Era News](#) for tens of news stories and Intelligence Briefs detailing the event on an almost daily basis for the past few years). Given the fact, that Russia is emerging as a Christian nation meaning that the Triumph promised at Fatima is close at hand, the seers are caught in a quandary. Thus, it is clear why Bishop Zanic asked them to write the "secrets" down in duplicate, one to be retained in a sealed envelope by him or his successor and the other by the seers. When the secrets occurred in the future, the bishop proposed opening and comparing the contents of the duplicate envelopes to verify the valid or bogus nature of their contents. Of course, the children, after being advised by the Franciscans, refused to cooperate with the bishop leaving them a wide swathe of maneuverability for the future. Nonetheless, It appears that their plan is falling apart. **Russia's conversion is throwing a monkey-wrench into the entire works.** The much ballyhooed chastisements had better all happen very soon (the entire increasing crescendo of all of them in a very short period of time) or the whole thing falls apart – perhaps this helps account for the massive media campaign (on left and right) against Russia.

Nonetheless, if Russia is being converted, that campaign will lose its efficacy.

This is a perplexing revelation. Which one is it, chastisement and punishment or Triumph? All **earlier Medjugorje leaks and messages indicated punishment and chastisement were imminent;** now we are told the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart is at hand – obviously because it is occurring in plain sight for anyone with eyes able to see, with eyes to discern' the Spirit of God at work in human history as foretold at Fatima.

Much more, very much more, could be written, but it is hoped that enough has been provided to establish a clear pattern:

Ivan, Vicka and Marija have founded lucrative businesses based in serving pilgrims that come to Medjugorje; all three continue on the Medjugorje circuit; all have been disobedient to local bishops, to national bishop's conferences and to the Holy See. A recent sudden turnabout does not change any of this; **they apparently realize that their time is about up. Perhaps this accounts for Vicka's enigmatic words to Sister Emmanuel Maillard** regarding the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart:

"You know that we are swimming in a major apostasy. Our Lady said: "all is collapsing."

Interpreting this as double speak, Vicka might very well be telling the truth. The truth however is *not* about the conversion of Russia and the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. Rather, it is a related truth about the collapse of the Medjugorje phenomenon. By leaving the pronoun "we" open to interpretation; given all that is known about Medjugorje, it might be said that "we" refers to the Medjugorje seers themselves and their supporters; they are all **"swimming in a sea of apostasy"**. With the Triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart rapidly approaching, the entire Medjugorje secret in Bosnia, Caritas, and around the world is about to be revealed, the entire scheme is about to be exploded – **all is collapsing.**"

After all, [Vicka did say that the Gospa is identified as the "Light Bearer"](#), a strange title for Our Lady since it is not in any Roman Litany and because "Light Bearer" translates into Latin, the language of the Church, as, "Lucifer."

"When we read that Vicka has called Mary the Light-Bearer—that is, she has called Mary Lucifer, since "Bearer of Light" is a literal translation of the term. In fact, since translations of Medjugorje messages are typically generated in as many languages as is practicable, a translation of Vicka's statement into Latin would simply state that Maria is Lucifer.

On top of this, the Gospa ([March 2, 2013](#)) has called all the followers of Medjugorje, to be "[light bearers](#)". In articles that follow, it will be demonstrated that the most devout adepts, those who have advanced from the apparitions to lead Medjugorje study and prayer groups have indeed become "light-bearers", bearers of New Age theosophy rooted in ancient mystery cults that filled the world before Christ came to dispel them.

[GO TO PART 4](#): "*Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates: Mirjana Soldo*"

Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates (Part 2 of 5): Ivan Dragizevic

[New Era World News](#)

PART ONE OF THIS FIVE PART SERIES on Medjugorje provided an historical overview which documented a clear pattern of disobedience on behalf of the Franciscan community of the Diocese of Mostar. Part One further pointed out that this pattern of disobedience includes the Franciscan clergy most closely associated with the seers; it provided a detailed account of the responses given by Bishops Zanic and Peric as well as the Yugoslavian Bishops' Conference and the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), whom the Franciscans also disobeyed. This disobedience, as demonstrated in Part One, was sanctioned by the

“Our Lady of Medjugorje”. Parts Two through Four will present the six seers and the continued pattern of disobedience arising among them as well as other factors contrary to the “criteria” established by the CDF for judging the authenticity of alleged apparitions also presented in Part One and reiterated below:

Criteria established by CDF for the Discernment of Apparitions

A) Positive Criteria:

a) **Moral certitude**, or at least great probability of the existence of the fact, acquired by means of a serious investigation;

b) **Particular circumstances** relative to the existence and to the nature of the fact, that is to say:

1. *Personal qualities* of the subject or of the subjects (in particular, psychological equilibrium, *honesty* and *rectitude of moral life*, sincerity and **habitual docility towards Ecclesiastical Authority**, the capacity to return to a **normal regimen** of a life of faith, etc.);
2. *As regards revelation: true theological and spiritual doctrine and immune from error;*
3. Healthy devotion and abundant and constant spiritual fruit (for example, spirit of prayer, conversion, **testimonies of charity**, etc.).

B) Negative Criteria:

a) *Manifest error concerning the fact.*

b) *Doctrinal errors attributed to God himself, or to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or to some saint in their manifestations, taking into account however the possibility that the subject might have added, even unconsciously, purely human elements or some error of the natural order to an authentic supernatural revelation (cf. Saint Ignatius, Exercises, no. 336).*

c) *Evidence of a search for profit or gain strictly **connected to***

the fact.

d) *Gravely immoral acts committed by the subject or his or her followers when the fact occurred or in connection with it.*

e) *Psychological disorder or psychopathic tendencies in the subject, that with certainty influenced on the presumed supernatural fact, or psychosis, collective hysteria or other things of this kind.*

The Seers

At the time of the first apparition in 1981, the Medjugorje seers consisted of one child **Jakov Colo** (age 10) and five teenagers: **Vicka Ivankovic** (16), **Mirjana Dragicevic** (16), **Marija Pavlovic** (16), **Ivan Dragicevic** (16) and **Ivanka Ivankovic** (15).



Ivan Dragicevic

Ivan is one of the three visionaries who continue to have daily apparitions; this same group of three has been given only nine "secrets" out of a total set of ten. The other three seers have had all ten secrets confided to them. Consequently, according to the Virgin Mary (referred to by the teenagers as the "Gospa"), those who have received all ten no longer receive daily visits and messages. Since Ivan still receives daily messages, he remains in a position to attract attention and to raise money given by those who come to hear his message or those who are willing to pay him to have an apparition in their homes or other gathering places around the world where Our Lady appears to him as scheduled.

Ivan was born May 25, 1965 in Mostar. After finishing elementary school, he attempted one year of secondary school at Čitluk, but

failed to pass. When his prefect asked about this failure, Ivan responded that it was due to the impact of Medjugorje. Since **the apparitions did not begin until the summer after the completion of his first year**, it is hard to grasp his meaning. Nonetheless, later in the same year, The Gospa indicted to Ivan and the others that she would like them to become priests and religious:

“I would like for you to become priests and religious, but only if you yourselves, would want it. It is up to you to decide” ([August 1981](#)).

Just four months later ([December 8, 1981](#)) she repeated her desire:

“I would like for all of you to become priests and religious, but only if you desire it. You are free. It is up to you to choose.”

In the fall of the same year, Ivan presented himself as a seminary candidate for the Franciscan province of Herzegovina. He performed as well at the seminary as he did in the high school, viz., after one year, [he was asked to leave](#):

“He preferred the visions and the prayer meetings over his ordinary scholastic duties and it is no wonder that he finished the school year with a negative grade. He had a retry: he was re-examined twice, in June and September 1982. He didn’t pass, so he was dismissed from the seminary at Visoko.”

After failing to master his studies at another school in Dubrivnik, Ivan finally settled on a **diploma in the catering business – something directly related to the apparitions** and his future business plans, which were apparently contrary to those of the Queen of Heaven; in fact, **none of the seers honored her request** to become priests and religious.

Instead of becoming a priest, Ivan dropped out of the seminary, started a hotel/catering business, and married a beauty queen, Miss Massachusetts, Loreen Murphy, who experienced some type of conversion

through Medjugorje, which eventually resulted in her marriage to the seer. Today, they live in a luxury villa in the Medjugorje countryside from which they entertain Medjugorje pilgrims. Ivan "[resides in both, the village of Medjugorje and the US](#), equally separating his time at each residence." Making money is *not* a sin, but making it off of alleged apparitions from which a person directly profits might indeed be a sin, a very grievous and deadly sin.

https://youtu.be/hhp_5Lfw0f4

Dragicevic Family Home and Villa

Recently, Ivan's apparitions were proscribed in the United States when on October 21, 2013 at the request of Cardinal Gerhard Muller (current Prefect of the CDF under Pope Francis), Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano (Apostolic Nuncio to the United States) forwarded a [letter](#) regarding Medjugorje and Medjugorjian seer Ivan Dragicevic, to Msgr. Ron Jenkins, Secretary of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The nuncio iterated the CDF's acceptance of the 1991 Yugoslavian Bishop's Conference ruling ([The Zadar Declaration](#)) as normative until the CDF makes its own final determination.

*"As you are aware, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is in the process of investigating certain doctrinal and disciplinary aspects of the phenomenon of Medjugorje. For this reason, **the Congregation has affirmed that, with regard to the credibility of the "apparitions" in question, all should accept the declaration, dated 10 April 1991 (The Zadar Declaration).**"*

In this same letter conveyed to the USCCB the nuncio expressed his "wishes to:

"...inform the (US) Bishops that one of the so-called visionaries of Medjugorje [sic], Mr. Ivan Dragicevic, is scheduled to appear at certain parishes around the country, during which time he will make

presentations regarding the phenomenon of Medjugorje.”

“It is anticipated, moreover, that Mr. Dragicevic will be receiving ‘apparitions’ during these scheduled appearances.”

The expectation of Marian visitations at the prompting/scheduling of Ivan Dragicevic is problematic in itself. More problematic is the fact that the entire issue is still undergoing scrutiny by the CDF in cooperation with Bosnian Bishop’s Conference. Like his Franciscan mentors, Ivan seems to have a problem with obedience (see [Part One](#)).

In 1996 [Secretary Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone](#), like the Papal Nuncio, made it clear that the CDF made its own the 1991 Yugoslav Bishop’s pronouncement that stated:

*“On the basis of the research that has been done, it is **not** possible to state that there were apparitions or supernatural revelations....It follows, therefore, that **clerics** and the **faithful** are **not permitted** to participate in meetings, conferences or **public celebrations** during which the credibility of such ‘apparitions’ are **taken for granted.**”*

In other words, the issue is still under scrutiny; nonetheless, **both the seers and the public often accept the credibility of the apparitions as taken for granted, when the Church has ruled that they cannot be taken for granted.** To meet the normative Zadar guidelines, Ivan (*et al*) would have to preface his engagements with statements such as the following:

“The Virgin Mary might be appearing at Medjugorje and if she appears here tonight, the whole thing might be a fabrication, or a ruse, or due to my own mental incapacity or for a profit motive; these things cannot be discounted nor can anything I say or experience be taken for granted as true; I might be a fraud – we will not know until the Church has finalized her investigation.”

Statements such as the above work to preclude presumptions leading the faithful taking the visions for granted. Nonetheless, like the Franciscan priests who served as his first spiritual mentors, Dragicevic does *not* seem to think much of Bishop's statements or those issued by the CDF. He continues to travel back and forth between Bosnia and the U.S. speaking at various churches and experiencing visions almost on demand, in violation of the Yugoslavian Bishop's (and CDF's) ban on such "*meetings, conferences or **public celebrations***" wherein the *credibility of such 'apparitions' is taken for granted and advertised as such by both the seer and his supporters*.

On the [website advertising a stay in Ivan's home](#), "pilgrims" are told that they will be able to,

*"Follow the path up Apparition Hill where the visionaries first **encountered Our Lady**. Touch and pray before the cross that commemorates the **spot where Mary first appeared** to the visionaries." Further, they are told that, "The apparition take place at 6:40 daylight savings time".*

On July 13, 2015, after accompanying them to Podbrdo to pray the rosary, [Ivan boosted his business by inviting tour guides to his home](#) to experience an apparition; at 18.40. Our Lady appeared on schedule with a special message for the tour guides. Ivan described the encounter:

"I would like also today with some words to bring you closer to this encounter with Our Lady this evening...The beauty of Her love, of Her gaze... all these years. This evening when Our Lady came... Her gaze... Her eyes... when she looked at us all here... always the feeling of Her joy makes you want to cry when you see it, how can you describe Her voice... Her smile... But believe me, the beauty of Our Lady is very difficult to transmit, through statues, through images, through words. This evening Our Lady came joyful. She greeted us all with her maternal greeting:

“Praised be Jesus my dear children!”

*“After this, Our Lady continued again to pray for all present – you tour guides present because I recommended you all to Her in a special way: your work with the pilgrims and your mission, and to live the messages of Our Lady... this mission that you all have... After, Our Lady gave the maternal blessing and blessed all. I recommended all of you, and like I said in a special way **I recommended you tour guides** and your families, all that you have brought in your hearts.”*



“[The Medjugorje Guides](#) are locals that have devoted their lives and vocation to guiding pilgrims around the history of the area. They have trained, studied and qualified on Church history, Local history, History of the Medjugorje phenomenon, Vatican, languages, interpreting and many topics.”

Events such as these are not only good business promotions, they are also *public pronouncements* that *presume the authenticity of events* contrary to clear directives given by the local bishops, the

Yugoslavian Bishop's Conference and the Holy See itself!

Running a Bed and Breakfast or even a hotel/motel that provides meals for guests, is in itself a seemingly safe and legitimate business for a Catholic layman, even a seer. The problem is *not* the business *per se*, the problem is with its promotion and with the way that it is run contrary to one of the main "negative criteria" established by the CDF for the evaluation of authenticity:

*"Evidence of a search for profit or gain strictly **connected to the fact.**"*

Ivan does *not* simply run a bed and breakfast; he [runs a motel](#) built around the specific business and message of Medjugorje – the "**fact**". He appears to be using the supposed apparitions as a tool to garner money- to make a lucrative living for himself and his family.

Anyone can book a trip online to stay at Ivan's home for a \$1000.00 a week, including a chance to talk to and pray with Ivan and his family. Tour guides even promise to "arrange meetings" with the other visionaries at their own homes... "pending their availability." The Pilgrimage Trip Includes:

- Round-trip airfare
- All airport taxes & fuel surcharges
- 7 nights in the Dragicevic Family Home with private baths and air conditioning
- Breakfast daily and Dinner daily
- Wine with dinners
- Daily Mass
- Catholic Guides
- Transfers by private motor coach
- Spiritual activities
- Prayer and Group Meetings

Related to his Medjugore hotel-motel business, one of the more shocking facts about the whole affair is that it has become "[a real money-spinner for the 'seers'](#)". How many simple Balkan peasants can

afford a villa complete with a luxury pool for \$800,000 payable in 6 months (May 24 to October 24) as indicated on the [Mortgage Note](#) below made out to Ivan Dragicevic?

MORTGAGE

DEFINITIONS

Words used in multiple sections of this document are defined below and other words are defined in Sections 3, 11, 13, 18, 20 and 21. Certain rules regarding the usage of words used in this document are also provided in Section 16.

(A) "Security Instrument" means this document, which is dated May 24, 2004, together with all Riders to this document.

(B) "Borrower" is Ivan Dragicevic and Lauren Dragicevic

Borrower is the mortgagor under this Security Instrument.

(C) "Lender" is First Bank and Trust

Lender is a Corporation

the laws of

909 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA 70112

organized and existing under

Lender's address is

Lender is the mortgagee under this Security Instrument.

(D) "Note" means the promissory note signed by Borrower and dated May 24, 2004. The Note

states that Borrower owes Lender EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND

Dollars (U.S. \$ 800,000.00) plus interest. Borrower has promised

to pay this debt in regular Periodic Payments and to pay the debt in full not later than November 24, 2004.

In September 2009, a [complete dossier containing real estate transactions made in the USA by Ivan Dragičević](#) was made available.

It contains such data as the following: On May 15, 2002 Ivan signed a fourteen year mortgage contract in which he promised to pay \$60,678 annually for the full term. He sold this property two years later and acquired a 14,000 square foot home and luxury pool in Peabody, Massachusetts for \$800,000, which he paid off in *one* year.

Ivan has apparently remained consistent in his defiance of the bishops,

According to Bishop Zanic:

"In 1981, the parish of Medjugorje was governed by the Franciscans. On 19 December of that year, ... Father Ivica Vego went to Medjugorje, spoke with the visionaries and consulted the Madonna, through them. And Our Lady, from this moment, in her messages began to defend with resentful words the rebel Franciscans."

Nonetheless, the bishop endeavored to remove Friars Vego and Prusina from Mostar due to the disorder they were causing and for their disobedience. Vego defended himself, however, by defaulting to Our Lady who had advised him, *via* the seer Vicka, not to leave Mostar. On

January 3, 1982 Our Lady stated to Vicka that:

*“Ivica (Vego) is not guilty. If they expel him from the order, he must be courageous [...] **Let him remain!** Ivica is not guilty [...] The Bishop does not arrange the situation and therefore he is guilty. And then **he will not always be the bishop. I will show the justice in Paradise.**”*

Our Lady, not Jesus will show the “justice.” Then, on **15 April 1982** Our Lady also told the priests not to obey the bishop:

*“**Do not obey anyone!**” (Nemojte slušati nikogo!)”*

With these words, according to the “visionary” Vicka, “Our Lady spoke to the two rebel Franciscans Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina, inducing them to disobey the local ordinary and the general vicar of their order” (Patrick Madrid).”

To make matters worse, on **21 June 1983 Ivan Dragicevic**, wrote a letter to the bishop, which **contained a warning** from Our Lady given during an apparition. Significantly, *Father Ivica Vego was present at this apparition as he often was* (He was also present when the Virgin Mary supposedly dropped the baby Jesus, to be examined later below).

Ivan wrote:

“Excellency. These are the thoughts that she (the Virgin Mary) told me: ‘Tell the Bishop that I seek a quick conversion from him towards the happenings in Medjugorje, before it is too late. May he accept these events with plenty of love, understanding and great responsibility. I want him to avoid creating conflicts between priests and to stop publicizing their negative behaviours.’”

*“The bishop is the spiritual father of all the parishes in Hercegovina. For this reason I seek his conversion towards these events. I am sending my second-last warning. **If what I seek does not come about, my judgement and the judgement of my Son await the**”*

Bishop. This means that he has not found the way to my Son Jesus."

Finally, on **October 30, 1984** "Vego and Prusina were both suspended *a divinis* and reduced to the lay state ([by the Vatican Congregation for Religious](#)) and dismissed from the Order (by the General Curia in Rome)."

If Bishop Zanic was in error and had not found his way to Jesus as Ivan claims the "Gospa" told him, then the Holy See itself, operating through the Congregation of Religious, must also await the so-called dread "judgement" of the "Gospa" and of Her "Son", for they dismissed the disobedient priests. It seems everyone is at fault according to Our Lady of Medjugorje except the disobedient friars and seers who continue to snub the episcopate by advertising, promoting and hosting visits of Our Lady in their homes and around the world in *search of profit/gain strictly connected to the apparitions*, something clearly prohibited by the Church.

[GO TO PART 3](#): "*Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates: Seers Continued*"

Medjugore Saga Priests & Bishops to Seers & Advocates (1 of 5): Historical Background

[New Era World News](#)

UNDERSTANDING THE MEDJUGORJE SAGA is greatly facilitated by beginning

with a historical review of the evangelization of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This northwestern Balkan region was evangelized by courageous Franciscan missionaries as early as the fourteenth century and then later by episcopal efforts to establish diocesan clergy; the latter virtually *ceased* to exist by the 18th century. Thus, when the Holy See established an Apostolic Vicariate for Bosnia in 1735, it assigned Franciscans as Apostolic Vicars (implying thereby that Bosnia was a "mission territory"). Later, in 1878 Herzegovina fell from the grip of the Ottomans and became part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Pope Leo XIII (1881), seeing that Bosnia was now ruled by a more stable Christian regime, took steps to re-establish dioceses governed by local bishops rather than Franciscan Apostolic Vicars.

The new bishops endeavored to build their dioceses by working with the long-established friars asking some to assist diocesan clergy and to help facilitate the transfer of parishes from Franciscan jurisdiction to Diocesan jurisdiction. Rather than cooperate, many Franciscans recalling the Order's heroic sacrifices and deep cultural roots in the area, chose to resist, such that by mid 1940 the friars still retained 80% of the 79 parishes in the dioceses of Vrhbosna and Mostar. This conflict reached a boiling point in 1960 when the Franciscans unleashed a torrent of criticism at the bishop and threatened him with violence, which led to Vatican involvement.

1968: "... [the Holy See ordered the Franciscans to hand over five parishes to the diocesan clergy](#). They surrendered only two. In 1975, ... a Decree of the Holy See was issued regarding the division of parishes in Hercegovinia. The Franciscans publicly and collectively denounced the decree."

This resistance continued unabated into the 1970's when the friars in Herzegovina formed the "[Mir i Dobro](#)" association of priests, to arouse popular support for Franciscan autonomy and opposition to diocesan parishes. Once again, the issue grew brawny enough to reach the Holy See.

On **June 6, 1975**, Pope Paul VI issued a Papal Decree entitled [Romanis](#)

[Pontificibus](#), which addressed the “[Herzegovina Affair](#)” involving the [Franciscans](#) of [Herzegovina](#) who, despite their vows of obedience, maintained control of local parishes and refused to relinquish them to the local bishops. The decree clearly specified the canonical jurisdictions of both the friars and of the diocesan clergy. Pope Paul VI ordered the Franciscans to transfer more parishes to the [Diocese of Mostar-Duvno](#) and to accept the episcopal ministry of the bishop:

The pope explained that:

*“It is the **bishop’s** role, as the ruler and center of unity in the diocesan apostolate, to **promote** missionary activity, to **direct** it and to **coordinate** it but always in such a way that the zeal and spontaneity of those who share in the work may be preserved and fostered. **All missionaries, even exempt Religious, are subject to his power** in the various works which refer to the exercise of the sacred apostolate” ([Ad Gentes](#))*

In the **spring of 1976**, the friars conducted a survey among themselves after which they [forwarded a letter to the Holy Father](#) in which they stated their opposition and refusal to implement the decree, “*Romanis Pontificibus*”:

*“...we fully aware and with full responsibility on behalf of our monastic province which we **lead** and before **God’s people** which has **been entrusted to the pastoral care of our brothers** (disregarding the bishop) in the same monastic province, before Christ’s Church and before You, Holy Father, (we) state that **the Decree, “Romanis Pontificibus” evidently contradicts the truth, offends natural justice and directly opposes good souls and has tarnished the reputation of the Church.**”*

In other words, not only is the bishop, wrong, so too is the pope. Consequently, “we” judge the pope’s directions (in *Romanis Pontificibus*) to “contradict the truth”, offend natural justice” and “oppose the good of souls”.

*“As such we feel bound by **our conscience** to undertake the stand that we cannot and will not; no we cannot **take responsibility for the repercussions which will surely follow if we were to approve, accept or implement the Decree.**”*

Predictably, Rome responded by imposing sanctions:

1. The Provincial administration was removed
2. The Supreme General of the Order in Rome was given authority to administer the Province
3. There were prohibitions from accepting new recruits to the novitiate

Still, many Friars refused to cooperate; resistance continued; well into the 1980's Franciscans still held 50% of the parishes in violation of the papal decree. Thus, when in the year prior to the apparitions (1981) Bishop Pavao Žanić decided to found a new parish in the city of Mostar, he entrusted it to the diocesan clergy and reduced the size of the existing Franciscan parish. In response, **Friar Ivica Vego** (a Franciscan priest who became a close confidant, and spiritual guide of the seers) and **Friar Ivan Prusina**, like Franciscans before them, opposed the bishop in the canonical exercise of his episcopal ministry as spelled out in the Decree, *Romanis Pontificibus*.

According to Bishop Zanic:

“In 1981, the parish of Medjugorje was governed by the Franciscans. On 19 December of that year, the above mentioned Father Ivica Vego went to Medjugorje, spoke with the visionaries and consulted the Madonna, through them. And Our Lady, from this moment, in her messages began to defend with resentful words the rebel Franciscans.”

Nonetheless, the bishop endeavored to remove Friars Vego and Prusina from Mostar due to the disorder they were causing and for their disobedience. Vego defended himself, however, by defaulting to Our Lady who had advised him, *via* the seer Vicka, not to leave Mostar. On

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“Do not obey anyone!” (Nemojte slušati nikogo!)”

With these words, according to the “visionary” Vicka, “Our Lady spoke to the two rebel Franciscans Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina, inducing them to disobey the local bishop and the general vicar of their order” (Patrick Madrid).”

To make matters worse, on **21 June 1983** another seer, Ivan Dragicevic, wrote a letter to the bishop, which contained a warning from Our Lady given during an apparition. Significantly, *Father Ivica Vego was present at this apparition as he often was* (He was also present when the Virgin Mary supposedly dropped the baby Jesus, to be examined later below).

Ivan wrote:

“Excellency. These are the thoughts that she (the Virgin Mar) told me: ‘Tell the Bishop that I seek a quick conversion from him towards the happenings in Medjugorje, before it is too late. May he accept these events with plenty of love, understanding and great responsibility. I want him to avoid creating conflicts between priests and to stop publicizing their negative behaviours.’”

*“The bishop is the spiritual father of all the parishes in Hercegovina. For this reason I seek his conversion towards these events. I am sending my second-last warning. **If what I seek does not***

come about, my judgement and the judgement of my Son await the Bishop. This means that he has not found the way to my Son Jesus."

Finally, on **October 30, 1984** "Vego and Prusina were both suspended *a divinis* and reduced to the lay state ([by the Vatican Congregation for Religious](#)) and dismissed from the Order (by the General Curia in Rome)."

Like the cadre of Franciscans before them, they disobeyed the order. In the bishop's own words, both Vega and Prushina "*continued exercising sacerdotal duties in the area of the new founded cathedral parish*" and "*tirelessly propagandize the Medjugorje apparitions.*" They were encouraged in their disobedience by the Gospa of Medjugorje (as recorded in the diary of Vicka and statements of the visionaries) who continually proclaimed their innocence while also claiming that the bishop was in error. Things changed when Vega's lover, Sister Leopolda, became pregnant; subsequently, they both left Medjugorje but continued to live nearby.

By the nineties there were **still seven parishes that had not been turned over to the diocese**. Again, the Holy See intervened. In order to assure compliance to *Romanis Pontificibus*, the assistance of the Superior General of the entire Order was requested and obtained. Nonetheless, newly appointed diocesan clergy were refused admittance to their churches by recalcitrant friars. As a result, several contumacious Franciscans were expelled from the Order for disobedience. Nonetheless, like other Friars disciplined over the Medjugore affair, they continued to be disobedient and to exercise priestly ministry even though expelled.

Thus, on December 13 and 14 of 1998, the General of the Order of Friars Minor, Fra Giacomo Bini, and Bishop Peric, the canonical authorities charged with putting the decree *Romanis Pontificibus* into effect, met in Mostar. They were joined by Fra Tomislav Pervan, Franciscan Provincial of Herzegovina and **Archbishop Marcello Zago**, *Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples*, **representing the Holy See**.

As a result of this meeting, the Bishop of Mostar in conjunction with the Provincial Superior of the OFM issued a joint declaration (**December 14, 1998**) to the priests and faithful of Mostar-Duvno in which they specified that the decree *Romanis Pontificibus* would be fully implemented and that disobedience would *not* be tolerated:

“The Holy See and the (Franciscan) order are well aware of the steps that are being taken. **Disobedient Franciscans should know that they are liable to be punished according to canon law and the rules of their order.** It is desired that the decree (*Romanis Pontificibus*) should at long last be implemented for the good of the Church, the diocese, the Franciscan province, and, above all, the faithful.

“We remind the faithful that sacraments received from punished Franciscans are invalid”...(The priests were suspended *a divinis*).

*“It is important that all, both clerics and the faithful, should see **the local bishop**, who is working with the secular and religious clergy, as **the centre and point of reference of diocesan ecclesiastical life.**”*

Nonetheless, several Franciscans not only refused to cooperate with the bishop, [they illicitly conducted the sacrament of confirmation](#) against his wishes both years before, and years after, the the December 14 (1998) meeting.

Communique of the Bishop’s Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina Concerning Confirmation (May 29, 2001)

*“[We the bishops of Bosnia-Herzegovina](#), motivated by our responsibility to maintain unity in the Church and by our pastoral care for the good of souls, having gathered together for a special session in Mostar, wish to communicate to the Catholic faithful and the general public the following: The appearance of a **member of a non-Catholic community** who recently **held the rite of confirmation** in three parishes of the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno, is an overt attempt*

to disintegrate the unity of the Roman Catholic Church in this country and to break its centuries-old bond of communion with the Apostolic See of St. Peter.

The priests dismissed from the Franciscan Order, as well as those who in disobedience to their religious and Church superiors, who invited a non-Catholic to preside at a Catholic rite, are directly acting against the holiness of the sacraments and the unity of the Church.”

The Franciscans seem to have clear “liberal” tendencies” including, *inter alia*, problems with obedience to legitimate episcopal and canonically established authorities. Given such an umbrous historical context, it is a good thing that [The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) (CDF) spent four years (1974-78) developing an objective set of “Positive” and “Negative” criteria to assist episcopal authorities with their apostolic and canonical duty of discerning the authenticity of alleged apparitions and surrounding events/circumstances such as those associated with Medjugore.

Criteria established by CDF for the Discernment of Apparitions

A) Positive Criteria:

a) **Moral certitude**, or at least great probability of the existence of the fact, acquired by means of a serious investigation;

b) **Particular circumstances** relative to the existence and to the nature of the fact, that is to say:

1. *Personal qualities* of the subject or of the subjects (in particular, psychological equilibrium, *honesty* and *rectitude of moral life*, sincerity and **habitual docility towards Ecclesiastical Authority**, the capacity to return to a **normal regimen** of a life of faith, etc.);

2. *As regards revelation: true theological and spiritual doctrine and immune from error;*
3. Healthy devotion and abundant and constant spiritual fruit (for example, spirit of prayer, conversion, **testimonies of charity**, etc.).

B) Negative Criteria:

- a) *Manifest error concerning the fact.*
- b) *Doctrinal errors attributed to God himself, or to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or to some saint in their manifestations, taking into account however the possibility that the subject might have added, even unconsciously, purely human elements or some error of the natural order to an authentic supernatural revelation (cf. Saint Ignatius, Exercises, no. 336).*
- c) *Evidence of a search for profit or gain strictly **connected to the fact.***
- d) *Gravely immoral acts committed by the subject **or his or her followers when the fact occurred or in connection with it.***
- e) *Psychological disorder or psychopathic tendencies in the subject, that with certainty influenced on the presumed supernatural fact, or psychosis, collective hysteria or other things of this kind.*

Major Players in the Medjugorje Affair

The Clergy

Father Jozo Zovko
Ivankovic

Father Tomislav Vlastic

Mark Miravalle

Father Iveca Vego

The Bishops

Supporting Cast

Bishop Peric

Bishop Zanic

Bishop Hnilica

Marja Pavolovic

Marijana Dragicevic

Jakov Colo

Ivanka Ivankovic

The Seers

Vicka

Ivan Dragicevic

The Bishops

Bishop Pavao Zanic



Prior to the apparitions in 1981, Pavao Zanic, the Bishop of Mostar declared two Franciscan Friars, Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusin, suspended and endeavored to have them expelled from the Franciscan Order. The two refused to relinquish their ministries, leading to increased and ever-spiraling controversy. Shortly thereafter, Our Lady reportedly appeared to five teenagers (and 1 boy of 10) closely connected with the two friars. On **January 11, 1982**, Bishop Žanić established a diocesan commission to scrutinize the purported occurrences.

The Bishop of Mostar, however, has *not* been in charge of issue since 1986. In **April** of that year, Bishop Zanic presented the CDF (headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) with an unfavorable report. Thereafter, **Cardinal Ratzinger**, acting as **Prefect for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith** (CDF), relieved Bishop Zanic of the burden and placed it in the hands of the **Yugoslavian Bishops Conference**, which, since the break-up of Yugoslavia, has become the **Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina**.

Then in **January of 1987** Bishop Žanić, himself, along with [Cardinal Kuharić](#) (President of the Yugoslav Bishop's Conference) issued a joint statement announcing the formation of a new Commission, as requested by Cardinal Ratzinger, to be overseen by the Yugoslavian Bishop's. Instead of listening to **endless speculation articulated by Medjugore zealots**, speculation about how Bishop Zanic was "sacked" by Rome due to his ineptitude *etc.*, it is actually beneficial to look at the **documented** reason for the shift from the Local Bishop's Conference to the National Bishop's Conference. According to Cardinal Kuharic

(who headed the National Bishop's Commission) and to Bishop Zanic (whom Cardinal Ratzinger named as "Co-Chair), according to the Co-Chairs of the new Commission of the National Bishop's Conference themselves, the reason for the shift had nothing to do with ineptitude or the need to "sack" a rancorous bishop; the reason is simply canonical:

*"In accordance with the **canonical regulations** which treat the matters of discernment of alleged apparitions and private revelations, the Diocesan Commission formed for that purpose by the Bishop of Mostar, the local Ordinary, investigated the events of Medjugorje. During the inquiry **these events under investigation have appeared to go much beyond the limits of the diocese**. Therefore, on **the basis of the said regulations**, it became fitting to **continue the work at the level of the Bishops' Conference, and thus to form a new Commission for that purpose.**"*

Even Medjugore devote and cleric [Rene Laurentin, recognized the fact:](#)

*"When a phenomenon of apparitions **takes on international proportions**, or when qualified groups from among the faithful demand Rome's intervention, **the Holy See itself assumes responsibility.**"*

As will be seen below, the CDF eventually reaffirmed Bishop Zanic and seconded his disapproval of pilgrimages to Medjugore. This eventuality was foreshadowed at the close of the statement in which [Bishop Zanic and Cardinal Kuharic announced the formation of the Yugoslav Bishop's Conference](#) to further investigate the Medjugore phenomenon, **a phenomenon that had reached international proportions**; they iterated ideas that were clearly in accordance with Zanic's own views of the matter:

*"It is not permitted to organize either pilgrimages or other religious manifestations **based on an alleged supernatural character** attributed to **Medjugorje's** events. **Marian devotion**, legitimate and recommended by the Church, **must be in accordance with the directives of the Magisterium**, and especially the apostolic encyclical*

(exhortation) [“Marialis Cultus”](#).

According to *Marialis Cultus*:

“The Blessed Virgin’s exemplary holiness encourages the faithful to “raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth before the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues.” It is a question of solid, evangelical virtues: faith and the docile acceptance of the Word of God; generous obedience; genuine humility; solicitous charity; profound wisdom; worship of God manifested in alacrity in the fulfillment of religious duties, in gratitude for gifts received, in her offering in the Temple and in her prayer in the midst of the apostolic community... her virginal purity... These virtues of the Mother will also adorn her children who steadfastly study her example in order to reflect it in their own lives.”

While waiting for the Yugoslav Bishop’s report, it became increasingly evident to the bishop that the Franciscan spiritual directors and conferees of the seers were deficient in many of these virtues and promoting unapproved devotion to Our Lady of Medjugorje, he remained steadfast in his negative judgement. By **March of 1990** the bishop was so convinced of the errancy of the apparitions that he made public his profession: [The Truth About Medjugorje](#), wherein he writes,

“I have already declared earlier and now I repeat the same declaration, that if Our Lady leaves a sign which the “seers” are speaking of, I’ll make a pilgrimage from Mostar to Medjugorje (30 km) on my knees and beg the Franciscans and the “seers” for forgiveness.”

“On the move are tourist agencies, pilgrimages, prayerbooks written by two Franciscans Vego and Prusina who were thrown out of the OFM Order, published in many languages in 600,000 copies, fanatical prayer groups that are inspired by the apparent messages of Our Lady and the great motivator of all – money.”

*“One month after the beginning of the “apparitions” I went to Medjugorje to question the ‘seers’. I asked each of them to take an oath on the cross and demanded that they must speak the truth. (This conversation and oath was recorded on tape). The first one was Mirjana: “We went to look for our sheep when at once...” (The associate pastor in the parish interrupted and told me that they actually went out to smoke, which they hid from their parents). **“Wait a minute Mirjana, you’re under oath. Did you go out to look for your sheep?”** She put her hand over her mouth, **“forgive me, we went out to smoke.”** She then showed me the watch on which the “miracle” occurred because the hands of the watch had gone haywire... I told her not to mention that a miracle occurred. Yet, on cassettes taped later on, she went on to speak of how a miracle occurred with the watch and that initially they had gone out to search for their sheep.”*

Accordingly, on **April 10 1991**, the Yugoslavian Bishop’s Conference promulgated a statement, known as the [“Zadar Declaration”](#), which confirmed Zanic’s position while leaving the whole question open to further inquiry:

*“On the basis of the investigations so far it can **not be affirmed that one is dealing with supernatural apparitions and revelations...** Yet the gathering of the faithful from various parts of the world to Medjugorje, inspired by reasons of faith or other motives, require the **pastoral attention** and care, **first of all, of the local Bishop (the Bishop of Mostar) and then of the other bishops with him**, so that in Medjugorje and all connected with it, a healthy devotion towards the Blessed Virgin Mary **according to the teachings of the Church** (according to the “bishops” not the Medjugore Franciscans) **may be promoted.***

The *Zadar Declaration* left the doors to future scrutiny open; it also clearly indicated (and indicates) that the Yugoslavian Bishop’s Conference found nothing that verified claims that Medjugore has a

supernatural origin in God. Moreover, since it did not overrule *trips* to Yugoslavia, it did specify that **visitors should be provided with pastoral care and authentic Marian spirituality** under the **direction of the local bishop** (again, not the Franciscans – unless they have the Local Bishop’s approbation).

This means that **the Zadar Declaration did *not* give permission to foster devotion to “Our Lady of Medjugorje”**; this remains a *current* impossibility since it has *not* been established that the Virgin Mary is appearing at Medjugore. Rather, it has been established that it **“cannot be affirmed” that anything supernatural is occurring there.**

Five years later, [Archbishop Bertone](#), Secretary of the CDF, made it clear (**March 23, 1996**) that the faithful could go to Medjugorje but **NOT** if the trip was promoted as a pilgrimage or journey to a place of authentic Marian apparitions or as an official diocesan or parish led pilgrimage.

“Official pilgrimages to Medjugorje, understood as a place of authentic Marian apparitions, are not permitted to be organized either on the parish or on the diocesan level, because that would be in contradiction to what the Bishops of former Yugoslavia affirmed in their fore mentioned Declaration.”

In the meantime, Bishop Žanić, in accord with the Zadar Statement, continued to exercise his legitimate episcopal duties by forbidding priests from organizing official parish-diocesan pilgrimages, pilgrimages that *ascribed* or *presume supernatural events* are occurring, or have occurred, at Medjugorje. Again, he was disobeyed by the Franciscans. There is no problem with disobedience from diocesan clergy; [“not one” of the hundred \(then ministering\)...accept them as authentic](#)“

Bishop Žanić retired in 1993 at age 75 and was succeeded by Bishop

[Ratko Perić.](#)



Bishop Ratko Peric

Bishop Ratko Peric was born on February 2, 1944. In December of 1979, he became Rector of the [Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome](#) in Rome and later taught ecumenical theology at the [Pontifical Gregorian University](#) until 1992. Like his predecessor, Bishop Zanic, Bishop Peric doubts the authenticity of the apparitions; he refers to them as a “religious show” and “*spectaculum mundo*.” Consequently, he defers to the statement of Yugoslavia Bishop’s Conference of 1991 and interprets it to mean that the Virgin Mary is *not* appearing at Medjugorje.

On April 1, 1995 Bishop Perić was kidnapped by Croatian militia of the [HVO \(anti-Serb and anti-Muslim Croatian nationalists\)](#) after he tried to replace Franciscan HVO sympathizers with less nationalistic diocesan priests.

Bishop Peric has pointed out that diocesan commissions studied the apparitions from 1982-1984 and then again from 1984-1986. These diocesan studies were followed by the Yugoslavian Bishops’ Conference, which studied them from 1987 to 1990. All three commissions have concluded the same thing: It cannot be affirmed that a supernatural event occurred or is occurring on Medjugore.

Under his tutelage, Pope Benedict XVI commissioned a team that after four year of investigation wrapped up its work in 2014 and presented it to the CDF, which is currently reviewing the report and expected to rule on it soon, perhaps for the 100th anniversary celebration of

Fatima.

During his entire reign, Peric has consistently believed and stated, "these are not real apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary." He bases his claim on a thorough review of the transcripts, which include interviews with the visionaries from the very beginning that provide him ample reason to doubt the authenticity of the alleged events. Some of these reasons he wrote about include:

- Friars Slavko Barbaric and Tomislav Vlastic, spiritual directors of the seers, filtered their so-called messages from the "Gospa".

In the [Chronicle of April 12 1984](#), Vlastic recorded:

*"Today I spoke with all the seers. I brought to their attention again **the necessity of not releasing statements to anyone without informing us.**"*

- The children reported that the Madonna taught them that those who ascend to heaven do so in both body and soul

Finally, Bishop Peric points out that after Father Vasic was removed, Our Lady wanted Slavko Barbaric to replace him as spiritual director of the seers so Barbaric could document the apparitions and messages. Slavko Barbaric passed away in AD 2000, and the alleged apparitions continue to this day... without Slavko Barbaric. Another "vision" that never came true.

On January 3, 1985 Bishop Zanic asked the [Franciscan Provincial to transfer Friar Barbaric](#):

"I ask you to transfer friar Slavko Barbaric from Medjugorje to another position. He at Medjugorje, on the very important questions regarding the alleged "apparitions" of the Madonna is making propaganda in a way completely opposed to the directions I have given many times orally and in writing."

Apparently, the Virgin Mary had other plans, contrary to those of the bishop. She expressed her desire that the friar remain at Medjugorje to help guide events and to chronicle her visits. Writing in third person, Friar Slavko recorded this message in the Chronicle:

*“3 February 1985. (Sunday) The vision came suddenly. Shorter this evening than in some days, just 2 minutes. Marija, Ivan, and Jakov were present. The message was for friar Slavko, as promised in the vision yesterday. It was given by Ivan. It went as follows: **“I would like that Slavko remain here, and attend to all the details and the notes so that at the end of my visit we will have a synoptic image of everything.** I am praying especially for Slavko at this time and for all those who work in the parish.”*

Unfortunately, Father Slavko died on November 25, 2000 years before the visions ended, years before a synoptic version could be completed as the Gospa had indicated. In other words, her remarks about Friar Slavko preparing a “synoptic image of everything” were incorrect; Father Slavko died making this a false prophecy.

For reasons such as these, and many others, [Bishop Peric remains skeptical](#), more than skeptical, he continues to deny the validity of the apparitions. At a recent **confirmation ceremony** in which one of the seers, Ivan Dragicevic, was present, the bishop pronounced from the pulpit:

*“Apollos (St. Paul) has shown us that the **unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace is more important than any personal talents, intractable charisms, speaking in tongues, falling on the floor, monthly double messages and tenfold talents.** **Our faith is founded on the Bible and tradition through the Magisterium of the Church, and not private hallucinations which occur three times daily.**”*

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