

# 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 disregarded 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”](#)

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# 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, their 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 Pavolovic, 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 than 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: Apparitions 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 the resumed in 1987 and then went public in 1997.

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# 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".





## 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 Medjugorje 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 Medjogorje [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*"

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# 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](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*"

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# **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

[January 3, 1982 Our Lady stated](#) to Vicka that:

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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 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 Vlasic

Mark Miravalle

Father Iveca Vego

**The Bishops**

**Supporting Cast**

Bishop Zanic

Bishop Hnilica

Bishop Peric

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 Perić**

Bishop Ratko Perić 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 Perić 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 Perić 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.**”*

# Church has Taken Tougher Stance on Medjugorje Waiting Final Pronouncement

[New Era World News](#)

IN THE FALL OF 2015 [Pope Francis](#), during a return flight from Sarajevo, told reporters that the Church was "close to coming to a decision" regarding its investigation of Medjugorje. The two bishops who have been the only Ordinaries in the Diocese of Mostar where the apparitions began have both made an unfavorable judgement about the supernatural events purported to have occurred there. Bishop Ratko Perić, the current bishop of Mostar-Duvno, holds the same negative position toward Medjugorje as his predecessor Bishop Žanić, who was bishop when Mary allegedly began appearing in 1981. Bishop Peric has not only evaluated the supposed apparitions as false, he has also denigrated them as a "religious show" and "*spectaculum mundo*" ([Belaj, Marijana](#) (2012)). Bishop Perić also composed a personal letter in which he stated that nothing supernatural was occurring in Medjugorje.

However, **The Bishop of Mostar has *not* been in charge of issue since 1986.** In that year, **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**.

Thereafter, **Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the CDF**, issued a clarification in which he stated that although both Bishops Zanic and Peric have ruled against the supernatural nature of the events, the issue had been handed off to the Yugoslavian Bishop's Conference and therefore "what Bishop Perić said in his letter ... is and remains his personal opinion." [Archbishop Bertone](#) stated:

*"The main thing I would like to point out is that the Holy See does not ordinarily take a position of its own regarding supposed supernatural phenomena as a court of first instance. As for the credibility of the "apparitions" in question, **this Dicastery respects what was decided by the bishops of the former Yugoslavia** in the Declaration of Zadar, April 10, 1991: "On the basis of the investigation so far, it can not be affirmed that one is dealing with supernatural apparitions and revelations." Since the division of Yugoslavia into different independent nations it would now pertain to the members of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina to perhaps reopen the examination of this case, and to make any new pronouncements that might be called for.*

Therefore,

*"What Bishop Peric said in his letter to the Secretary General of Famille Chretienne, declaring: "My conviction and my position is not only 'non constat de supernaturalitate', but likewise, 'constat de non supernaturalitate' of the apparitions or revelations in Medjugorje," should be considered the **expression of the personal conviction of the Bishop of Mostar** which he has the right to express as Ordinary of the place, but **which is and remains his personal opinion.**"*

In 1991 the Yugoslavian Bishop's Conference issued binding guidelines including a statement that:

*"It cannot be affirmed that these matters concern supernatural apparitions or revelations."*

Among its guidelines was one that forbids "official diocesan" and "parish pilgrimages" to Medjugorje; however, it does permit priests to accompany groups of Catholics to provide the sacraments and spiritual direction.

Likewise, [Archbishop Bertone](#) made it clear the pilgrims could go to Medjugorje but NOT if the trip was promoted as a pilgrimage or journey to a place of authentic Marina apparitions.

*"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."*

Thus, although pilgrimages are permitted, Medjugorje cannot be promoted as "a place of authentic Marian apparitions."

Then on October 21, 2013 at the request of Cardinal 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 Medjugorian seer Ivan Dragicevic, to Msgr. Ron Jenkins, Secretary of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The letter conveyed the Nuncio's "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 was problematic: The entire issue is still undergoing scrutiny by the the Bosnian Bishop’s Conference in cooperation with the CDF. Nevertheless, devotees continue to gather around the seers who undertake international journeys to promote the message while continuing to receive new messages. Many, as those preparing to attend Ivan’s appearances, presume that the Virgin Mary is going to appear (on schedule). This is an issue in itself: The Fatima children did not know when Our Lady would appear, they knew the date but *not* the time – the August, 19 appearance was unannounced. It is an issue for the CDF for other reasons as well, primarily its acceptance of the 1991 Yugoslavian 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 but both the seers and the public often accept the credibility of the apparitions as taken for granted, when they are not. To be so, 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 its investigation.

Specifically, the [Nuncio's letter states](#):

*“The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is in the process of investigating certain doctrinal and disciplinary aspects of the phenomenon of Medjugorje...With regard to the credibility of the “apparitions” in question, all should accept the declaration, dated 10 April 1991, from the Bishops of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, which asserts:*

*“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” would be taken for granted.”*

In other words, until the CDF decides on the matter, in the absence of a statement by the Bosnian bishop's, the Church is defaulting to the Yugoslavian bishops. Consequently, to avoid confusion and scandal, Archbishop Muller requested the nuncio to inform the US bishops about the seers visit in light of the 1991 Yugoslavian bishop's pronouncement, which clearly states that it is *not* possible (currently) to state that there are/were apparitions or supernatural messages.

Cardinal Muller's approach represents an increasingly active intervention on the part of the CDF; it “represent(s) a change of pastoral attitude on the part of the Holy See”. It is clear that the CDF is insisting that ecclesiastical decisions be adhered to while we await the final decision of the Church.

Regarding Medjugorje, Catholics are duty-bound to obey directives from the local bishop and Yugoslavian/Bosnian Bishops' Conference, esp. directives regarding pastoral responsibilities, authentic Marian spirituality, liturgical celebrations and regulations regarding use of the church's property. Nor (according to [Colin B. Donovan, STL](#)), is it clear if Catholics are even any longer permitted to go to Medjugorje

*“While the earlier statements permitted Catholics to go to Medjugorje, and even include priests acting as chaplains, the 2013 statements raise serious questions about the possibility of doing so. It was already inherent in the earlier statements that the valid basis for a pilgrimage must be a balanced Marian devotion. Catholics may not participate in any Medjugorje event that takes for granted the authenticity of the apparitions. Prior to 2013 the prohibition was placed on bishops and clergymen directing them not to conduct any formal pilgrimages to Medjugorje so as to give the appearance of official approbation when none actually existed; this extends to conferences, talks, retreats etc. hosted outside of Medjugorje as well.”*

*“Practically speaking, how does one go on a pilgrimage to a destination whose fame depends on an alleged apparition and not presume it to be authentic? It seems unlikely that such pilgrimages are simply a matter of tourism and not organized with encounters, conferences and other activities to satisfy a presumption of authenticity.”*

Nor is *public* veneration of the Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Medjugorje permitted; such a “*cultus*” amounts to a “presumption of authenticity”.

When looking at both sides Medjugorje spectrum, from “Convinced Devotees” to “Unconvinced Skeptics”, it becomes



easier to understand why the latter group seems to have the stronger argument, why the Church has arrived at its current more strict approach, and why Pope Francis recently warned the faithful to be on guard for those “who always need novelty of Christian identity...They’ve forgotten that they were chosen, anointed, that they have the guarantee of the Spirit.”

He said this prior to taking a papal jab at the visionaries”,

*“But where are the seers who tell us today, ‘the letter that the Madonna will send us at four in the afternoon.’”*

Our Lady, he emphasized,

*“...is the Mother of everyone! And she loves all of us. She is not a postmaster, sending messages every day.”*

**Continued Tomorrow – Why the Church has Taken a Tougher Stance on Medjugorje while Waiting for Final Pronouncement**