

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 Medjugorjian 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

Knowledge about “Fruits” Necessary to Evaluate Medjugorje and Other Apparitions

[New Era World News](#)

THIS IS PART TWO of a Series Entitled Confusion about Marian Apparitions. [Part One](#) ended with these words, which serve as a transition to a discussion about Obedience and then Medjugorje:

“Since Satan hates the woman and her seed, we should expect

anything pertaining to her, especially special visits to earth to guide and nourish her children, to be surrounded with confusion, lies, deceit, forgeries and above all else, by hatred and disobedience. And this is exactly what is found, especially on the ultra-liberal and ultra-conservative fringes. Although polar opposites, what they share in common is an affinity for **disobedience** and a **perversion of God's mercy**, which is either (1) forgotten, shrouded in false piety or turned into an occasion for callousness and hardness toward sinners, a wish for their punishment and chastisement rather than love, mercy and compassion as flow from the Heart of Jesus to [rescue them from hell as Our Lady requested at Fatima](#) or (2) an excessive tolerance leading to a false notion of love resulting in acceptance and even justification of sin.

The typical Medjugorje devotee will defend these supposed apparitions by citing scripture teaching that a tree is known by its fruits ([Luke 6:43](#)) and then proceed to explain how **people are praying their rosaries and fasting etc.** as if this was proof of advancement in holiness, while also ignoring that the Scripture about good fruits is connected to another teaching about false apostles:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them” ([Matt 7:15-16](#)).

Fasting is a discipline that involves the body; it cannot, in itself, make a person holy because becoming holy is a spiritual matter involving the human soul. Fasting can contribute to growth in holiness by enabling a person to acquire discipline and control of themselves, control of their passions in order that they might *begin* to make an advance on the spiritual path to holiness. Fasting-mortification is a first step; it involves disciplining the body.

Meditative prayer also involves the human body and its *sentient faculties* of memory and imagination, **faculties that human beings share with animals** (but not with angels) – **sentient faculties are *not* spiritual faculties**. Meditative prayer, like fasting, involves the lower or animal sentient faculties; they are necessary but insufficient for spiritual growth, necessary to tame and order the passions and the imagination, which have been poisoned by the world, lack of proper formation in virtue, and temptation that can arise from the angelic realm. **Mediation and fasting are for beginners**, those who are ruled by their passions and imagination or who have a difficult time overcoming them. Novices must first be cleansed or purged of these affections, that is why spiritual doctors of the Church refer to fasting-mortification-meditation as the “Purgative Way.” They represent a disciplining or purging of the mind and body without which further spiritual growth cannot be attained.

Fasting is a discipline, which if *not* performed with the proper motive of love of God and neighbor is practically useless. The same can be said of prayer, and esp. of meditative prayer, which is for beginners, those who are getting prepared to walk the higher spiritual path referred to by spiritual doctors as illumination (or the “illuminative way”) associated with growth in wisdom culminating in the mind of Christ, where a person learns to understand, appreciate and ultimately prefer the wisdom of the cross. Illumination, the acquisition of wisdom leads to a still higher realm: spiritual perfection by way of love. **Perfection cannot be achieved without love; it is love that represents the highest spiritual attainment of the human soul manifest in what Teresa of Avila and other doctors of mystical theology refer to as the “*Unitive Way*”,** the sublime path of love. This path cannot be followed until a person has first conquered his-her passions and acquired wisdom, not just the wisdom contained in dogmatic theology, but the wisdom associated with the mystery of the Cross, mystical wisdom or mystical theology. It is only by

means of this wisdom that a person is able to understand and embrace the suffering that necessarily associated with love ultimately culminating in union with God and neighbor. Few people travel this road, many come to the doors of the unitive way, but recoil to the comforts of intellectual conversation:

“How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it” ([Matt 7:14](#)).

John Paul II discussed the mystery of suffering in his encyclical [“*Salvifici Doloris*”](#):

“The words of that prayer of Christ in Gethsemane prove the truth of love through the truth of suffering...This discovery caused St. Paul to write particularly strong words in the letter to the Galatians: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”[62] Faith enables the author of these words to know that love which led Christ to the cross. And if He loved us in this way, suffering and dying, then with this suffering and death of His He lives in the one whom He loved in this way; He lives in the man: in Paul. And living in him to the degree that Paul, conscious of this through faith, responds to His love with love.”

The failure of many to mount from purgation of the senses to spiritual wisdom and onward to the mystery of the cross by way of salvific love is the reason there are so few saints, but an abundance of catechists and professors (masters or quasi-masters of dogmatic theology). There are many master of dogmatic theology but **mystical theology** has few masters, it cannot be mastered in the same way as dogma – it **is not cerebral**. Mystical theology is *not* something that is learned, rather, **mystical theology must be lived**, lived in ardent love of God and neighbor according to the mystery of the Cross.

*“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our **Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (things of the body)...From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me; for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your **spirit, brethren. Amen**” ([Galatians 6:14-18](#)).*

Paul bore the marks of Christ in his body not as a trophy, but out of love for those to whom he ministered, those whom he served:

*“I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, [for] that is far better. Yet that I remain [in] the flesh is more **necessary for your benefit.** And this I know with confidence, that I shall remain and **continue in the service of all of you for your progress** (not mine-but yours) and joy in the faith” ([Philippians 1:23-25](#)).*

No one can advance in the spiritual life if they are focused on themselves, on attaining spiritual benefits for their own advancement before men

“And when Simon (the magician) saw, that by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said to him: Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter. For thy heart is not right in the sight of God” ([Acts 8:18-21](#)).

Not even prayers can be answered when the heart is turned to itself rather than to God and neighbor:

“From whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members? You covet, and have not: you kill, and envy, and can not obtain. You contend and war, and you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not; because you ask amiss: that you may consume it on your concupiscences” ([James 4:1-5](#)).

This is exactly the point being made here, viz., before any advancement can be made in the spiritual life, concupiscence must be brought under control and eradicated. I did not say that the passions need to be eradicated (they are all good) but concupiscence or *disorderliness* that arises from the passions due to a weak will usually accompanied by a dim intellect have to be dealt with if there is to be any spiritual progress. However, the intellect can be sharp, razor sharp, and the passion still pose a problem. Or, a person might overcome the passions and acquire wisdom but then fail to advance in love – that leads to a stop in purgatory. If failure to love results is due to intellectual pride leading to schism, it might even be worse- that is up to God to decide, “who am I to judge” such things as Pope Francis has said.

As a person cannot have prayers answered on account of their asking wrongly, neither can they advance in the spiritual life if they pray and fast with the wrong intentions or without first having obtained rule over their own house, which makes possible further advancement in wisdom and love. If all a devotee does is pray for himself or for those whom he loves – he is *not* advancing, even the Pharisees and tax collectors did the same – he must pray and sacrifice for his enemies. Instead many dream of their chastisement and pray for justice and punishment – these are human sentiments *not* in accord with the mind and mission of Jesus Christ:

“I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate

you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect” ([Matt 5: 44-48](#)).

Likewise, anyone who fasts without love is wasting his time. Our Lady taught her children to fast and pray for love of others, what she referred to as Reparation Prayer, Reparation Sacrifice, “Reparation Communion” all done for love of others, especially for the poorest of sinners in order to rescue them from eternal despair:

“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in this world devotion to my Immaculate Heart...If what I say is done, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace” ([July 13, 1917 apparition of Our Lady of Fatima](#)).

Our Lady did *not* teach the children to merely fast and pray; **she taught them to fast and pray out of love for others.** If this is not being done or being done only for those by whom the person praying is loved, there will be little advancement. **Without love, there is no merit in such activities.** Even if a person progresses beyond the *purgative way* to the *illuminative way* and grows in wisdom so as to understand the greatest mysteries, even then, without love, such an attainment is essentially useless. Head and Heart, love and wisdom, must function together as an integral unity if there is to be an authentic expression of Catholicism. **Wisdom, no matter how great a good** (Aristotle even referred to it as the *Summum Bonum* – the greatest of all goods) **is deficient without Love.**

In fact, wisdom is not only incomplete without love, it is inferior to love – it is meant to be consummate in love:

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

*“Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away... Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity**” ([1 Corinthians 13: 1-13](#)).*

Backing up to the purgative way regarding spiritual exercises for beginners such as fasting and meditative prayer, it is dangerous to “get high on, or “prideful about”, these lesser things; they cannot, in themselves, make a person holy. Holiness depends upon further appreciation of the wisdom of the cross acquired by illumination and ultimately depends upon death to self to better love God and neighbor without which no one can become perfect.

However, in addition to the sentient exercise of meditative prayer and mortification associated with the purgative way, there is a third element found at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of the spiritual ascent to perfection: Obedience. **Of the three, mortification, meditative prayer and obedience, it is the latter that is most**

important. In fact, one extremely small act of obedience, such as putting the lights out at 10 PM, is greater than the greatest act of mortification done without love, such as willingness to be endure torture out of hatred or pride.

Obedience is for beginners and for well-advanced proficientes as well. **Obedience is greater than sacrifice**, unlike fasting and meditative prayer, **obedience is a spiritual exercise.** it is a spiritual exercise **because it involves the will, which is a spiritual faculty of the rational soul.**

Obedience does *not* differ in *degree* from mortification, it differs in *kind*; it is altogether of another species. Because it is a spiritual operation, it always exceeds that which is merely sentient or physical. The lowest operation of the higher spiritual power exceeds the highest operation of a lower physical power. The soul is the eternal spiritual image of the Holy Trinity, the body, without the soul, is merely finite dust having some likeness to God but *not* His image and not eternity.

Thus, a simple act of obedience transcends the greatest act of mortification if not elevated by love (because love emanates from the spiritual soul)!

Unfortunately, disobedience comes in great droughts at Medjugorje. As indicated, meditative prayer (such as the rosary) and fasting *etc.* are *not* necessarily fruits. **There are 12 fruits and they all flow from LOVE not one of them is *mortification* or *mediation*, because the fruits are all spiritual.**

The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit:

“charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity (for love of God). Against such there is no law. And they

that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.” ([Galatians 5:22-24](#)).

So when a Medjugorje devotee claims that rosary and fasting are fruits; he-she is speaking incorrectly. Fasting and meditative prayer might be manifestations of fruit if done out of love – as was said above, all the fruits flow from charity or love:

“The first disposition of the [human](#) mind towards the [good](#) is effected by love, which is the first of our emotions and the root of them all, as stated above ([I-II:27:4](#)). Wherefore among the fruits of the [Holy Ghost](#), we reckon “[charity](#),” wherein the [Holy Ghost](#) is given in a special manner, as in His own likeness, since He Himself is love. Hence it is written ([Romans 5:5](#)): “The [charity](#) of [God](#) is poured forth in our hearts by the [Holy Ghost](#), Who is given to us.” The [necessary](#) result of the love of [charity](#) is [joy](#): because every lover rejoices at being united to the beloved. Now [charity](#) has always actual presence in [God](#) Whom it loves, according to [1 John 4:16](#): “He that abideth in [charity](#), abideth in [God](#), and [God](#) in Him”: wherefore the sequel of [charity](#) is “[joy](#).” Now the perfection of [joy](#) is peace” ([St. Thomas Aquinas, Q 70, A 3](#)).

From there Aquinas goes on to demonstrate that all the fruits flow from love because they are manifestations of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Soul, the Holy Spirit who is Love.

Thus, prayers fasting and all manner of piety are not indications of the working of the Holy Spirit *if* they are unaccompanied by love, love of God manifest in a willingness to die to self, do be obedient, to suffer for the good of others, to suffer with **joy** and **peace**, which actually are **fruits** – these are the fruits to be looked for. However, when Medjugorje is examined, it is readily seen that not only are

these fruits often absent, **there opposite corruptions are often abundantly present.** Understanding this helps to grasp exactly what the “Holy Office” intended when it stated:

[“We must resist error even when it masquerade as piety.”](#)

Scripture confirms this insight by the Holy Office; it also reveals how to spot error – error cannot hide forever behind a **masquerade of piety** nor can it hide behind **ersatz love** like Judas hid behind the purse whose contents he spent on himself. Error is revealed in concupiscence, worldliness, in lack of peace, the tranquility of spirit that comes forth from wisdom and love nurtured by humility **and obedience:**

*“Now I beseech you, brethren, to **mark them who make dissensions** and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, **and avoid them.** For they that are such, serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly; and by pleasing speeches (ultra-conservatives) and good words (ultra-liberals), seduce the hearts of the innocent. **For your obedience is published in every place.** I rejoice therefore in you (not in them who are disobedient). 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. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” ([Romans 16: 17-20](#)).*

At Medjugorje disobedience is all over the canvas as will be demonstrated in the next article. As reported in [Crisis Magazine](#):

“In Medjugorje, we are confronted with the counter-intuitive phenomenon of the Madonna (Herself) encouraging disobedience to the successors of the Apostles, and disobedience of some Franciscans to Vatican directives.

[Pope Francis has](#) directed that the matter be looked into and has recently indicated that the process of investigation is

“nearly complete.”

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