**Biskupije Mostar-Duvno i Trebinje-Mrkan**

Dioeceses Mandetriensis-Delminiensis et Tribuniensis-Marcanensis

## The scientific tests on the Medjugorje seers: A critical study by Prof. TH. Kammerer

10. June 2011.

*Foto: nepoznato*

*Prof. Henri Joyeux and Father René Laurentin (both French), in collaboration with some other professors and doctors, published in 1985 the book „Etudes médicales et scientifiques sur les apparitions de Medjugorje“, published by O.E.I.L. (Medical and Scientific Studies On the Apparitions At Medjugorje". The work has been translated and published in Croatian, too, (Duvno 1986). A critical look at this work was addressed by a member of the enlarged Diocesan Commission (1984-1986), Father Nikola Bulat, in his study on the phenomenon of Medjugorje Istina će vas osloboditi, Nepouzdanost izvora i nedoličnost poruka. Studija o nekim međugorskim pitanjima ["The Truth Shall Set You Free. The Unreliability Of the Sources And the Indecency Of the Messages. A Study On Some Issues Of Medjugorje”] (1986), Mostar 2006, pp. 96-98.*

*A few months after the exams conducted by Dr. Joyeux, further medical tests were carried out by an Italian group, led by Dr. Luigi Frigerio, in 1985.*

*Prof. Théophile Kammerer, then President of the International Medical Committee of Lourdes, after having studied the French dossier and having known the results obtained by the Italian group*

*(through the report of Dr Cherubino Trabucchi), presented his criticisms in a meeting of the Committee in 1986.*

*We asked Mrs. Pascale Leroy-Castillo, Director for Archives and Heritage of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, to send us a transcript of the conference. She replied on May 13, 2011, with the consent of Dr. Alessandro de Franciscis, head of the Lourdes Medical Bureau, that publication of the contents of the conference of Prof. Kammerer is allowed, stating that it was held at the meeting of that Committee in September 1986. Also on this occasion, we sincerely thank the officials of the International Medical Committee and of Archives and Heritage of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes for their kind permission. Here are some passages from the exposition of Prof. Kammerer.*

Report of the Meeting of Lourdes International Medical Committee

This year, as had been decided for a long time, the Committee meeting has been held in Lourdes, 20 and 21 September 1986 [...]

It was chaired again by Bishop Henri Donze, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, and Professor Théophile Kammerer, in the presence of Bishop John Sahuquet, Coadjutor of the Bishop Msgr. Donze.
Present were Professors and Doctors Juan Gibert Queralto Espinos and Domingo Perez, from Spain; Erwin Theiss, from Germany; St. John Dowling, from England; and Bernard Colvin, from Scotland.
From France, also present were Professors and Doctors: Jean-Louis Armand-Laroche, Charles Boudet, Charles Chassagnon, Pierre Mouren, Louis Revol, Jean Rodier, Jean Rousseau, André Trifaud, Théodore Mangiapan, besides Dr. Kammerer. [...]

After a few words of welcome from Bishop H. Donze for everyone, especially for the new members present, Prof. Kammerer made his presentation. […]

CRITICAL STUDY OF MEDICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE MEDJUGORJE VISIONARIES

In recent years several books have been published about the apparitions of Medjugorje, a village of Yugoslavia (Herzegovina), which in the last five years has become a place of pilgrimage attracting huge crowds. The following study will focus specifically on medical expertise published in the book: “Etudes médicales et scientifiques sur les apparitions de Medjugorje” [Medical and Scientific Studies On the Apparitions At Medjugorje ] by Professor H. JOYEUX and Father R. LAURENTIN (published by O.E.I.L., 1985). Additional data from Italian source, have been added thanks to the kind cooperation of Professor Ch. TRABUCCHI. [....]

Prof. TRABUCCHI wanted to present in detail a book published in Italy: "Dossier scientifico su Medjugorje" [Scientific Report on Medjugorje] written by L. Frigerio, G. Mattalia, and L. Bianchi (1986). [….]

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

1. We must first recognize the good point and the merit of the tests carried out: they are the first that have been implemented in ecstasy, during an apparition. Experts have overcome many obstacles, the last and most important being the opposition of the seers - which is understandable. The latter took refuge behind the authorisation of the Virgin, who has expressed her consent, and sometimes her denial: "It is not necessary." In that case, experts have complied.

2. Despite all efforts, as to their level, these tests remain superficial. The most important was the EEG: with 8 electrodes in contact with the scalp, to explore approximately 50 billion neurons working

in the brain, we can - very roughly - compare his accuracy with that of a plane, flying over Paris at a height of 10,000 meters [more than 32,000 feet], wanting to take note of the activities of the city and of its inhabitants. One should know that the EEG provides valuable information in relation to global changes in brain activity (sleep, dreaming for ex.) or to perturbations concentrated in a "focus": brain tumor, softening, epilepsy etc. On the other hand, it does not provide any usable data on mental activity, emotional and affective states, neurotic disorders, psychoses. It is rarely used in psychiatry except in cases of suspected organic lesion.

3. Despite this, all the sophisticated techniques impress the simple-minded readers and may make them believe that, given the evidence of the normality of the seers, subjective visions are excluded and, at the same time, objective apparitions are scientifically proven. The very title of the book itself "Medical And Scientific Studies On the Apparitions At Medjugorje" tends to induce that belief.

4. What is really disconcerting is to see that the expertise is limited to those instrumental tests to which some superficial clinical observations are added. It presents itself as an example of neurobiological reductionism currently in vogue in the milieu of materialist neuroscience. Clearly, the problems raised by apparitions or visions relate mainly to psychology or psychopathology and require the assistance of a psychiatrist. The team thought they could do without that assistance, and gave no explanation for this: it is a serious fault. Some examinations carried out by Italian and Yugoslav psychiatrists are mentioned: they are superficial and, at most, consist of tests: they allow nothing but the description of the temperamental profile. We can say that there is a sort of short circuit between the neurobiological data and the spiritual approach to the phenomena.

5. Every psychiatric observation requires several interviews with the subject and possibly his parents, dedicated to attentively listening to information:

a) *curriculum vitae*, as detailed as possible, of the subject, since his early childhood, noting physical or mental diseases and injuries, investigating critical phases, school adjustment, relationships with peers, the entry into work etc;

b) family history, relationships between parents and between generations, any conflicts at all levels;

c) in this case, the religious evolution of each of the seers would have to be very important: their first approach to prayer, forms of family religiosity, peculiar devotions, religious education received, the way the Bible was presented to them etc., possible participation in pilgrimages;

d) details of the psychiatric state of everybody in the weeks and the days preceding the first apparition; genesis of the group of seers.

The careful observation of each seer during these interviews, his attitude, his emotional reactions and all information collected would have enabled the psychiatrist to achieve a fairly accurate knowledge of his personality, its evolution and psychological condition. Certainly it was a difficult undertaking, requiring an interpreter, but perhaps not impossible, and in any case, essential to an investigation that wants to draw conclusions.

6) Curiously, only one psychological personal datum is mentioned, not in the expertise but in the story of the first apparitions, reduced to a mere allusion. It concerns the first seer, Ivanka, 15 years old, who had lost her mother a few weeks before the first apparition (May 1981).

More can be said: she was the one who, in the second apparition, asked the Virgin the first question, a personal question, asking for news of her mother. Response of the Virgin: "Your mother is fine, she is with me."
It could be that the death of her mother has played, on a psychological level, an important role in the genesis of the first vision of Ivanka. But no one could give his opinion, of course, on this issue without more information. Everyone knows, in fact, that the loss of a mother, especially for a teenager, can be a profound and disturbing emotional stress.

In the case of Ivanka, precise information would be required about the disease (or possibly the accident) and the death of her mother, the personality of the latter, her role in the family, her religious life and her behavior, the reactions produced by her death etc.

The "elaboration of mourning" will, however, be the subject of a further development.

This example illustrates the vital importance of the psychological approach to the difficult problems of visions and apparitions. They will be presented in a general plan in the second part of the report.

Th. Kammerer
September 1986

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Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/scientific-tests-medjugorje-seers-critical-study-prof-th-kammerer

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## THE ATTACKS OF THE MEDJUGORJE "APPARITION" AGAINST THE DIOCESAN BISHOP PAVAO ŽANIĆ

**Međugorski Fenomen** 10. May 2017.

*Foto: ABOM*

On May 2nd, the day of the liturgical memorial of the great bishop and scholar of the universal Church, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, we recall in the Dioceses of Herzegovina the 46th anniversary of the episcopal ordination that was held in the parish church of St. Peter and Paul in Mostar, during

which Bishop Petar Čule together with Archbishop Smiljan Čekada of Sarajevo and Archbishop Frane Franić of Split-Makarska, ordained as bishop, Father Pavao Žanić a priest of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska and Rector of the Minor Seminary. He was appointed as coadjutor bishop, that is, successor of Bishop Čule on 9 December 1970.[1] He took over the administration of the Dioceses nine years later, on the feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, 14 September 1980, thereby becoming the residential bishop of the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno and the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan. His episcopal motto was the same as the one he used for his ordination to the priesthood: *In Faith, Hope and Charity*. Between 3 November 1988 and 14 January 1990, he was appointed by St. John Paul II, to also care for the Diocese of Dubrovnik as its Apostolic Administrator.

Upon reaching the age of 75 (born on 20 May 1918), the Holy Father accepted his resignation. On 23 July 1993, he retired to his hometown of Kaštel Novi, Croatia. He died in Split on 11 January 2000 and was buried in his family's tomb in his home parish cemetery.

From the beginning of his episcopal ministry as coadjutor and cooperator of Bishop Čule in Mostar, he was actively involved:

- In the construction and completion of the Cathedral of Mary Mother of the Church in Mostar (1975-1980);

- In the many pastoral activities of the dioceses: Confirmations in all the parishes, Parochial Missions in many parishes, Visit to missionaries in Africa in 1983, Pastoral visits throughout Herzegovina;

- In the pastoral care for the family, also as the President of the Council for the Family of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia (1973-1990);

- In caring for the clergy from the minor seminary onwards: between 1980 to 1993 he ordained 29 priests; he sent 8 to continue studies in Rome and elsewhere, another 2 were sent to other faculties to study literature and music in Zagreb, and during his episcopal ministry 8 of his priests were in the missions in Africa, while 18 were in Croatian parishes and missions abroad. He also held recollections and spiritual retreats to priests, seminarians and religious sisters;

- In monitoring religious life in the dioceses;

- In promoting healthy Marian devotion by preaching on Mary in the parishes, especially at the Shrine of the Queen of Peace in Hrasno (Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan), then as the leader of ten pilgrimages, usually by train, to Lourdes and Fatima;

- In launching "Crkva na kamenu" - "The Church on the Rock", in the 1980's, the diocesan monthly pastoral periodical, in which he often wrote many articles;

- In establishing the Diocesan Caritas of the Dioceses of Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkan in 1982, thereby empathizing with the sufferings of the marginal and the poor;

- In constructing a retirement home for priests in Bijelo Polje between 1982 and 1984;

- In presiding over the celebrations of the Millennium of the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan in 1984, by dedicating the centuries-old parish church in Trebinje on 17 June that year, and asking the Holy See to raise the same church by formal decree to the dignity of a cathedral;

- In establishing a Theological Institute in Mostar in 1987, which the communists immediately banned under that name, however whose title was restored in 1991;

- In introducing a mandatory marriage preparation course lasting several days, for engaged couples in 1987;

- In celebrating on 2 June 1991 in Mostar, the 50th anniversary of his ordination to priesthood: 1941-1991[2], and the Silver Jubilee of his episcopal ordination on 5 May 1996 in Mostar: 1971-1996.[3]

For this occasion, Pope John Paul II on 21 May 1991, sent these words to the Bishop: “We are aware of the hardships and troubles of your pastoral ministry that have made your burden even more bitter, however, you have never been deprived of fearless faith; indeed, your love for everyone, as well as your great devotion and your diligence in choosing and educating young men who are called to the Lord’s service have grown to a great extent.” On 29 May 1991, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, sent him a telegram that contained the following words: “While whole-heartedly uniting myself to the exalted message sent by the Vicar of Christ to you, dear Bishop, on the happy occasion of your two decades of suffered and yet fruitful episcopal ministry, directed entirely towards the good of the two beloved Churches of Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkan as well as elsewhere where the supreme trust of the Holy Father invited you to generously dedicate your apostolic efforts under the heavenly intercession of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, whom you have always gently loved and preached on to your beloved faithful as the Mother and Helper of God...”.[4]

Then Bishop Žanić experienced the tragedy of the war from 1991 to 1993:

Several thousand of his faithful were killed, tens of thousands had to go into exile, leaving behind destroyed property. He experienced the burning down of the diocesan chancery building, the destruction of the cathedral, the damaging, destruction or demolition of more than 100 parish and affiliated churches, rectories, offices, monasteries and cemeteries.[5]

From 1980 to 1993, as his first concern, he followed “The Herzegovinian case”. During the turbulent times in the history of this country under the communist regime, he led the dioceses with true love for the Church and in faithfulness to the Holy See. This was recognized by the Holy See, which entrusted to him for some time, the governance over three dioceses: Mostar-Duvno, Trebinje-Mrkan and Dubrovnik.

From 1981 to 1993, he followed the “Medjugorje phenomenon” by establishing the First Commission from 1982 to 1984, followed by an extension of the same from 1984 to 1986.

As a Marian bishop, he was at first open to the “apparitions”. In his first statements, he defended the priests before the communist attacks as well as the possibility of Marian apparitions. He believed that the “visionaries” were having some inner experiences, but he was very careful that their subjectivity would not be replaced by supernatural “apparitions”.

That is to say, the so-called “apparition” in Medjugorje, known as “Our Lady” from the first moments of the so-called apparitions, appeared not only in a very strange fashion, but also in a way completely unworthy of the Immaculate Virgin Mary.[6] This behavior became even more worrisome in the following months when the “apparition” launched - through the self-proclaimed seers of Medjugorje - a series of charges against this faithful servant of the Church and very devout son of the Mother of God.

In response to many demands of the faithful regarding the behavior of the Medjugorje “apparition” during the initial period of the apparent apparitions in St. James parish, located in this diocese, as his successor, I feel obliged to present this faithful servant of the Church, thereby defending him from many lies and slander.[7] What follows is a collection of documentation between the period of

December 1981 and January 1983, relating to a truly strange phenomenon that the "apparition" of Medjugorje, according to the documented statements of the "visionaries" and their "spiritual leader" Fr. Tomislav Vlašić, OFM[8] (who in 2009, due to serious offenses and misdeeds was dismissed from the Franciscan, OFM, order and laicized), directed various sharp threats and attacks against Bishop Pavao Žanić of Mostar-Duvno, while at the same time placing under its protection two Franciscans known for their disobedience towards the decisions of their Religious superiors and the Holy See.

These interpretations, based upon authentic documents kept in the Archives of the Diocesan Chancery Office in Mostar, are necessary due to the serious and unjust attacks and defamation of the bishop, who was a humble and faithful minister of the Church, who can only defend himself through his writings and works. All of this especially in the light of the "pastoral activities" of the former Franciscan Tomislav Vlašić, OFM, "the mystic and charismatic magician"[9], founder of a new venture in the style of New Age called "Nucleo Centrale" (Central Nucleus) which from 2012 with the help of modern means of communication now operates globally,[10] and also in the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno.[11]

**I. – "THE HERZEGOVINIAN CASE"**

As an introduction to the article, I present only a few lines on "The Herzegovinian case", of which an entire study has been drafted for the time frame from 1881 to 1980.[12]

What is understood by the "Herzegovinian case" is the distribution of parishes between the Franciscan friars and the Diocesan priests in the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno (currently with 177,000 believers), excluding the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan (currently with 20,000).

**The Solemn Decision / Decisio solemnis**. At the time of the creation of a regular Church hierarchy in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1881, this diocese had only one secular priest from Dalmatia, Fr. Klemo Sumić (1877-1923). How the Franciscan friars succeeded in acquiring a monopoly on the pastoral ministry over the centuries in the area that today covers the local Church of Mostar-Duvno – we will not interpret here. At the request of the Holy See, the Franciscan Bishop Paškal Buconjić, OFM, after 18 years of hesitation, along with the Franciscan Provincial Father Luka Begić, OFM, proposed a distribution of the parishes that was approved by the Holy See by Solemn Decision / *Decisio solemnis* in 1899 and officially proclaimed in Mostar only in 1908. According to this distribution:

24 of the existing and affluent parishes remained under the Provincial religious administration */ pro mensa regulari*, i.e., about 2/3 of the faithful and territory of the Diocese;

12 existing parishes listed by name, were destined for the future diocesan clergy;

12 parishes listed by name, however non-existent at the time, were left to the bishop's free disposal, i.e., the bishop could entrust them to the diocesan clergy.

**The Decree**. Leaving aside the various troubles and resistances, as well as the more or less successful outmaneuvering of the Decision, we wish to emphasize that the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, under whose jurisdiction this Diocese remained until 2006 (having heard the opinions of other Dicasteries involved), on 6 June 1975 issued a Decree entitled *Romanis Pontificibus,* approved by Pope Paul VI in a special form / *sub forma specifica*. According to this Decree, the Franciscans were supposed to leave to the free disposition of the bishop, 8 parishes (designated in the Decision of 1899), and, moreover, allow the division of the parish entrusted to them in Mostar so that a cathedral parish could be created. The Decree was not published in Latin or in Italian, but only the "official version in Croatian" was disclosed.[13] The Franciscan General Administration in Rome

published the Latin text in its *Acta*, only 15 years later, in 1989.[14] Today the text can also be found in English.[15]

**The Provincial Administration** of the OFM Franciscans of Mostar responded in 1976 to the Pope with their explicit: We cannot / *Non possumus,* implement the Decree of 1975.[16]

The Holy See responded by removing the Provincial Administration that same year. The imposed local administration was only considered as "ad instar", i.e., the Minister General of the Order managed the Province from Rome with his delegate or sub-delegate, and then through the "ad instar" provincial, from 1976 to 2000.

**The Cathedral Parish in Mostar**. According to the Decree *Romanis Pontificibus*, a cathedral parish was to be established in Mostar by dividing the only existing city parish of St. Peter and Paul, that had been entrusted to the Franciscans before and after. After the erection of the cathedral of Mary Mother of the Church, which was consecrated on 14 September 1980 by Cardinal Franjo Šeper, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a significant part of the Franciscans in the Province considered the Decision on the Cathedral Parish as well as the Decree of 1975 as unjust. Some Friars in Mostar, supported by groups of fellow supporters, showed excessive disobedience by taking over chapels in cemeteries belonging to the new parish, thereby disrupting the diocesan priests of the cathedral in their ministry. Amongst these were two Franciscan chaplains (associate pastors) of Mostar, Fr. Ivan Prusina, OFM, (today pastor of a Croatian mission in Switzerland), and Fr. Ivica Vego, OFM, (who left the Franciscan Order and the Priesthood in 1988).

**II. – "MESSAGES" AGAINST BISHOP ŽANIĆ IN THE MEDJUGORJE "APPARITIONS"**

Bishop Žanić inherited "The Herzegovinian case" as coadjutor and as the Ordinary of Mostar-Duvno. Since he was fully confident in the decisions and decrees of the Holy See, he sought to resolve this intricate case, to devote himself to other pastoral activities. Hence, upon taking over the administration of the diocese and remaining loyal to the Successor of Peter, he insisted with the Holy See that these decisions be effectively enforced in Herzegovina. St. John Paul II showed such understanding of the situation presented by Bishop Žanić, that he invested his authority by allowing the Congregation for Consecrated Life to dismiss from the Order of the Friars Minor, those who would not obey the decisions of their Religious superiors and the Holy See, without allowing them the opportunity to appeal to ecclesiastical courts.

Amongst the ranks of the Franciscan fathers, the two previously mentioned associate pastors in Mostar were particularly disobedient regarding the Church decisions. They were at the forefront in impeding the pastoral life of the new cathedral parish in Mostar. It is precisely here that in a strange way, the voice of the "apparition" of Medjugorje entered the scene by attacking Bishop Žanić, who was faithful to the Holy See, while defending the two disobedient chaplains in Mostar.

- **24 June 1981** - After the commencement of the story of the Medjugorje phenomenon, in the village of Bijakovići located in the parish of Medjugorje, a group was formed of four girls: Vicka and Ivanka Ivanković, Mirjana Dragićević and Marija Pavlović, and two boys: Ivan Dragićević and Jakov Čolo, aged 10 to 16, claiming to have apparitions of Our Lady every day. Fr. Jozo Zovko, OFM, was the pastor of Medjugorje and Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo, OFM the associate pastor. Thus, the "Medjugorje phenomenon" began[17] and accompanied "The Herzegovinian case".

Among the first "messages" of these "apparitions" was one that immediately supported the Franciscans with regard to "The Herzegovinian case". From December of that same year, the

“apparition” openly sided with the disobedient Franciscans, and thereby against the diocesan bishop Pavao Žanić, who was the competent Church authority.

1. **At the very beginning of the “apparitions”** - Bishop Žanić wrote to the Vice-President of the Bishops’ Conference of Yugoslavia – “Fr. Nikola Radić, OFM, the delegate of the Superior General of the OFM Order for Herzegovina, told me a few days after the beginning of the ‘apparitions’ in Medjugorje: ‘A friar from Široki Brijeg swept in and said that Our Lady has appeared in Medjugorje and that she said that the Friars are right!’ The Friars defending Medjugorje have turned this into a defense of their disobedience to the bishop and the Holy See and in defense of their material interests.”[18]

Despite this and despite various other inconsistencies, deceptions and manipulations, Bishop Žanić was open in the first months of the alleged “apparitions”, yet always careful with regard to the subjectivity or supernaturalness of the “apparitions”.

However, when this “apparition”, called “The Gospa [Madonna] of Medjugorje” began blaming the bishop himself, who was always devotedly Marian to the highest degree, the bishop took a stance of open denial against the authenticity of the “apparitions”. We now present the chronological course of the attacks of the “apparition” of Medjugorje on the Bishop:

2. **19 December 1981** – The “seer” Vicka, wrote in her *Agenda*[19]: “I asked about the Herzegovinian problem, especially regarding Fr. Ivica Vego. Our Lady said that bishop Žanić is to blame for the entire mess, regarding Fr. Ivica Vego she said that he was not guilty, but that the bishop has all authority. She told him to stay in Mostar and not to leave there.”

- On the same day, Fr. Tomislav Vlašić, OFM, in the *Chronicle of the Parish of Medjugorje*[20], questions the “seer” Vicka and writes: “What did Our Lady say exactly: Did she say that the bishop was to blame for the mess in the diocese or, in the recent cases, (related to Ivica [Vego] and Ivan [Prusina]) he made some wrong moves? Vicka told me that Our Lady said that the bishop made some wrong moves, but that she cannot literally repeat it.” While carefully keeping in mind the difference suggested by Fr. Vlašić, Vicka repeats the phrase as suggested by Fr. Vlašić. She heard it from “Our Lady” yet she cannot “literally repeat it”!

3. **3 January 1982** - In Vicka’s *Agenda* we read: “The bishop is not keeping order and therefore he is to blame. He will not be bishop forever. I will show justice in the kingdom”, “Our Lady” threatens the diocesan bishop through her “seer”.

- **On the same day** in the *Chronicle* written by Fr. Vlašić, the following entry appears: “The children had a vision. The most important thing is what the bishop later specifically dealt with. That is, following my proposal, to verify the truth of Our Lady’s response on 19.12.81. regarding the chaplains, I asked the visionaries to inquire about this once again.

The replies of the seers:

- Our Mother told the dear bishop that he was a bit rash in his decision and that he should think this over again and listen to both sides. She asks him to be just and patient.[...] The bishop is making a mess and therefore he is guilty. He will not be Bishop forever, I will show justice in the Kingdom.”

4. **11 January 1982** we read in the *Chronicle of the parish*: “They asked again about the two chaplains of Mostar and Our Lady repeated twice what she told them before”. Hence, even what she said about the bishop.

5. **14 January 1982** – The "seer" Vicka openly lies to Bishop Žanić. In the *Appendix* to the *"Information"* section of the Official Diocesan Bulletin of the Dioceses, after having spoken with the "seers", which was tape-recorded, Bishop Žanić writes: "On 14 January 1982, the children came to me saying that Our Lady sent them (V.[Icka] I.[vanković], M.[arija] P.[avlovic], and J.[akov] Č.[olo].

- Our Lady said that you acted rashly in some things. That's all she said. [...]

- Someone told me that you had a message for the chaplains of Mostar [the Bishop said].

- We did not ....

- You did not? [The bishop said surprisingly].

- Which chaplains?

- Those in Mostar.

- It's nothing.

- I guess others told me incorrectly [the bishop added]

- Somebody misinformed you and your misheard it.

During the conversation, I asked the children several times: Is there anything else concerning the bishop? ... Try to remember something else that would concern me ... The answer was negative."[21]

6. **20 January 1982** - According to Vicka's *Agenda*: "Our Lady, what is it with the bishop? Will he change his position? - Our Lady answered, I will not rush. I'm waiting to see if he will ease up according to my messages, which I sent through you".

- According to the *Chronicle* on the same day, "Our Lady" proclaimed: "The bishop was too rash in his decision".

7. **3 April 1982** - Bishop Žanić published what he recorded on the tape-recorder:

"On 3 April 1982. V.[icka] I.[vanković] and J.[akov] Č.[olo] came to me as directed by Our Lady.

- Our Lady reproached us for not telling you everything the last time... She spoke about this case and smiled, and said that she herself would calm all this down.... I have no idea what it's all about... and then she smiled. (...) [said Vicka].

- Why didn't you mention the names of those Franciscans they want to throw out? [the Bishop asked].

- Regarding these Friars she said that they too like to work in the Church, as do all the others, to say Mass, the priests are not guilty of anything, she gave them names, and I did not know them and later I saw them...

Prusina and Vego.

She said that they are not guilty of anything, and repeated this twice.

And J.[akov] heard it, and M.[arija] was there also.

- Did she tell you about them before you were with me the last time (14 January 1982), and therefore reproached you for not telling me? [the Bishop asked]

- Yes! That's why he reproached me three times for not coming, for not saying...

- Once again, we haven't understood each other. (I insist, in order to emphasize the contradiction found in the answer of 14 January 1982).

- The last time you were with me, did Our Lady tell you before we met to tell me this?...

- Yes! But I did not say this, so she reproached me for not doing my duty, and I was talking a lot, but I could not remember... Then [the Madonna] said, I think it's a great shame this unheard-of quarrel between the Franciscans and the Diocesans. The people are making peace but it's all in vain for them (the priests)...

- Jakov: She said it was a big blow to the Church ...

- Vicka: Every day she tells us something... and about you, that you did not act justly.

- Jakov: That you also made this mistake by doing what you did.

- Vicka: That there are some mistakes, but what do I know...

- Wherein? [the Bishop asks].

- In this Franciscan case.

- So what do you think I did wrong and thereby was mistaken?

- Jakov: She said something about the Franciscan case between Friars and Diocesans.

- And do you know what this is about?

- Jakov: I don't know.

- I would like to resolve this if I knew what I did wrong, but I listen to the Pope and whatever the Pope orders me to do, I do [said the bishop].

- Vicka: You also must obey someone, but I would rather listen to Our Lady than my own mother... I would surely love to listen more to Our Lady rather than the Pope, certainly!

- Our Lady cannot speak out against the Pope... You yourself must also be very careful and suspicious if she says something against the bishop [the bishop added].

- Vicka: There are no doubts here. I hear this the same way I hear you now (recorded)."

Then Bishop Žanić continues: "When I told this to Fr. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, who was ministering in Medjugorje, he told me that V.[icka] was temperamental, that she can be impulsive... 'At one point, sometime between Christmas and the New Year, she told me that Our Lady said that the bishop was to blame for everything in Herzegovina.

I told her that this cannot be...'

I then told him: 'You shouldn't have spoken to her at all, but sent her to the bishop. This is manipulating with the children...'"[22] [the bishop said to Father Vlašić].

**- These lies of the "seer" and the manipulations of the manipulator Vlašić, were clear proof for Bishop Žanić to take a firm stance regarding the inauthenticity and fabricated nature of the Medjugorje phenomenon.**

8. **15 April 1982** - In the *Agenda* of 1983, we find an entry with "Our Lady's" words written in Vicka's handwriting: "The bishop is to blame for this, and there are many who support him."[23]

- The *Chronicle* is missing the date of 15 April 1982, which was not delivered to the Chancery Office.

9. **26 April 1982** – In Vicka's *Agenda* we read:

- "The bishop - ['Our Lady'] says – has no real love of God for the two of them";

- "What the bishop is doing, is not according to God's will";

- "The bishop is not acting according to God's grace".

- The *Chronicle* is missing the date of 26 April 1982.

10. **27 June 1982** – The *Chronicle* states: "To the question: The bishop objects to the fact that you said that Fr. Ivica Vego OFM and Fr. Ivan Prusina OFM are not guilty. He thinks that you are not the true Madonna because you do not respect the decisions of the superiors. Will you explain your position to us? She replied: 'The superiors should be respected and listened to. But they also make mistakes; they need to seek forgiveness and correct them. The bishop, and even more those who are encouraging him, with their stance are harming the faith...'."

11. – It is not entirely clear in this whole affair, what the role was of the Slovenian Jesuit priest Radogost Grafenauer[24], who Bishop Žanić quotes in his booklet:

"**Towards the end of January 1983**, Fr. Grafenauer, SJ, came to me with the intention of investigating the phenomenon of Medjugorje. He listened to about twenty tapes and then said he would not go to Medjugorje because there is no Madonna there. Following my suggestion, he then went, and after a couple of days he returned as a 'convert' of Fr. Vlašić. He brought me a few pages of text, threw it on the table and said:

'Here bishop, is the Madonna's message to you'."[25]

We now quote from the booklet, the conversation between Fr. Grafenauer and the "seer" Vicka Ivanković:

"Graf.: You told the bishop that he was guilty, and that these two (Vego and Prusina) are not guilty and that they can perform their priestly duties (ministries).

Vicka: Yes.

Graf.: Can they hear confessions, is this what Our Lady said?

Vicka: Yes.

Graf.: If Our Lady said this and the Pope says they cannot...

Vicka: The Pope can say what he likes, I say it the way it is."[26]

From the conversations of Father Grafenauer and the "seer" Marija Pavlović:

"**Marija Pavlović** "seer" – We present here a transcript of the tape-recordings of the conversation that Fr. Grafenauer held with her:

**Graf.**: Did Our Lady say the bishop is guilty?

**Marija**: Yes!

**Graf.**: Did she say that Vego and Prusina are not guilty?

**Marija**: Yes!

**Graf.**: As soon as Our Lady says that the Bishop is guilty, a person immediately can start doubting that this is not Our Lady... That is, that the seers are spreading the news that the Bishop is guilty...

**Marija**: That's what Our Lady told us.

**Graf.**: This is creating a revolt in Herzegovina and these are not good fruits. People will be angry with the Bishop and they will slander him, and how can Our Lady do something like this... The Church knows that Our Lady is good and she would not do this.

**Marija**: Our Lady told us so."[27]

**Conclusion**. From these elaborated points, based upon the precise words of the children who present themselves even today as "seers" of the same "Madonna" and from the words of their "spiritual leader", the result is that the "apparition" of Medjugorje attacked the courageous messenger of the truth of the same Mother of God, and on the other hand, defended various forms of disobedience and immorality. Furthermore, she continued doing this up until 1985 (at the end of August 1982; 29 September 1982; 17 January 1984; 14 November 1984; 5 January 1985).

Bishop Žanić, in his 23 years of episcopal ministry, presented himself as a man of complete moral integrity, a preacher of the truth who people gladly listened to, an untiring administrator of the holy sacraments and a brave shepherd, ready to die for the truth and for his faithful flock.

It is undignified to use Our Lady as a "post-office manager" to answer the various inappropriate and manipulative questions of the "seers" and their "spiritual leader" on the "Herzegovinian case" that has lasted a century.

The Madonna is not honored by presenting her as one who manipulates her own holy person, by interfering in the regular administration of the Holy See and the Diocesan bishop of Mostar-Duvno regarding the jurisdiction of the pastoral activities of the priests.

It is undignified that Vicka revised her diary, by writing her imaginative experiences from 1981 and from the first half of 1982 in the 1983 *Agenda*.

It is undignified that the "seers" are giving, as they gave from the first days of "apparitions," very disturbing statements that do not correspond to the truth but only deceive the faithful.

Mostar, 2 May 2017

+ Ratko Perić, bishop

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[1] Pavao Žanić, Liber intentionum, 1959-1982: The pontifical appointment of Father Pavao Žanić was made on 9 December, communicated on 28 December 1970, and published on 4 January 1971.

[2] Tomo Vukšić, editor, *Istina oslobađa. Zbornik biskupa Pavla Žanića*, [The Truth sets us free. Miscellenea of Bishop Pavao Žanić, Mostar, 1992.

[3] Ilija Drmić, „Srebrni biskup jubilarac" [The Bishop's Silver Jubilee], in: Crkva na kamenu, n. 5/1996., pp. 5 and 12.

[4] T. Vukšić, op.cit. pp. 35-40.

[5]*Raspeta Crkva u Bosni i Hercegovini. Uništavanje katoličkih sakralnih objekata u Bosni i Hercegovini*, [The Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Destruction of Catholic Sacred Sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina], Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Zagreb, 1997, p. 208.

[6] Cf. http://md-tm.ba/clanci/first-seven-days-apparitions-medjugorje

[7] Cf. http: //www.md-tm.ba/clanci/il-dodicesimo-anniversario-della-morte-del-ve ...

[8] According to Vicka's Diary (III), dated 28 February 1982, "Our Lady" told the "seers": "You can thank very much Tomislav for guiding you so beautifully". Copy in the Chancery Office in Mostar.

[9] P. Žanić, The current (unofficial) position of the Diocesan Chancery in Mostar relating to the events of Medjugorje, 30 October 1984, n. 22.

[10] In 2012 Tomislav Vlašić after being laicized, announced that he was a member of the group called "Nucleo Centrale" [Central Nucleus], of 49 beings in the universe chosen by God, along with his associate called Stefania Caterina.

[11]http://www.versolanuovacreazione.it/ and
also: http://www.fortezzadellimmacolata.org/appuntamenti

[12] Marko Perić, Hercegovačka afera [The Herzegovinian case], Mostar, 2002. The diocesan web-link, in Croatian: http://www.md-tm.ba/sites/default/files/hercegovacka_afera.pdf.

[13]*Glas Koncila*, [*The Voice of the Council*] 14/1975, p. 4.

[14] Latin original *Romanis Pontificibus* published in: *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Rome, II /1989, p. 85-89.

[15] The Decree *Romanis Pontificibus*, in
English: http://www.cbismo.com/index.php?mod=vijest&vijest=648

[16] Archives of the Franciscan Province of Herzegovina, n. 160/76, 10 May 1976.

[17] Dražen Kutleša – Editor, *Ogledalo Pravde*, [*Mirror of Justice*, The Diocesan Chancery in Mostar on the alleged apparitions and messages of Medjugorje], Mostar, 2001,
passim, http://www.cbismo.com/files/file/ogledalo_pravde.pdf

[18] Bishop Pavao Žanić to Archbishop Alojzije Šuštar, Vice-President of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, Letter dated 24 November 1983, prot. 1172/1983.

[19]*Agenda (1983)* of Vicka Ivanković, who entered the date 19.XII.1981. in the *Agenda* of 1983.

V. Ivanković, *Agenda 1983*. It regards an 11-page photocopied calendar with Vicka's own handwritten notes on the "messages" of the "apparition" to the disobedient religious priests, Ivan Prusina OFM and Ivica Vego OFM, the chaplains of Mostar with the following nine disordered dates: 19-XII-1981; 3-I-1982; 11-I-1982; 20-I-1982; 26-IV-1982; 29-IX-1982; end of August 1982; 15-IV-1982; 16-IV-1982. The copy was consigned by Vicka to the Chancery of Mostar on 17 May 1983 and is found in the Diocesan Archive of Mostar. See: Nikola Bulat, *Istina će vas osloboditi* [The truth will set you free], Mostar, 2006, pp. 52-56 and 99. The entire text in Croatian compared to the extracts of Fr. Radogost Grafenauer, *Ivi,* pp. 100-114.

[20] Tomislav Vlašić, *Kronika ukazanja u župi Međugorje*, [Chronicle of the Apparitions in the Parish of Medjugorje], 1981-1983. This regards the *Chronicle* kept and written by Fr. Tomislav Vlašić from 11 August 1981 to 15 October 1983; The original is in the Parish Rectory of Medjugorje, while a copy was submitted by the author to Bishop Žanić on 16 November 1983, and is kept in the Archives of the Chancery Office in Mostar. Regarding the authenticity of the Chronicle, see the article of N. Bulat, op. cit., pp. 23-33. The book can be found on the portal: http://www.cbismo.com/files/file/bulat_istina.pdf

[21] "Dodatak 'Informacijama'" ["Appendix to the 'Information'"], in: Službeni Vjesnik [Official Bulletin], 2/1982, p. 2. Published as a brochure in: Croatian, French, English, Italian, German; Cf. P. Žanić, *Medjugorje*, in English, Mostar, 1990, n. 7, p. 4-5.

[22] Appendix to the "Information" in: *Službeni Vjesnik* [Official Bulletin], 2/1982, 2-3, Cf. P. Žanić, Medjugorje, Croatian, 1990, n. 8, p.5.

[23] V. Ivanković, *Agenda 1983*, 15. IV.1982.; N. Bulat, *op. cit.*, p. 105-106.

[24] Radogost Grafenauer came from Medjugorje to Mostar on 2 February 1983, and gave Bishop Žanić various quotes taken from documents available in Medjugorje, referring to the "Herzegovinian case" and the two Mostar chaplains. See text in Croatian N. Bulat, *op. cit.*, p. 57-59.

[25] P. Žanić, *Medjugorje*, in Croatian, Mostar, 1990, n. 9, p. 5.

[26] P. Žanić, *Medjugorje*, in Italian, Mostar, 1990, no. 10, p. 6.

[27] P. Žanić, *Medjugorje*, Mostar, 1990, n. 12, p. 7.

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/attacks-medjugorje-apparition-against-diocesan-bishop-pavao-zanic

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## THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS OF THE "APPARITIONS" IN MEDJUGORJE

27. February 2017.

*Foto: Međugorje 30 June 1981*

Since "the Church of the living God" is "the pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), the goal of all past research on the "Medjugorje phenomena" has been to determine the truth: are the

apparitions authentic or not? *Constat vel non de supernaturalitate?* This has been the goal of the first diocesan commission in Mostar (1982 - 1984), the extended commission (1984 - 1986), the commission of the Bishops' Conference in Zagreb (1987 - 1990), the commission of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in the Vatican (2010 - 2014) and the evaluation of the same Congregation (2014 - 2016), as designated by Pope Benedict XVI. It is all now in the hands of the Holy Father Pope Francis.

The position of this Chancery throughout all this time has been clear and resolute: this is not an authentic apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Although there has been some talk at times that the apparitions during the first days might be considered true, then many "additional" unreligious elements came forth tied to these events, however, this Chancery has always promoted the truth regarding the first days. After copying and transcribing the audiocassettes of the talks of the pastoral staff in the parish rectory of Medjugorje with the boys and girls who claimed to see the Virgin Mary, we bring forward with conviction and responsibility, the reasons and findings regarding the inauthenticity of the alleged apparitions. And if the real Madonna, the Mother of Jesus, did not appear as she has not – then all of this regards self-proclaimed seers, ostensible messages, a so-called visible sign and alleged secrets.

During the years of my service as a bishop, firstly as a coadjutor bishop (1992/93), and then as the Ordinary, through my preaching, the publishing of books (*Prijestolje mudrosti* 1995, *Ogledalo pravde* 2001, *Isusova majka* 2015) and some fifty Marian and Mariological articles, I strived to explain the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the incarnation and the mission of the Son of God, and her Son as well, as her providential intercession for the Church to which she is the Mother by grace. At the same time, I pointed out, as did my predecessor of blessed memory, Bishop Pavao Žanić, the inauthenticity of the Medjugorje apparitions that have now reached 47 thousand. This Chancery has always sought to inform the Holy See, especially the recent Popes: Saint John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis on these events. We have, therefore, summarized here some points regarding the first days of the "apparitions" which convince us deeply of the inauthenticity of the "apparitions".

**An ambiguous apparition**. The woman who allegedly appeared in Medjugorje acts contrary to the real Madonna, Mother of God, as in the apparitions the Church has recognized as authentic. She regularly does not speak first, laughs in a strange way, disappears after some questions, and then comes back again, she's submissive to the "seers" and the pastor: comes down from the hill to the church (although reluctantly). She is not sure of how long she will be appearing, she allows some of the people present to step on her veil, which is dragging on the ground, and to touch her garments and her body. This is not the Madonna from the Gospels.

**A strange quiver**. One of the "seers", Ivan Dragićević, during a talk with the chaplain Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo OFM (1936 - 1991) said he noticed, during the first day of the apparition, a "quiver" of the hands of the vision.[1] What kind of "quiver"? This cannot arouse just a suspicion, but also a deep conviction that this is not an authentic apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, even though the apparition apparently presents itself this way already on the fourth day.[2]

**A false anniversary**. The alleged apparitions began on 24 June 1981. However, the directors of the "Medjugorje phenomena" decided that the anniversary should not be celebrated on the 24th but the 25th of June. The reason behind this choice is that on 25 June 1981, allegedly, all six "seers" were present for the "apparition" – the chosen six amongst the many who in those days bragged about having "apparitions". The real truth, which repudiates Vicka Ivanković's version, has been said by Ivan Dragićević himself: "I was there the first night, not the second".[3] Of the six of the usual "seers"

(except for Marija Pavlović), Jakov Čolo was present at the apparition for the first time on the second day.[4] Therefore, the date of the anniversary is unfounded, inaccurate and false.

**The (in)visible child**. The figure that allegedly appears as a woman had been portrayed differently. Some of the "seers" saw a covered child in the hands of the woman. These were Vicka and Ivanka Ivanković[5], Mirjana Dragićević[6], and Ivanka confirmed it again[7]. Ivan, however, firmly denies seeing the child, while on the contrary, he could see from a distance the "eyes" and "eyelashes" of a female figure.[8]

**A deceitful sign**. The "seers" have, since day two, asked the vision for a "sign" as proof of an authentic apparition. According to Ivanka, the "sign" of the apparition was a rotation of the watch on Mirjana's hand: "the watch turned around completely". "She left a sign on the watch!"[9] A most ridiculous and strange sign!

But, when frequently asked to give a visible sign, the apparition would smile and disappear on a regular basis.[10] Sometimes she returned instantly. At one moment, a layman named Marinko, who leads the "seers", intrudes and suggests to them: if the Madonna cannot give a sign she "should ask Jesus to help her".[11]

Ivanka is sure the apparition will leave a sign on the hill, maybe in the form of water.[12] We have been waiting for nearly four decades, and there has been no sign, no water – only fabrications!

**An unexplained silence**. During the first seven days, the apparition takes no initiatives and never starts to talk first.[13] It responds to the questions of the "seers" in general, in a dubious way, nodding its head[14], postponing, promising a healing miracle and leaving a message to the world: "The people should firmly believe as if they see me". And to the Franciscans: "They should firmly believe" [that she appeared].[15]

**Strange messages**. During the first days, according to the tape-recorded conversations, no purpose of the alleged apparitions can be seen: the apparition did not justify itself, did not give any special message for the "seers" or the Franciscans, except to believe that she "appeared", or for the faithful of the parish or the world. Yet the private "messages" are of this kind:

Ivanka's mother, who died two months before, sends a message: "Listen to grandma because she's old".

The apparition says to Mirjana that her late "grandpa is alright" and that she "has to go to the cemetery".

Ivanka heard from the apparition that the motive of the "apparitions" in Medjugorje is "because there is a lot of faithful".

Vicka heard the apparition came so "the people would reconcile".[16]

Ivan heard it say: "You are the greatest believers".[17]

Jakov simply says: "Listen, when I ask a question, inside me I think what she would say and then she says it the way I was thinking she would".[18] Nothing other than imaginations and fabrications!

**False prophecies on false apparitions**. When Ivanka asks how long it will stay and appear, the apparition answers: "As much as you want, as much as you like."[19]

Mirjana says she will ask the apparition how many days it will appear and then adds that some voice from within her says it will still appear "2-3 days". She repeats that once more.[20]

When the pastor, Fr. Zovko, asked when the “apparitions” will stop; Vicka answers: “I think it is the same as if we were to say that we would never come again, but that she leave us some sort of precise sign, it would surely stop”.[21] Does this mean: since the desired “sign” has not occurred in 37 years, the “apparitions” are not stopping!

Then a categorical statement of the apparition came, which “appeared” not in Medjugorje but in neighbouring Cerno, on Tuesday afternoon of 30 June 1981, that it would appear “three more days”: on 1, 2, 3 July 1981. Actually, in answering the pastor’s question on how long it will appear, five of the “seers”, except for Ivan, answered unanimously: “Three days”.

Then the apparition changes its mind and “appears” nonstop for 37 years: to three “seers” every day (Ivan, Marija and Vicka) and to the other three once a year (to Mirjana since 1982, to Ivanka since 1985 and to Jakov since 1998). Apart from that, to two of the seers of the group, the “apparition” occurs once a month since 2007 (with “messages” to the world): to Mirjana on the 2nd and to Marija on the 25th of each month.

**Different dresses**. From the interviews with the “seers” the apparition is dressed in different ways. She had a dress that was:

according to Ivan “blue”, on the first day[22],

according to Ivanka “brown”, on the second day[23],

according to other “seers” Jakov[24], Mirjana[25] and Ivanka “grey” on the sixth day[26].

**More nervousness than peace**. Some anxious nervousness could be observed when the three “seers” Ivanka, Mirjana and Vicka “fainted” and fell on the ground on the third day, 26 June. “They fainted but nothing happened to me” Marija courageously said of herself.[27] Vicka: “Father, I went up there and brought with me some blessed salt and holy water. And I said: if it’s not Our Lady it will leave. We will sprinkle some and see. Really, we will see. I came and began: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. If you are Our Lady, stay among us, if you are not, go!”[28] There is a constant request for a visible “sign” for people to believe them. The sign is mentioned in most conversations[29] and it can be noticed that the “seers” are nervous because there is no visible sign.

**Scandalous touches**. Something very unusual and serious: the apparition allows someone from the crowd to step on not only her veil that extends to the ground,[30] but also to touch her body. Vicka had been touching her on the second day already. “And when you touch her, Father, your fingers bounce back like this”.[31] Ivanka repeats the same and adds that, touching her body, she feels that “the air is something like silk, our fingers move back like this, when we touch her, they move away”.[32] They allowed a doctor to touch the apparition: “And, look, she touched her dress”.[33] Those stories of touching the alleged body of the Madonna, her dress and stepping on her veil create in us the feeling and the belief that it is something undignified, inauthentic and scandalous. We can only say: This is not the Catholic Madonna!

**Intentional manipulations**. The interlocutor of the “seers”, Father Jozo Zovko, parish priest, is nervous because

the apparition does not send specific messages to the world and the Franciscans,

because she does not move from the hill to the church where her statue is located,

moreover, he asks can Our Lady be “obliged” – literally! – to come down to appear in the church. Fr. Zovko: “But I want to know this, Mirjana: if Our Lady does not appear in the church, can you oblige her to show herself in church, maybe she can, what do you think?” Mirjana: “I do not know. We never thought of that”. Fr. Zovko repeats: “I think she can oblige: ‘Our Lady, I ask of you to appear in the church’, what do you think?” And then Mirjana gives in and thinks it would “still be better that way because the police would not look for us then…”[34] And like that, with manipulations, the “apparitions” move to the parish church on 1 July 1981. This “obliging” of the alleged Madonna to come down and appear in the church is playing with magic and not Christ’s Gospel.

**Conclusion**. The work of the commission on the “Medjugorje phenomena” in Mostar was followed by a statement of Bishop Pavao Žanić in Međugorje, 25 July 1987. The purpose of the Bishop’s statement was to clearly point out that there are no supernatural apparitions and revelations in Medjugorje. After the work of the commission in Zagreb, a declaration was issued by the Bishops’ Conference, in Zadar, on 1 April 1991. It said: on the basis of studies made so far, it cannot be affirmed that these matters concern supernatural apparitions or revelations.

Considering everything this Chancery studied and researched so far, including the study of the first seven days of the alleged apparitions, we can calmly claim: Our Lady did not appear in Medjugorje! That is the truth we hold on to, and we believe in the Lord’s word that “the truth will set us free” (John 8:32).

**+Ratko Perić, Bishop**

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[1] Cassette 2, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivan Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[2] Cassette 7, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Sunday morning, 28 June 1981

[3] Cassette 2, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivan Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[4] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[5] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[6] Cassette 6, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[7] Cassette 11, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Sunday evening, 28 June 1981

[8] Cassette 2, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivan Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[9] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[10] Cassette 10, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Sunday evening, 28 June 1981

[11] Cassette 13, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Tuesday afternoon, 30 June 1981

[12] Cassette 13, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Tuesday afternoon, 30 June 1981

[13] Cassette 13, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Tuesday afternoon, 30 June 1981

[14] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[15] Cassette 11, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Sunday evening, 28 June 1981

[16] Cassette 1, all the quotes from conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivana and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[17] Cassette 2, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivan Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[18] Cassette 16, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – five „seers“, Tuesday evening, 30 June 1981

[19] Cassette 13, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Tuesday morning, 30 June 1981

[20] Cassette 14, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Tuesday morning, 30 June 1981

[21] Cassette 15, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Vicka Ivanković, Tuesday morning, 3 June 1981

[22] Cassette 2, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivan Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[23] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[24] Cassette 5, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Jakov Čolo, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[25] Cassette 6, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Saturday afternoon, 27 June 1981

[26] Cassette 11, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Sunday evening, 28 June 1981

[27] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[28] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[29] Cassettes 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16.

[30] Cassette 7, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Sunday morning, 28 June 1981

[31] Cassette 1, conversation Fr. Zrinko Čuvalo – Ivanka and Vicka Ivanković and Marija Pavlović, Saturday morning, 27 June 1981

[32] Cassette 11, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Sunday evening, 28 June 1981

[33] Cassette 13, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Ivanka Ivanković, Tuesday morning, 30 June 1981

[34] Cassette 14, conversation Fr. Jozo Zovko – Mirjana Dragićević, Tuesday morning, 30 June 1981

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/first-seven-days-apparitions-medjugorje

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**Medjugorje: Confirmation candidates, keep the Church's teachings about our Lady!**

17. May 2014.

*Foto: nepoznato*

In the parish of Medjugorje the celebration of Holy Confirmation is held every year for the eighth grade graduates because usually there are about 80 of them. This year there are exactly 79. Confirmation is scheduled at 10:00 on Saturday May 17.

A procession formed in front of the church that joined the confirmandi on one side and the sponsors on the other side. Parents and the other faithful remained on the side or in front of the parish church of St. James the Greater. The choir intoned "Come, Holy Spirit!" Then followed the various concelebrating priests including the parish priest, Fra Marinko Šakota and the Dean of Čitluk, Fra Dario Dodig. They took their proper places in church. Also the well prepared candidates, who were catechized by Fra Ivan Landeka, Jr, and passed their examination two weeks before.

Two of the candidates extended greetings to Bishop Ratko [Perić] in the name of all and petitioned him to administer the holy sacrament of confirmation. An honorary bouquet of flowers was placed on the altar.

A word of welcome was given by parish priest Fra Marinko to the bishop, the priests and everyone in the church.

The bishop gave glory and praise to the Holy Trinity and veneration to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, who of us humans is nearest to the Divine Trinity. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Galatians, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (6:7), in the same way it can be said, Do not gamble with those private alleged "messages" and "apparitions" of Our Lady! Keep the public divine truths about Our Lady and the obligatory divine church teachings! Also the veneration of St. James, the patron and protector of this parish!

The bishop welcomed the pastor and his pastoral associates, all the concelebrants, the confirmandi and all attending the holy mass.

The candidates duly performed their assignments: the reading and prayers. On receiving the sacrament of holy confirmation they came reverently and in silence so only the words of the bishop and the candidates were heard. They also approached Holy Communion in the same recollected way.

**The Bishop's Homily**

Jesus: "Whoever sees me also sees the Father "

**Brothers and sisters, dear candidates!**

We read the Gospel passage (John 14:7-14) about God the Father who shows himself in a visible way in Jesus' words and deeds, as Christ himself explained in his response to Philip: Whoever sees the visible Son, has seen the invisible Father. That truth and saying of Jesus is at the same time surprising and amazing. Surprising, because at first glance it goes against the whole Greco-philosophical spirit of that time, which has always believed that God is unknowable, that he can in no way be seen; and it goes likewise against the Jewish-religious spirit, which taught that even Moses, the most chosen among all people, was able to see God in his revealed glory only "from the back" and that God could not be seen in "the face" (Ex. 33:23 ). Now, suddenly, - and it amazes us - Jesus says that it's all so simple, that it could not be more simple. Namely, all see the Son who is in the body with all the human characteristics and needs: food and drink, work and rest, conversation and friendship. If this is so - and it is because Jesus says it - then we can draw conclusions about several important truths of our Christian life:

First: **Family**. God came into an ordinary human home. God was a living guest in the ordinary human family of Mary and Joseph. Mary like a real earthly mother and Joseph like a real foster father, though not the physical father, made a home for the Son of the Most High God. So whoever sees that earthly Son, also sees his Father in heaven. He is the image, the likeness, the reflection of the Father. The Son was born just as we are born. He was a little just like we too were little ones. The people were expecting a Messiah who would come as a glorious King, with the horns of Jericho going before him that even shook down the walls of Babylon! But there was none of that! Backyard sparrows flit around and chirped before our new-born King and the entire treasure of the Bethlehem babe was in a tear and the bosom of a lamb in the stable. The birth of Jesus sanctified all human birth, his childhood blessed all childhood, and his entry into family honored every family. We must never forget that and be forever grateful for it.

- Dear candidates , after birth we are baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. We have our own name and an indelible baptismal character showing that we belong to God as his property, body and soul, past, present and future. We are by faith in the house of the Eternal Father and of His Son and of the Holy Spirit. Although we cannot see him today with our physical eyes, we still experience him in our faith through his commandments and gifts.

Second: **Work.** It was not beneath the dignity of the Incarnate Son of God to perform any kind of honest human labor. Even to washing the feet of the apostles. He was a laborer, a craftsman, a carpenter in Nazareth. He understands all of our employments: both when a person is satisfied with his salary and also when there is no payday for months, even when he is fired from work after thirty years of seniority. In the Old Testament labor is presented as a curse: "In the sweat of your brow you shall eat your bread" (Genesis 3:19). In the New Testament by the hands of Jesus the Worker human work is blessed and therefore associated both with external reward and internal joy.

- Dear candidates, this is also a message for all of us to honestly earn our daily bread, to live in the spirit of the gospel and in truth, in Christ's truth and love, but not to get earthly and materially rich, and above all not at the expense and the detriment of someone else!

Third: **Trials.** God knows what our trials in life are. Neither in Nazareth nor in his entering into public life was the life of Jesus a carefree idyll, but a struggle for daily bread, a battle involved in the trials of life, even with temptations by Satan, something is made totally clear in the Judean desert at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The Lord then personally defeated Satan, the father of lies and all of his demonic attacks. He put the Word of God first and then the need for bread; the absolute adoration of God and the complete shunning of idols and false deities; he emphasized the glory of God and not the pursuit of vain human popularity. To all the temptations of the evil one the

Lord answered with his definitive divine power, "Get thee hence, Satan! Be gone, Satan!" (Matt. 4:10).

- Dear candidates, today in a special way you will validate what your parents promised in your name at your baptism, that is, deliberately, knowingly and freely to say that you renounce Satan and his deceptive seductions, his false splendor and promises, and cling by faith to God the Creator, God the Savior and God the Comforter, who is the same God in three Divine Persons the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Fourth: **Love.** In the life of Jesus we see God who loves us humans with the gift of bread and forgiveness, of blessing and peace. In Jesus we experience God alive, vitally and providentially caring for us, feeling for us and being with us, loving us all and wanting to bring us all to the knowledge of truth and eternal salvation. Jesus set the example for us and taught us how to care about the Kingdom of God, and how the rest will be added; how to think more of others than of ourselves, because we humans will be judged and saved not by self-love, but by love of one another.

- Dear candidates, today in this sacrament of holy Confirmation you are knowingly receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom for life, habitual prudence, salutary knowledge, capacity to receive and impart true council, moral fortitude, fruitful piety and fear of the Lord in all things. The more you cooperate with these gifts, the more you will be not only good believers but also real witnesses of Jesus.

Fifth: **Suffering.** Ever since love came into human life, her companion suffering also entered. In Jesus we see God on the cross. We humans, however, more easily imagine a God who punishes the wicked. But the Son of God chose the cross and deigned to cling to the cross for us sinners. That is not found in any other religion in the world. His miraculous conception, his crucifixion on Calvary and his glorious resurrection exist only in our Christian faith as the fundamental truth and the way of our eternal salvation.

- Dear candidates, in today's Gospel Jesus made a big promise: "Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do." He said that (Jn 14:13,14 ). Jesus does not say that he will answer every one of our prayers, but only the one we direct to him in his name. So when you pray to God, ask yourself if you can make this prayer in the name of Jesus. Would Jesus approve what you are asking? Is it appropriate and honorable? Would it be pleasing or not to Jesus?

Asking Jesus to take revenge on someone, is something with which Jesus will not help, because it's a sin. And he does not consent to anyone's sins.

Praying to win against another team in soccer or tennis is also something that Jesus will not answer, because he knows better who is closer to him, who is keeping his commandments, and for whom such a transient success would be more spiritually beneficial. He is coaching both teams in their competition and their mutual respect.

But if you ask Jesus to realize the spiritual vocation you are feeling, to call those that he has chosen to the seminary or the monastery, you can expect him to answer your prayer because you prayer according his and the Father's will.

**Conclusion.** When we pray, let us always ask ourselves: if our petition is reasonable, honorable and worthy, and therefore possible? Or is it full of desire centered around myself, that is, a desire aimed at forgetting or diminishing someone else? The prayer most answered is that of the one who prays: O God, prepare me to accept your will for whatever happens in my life, because whatever comes from you is for my permanent good! When you pray like that, you are praying in the name of

Jesus! Whoever respects and loves Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the Heart of the merciful one, the just Judge, for whom nothing is impossible, will also experience the Father of love, of mercy and of salvation, and you are also loving the Holy Spirit who makes people rejoice with his divine fruits and gifts!

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/medjugorje-confirmation-candidates-keep-churchs-teachings-about-our-lady

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## MEĐUGORJE: SECRETS, MESSAGES, VOCATIONS, PRAYERS, CONFESSIONS, COMMISSIONS

01. September 2007.

*Updated in 2007 following the Conferences held in Split on 25 May 2002 and*

*at St. Patrick's Pontifical College at Maynooth, Ireland, on 17 February 2004*

Medjugorje is a parish in the diocese of Mostar-Duvno in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a population of about 4,000 persons, which has been entrusted to the pastoral care of the Franciscan fathers OFM. From 24 June 1981 onwards, some events have been occurring which many people, some Franciscans included, have attributed to so-called apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has seemingly presented herself as the "Queen of Peace".

**I. How many so-called visionaries and visions are there?**

**1. Vicka Ivanković**, born on 3 September 1964, in the parish of Medjugorje, has been receiving "apparitions" from 24 June 1981, every day. There have been pauses, but there have also been days with up to ten "visions". Vicka married Mario Mijatović in 2002 and now has two children and lives in the neighbouring parish of Gradina.

*How many "visions" has she had till now?* – According to a simple calculation of the days, it would be 9,560 including today's. These "apparitions" were together with the other "seers" during the first years, yet for many years now she has been having them alone, separately, in the evening, regardless of her location. As if they were programmed.

Vicka's little daughter Marija has now started to shout in Krehin Gradac as well as in the eternal city that she sees the Madonna![1] It seems to be becoming hereditary.

**2. Marija Pavlović**, born on 1 April 1965 in the parish of Medjugorje, has been a "seer" from the second day of the "apparitions", 25 June 1981, every day up till now. In 1993 she married Paolo Lunetti, an Italian. She has three children and is now living in Monza, near Milano.

*How many "visions" has she had till now?* Around 9,560 including today's, together with the other "privileged few" or alone. The "apparitions" are not tied so much to the locality of Medjugorje as to persons: wherever these persons travel in the world, the "apparitions" travel with them.

**3. Ivan Dragičević**, born in Mostar on 25 May 1965, has had daily "apparitions" from 24 June 1981 to this day. He married the former Miss Massachusetts, Loreen Murphy in 1994 and has four children. He lives with his family part of the time in Boston and the rest of the time in Medjugorje.

*How many "visions" has Ivan had till now?* About 9,560 with today's, together with the other "seers" or on his own.

**4. Mirjana Dragičević**, born in Sarajevo on 18 March 1965, has had "visions" from 24 June 1981. Her last regular encounter was on Christmas day 1982. From that day onward, she has received an "apparition" once a year – on her birthday – 18 March. Along with this, from 2 August 1987, on each 2nd day of the month, she hears the Madonna's voice and sometimes sees her. That would make it 20 years times 12 months, she either hears or sees the Madonna. Mirjana married Marko Soldo in 1989 and has two children. She now lives in Medjugorje.

*How many "visions" has Mirjana had till now?* All totalled: about 810.

**5. Ivanka Ivanković** was born in the parish of Medjugorje on 21 June 1966. The phenomenon appeared to her from 25 June 1981 to 7 May 1985. She now has a "vision" once a year, on 25 June, on the anniversary of the "apparitions". She married Rajko Elez and has three children. She is currently living in Medjugorje.

*How many "visions" has Ivanka had till now?* About 1,454 all together.

**6. Jakov Čolo** was born on 6 March 1971 in the parish of Medjugorje. From 25 June 1981 he received daily "apparitions" up until 12 September 1998. From this date onward, he has only had one a year – on Christmas day. In 1993, he married Anna-Lisa Barozzi from Italy. They have three children and now live in Medjugorje.

*How many "visions" has he had till now?* Together with the others and separately, around 6,294.

The Madonna has been presumably "appearing" on a regular basis and at one and the same time, even if one of the "seers" is in America, another "visionary" in Herzegovina, a third in Italy or a fourth in Maynooth. Adding all this up together makes for 37,238 "apparitions" up till now. Please don't ask me about the accuracy of these statistics, because a thousand "apparitions" more or less, have no role to play here! The hierarchical Church at various levels: diocesan, national and Holy See, hasn't accepted a single apparition as authentic. Let us now compare Medjugorje to two recognized Marian shrines:

At **Lourdes** in 1858, the Madonna appeared as the "Immaculate Conception", 18 times to Bernadette. The Church accepted these apparitions and four years afterwards declared them authentic, in 1862.

At **Fatima** the Madonna appeared in 1917 as "Our Lady of the Rosary" 6 times to the ten year old shepherd children Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. 13 years later, in 1930, the Church accepted these apparitions as authentic.

Three of the Medjugorje "seers", who say they have daily "apparitions", live most of the time outside of Medjugorje, while the remaining three that live in Medjugorje supposedly have only one "apparition" a year, with the exception of one of them who also has a monthly "apparition".

**II. HOW MANY SECRETS HAS THE ALLEGED MADONNA**

**GIVEN TO THE SO-CALLED SEERS?**

Those who have daily "visions" have received nine secrets, while those who have "apparitions" once a year, have ten secrets. It is not clear if nine or ten secrets have been given and are known to each of the "seers", or if each of the "seers" has his/her own number of secrets which differ from the rest.

If we compare this to the authentic apparitions, then one can see that at Lourdes there were no secrets, while at Fatima one secret was divided into three parts. Yet at Medjugorje till now there have been 9 or 10, or even 57 possible secrets, that have been divided by three "seers" who have received 10 and another three who have received 9. To this day not a single secret has been revealed.

In the first years there was apocalyptic talk about a "great sign" to happen, yet to this day this "great sign" has not occurred, and the expectation for a sign has diminished.

Recently Vicka told the media that she has completed her work on the biography of the Madonna and that everything is written down in three booklets. The Madonna's "biography" now awaits heavenly approval, an "imprimatur", so that Vicka can publish it in book form, which will then be "the best read book in the world".[2]

**III. HOW MANY PRESUMED MESSAGES HAVE THERE BEEN?**

All the "messages" of Medjugorje can be summed up into five basic ones, as is usually the case, yet these "five" are actually the following "fifteen": peace, conversion, prayer, fasting, vigilance, penance, adoration, witnessing, faith, call to holiness, Eucharist, Word of God, monthly confession, rosary…

Many authors greatly differ which five should be taken from these fifteen. Italian, French and Croat authors… all have their own interpretations. It's important to mention here that besides the daily "messages", there are also special monthly "messages" on the 25th of each month, which are given to Marija in Italy, which she then sends to the parish rectory of Medjugorje for verification and are then sent out into the world.

All these "messages" of the various interpreters of Medjugorje, are heard every Sunday in church. For us, the novelty of Medjugorje would be that the "Queen of Peace" on the 25th of each month sends out a special communication with the message: "Thank you children, for responding to my invitation". The Madonna thanks the "seers" for having the time, for wanting to, and deigning themselves to meet and talk with her. According to these words the "Madonna" is amazed and grateful to the "seers" who have responded to her invitation! This is somewhat like parents thanking their children for being born, or physicians thanking the infirm for seeking their health back![3]

**IV. HOW MANY VOCATIONS HAVE RESULTED**

**FROM THE "APPARITIONS"?**

Of the six "seers" of Medjugorje, none of them have received a religious vocation. Three of them mentioned that they were going to enter and two even went on to follow this inexplicable voice, yet with time everything vanished.

**Ivan Dragičević**, became a candidate for the Franciscan Province of Herzegovina. In 1981 he went to the minor seminary of Visoko where he continued with the "apparitions". Due to the fact that he failed to pass his repeat examination, it was decided that he could possibly do better if he went to the minor seminary of Dubrovnik. While in Dubrovnik, he managed to pass his repeat examination and enter into the second year, but he didn't show the same aptitude for school as he did for the "apparitions", and hence he returned home in January 1983.

Having said farewell to the seminary, Ivan continued not only with daily "apparitions" to this day, but at a certain point began imposing the harsh demands of this phenomenon of his upon the local bishop Pavao Žanić, that he accept the "messages" of Medjugorje. In 1994 he married an

American woman in Boston and thereby irrevocably transformed his religious vocation into a marriage.[4]

**Vicka Ivanković** at the outset demonstrated enthusiasm for the religious life. In September 1981 she confided her feelings to an Italian weekly: *I would like to enter a convent and become a nun.*

Even though she was an "enrolled nun", Vicka never entered a convent. Twenty years later, she found a young man from the neighbouring parish of Krehin Gradac and the two of them were married in Medjugorje. Over two thousand invited and curious guests attended their wedding party. During the wedding festivities, the "seer" went to her new house a few kilometres away from the noise of the wedding party with husband alongside her and had a "vision", according to the usual routine and regular programming. Afterwards they went back to the wedding party.

The "visionary" in the beginning announced *Urbi et Orbi* – "to Rome and the world" – that she is an "enrolled nun", but twenty years later she travelled to Rome to buy her wedding dress. The "visionary" explained this to a journalist: *the Madonna gave each of us our freedom to choose. Everyone can respond to the vocation they desire. Regardless of the fact that I'm now married, I shall continue to spread the messages of the Madonna, because Christian faith can be witnessed in marriage as well*.[5]

Regarding her religious vocation – she feels free; yet as regards "spreading the messages of the Madonna" – she feels obligated!

**Marija Pavlović**. In response to an Italian journalist's question *Why haven't any one of you decided to become a priest or nun?* Marija in 2001 gave the following explanation: *For many years I though that I would become a nun. I began visiting a convent and my desire to go there was very strong. But the Sister Superior once told me: "Marija, if you want to enter, you are very welcome; but if the bishop decides that you must not speak about Medjugorje, you will have to obey". At that moment I began thinking that my vocation might possibly be to witness to what I have seen and heard, and that I will be able to find the road to holiness outside the convent.*[6]

Marija therefore came to terms with the demands of religious life in which she couldn't obey the bishop if he were to decide that she shouldn't spread the "apparitions" which the Church even to this day has not declared authentic. Hence, she decided to find the road to holiness "outside the convent".

**God's work**. Yet things weren't exactly that way. Marija did eventually attempt entering a mixed spiritual community, where she remained for several months. She then left the community with a written explanation that provoked no little public astonishment. First of all, it was written that the Madonna, through Marija, had said on 8 March 1987 that that community was *"God's plan", "God's work"*. Later on, when she left the community with her boyfriend Paolo Lunetti, who helped her leave and write a letter, she refuted everything in her own handwriting on 11 July 1988: before God, the Madonna, and the Church of Jesus Christ, she categorically denied that there were ever any "messages" through her for this community and for this "work of God", in which she had lived for several months.[7]

At that time, in 1983, Fr. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, who was the spiritual director of the "seers" of Medjugorje, wrote to the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar: *The children have decided to enter the religious life, but they are waiting for the right moment which only they know.*[8] Today the whole world knows that these were only stories or fairytales for children. Not all the "privileged"

children of Medjugorje entered the religious life, while those that tried – quickly left. Only the mature won't allow themselves to be misled by irrational "messages" and children's stories! Could this be some kind of "sign", "secret" or "message" of Medjugorje?

Though I believe that it's improper, I will nevertheless compare these "vocations" with the two best-known modern Marian shrines: Lourdes and Fatima.

At Lourdes, the 14 year old Bernardette once said: *I must become a nun, but I don't know in which Order. The Holy Virgin told me this and I'm waiting.* She received her religious robes in July 1866. Though infirm, she held on to her death on 16 April 1879. Pope Pius XI canonized her on the Immaculate Conception in 1933.

Secondly, at Fatima, the seer Lucia became a nun in 1921 and a Discalced Carmelite in 1948. She died on 13 February 2005, while Francisco and Jacinta died as children and were both beatified by Pope John Paul II at Fatima in the year 2000.

There's something strange in all of this: three "seers" who tried to "enrol" themselves into religious life, later on dismissed themselves and were happily married, yet still have regular daily "apparitions". The other "seers", who didn't enter the religious life, receive an "apparition" only once a year. Can this be considered a reward for those who didn't enter the religious life?

**God's grace**. Keeping in mind the fact that many young boys from Herzegovina who entered the seminary and who later on became priests and the numerous young girls who became nuns (from the parish of Medjugorje alone there are over 30 living priests and sisters) who from what I know, never had any apparition, message or encounter with any supernatural phenomenon; it's indeed odd that not one of the "seers" in these 27 years, who have had between 810 and 9,560 "apparitions" received a religious vocation. And this same phenomenon, demands in a threatening way, that bishop Žanić recognize the "messages" of Medjugorje as authentic without questioning them. Every true religious vocation is a grace from God and a serious matter. The manner in which religious vocations were handled by the "visionaries" has been shown to be irresponsible. Could this possibly be a question of games without borders, regarding numbers, "visions", "messages", "secrets" and "signs"?

**V. WHAT DO PRAYERS AND CONFESSIONS PROVE?**

**1. Prayer as a context**. Prayer is an important factor in the "apparitions" of Medjugorje. It is in the context of praying the *Our Father* that in most cases the "apparitions" begin for the "seers". They even cease praying so that the "apparition" can be followed for a few minutes.

**2. A Message not to pray**. On 16 September 1981: "She also told them that they need not pray for themselves, because she has rewarded them in the best fashion. They should pray for others instead".[9]

*The Biblical Madonna will never say that people need not pray for themselves and that the "reward of apparitions" replaces personal prayer. This is false teaching. Even Jesus prayed firstly for himself, then for his apostles and then for the entire world "that all may be one"* (Jn 17).

**3. A Message to pray for bishop Žanić**. Concerning a prayer-group of Medjugorje "the Madonna has asked that they fast on bread and water twice a week. Three months later we are fasting on bread and water three times a week. The group is offering the majority of their prayers for him (bishop Žanić). We often offer our adoration, rosaries and visits to the place of the apparitions

where we pray long into the night for him. God shall look upon our prayers and fasting".[10] So wrote Fr. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, on 8 January 1984.

The phenomenon established a prayer-group around Fr. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, who in a letter in 1984 presented himself to the Pope as the one "who through Divine providence guides the seers of Medjugorje".[11] This group has been praying and fasting just so that the bishop would give in to the hallucinations. They also built a convent in Medjugorje with close to 100 beds and didn't even think of asking the bishop for permission to do this. Then the "mystifier" Fr. Vlašić was recently removed from his guiding role in the prayer-group, after having mixed the spiritual with spiritism in Medjugorje during a retreat!

**4. He could have but didn't want to?** In an interview in 1993, during the height of the war, the "seer" Jakov said: "The Madonna has asked me today, as every day during these last twelve years, that I pray for peace in the former Yugoslavia. The Virgin convinced me that I could stop the war with my prayers…".[12]

If this were not so naïve, a normal believer would ask himself: if the "seer" was capable of stopping the war in ex-Yugoslavia, then why didn't he go pray and bring it to an end? Yet during the war over 2 million people were displaced, over 100,000 were killed, thousands of religious sites and tens of thousands of homes were destroyed, and then the unjust Dayton accord was imposed upon us!

**5. Can prayer be considered proof?** There are people within the Church who say: If the people are praying to God, then let them go to Medjugorje, let them make their pilgrimages and pray. It's better for them to pray than not to pray, better to venerate "the Madonna of Medjugorje" than not to venerate any Madonna at all!

For 2000 years the Church has been teaching and suggesting to the faithful that they pray, fast, do penance, go to confession and convert. She doesn't prohibit anyone from praying to God where they please. Yet she does not allow "pilgrimages to a place of apparitions" that have not been accepted as authentic to be endorsed in churches from the altar. She does this so that the truth may be separated from falsehood and true doctrine distinguished from false doctrine.

As if it were really necessary for someone to travel thousands of kilometres from Corea or Ireland to Medjugorje just to pray a rosary or to make a confession. Yet Jesus teaches us to *"go into your room"* and *pray to your Father in heaven! (Mt 6:6).*

Do those who say that they have travelled to Medjugorje over thirty times, really prove that they have "converted" by saying this? This could be a true sign that they haven't converted yet.[13] A truly converted person would never boast about this, but would rather demonstrate it by his/her life!

If the faithful of the parish of St. Jame's in Medjugorje sincerely confess their sins and pray, regardless of all the nursery rhyme "apparitions", they thereby certainly receive the same Divine graces that other believers receive who pray and validly receive the sacraments in Catholic churches throughout the world. The local Church has always held this belief.[14]

**VI. HOW MANY CHURCH COMMISSIONS AND INTERVENTIONS**

**HAVE THERE BEEN?**

Towards the end of June 1981, the sensational news of the "Madonna's apparitions" to children in Medjugorje started to spread in the mass-media. In mid-August of the same year, after having spoken with the so-called seers in Medjugorje on 21 July, in his first *Statement*, the bishop of

Mostar-Duvno, Msgr. Pavao Žanić, emphasized that the most difficult question is whether or not this is a "subjective experience of the children or something supernatural?"[15] Even though he had informed the Pope and the Holy See on many occasions regarding the diverse opinions regarding Medjugorje, the bishop felt it was necessary to establish a diocesan commission in order to study the events.

**A – The Chancery of the Diocese of Mostar**

*The First Church Commission* (1982 – 1984)

Bishop Žanić established the first Commission on 11 January 1982, which investigated the events until 1984.[16] It was comprised of four priests, 3 diocesans and 1 religious franciscan.[17]

**The bishop's new discoveries**. The Commission hadn't even gathered yet when on 14 January 1982 something happened that marked the bishop's position once and for all. That day, three of the "seers" came to Mostar with the "Madonna's" message that the bishop, regarding the famous Herzegovinian Affair acted too hastily, because he sought the removal of two Franciscan associate pastors who were causing problems in Mostar. The bishop, who during his lifetime venerated the Madonna with numerous devotions and pilgrimages, upon hearing that the phenomenon in Medjugorje was accusing him of irreligious disorder in reference to the parishes; that it didn't recognize in him a faithful son of the Church and the Madonna, the Mother of the Church, to whom a year earlier in September 1980, the Cathedral church of Mostar was consecrated; that the phenomenon was defending disobedient religious friars who were obstructing the normal functioning of the Cathedral, began to look with suspicion upon the "messages" and the "apparitions" in Medjugorje. Despite all this, the Commission began its work.

**The "great sign"**. The Commission held three conversations with the "seers". In 1982, the third meeting brought some results. On the bishop's request, the Commission asked the "seers" to write down in duplicate copy, what kind of "great sign" shall appear and when it would happen. They were then to put their responses into two envelopes and then seal them. One of the envelopes was to be kept by them while the other at the Chancery office. When the "great sign" occurs, then the envelopes would be opened and the truth verified. However, five of the "seers" refused to answer the questions, because the Madonna did not permit them to. Yet the seminarian Ivan did respond in writing to the questions. He even said that the Madonna did not forbid him from responding to the questions. His response was more than inappropriate. A good number of lies and tricks are tied to this "great sign" particularly "endorsed" by Fr. Slavko Barbarić OFM, which to this day hasn't occurred.[18]

**The Response to the Holy See**. In November 1983, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asked the bishop if the Commission has come to some conclusions. Bishop Žanić wrote a study on Medjugorje and the Herzegovinian Affair, which he sent to Cardinal Josef Ratzinger. In the conclusion the bishop puts forth the question of the "apparitions":

Are they from God? – The "Madonna of Medjugorje" has brought more disorder and disarray here than there was earlier! Hence he doesn't see how he can accept this as coming from God.

Is it from the devil? – He has difficulty accepting this hypothesis as well, even though the thought has crossed his mind.

Is it all a hoax? – From the outset one can notice that the children have sometimes lied. At times it's clear that what they say is what they have heard from the Franciscans, especially regarding the "Herzegovinian Affair". The bishop goes on to say that he awaits the judgement of the

Commission and the cessation of the “apparitions”. The bishop waited 17 years and he was able to see the Madonna in heaven on 11 January 2000 (the day of his death) before seeing the “visions” of Medjugorje cease.

*The Second extended Commission* (1984 – 1986)

In 1984 bishop Žanić decided to extend the first Commission. He wrote to all the theological faculties in Yugoslavia and sought the permission of certain religious superiors to allow their experts to join the Commission.

There were 15 members in the Second Commission: 12 priests and 3 medical experts. They held seven meetings in all. The first was in Mostar in March 1984, and the seventh in the same city in May 1986, during which the Commission completed its work. The members of the Commission voted on the following conclusion: *Non constat de supernaturalitate* (11 voted ‘for’, 2 ‘against’, 1 accepted ‘in nucleo’, and 1 abstained). The Commission prepared a draft “Declaration” in which were listed the “unacceptable assertions” and “bizarre declarations”, attributed to the curious phenomenon. The Commission also stated that further investigations were not necessary nor the delaying of the official judgement of the Church. The bishop duly informed the Bishops’ Conference and the Holy See, and he then informed the public during his homily in Medjugorje in 1987.[19]

Two members of this Commission published their scientific reports on the sectors of the investigations that were allocated to them: Don Nikola Bulat[20] and Msgr. Mato Zovkić.[21]

The well-known negative position of the bishop which he summarized in 28 points in 1990, is significant since it speaks of the unauthentic nature of these supernatural apparitions.[22]

In August of 1993, bishop Žanić handed over the administration of the diocese to his successor who continued his work along the same treaded path.

**B – The Bishops’ Conference of Yugoslavia**

The Bishops of Yugoslavia intervened twice, in 1984 and 1985, and asked both priests and faithful to await the judgement of the Church regarding the events of Medjugorje, which shall be given after intense investigations. Hence, no pilgrimages are to be organized as if “the Church has already given a positive judgement”.[23]

*The Third Commission* (1987 – 1990)

In January 1987, upon the suggestion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, cardinal Kuharić and bishop Žanić made a joint communiqué in which they announced the formation of a third Commission and in which they asked the faithful not to organize pilgrimages which would ascribe to the events of Medjugorje any supernatural character.[24] The Commission was comprised of 11 priests (6 religious, 5 diocesan), 4 psychologists and one religious sister as secretary.

The Commission held 23 meetings in Zagreb at the Secretariat of the Bishops’ Conference. The first meeting was in April 1987 and the twenty-third in September 1990.

A characteristic of the third Commission was that its work was to be done based on the findings and results of the previous Commissions and *ex novo*. Everything was done under oath and no communiqués for the public were made. The results of their four-year long efforts were presented to the members of the Bishops’ Conference in Zagreb in 1990. Discussions at the Bishops’ Conference on the “apparitions” were held on four occasions: 25 April, 9 October and 27 November 1990, and

the *Declaration* on Medjugorje was accepted by a vote held in Zadar on 10 April 1991: 19 bishops voted for the Declaration while 1 abstained.

**The Declaration states**: "During the regular session of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, held in Zadar from April 9-11, 1991, the following was accepted:

**DECLARATION**

From the very beginning, the Bishops have been following the events of Medjugorje through the local Bishop, the Bishops' Commission and the Commission of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia for Medjugorje.

On the base of studies made so far, it cannot be affirmed that these matters concern supernatural apparitions or 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 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 may be promoted. The Bishops will also provide special liturgical and pastoral directives corresponding to this aim. At the same time, they will continue to study all the events of Medjugorje through their commissions.

Zadar, 10 April 1991

The Bishops of Yugoslavia".[25]

**The Aggression**. In the years that followed, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina found themselves victims of a terrible aggression. With the formation of new states, new Bishops' Conferences were established. Despite the *Declaration* of the Bishops' Conference: *Non constat de supernaturalitate*, that is, it cannot be affirmed that these matters concern supernatural apparitions or revelations in Medjugorje, the adherents of this phenomenon consistently claim that the "Madonna is appearing".

If our Bishops' Conference, despite numerous curious visitors to Medjugorje, notwithstanding massive publicity accompanied by charismatic inspirations, had the courage to declare on the base of serious, solid and expert investigations, that there is no proof in Medjugorje of any supernatural apparitions, this then is a sign that the Church even in the 20$^{th}$ century is still "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (*1 Tim* 3,15).[26]

**C – The Interventions of the Holy See**

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, intervened four times through two of its Secretaries, while Cardinal Ratzinger also made an important statement.

In 1985, Msgr. Bovone notified the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Italy not to organize official pilgrimages to Medjugorje.

In 1995, Msgr. Bertone wrote to the bishop of Langres, Msgr. Taverdet, and repeated the same to Msgr. Daloz of Besançon, who were interested in knowing the position of the Holy See on Medjugorje.

Finally, in 1998, the same Secretary wrote to Msgr. Gilbert Aubry, bishop of Reunion. All these letters emphasized that pilgrimages, whether private or public, are not allowed if they presuppose the authenticity of the apparitions, since this would be in contradiction to the declaration of the

Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the supporters of the events of Medjugorje hold fast to the word "pilgrimage" and neglect the *conditio sine qua non*: that they do not presuppose the authenticity of the apparitions.

**Ratzinger's "frei erfunden"**. In 1998, when a certain German gathered various statements which were supposedly made by the Pope and the Cardinal Prefect, and then forwarded them to the Vatican in the form of a memorandum, the Cardinal responded in writing on 22 July 1998: "The only thing I can say regarding statements on Medjugorje ascribed to the Holy Father and myself is that they are complete invention" – frei erfunden.[27]

**Ad limina visit 2006**. During my official visit to the Holy Father Benedict XVI, I not only expressed my doubts but also my disbelief in the "apparitions" of Medjugorje. The Holy Father, who prior to his election was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, replied with this thought: "We at the Congregation always asked ourselves how a believer could possibly accept as authentic, apparitions that occur every day for so many years?"[28]

**Conclusion**. Not only are these statements attributed to the Holy Father and Cardinal Ratzinger "complete invention", but the numerous messages of Medjugorje, ascribed to the Madonna are also complete invention. If our faith is considered *obsequium rationabile* – rational service to God, true and healthy spiritual worship, as it rightfully is (*Rm* 12:1), it cannot then be any person's private fantasy or illusion.[29] The Church is competent to say this. In her name, 30 chosen priests and physicians, working together in three Commissions for 10 years, in more than 30 meetings, dutifully and expertly investigated the events of Medjugorje and brought forth their judgement. And not one, but twenty bishops responsibly declared that there exists no proof that the events in Medjugorje concern supernatural apparitions. The believer who respects both principles: *ratio et fides*, therefore adheres to this criterion, convinced that the Church does not deceive.

Regarding Medjugorje, there exists a real danger that the Madonna and the Church could be privatized. People could start contriving a Madonna and a Church according to their own taste, perception and deception: by not submitting their reason as believers to the official Magisterium of the Church, but rather forcing the Church to follow and recognize their fantasy.

Naïve believers could easily then leave the living fountains of grace in their own parishes to travel down to Medjugorje or follow the "seers" around the world, who by the way, thanks to the "apparitions" have good homes and a comfortable existence – at least that's what the media says.

There are at least 6 or 7 religious or quasi-religious communities, in fieri or already formed, of diocesan or no right, that have established themselves in Medjugorje by their own will, without submitting themselves to the Diocesan Chancery. These communities are more a symbol of disobedience than a charismatic sign of obedience in this Church!

In the diocese of Mostar-Duvno there exists a problem which in recent years has practically become a schism. At least nine Franciscan priests, who have been expelled from the Franciscan OFM Order and suspended *a divinis,* have rebelled against the decision of the Holy See and have not allowed the transfer of some of the parishes from Franciscan to Diocesan administration. They forcefully occupy at least five parishes, all the while continuing with all priestly functions. They invalidly perform marriages, hear confessions without canonical faculties, some of them invalidly confirm youngsters, and in 2001 they invited an old-Catholic deacon who falsely presented himself as a bishop to "confirm" about eight hundred young people in three parishes. Two of these expelled Franciscans even went as far as asking the Swiss old-Catholic bishop, Hans Gerny, to ordain them as

bishops, yet they did not succeed. So many invalid sacraments, so much disobedience, violence, sacrilege, disorder and irregularities and not even a single “message” amongst the tens of thousands of “apparitions” has been sent to alleviate these scandals. A very strange thing indeed!

The Church, from the local to supreme level, from the beginning to this very day, has clearly and constantly repeated: *Non constat de supernaturalitate*! This practically means no pilgrimages are allowed that would presuppose any supernatural character to the apparitions, there exists no shrine of the Madonna and there are no authentic messages, revelations nor true visions!

This is the state of things today. How will things be tomorrow? We’ll leave them in God’s hands and under Our Lady’s protection!

Mostar, 1 September 2007

+ Ratko Perić

Bishop of Mostar-Duvno

[1] *Međugorje Tribune*, 2-2007, p. 30; In Krehin Gradac Marija said: “I see her too. Look at the Madonna!” In Rome she said: “There's the Madonna, above the Pope, behind the window! Tajo, the Madonna is up there with the Pope!”

[2] *Međugorje Tribune,* 2-2007, p. 26: “I think it will be the most read widely-read book in the world”; *Dnevni list* (Mostar), 26. 6. 2007, p. 56.

[3] *Ogledalo Pravde (O. P.),* Mostar, 2001, pp. 249-250.

[4] *O. P.,* p. 34.

[5] *Arena,* 31. 1. 2002, p. 20; *Crkva na kamenu*, 12/2002, p. 12.

[6] *O. P.,* p. 28.

[7] *O. P.,* pp. 30-31.

[8] *O. P.*, p. 55.

[9] *O. P.,* p. 111.

[10] *O. P.*, p. 126.

[11] *O. P.,* p. 56.

[12] *O. P.*, p. 37.

[13] *O. P.*, pp. 229-230.

[14] *O. P.*, pp. 268-269.

[15] *O. P.,* p. 192.

[16] *O. P.*, p. 43.

[17] *Crkva na Kamenu*, 2/1981, p. 1.

[18] *O. P.,* pp. 102-108. Fr. Slavko Barbarić OFM died on 24 November 2000. The day after his death, a message came from the “apparition”: *I rejoice with you and wish to tell you that your brother Slavko*

*has been born to heaven and he is interceding for you.* This means that they need not pray for him any more but that they can pray to him!

[19] *O. P.*, pp. 47-50.

[20] N. Bulat, *Istina će vas osloboditi. Studija o nekim međugorskim pitanjima (1986.). Nepouzdanost izvora i nedoličnost poruka* (The truth shall set you free. A study on some aspects of Medjugorje /1986/. The untrustworthiness of the sources and the impropriety of the messages), Mostar, 2006. *Predgovor (Preface),* pp. 7-14.

[21] M. Zovkić, *Problematični elementi u fenomenu Međugorja* (Problematic elements in the phenomenon of Medjugorje), u: Bogoslovska smotra, 1-2/1993., pp. 76-87. See also *Zovkićeva prosudba međugorskih zbivanja*, (Zovkić's judgment of the events of Medjugorje), in: „U Službi riječi i Božjega naroda", Sarajevo, 2007, pp. 721-745.

[22] *O. P.*, p. 196.

[23] *O. P.*, p. 193.

[24] *O. P.*, p. 196.

[25] *O. P.*, p. 197.

[26] *O. P.*, p. 151.

[27] *O. P.*, p. 283.

[28] *Crkva na kamenu*, 4/2007, p. 24.

[29] *O. P.,* p. 84.

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/medugorje-secrets-messages-vocations-prayers-confessions-commissions

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**CALUMNIES IN FILM** 06. June 2017.

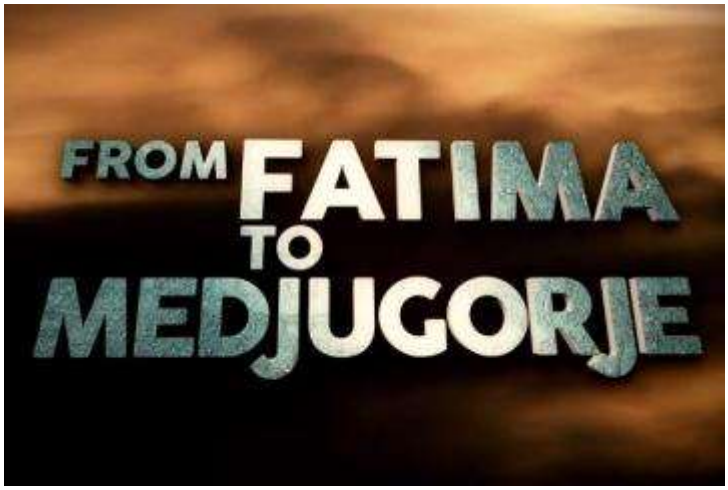


*Foto: nepoznato*

***The response of Bishop Perić: If General Lieutenant Maksimov is a real person, there should be no problem with organizing a public confrontation. Let all the incriminating documents and their***

***content be shown to the public! Let their authenticity be proved and let everyone, including the Bishop, morally and legally answer for their actions and accept moral and legal responsibility.***

**Introduction**

In the middle of May 2017, a collage film named "From Fatima to Medjugorje" appeared, made by Nazareth Production, script written by a certain Slom Bezael and directed by Ami Drozd. When the promotional announcement, comprised of four trailers, first appeared on the website Dnevno.hr, this Chancery issued a statement in which we refuted all the defamations regarding the shepherds of the Church of Mostar, bishops Pavao Žanić (1918–2000) and Ratko Perić: "Everything said in the film about the supposed 'cooperation' of our shepherds Pavao and Ratko with the anti-God and anti-Church secret security, is a blasphemous calumny and has no foundation, nor any involvement with the persons being slandered: it serves only as defamation not just of the individuals but of the Church herself!"

These days we have had the opportunity to see the entire film. We feel the need to intervene once more: not to engage in polemics with the authors—with what truth can malevolent and targeted calumny be refuted?—but for the sake of the truth, and for the sake of the souls of the faithful who may, while watching this defamatory film work, be shaken and agitated, which was obviously the intention of the maker and the publisher.

Thus, we consider this defamatory film work to be disgusting, blasphemous calumny: and what is blasphemous is the work of the father of lies. Therefore, even qualifying the film as calumny is an understatement. The core of which this film was made is nothing new, especially in regard to the alleged 'cooperation' of Bishop Žanić, since the 'cooperation' of Bishop Žanić with UDBA [translator's note: Yugoslavian state security administration, commonly known as the Communist secret police] was already addressed in another film work. Also, some of the frames in this latest film, such as the images of the consecration of Bishop Perić in Neum in 1992, are by the same author.

**The Film**

It would be useless to recount the entire film. We will limit ourselves to the issues involving bishops Žanić and Perić. That is, we will limit ourselves to writing only about the content in which the Mostar bishops are *explicitly* proclaimed as the 'collaborators' of UDBA and the Soviet KGB.

***'Cooperation' of Bishop Žanić with UDBA***

Not only was UDBA concerned with the 'Medjugorje phenomenon', but the KGB also, which had been "present in Medjugorje from the beginning". How were they to effectively suppress something that was destroying the Communist system and Yugoslavia? The position of the local bishop is important. UDBA agent Lasić is in possession of an incriminating document about Bishop Žanić. "It was about an intimate relationship with one of his colleagues when he was really young and of some other details which are not in accord with what he is supposed to represent". That "document" is handed by KGB agent General Lieutenant Maksimov on 4 October 1981 to Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli who is very surprised (as is Vatican diplomat Pietro Sambi and Maksimov himself). The Holy See finds a way to replace the bishop. "At the time of Fr Jozo Zovko's trials [1981] the Church began to search for Bishop Žanić's successor. The rector of the Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome, Ratko Perić, was invited to an interview. While the UDBA agent Lasić was trying to blackmail Bishop Žanić in Mostar, Ratko Perić declared in Rome that he would accept any duty the Church chose to entrust to him".

Under the “blackmail” of the sin committed “when he was very young”, Bishop Žanić changes his positive position on Medjugorje and agrees to cooperate with UDBA to disprove “the apparitions” by his apostolic authority: “Among other things, to the satisfaction of the secret service, he dispatched letters to many bishops asking them to stop the flow of pilgrims to Medjugorje. The Yugoslav secret service was happy as the Bishop put into action everything they requested”. So, in order not to be accused, Bishop Žanić cooperates and in return UDBA will not disgrace him. At the same time, the Bishop is reluctant to give up the Mostar diocese, “arguing the thing should not be rushed because he had been assured the incriminating document against him had been destroyed”.

***The ‘cooperation’ of rector Perić with the KGB***

In December 1982 rector Perić meets KGB agent General Alexander Maksimov, who is the principal and only depicted accuser of the bishops of Mostar: “From then until 1989 we met seven times,” says Maksimov. Although he was inclined to believe in the authenticity of the event in Medjugorje, the rector of St. Jerome promised to the Soviet KGB agent: “If there is some truth in those ‘apparitions’ he would destroy even the least part of it, and that he knew how to do it; [but] they [the KGB] had to act via the Yugoslav UDBA” to “impede the Franciscans in their activities in Herzegovina”, pointing out that “with the Franciscans, it should be done brutally and cleverly, in all ways possible”! His only concern was that the Yugoslav UDBA and Herzegovinian friars should know nothing of his cooperation: “He said he believed us, he knew what a successful service we are, that his Italian colleague who connected us said so too, and that we would arrange everything about coordination with our Yugoslav colleagues, but that no one should ever know he had anything to do with the persecution of the Franciscans. […] He pointed out that one has to be firm with them, that it cannot be done otherwise […]. The agents of the KGB from all parts of the world kept him informed about Medjugorje. They fed him information of what the Franciscans were doing and planning and what bishops around the world were saying, and asked them to influence those bishops to speak out against the phenomenon and discourage the faithful from going to Medjugorje”! “Perić continued to cultivate those contacts and meetings even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union”?!

***Film evidence: documents, images, videos***

Facsimiles of documents in Russian Cyrillic, which are supposed to corroborate the agent’s claims and be irrefutable evidence, appear seven times in the film. But those facsimiles appear and disappear so quickly that the viewer cannot make out the date of issue or the protocol number, let alone read the names of the participants of the meetings and the content. If you pay attention to the signature on the documents, it is exclusively and only the signature of General Maksimov.

The images and the videos of Bishop Žanić and the rector, later Bishop, Perić are from regular ecclesial and liturgical appearances. It is evident that the images were taken without the permission of the owners, which is, by the way, a felony. But there is no image or evidence of any meeting, conversation or signature by the slandered bishops. There is only one image assembled from pictures of Bishop Žanić and UDBA agent Lasić: Bishop Žanić in his office, Lasić somewhere on the road in his vehicle.

***The witness***

The main and only witness of this unseen calumny on the bishops of Mostar is a KGB agent, General Lieutenant A. Maksimov. With sunglasses on, looking in one direction, he speaks. He does not look at the camera. We get the impression that he is reading a written text. According to his own statement, he heard of Medjugorje right at the beginning of July 1981 when he was ordered to urgently travel to Belgrade. He has “excellent” contacts in the Vatican. He meets with the Secretary of State and

another official in the Vatican itself and in Roman restaurants, such as the Restaurant Columbus. On one occasion, “as a gesture of good will”, he leaves “a personal gift” for the Pope: a list of priests who collaborated with the secret service in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Ukraine!

We have tried to find out via internet search engines if General Maksimov is a real person. But we could not. We know secret services hide the identity of their agents. But this sort of highly ranked official, a “deputy of the KGB”, cannot easily be hidden. After all, if he is a real person, it should not be a problem to organize a public confrontation with Bishop Perić.

**Our response**

***The ‘cooperation’ of bishop Žanić***

The assumption, or more accurately the calumny, that Bishop Žanić was a ‘cooperator’ of the UDBA, as we have already said in the introduction, is nothing new in the media. After that calumny was brought out in the film ‘Gospa’ by Zagreb director Jakov Sedlar, this Chancery responded with a statement on 17 June 1995. When he, in an interview, threatened a lawsuit the Chancery issued a statement again on 1 December the same year, encouraging him in his intent. This Chancery made yet another statement on 21 December 2011 after a book “Misterij Međugorja. 30 godina fenomena” (The Mystery of Medjugorje. 30 years of the phenomenon) had been published by *Večernji list* in Zagreb, signed by journalists Ž. Ivković, R. Bubalo, Z. Despot and S. Hančić. Some twenty days later, on the anniversary of the death of Bishop Žanić, 11 January 2012, Bishop Ratko refuted these defamations in a homily in the cathedral. And the polemics ceased.

In November 2011, the Bishop made a written request to Mr Almir Džuva, the director of the Intelligence-Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, to enable him to view the public records of UDBA reports regarding Bishop Žanić and Medjugorje. The director approved his request and made available copies of more than 30 documents from 1981 until 1988. No document mentions any sort of Communist blackmail or threat, let alone ‘cooperation’. Moreover, in some of the reports which had been sent from the Security service in Mostar to higher ranking officials in Sarajevo, Bishop Žanić declined a meeting with the president of the Commission for religious questions, on 14 July 1981. And as a persistent opponent of the Communist system, Bishop Žanić was referred to as a number one ‘bearer of enemy activity’ in documents dated: 31 January 1983, 7 November 1983, 8 December 1983, 4 January 1984, 7 March 1984 and 24 April 1986. And that kind of ideologically principled opponent of Communism was in Mostar from 1971 until 1993.

However, in this latest film work, at least to our knowledge, a “sin” of Bishop Žanić from “an early age” is brought up. The screenwriter, director and “the witness” do not tell us what “very young” means. Even science does not consider a 20-year-old “very young” or adolescent. Bishop Žanić was born on 20 May 1918. And what a miracle: half a century later UDBA agent Lasić is in possession of an “incriminating document” which makes Bishop Žanić “break under pressure” and “accept” unquestioning cooperation, and makes the Holy See instantly search for his successor: ”At the time of Fr Jozo Zovko’s trials the Church began to search for Bishop Žanić’s successor.” Therefore in 1981. UDBA knows that!

And the truth is that the Holy See, despite supposedly “unquestionable evidence” of “unsuitableness” for the apostolic service, left Bishop Žanić as the head of the Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkan dioceses for 12 more years, until 24 July 1993, when he reached the age of 75, which is the canonical age for retirement. Moreover, from 3 November 1988 until 14 January 1990, the Holy See entrusted him with a third diocese, Dubrovnik. Is this how the Holy See relieves from duty bishops who have lived a life, even in youth, “not according to what they should represent”? Does

the Holy Father speak in such exalted manner of the sacerdotal and apostolic service as Saint John Paul II did, on the occasion of Bishop Žanić's 50th anniversary of priesthood and 20th anniversary of his episcopate in 1991, although, according to the makers of the film, Žanić was a disturbance to the Pope himself in his endeavour to destroy Communism, in which Medjugorje was of significant help? "We truly know with what care and zeal you have performed your sacred service during the long path of your life, first as a pastor, then as a diocesan delegate for consecrated women, and lastly as a rector of the minor seminary. Knowledgeable in theology, exceedingly loyal to the Holy See, you diligently sought to spread personal devotion to the Eucharist, with which worship –and you put all of your soul into it- the unity of hearts and minds are guarded. Becoming the coadjutor bishop in 1970, for ten years you invested all your strength for the spiritual good of the faithful of Christ in the Mostar-Duvno diocese, whom you have accompanied with tireless love and brave zeal. And when the diocese was entrusted to your caring administration, the faithful of your flock have already known you as their father and the teacher of divine truths.

We know that troubles and difficulties have made the burden of your pastoral service even more bitter, but you have never lacked fearless faith, moreover, your love towards everyone, exceptional devotion and your diligence in the choice and election of young men called to the service of the Lord have increased entirely. Thus, honourable brother, just bravely forward!"

Doesn't this say that the authors of this film are defaming the Church herself if the Holy See lauds Bishop Žanić with this kind of treatment, instead of "deserved punishment"? Therefore, we call upon the authors of the film to prove their claim: show it with documents! They are not convincing anyone reasonable with more facsimiles of the "latest documents" which appear in the film at "the speed of light". If they do not do that, they will be acknowledging themselves as slanderers.

***The 'cooperation' of the rector and bishop Perić***

If it were not a blasphemous calumny which aims to defame the person but the Church herself, the claim that the rector of St. Jerome and Mostar bishop Perić had been a collaborator of the KGB would be a real joke. If we add to that the "motivation": "He has said he will cooperate, but he made a condition: for us to intervene with Yugoslav secret services to limit the activities of the Herzegovina Franciscans to the maximum", then we have no words to describe this calumnious construction. Without an image, a document, the Bishop's signature, the date or place of the meeting, nothing except the agent's claim: "Yes, I met Ratko Perić in December 1982. From then until 1989 we met seven times", and thereby declare someone a collaborator of the most infamous intelligence service since the beginning of Communism, can only be done by someone who is filled with hatred towards the person, his ecclesial service and the institution in which the rector and bishop Perić responsibly acted. If we add to that the statement that even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and that means after the disintegration of the Communist KGB, while war raged in the Herzegovinian dioceses (a war in whose creation those infamous services had a great role), he maintained contact with them, is complete and utter nonsense. That a Catholic priest, whom "the witness" describes as very intelligent, remained probably the only priest of the Catholic Church who continued to collaborate with the KGB, even after the Berlin wall fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated and the KGB disbanded; that the rector of St. Jerome was informed of events in Medjugorje by "KGB agents", is ludicrous! We believe that people who think of Bishop Perić as a person not "open" to the Medjugorje phenomenon will also consider this, if not disgusting, then certainly highly unlikely. Unfortunately, not only can anything be printed on paper, but anything can be put on film when the eclipse of the mind and the malice of heart combine.

The only facsimile in the film where the Bishop's name appears, if it is authentic, says absolutely nothing. In the 31st minute of the film a facsimile of a document appears, which is, as we read: The translation of the protocol received from the Vatican 26 January 1984, Apostolic Palace (Апостольский дворец) Vatican, Holy See. The first two lines highlighted in orange "reveal" the participants of the meeting: Alberto Tricarico, Bishop Pavao Žanić and Ratko Perić. From the next four lines, we can read that the subject of the meeting was "Herzegovina case" and Medjugorje. And nothing more. We say it reveals nothing because it is publicly known, and we have published it a few times, that Bishop Žanić, during his 23 years of service as a bishop, went to Rome more than 80 times and met with the Pope 14 times with the hope that the Holy See would finally and justly resolve the "Herzegovina case" and the "Medjugorje phenomenon". What is therefore strange and "incriminating" in the fact that his priest serving in Rome accompanied him at those meetings sometimes?

Moreover, Bishop Žanić had meetings every time he came to Rome with Mons. Pierluigi Celata, who was until 1979 desk-officer for events in Yugoslavia, and from 1979 until 1988 that service was performed by Mons. Faustino Sainz Munoz. There was no reason the Bishop would speak with Mons. Alberto Tricarico, who was, from 1982 until 1985, the consultor in the apostolic nunciature of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden!

***'Cooperation' and the situation in the field***

If there were any truth in this shameless invention, how could we not ask ourselves: What effects didf the 'cooperation' of Perić and Žanić and the pressure from UDBA and the KGB have on the Herzegovinian Franciscans? What was happening to the Franciscans and Medjugorje at that time?

Everyone agrees that the cue for the start of the persecution of the Herzegovina Franciscans Fr Jozo Zovko, Fr Ferdo Vlašić and Fr Jozo Križić, was given by the then-ideologist of the Communist party Branko Mikulić with his speech on "The Day of the Fighter", 4 July 1981 at Tjentište. After the preparation of the media, on the feast of the Assumption, the arrest followed, then investigative jail in Mostar, the shameful verdict and imprisonment in Foča. What kind of stance the bishop of Mostar had at that time can be found in the film itself, which presents the Bishop's homily during the Confirmation on 25 July 1981. And at the municipal party conference in Čitluk in August 1981 "the behaviour on the part of the priesthood was vigorously condemned" and the persons cited by name then were Bishop Žanić, Fr Jozo Zovko and Fr Ferdo Vlašić. That Bishop Žanić was not afraid to be named is more that visibly seen in his 1 September 1982 letter of protest to the president of the State Presidency, Sergej Kreigher, where he rejected with indignation the absurd defamations about some of the Franciscans, specifically on Fr Jozo Zovko, as well as himself. He writes: "As the Catholic bishop and the responsible Ordinary of Mostar diocese I reject all the irresponsible defamations and attacks against myself and my priests, the distastefulness of which does not in any way contribute to a sober look on the events in Medjugorje parish. This kind of offensive act offends basic civil and human rights. I appeal to you to accept this protest and, as the most responsible person in the FSRY, take vigorous steps against this kind of irresponsible act." In the previous part we have already said how UDBA perceived Bishop Žanić.

And the rector of the Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome, the priest Ratko Perić? According to "the witness", their first meeting happened in December 1982 and further meetings continued until 1989. Therefore, rector Perić cannot be involved in the story of the persecution of the Franciscans in 1982, not even according to this film's construction. Fr Jozo Zovko was arrested, accused, sentenced, deported to the prison in Foča and out of prison already in February 1983; then he came to Herzegovina and took over the parish at Bukovica. At the same time as Fr Jozo Zovko's trial in

November 1981, the separate trial of Fr Ferdo Vlašić and Jozo Križić took place. Fr Ferdo was sentenced to 8 years of prison and Fr Jozo to 5.5 years with the prohibition of public appearance in the press (as an editor and writer) for three years after the completed sentence. After more interventions, the sentence was gradually reduced for Fr Ferdo: 12 March 1982 from 8 to 5.5 years, 15 November 1983 from 5.5 to 5 years and lastly at the beginning of January 1986 from 5 to 4.5 years, which he unfortunately had to do and which had serious consequences (as did previous long-term imprisonment and persecutions): he died age 75, on 15 October 1995. The sentence was reduced from 5.5 to 2.5 years to Fr Jozo Križić. He died age 42, on 9 January 1993. May they both rest in peace!

And Medjugorje? During the incriminating "cooperation" of then priest Ratko Perić with the Soviet intelligence agency the pressure in Medjugorje slowly declined. Instead of imposing prohibitions and obstacles, the Communist police slowly started to regulate the traffic. A logical question can be asked: How come the only demand of Bishop Perić is not being fulfilled and the KGBdid not influence UDBA colleagues in Yugoslavia to increase the persecution of the Franciscans and destroy Medjugorje? Where are the fruits of the "conspiracy pact" to "brutally and cleverly" deal with the Franciscans, "in all ways possible", even with a "stick" so that "if there is some truth in those 'apparitions' even the least part of it should be destroyed"?! And Mons. Perić continued the cooperation even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the KGB? *Sapienti sat* - [To the wise, a word is enough!]

***The Film, the 'cooperation' and Medjugorje***

The film titled "From Fatima to Medjugorje", deals with the beginnings of the apparitions in Lourdes and Fatima during the first ten minutes, then with the persecution of the seers by representatives both of the Church and civil authorities. Since "politics" was not the main reason behind them, the persecutions stopped, the issue developed and the Church recognized the apparitions. But "politics" is the main reason behind the persecutions in Medjugorje, and in its worst form. With counter intelligence methods the Bishop and his priest at service in Rome, his "possible" and future successor are blackmailed. Both pressured by the blackmailing, they change from being those who "approved of the possibility of the apparitions" to become great critics and work for the destruction of "Medjugorje" with their ecclesial authority in every way possible, and by every means necessary. Is that true?

Bishop Žanić radically changed his stance on Medjugorje after the revelations during his own conversations with the protagonists of the Medjugorje events, and from the findings of the Commissions, the first one and the extended one, which he himself founded, but not under the absurd pressure and invented blackmails of the secret services. As he was a Marian bishop, he believed in the possibility of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He personally led multiple pilgrimages to Marian sanctuaries, especially in Lourdes. And when he in his Catholic conscience and apostolic responsibility came to a conclusion that there are no supernatural revelations in Medjugorje, the Bishop publicly, not secretly and conspiratorially, pointed out his view with arguments in Mostar, as in Medjugorje, Zagreb and Rome. At least that is known! Everyone could agree or disagree with this stance, because it is not a Catholic dogma. But no one has the right to calumniate!

His stance was confirmed by the Croatian bishops and archbishops in their plenary session in Zadar, 10 April 1991, after receiving the report of the Commission they themselves founded. The Declaration clearly stated: "On the basis of studies made so far, it cannot be affirmed that these matters concern supernatural apparitions or revelations". True, the bishops said that further events

must be closely followed and that they would be at the disposal to the faithful that gather in Medjugorje, but official pilgrimages to Medjugorje could not be organized.

Mons. Perić, at the time the film describes, was assigned to pastoral service as the rector of the St. Jerome College in Rome. Therefore, because of distance, and at the time because of limited communication, he was far from everything happening in Medjugorje. Although he was (and "the witness" argues he is capable and educated) known in the Church in Croatia as a theological writer, he never was a part of a commission, not on the diocesan nor the bishops' conference level. But that he personally followed the events in Medjugorje and examined them from a theological perspective could be expected of him. No reasonable person can blame him for that. That his conclusions were identical to the conclusions of the commissions, of Bishop Žanić and all bishops of the Church in Croatia, cannot be held against him let alone calumniated, because of that. By his consecration as a bishop, becoming first the coadjutor (1992—1993) and then ordinary, he is called to watch over the truth and promote the truth by his own service and by his apostolic responsibility. In that sense, these 25 years of his episcopal service to the Church in Herzegovina we have seen, heard, and read his writings and activities. Therefore, let us ask a rhetorical question: during all these years, can a "blackmailed" person, without fear of being exposed (and fear can in no way be attributed to the Bishop) responsibly and publicly speak about that which by his Catholic conscience and apostolic responsibility he considers to be the truth, despite all the objectors, and run the risk of possibly being exposed?!

The Holy See, which has from the beginning carefully followed all the events in Medjugorje, founded an international Commission only in 2010, by the decision of Pope Benedict XVI and the signature of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. After the end of that Commission's work, the Congregation itself studiously approached the phenomenon, under its theological and moral aspects. We await the final verdict of the Church. Everyone who is of the truth will let the Church do its work in peace because she is the only one called to state not only a personal opinion and half-truth, but an official stance.

Therefore, we are convinced the film damages Medjugorje itself. For how can we accept that God "blesses" someone's calumny and malice to reveal the Truth and defend the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary?!

**Conclusion**

We said in our first statement already that we will not hesitate, if we find it necessary, to search for legal protection. True, the bishops, who are Jesus' apostles, are called to be the first to accept, like the Teacher, the contempt of the world: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own: but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you" (John 15:18-20). After being struck in the high priest's house, Jesus said:Therefore, once again, we call upon on the authors of this cinematic slander story and all those who have evidence of the collaboration of the pastors of the Church in Herzegovina with the infamous secret services of the Communist regimes: bring forth to the public all incriminating documents and their contents! Prove their authenticity and then let everyone, even the bishop, morally and legally answer for their actions and assume moral and legal responsibility! Whoever then is in possession of any document with the bishop's file, signature, photo, meeting, tape-recording, video-recording, with any secret intelligence service of this world - let them release this to the light of day!

Everyone who has, *sine ira et studio* [without anger and fondness], watched this film work will surely realize the emptiness with which it abounds (as long as those who made it do not prove the truthfulness of it: to objective viewers it is a slanderous pamphlet!) To speak in the Christian spirit: we pray they do not reap as they have sown! We pray that we all come to the realization of the Truth and live by the Truth. And woe to those who with even one blasphemous word or action should scandalize even one of the least ones!

Mostar, 26 May 2017

Fr Željko Majić

vicar general

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/calumnies-film

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**SEDLAR'S CALUMNIES** 08. June 2017.

The Zagreb weekly *7Dnevno* (7 Daily) in their issue of 2 June 2017, allocated pages 28 and 29 to director Jakov Sedlar for him to reply to our reaction titled *Calumnies in Film* of 26 May this year. Sedlar's statement, either as author or editor, is entitled: *What Medjugorje is for Bishop Perić: The Bishops - KGB, UDBA and Pastoral Statements*. The day after that, the portal Dnevno.hr published the same.

It appears as if the director wants to apologize to readers for having to wait a week for his answer: "I spent the last few days outside Croatia...". It seems that it would have been wiser for him if he had taken a few more days or a week to gather his thoughts better, freshen his memory, consult his own archive and study his reply, and then sat down and written with arguments what he considered necessary. This has greatly facilitated our work. What one could have truly expected after our reaction, was that the Russian General Maksimov would come forth and call for a public debate. But, then Jakov Sedlar came forth who suggested that Bishop Perić confront an "employee of the Yugoslav secret service - Lasić"?! Hence, we felt it useful to inform Sedlar that we read his Statement and that with it, he has not closed our mouths or computers. We have no need to add to or correct our previous response. Therefore, this reaction will only have answers and comments on some of Sedlar's statements and claims.

**1. The issue of the lawsuit**

***The director:*** "I must admit that I was shocked. Along with the despicable lie concerning my 'intention' in 1995 to sue the Chancery of Mostar [...]. I do not know what was written in a series of newspaper reviews and interviews in those months after the 'Gospa' [Sedlar's film on Our Lady] was released, for I did not follow them, nor did I authorize any interviews, but I do know that I never thought of suing anyone, not even the Chancery of Mostar. Not for the fact that there was no reason for suing in the opinion of some lawyers, whose opinions I still did not accept" (7 Daily).

**Answer:** This refers to an interview given by J. Sedlar to *Panorama*, a political-informative weekly, to the journalist Marko Marković, on 29 November 1995, p. 16-17, titled: *Bishop Perić of Mostar, is shamelessly lying and monstrously accuses my "Gospa"*. As we have already written in the last two reactions of this Chancery, on 1 December 1995, immediately after realizing the seriousness of the threat, in its response titled "Film Fiction", the Chancery called for the threat to be realized.

The truth is, and this should be said, that the director does not speak on the lawsuit in the first-person singular, but in the name of the "distributor". However, since in the part of the interview dedicated to the film "Gospa" the first-person plural dominates in the dialogue - and thereby we heard of the lawsuit only from him and also in the title of the interview it is clearly written: Bishop Perić "monstrously accuses **my** "Gospa" - our invitation and encouragement to go to court then went to his address. Whether we are right or not, let the director verify this with his producer Igor Prizmić, or read his statement in *Nacional* (The National) of 9 August 1996, pp. 3-4, where it is apparent that at the time - due to great financial losses – what was mentioned the most, were appeals and calls to go to court.

**2. The Writer of the text spoken in the film – The Screenwriter**

***The director*** mentioned in *Panorama* 1995, as well as in *7 Daily* in 2017, regarding the story of how the film "Gospa" emerged, that the academic Ivan Aralica, was the author of the script - the screenwriter. In *7 Daily*: "First of all, honorable author of the Statement, the screenwriter (writer of the text that is spoken in the film) was not myself, but Ivan Aralica the greatest Croatian author. Hence, the scene of the meeting of Bishop [Žanić] and the senior member of the Yugoslav secret service, was not written by me, I transferred it to film. You should already know this, since you want to be a movie analyst and critic. Meanwhile, Ivan Aralica is not just anybody and he did not accidentally write that scene. He wrote it because Bishop Žanić really did have a series of similar meetings, whether you like this or not."

**Answer:** In the interview given by the academic Ivan Aralica to Fr. Božo Goluža, the editor of the diocesan monthly *Crkva na kamenu* (Church on the Rock), 5/2002, pp.12-15, to the question: "If I'm not mistaken, you wrote the screenplay for 'Gospa' [...]", the screenwriter answered: "I'm not the only screenwriter of the film. Others came after me who made the final version. Besides this, even if I had written the final version of the script, between the script and the making of the film, there exists a possibility for changes to be made. However, all of this - the corrections to my script and the making of the film - does not relieve me of the authorship of the major part of the scenes. One of the painful things in my life is the objection that I described bishop Žanić as a collaborator of the communists. My opponents among film critics know that this bothers me, yet they insisted on this as much as they could." And now the director is insisting in 2017.

In completing his answer, the academic Aralica is more than clear: "If I had known I would not be able to avoid this, I would not have written the script, or I would have written a book before the script which would not have allowed this illusion. With a book, I would have known how to defend the reserved position of the episcopate towards the apparition. My fault, my most grievous fault, for getting involved in this!"

**3. The Police that slowly regulated traffic**

***The director*** repeats four times his astonishment and asks how in our reaction we could say that "the police slowly regulated traffic". But the real insinuation is that we said that "the police slowly regulated traffic" at "the time when Fr. Jozo Zovko OFM, Fr. Ferdo Vlašić OFM and Fr. Jozo Križić OFM, were being tried and convicted by the courts"!

**Answer**: We are convinced that no person of goodwill could have read in our sentence that "the police slowly regulated traffic" at the time when the Herzegovinian Franciscans were being persecuted. And not just them. There were also other priests and lay faithful - especially young people. But since we are to Sedlar "shameless liars", we refer to the testimony of the associate pastor of Medjugorje at the time, Fr. Tomislav Vlašić OFM, with whom the director himself "was oftentimes

in the company of during those years". He will probably trust him. Specifically, in the publication: *A Medjugorje la Madonna è viva. Colloqui con padre Tomislav Vlašić* (In Medjugorje the Madonna is alive. Talks with Fr. Tomislav Vlašić*),* Mestre, 2008, p. 41, Vlašić says: "After about the first anniversary [i.e., in 1982 - hence, about half a year before the "collaboration" of rector Perić and the notorious KGB began according to the film construction], their position [i.e., of the Communists] began to change because they realized that the gathering of people in Medjugorje had no political connotations. A little later, more precisely in the winter of 1983, a new political activity of the authorities of the time "began", that sought to promote and introduce "religious tourism" and the rapid construction of houses that would serve to that end. After that, the regime completely changed its tactics: it started to exploit the Medjugorje apparitions and the gathering of people for their own interests and material gain."

**4. Bishop Žanić changes his position**

***The director***: "Let's say this, how can one explain the fact (which is not mentioned in your Statement) that Bishop Žanić in his sermon in Medjugorje on 25 July 1981, publicly said before a large gathering of believers: "The children are not lying, everything is true!" This was the first time I heard about this in the movie. I do not know where the authors got it from and it really seems to be the true voice of Bishop Žanić, or am I mistaken?!"

**Answer**: The director is not mistaken. But again, his assertion is wrong. That is, in our reaction it is clearly written: "What kind of stance the bishop of Mostar had at that time can be found in the film itself, which presents the Bishop's homily during the Confirmation on 25 July 1981."

Why Sedlar did not notice this, only he knows. Is the answer found in our interpretation, which in no way contributes to the director's suggestion, that this is the result of "collaboration"?

**5. The two bishops in no circumstances are the complete Church**

***The director*** *of the film "From Fatima to Medjugorje"*. "I do not know the authors of the film. I do not know their goals (except for I suppose, that they want, as all authors do, that as many people as possible watch the film) but I did not get the impression that in this film they wanted to defame 'not only the persons, but also the Church'. 'Two bishops in no circumstances make the entire Church'."

**Answer**: Even though it was not our intention to claim that due to the defamation hurled against the two bishops, that the whole Church had been defamed, we can still say it along the way. St. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred at the beginning of the 2nd century) in his Letter to the Smyrnaeans wrote: *Ubi episcopus, ibi Ecclesia* - Where there is the bishop, there is also the Church. Hence, without the bishop there is no concept of the concrete Church. However, under no circumstance did we intend to extend the doctrine of papal infallibility to the local bishops. Accordingly, what we said in interpreting the "collaboration" of the bishops: "Doesn't this say that the authors of this film are defaming the Church herself if the Holy See lauds Bishop Žanić with this kind of treatment, instead of 'deserved punishment'"?

**6. Sedlar and the bishops of Mostar**

Why Sedlar, who has "lived, grown up, associated with and still associates with numerous magnificent Croatian priests (both Franciscan and Diocesan) who in many respects have been for him unattainable examples" - for more than twenty years now, has been drawing his bow and shooting his poison arrows at the bishops of Mostar, is not clear to us. If the bishops of Mostar are not an example for him, then of course, he has every right to his own opinion. But, no one has the right to

slander anyone, neither by divine nor human law, including Sedlar! Whether now we are telling the truth or slandering Jakov Sedlar, let the readers decide.

***First calumny***. "What shocked me was that bishop Perić and his office in Mostar wrote a letter against the movie and sent it to 1200 addresses in the United States. Mainly to the offices of bishops and the Catholic Church of America. [...]. 54 million Catholics live in America. We were damaged in a terrible way" (*Panorama,* 29 November 1995).

**The truth**. The Chancery Office expressed its opinion on the film solely from an ecclesiastical - religious point of view. It did so on 17 June 1995, i.e., two months after the film began screening in Croatian and other cinemas. "1200 letters" to various addresses, as claimed by the director, were not sent. The Chancellor, on behalf of the Chancery Office, sent the text through the mass-media and the following newspapers published it: *Slobodna Dalmacija,* 19.VI; *IKA,* 21.VI; *Glas Koncila,* 26.VI; *Crkva na kamenu*, n.7/1995, and indirectly and partially by *Obzor*, 26.VI., all in 1995.

To be biblical: If Sedlar finds a hundred times less, that is, 12 addresses in America that the Chancery Office of Mostar directly sent a letter to, let him not spare us!

***Second calumny***. "There is an indication that some of the tapes, were released precisely from Mostar, while the movie was playing at cinemas, which is a criminal offense punishable by a prison sentence of 7 to 15 years" (*Panorama*).

**The truth**. The producer of the film "Gospa", Igor Prizmić, in the *Nacional*, 9 August 1996, p. 3-4., (14 months after the Chancery Office's reaction to the film "Gospa"), did not mention even a single word about the "1200 letters" or the possibility that "someone from Mostar allowed the circulation of the cassettes", instead: "A total of 4.700.000 USD were invested into the "Gospa" film, of which 1.700.000 was invested by Ivan Perković and myself. We find ourselves at this moment, in an extremely unfavorable situation, because none of the investors, including many of my friends and longtime business partners from America and Canada, have not returned a cent.

The American company 'Penland' mislead us, to which upon the insistence of Jakov Sedlar, we transferred all the rights. Instead of the proclaimed and promised 400 copies, only 30 copies of the movie were made."

We ask Sedlar – is it possible that the other 370 copies were unlawfully obtained by bishop Perić – "or someone from his office in Mostar" - and that these 370 copies, while the other 30 copies were being screened at theaters, were sent through "their channels" to various American and world theatres and in this way greatly damaged the director, distributor, author and producer?!

***Third calumny.*** "While the film "Gospa" is in question, bishop Perić in his letter to the Vatican a year ago shamelessly lied, by claiming that the Franciscans and I earned 5,400,000 USD with this film!"

**The truth**. Bishop Perić never sent a "letter to the Vatican" in which he wrote this! Let Sedlar show the letter!

***Fourth calumny.*** "Given what I know, it seems to me that this part of the movie is quite credible".

**The truth**. We are truly interested to know what part is "quite credible". We believe that all the readers of these accusations and answers are interested as well. We have no objection that all the archives that keep records of the UDBA be made available to the director and that all documents be given to him, which were not given to the bishop despite his courteous request. And let him prove in court the credibility of operation "Crnica" that has over "1000 pages" and all other documents and files and the "co-operation" of bishop Žanić! Let him also call the "operative of the Yugoslav secret

services Lasić", since he already knows where he lives. There is no need to confront bishop Perić, because in this film work he is not presented as associating with the Yugoslavia UDBA or even with Lasić. Does this not seem to be a *condition sine qua non* for the Director and his credibility?

***Fifth calumny***. "I'm not the only one who will say that since his arrival as the head of the diocese of Mostar-Duvno, bishop Ratko Perić, he has not brought peace. Unfortunately, he brought distress, conflicts and divided the Croatian people..."

**The truth**. How bishop Ratko Perić speaks and for which Peace strives for, from his episcopal consecration to this day, is well-known to the Croatian people and to the Catholic faithful. Up until today - and for the director of the "top documentary film" - it was not heard that any objective and impartial Croat and Catholic has said that bishop Perić "brought distress, conflicts and divided the Croatian people" and that he was a "collaborator" of the most notorious secret services of the 20th century, even when the USSR and KGB were falling apart! The bishop's clarity and courage in seeking the rights of the Croatian people are all well known to everyone. If the bishop's national identity is unclear for J. Sedlar, let him go and ask all the ordinary God-fearing people, from high-positioned politicians and diplomacy, as well as local people and those abroad.

***The sixth calumny***. "... he has in all possible ways tried and keeps trying to speak of everything worst about Medjugorje. [...] What is lasting is, I would say, his consistent hatred, even towards the thought that Our Lady appeared in Medjugorje. [...]. A huge number of pilgrims has been (and is) humiliated and punished, who cannot fathom the negative passion which with both bishops spoke about Medjugorje."

**The truth**. What is lasting, both with bishop Pavao and with bishop Ratko, is the quest for the truth about Medjugorje: the defense of God's truth, Our Lady's dignity and the image of the Church.

Jesus once said, for our human perception some very strange words, we could say even hard words: "Do not think I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34). Will we, after these evangelical words of Jesus, proclaim him a man of distress, conflict, division and struggles, even among his own people? Clearly, Jesus brings peace. He is our Peace. He is the giver of peace, but not the peace that the world gives. Christ's Peace is established in Truth and Justice. One arrives at such peace, as bishop Perić has taken from St. Paul into his bishop's motto, "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). He did not choose that path, but has been called to that path, and chosen for that path. This is the *baptism he is to be baptized with*, if the bishop wishes to be an apostle of Christ.

***Seventh calumny.*** "He gave his position ahead of any other commission".

**The truth**. The statements of bishop Perić on Medjugorje began after his episcopal ordination in Neum, on 14 September 1992. Let Sedlar prove and publish a single one of the bishop's public statements before the conclusions of the Diocesan Commissions and the Commission of the then Bishops' Conference and the Statement of the same BC of 1991!

Let's repeat here again: We are convinced that the film and that this type of "defense" even Sedlar himself are damaging to Medjugorje. For how can we accept that God "blesses" someone's calumny to reveal the Truth and defend the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary?!

***Eighth calumny***. "In those years, I was often in the company of Fr. Tomislav Vlašić, Fr. Slavko Barbarić, Fr. Leonard Oreč and some other Franciscans. Bishop Žanić and later Perić humiliated and punished them. They were very sad, they were unhappy that they could not do their mission in peace."

**The truth**. While not considering Sedlar an attorney of individuals or the entire Franciscan community in Herzegovina, we thought we might not comment this statement.

Canon Law of the Church clearly defines rights and duties. If anyone has been wrongfully deprived of his rights, he need not tremble before the Bishop or walk with a "stiffened face", but he can turn to a higher authority. The decisions of the competent authorities of the Church are equally binding upon bishops and priests, religious men and women, as well as all believers. We are the Catholic Church and not "Christians of a different way".

***Ninth calumny***. "Personally, this movie did not provide me anything new except the point that he contacted the high-ranking KGB operative Maximov and vice versa. [...]. Indeed, I'm really unconcerned whether bishop Perić really did drink tea or vodka with Maximov at the Columbus hotel in Rome."

**The truth**. We are convinced that Sedlar, as a "movie making" man, knows well all the "tools" that were used to make this defamatory work "From Fatima to Medjugorje". That which ordinary viewers might consider as somewhat true, and the way this is achieved, is very well known to him. He must have noted that the facsimile which mentions the meeting at the Columbus restaurant in Rome, dated 3 September 1981, and that the "agent" did not drink "tea and vodka in Columbus" with rector Perić, but, according to his "claims", with a certain Pietro Sambi. From the same "agent" **he could have** heard (in the 28th minute of the film) that he allegedly "met" with Perić for the first time in December 1982. Hence, about 15 months after Sedlar's "tea or vodka". If he did not notice this, then how could the movie be rated as "top quality"?!

Why did he need all of this?

**We conclude**, not only this review of Sedlar's statement, but also any public-media debate on this topic. And obviously, not because we have run out of arguments, but because we do not think it makes any sense to bother readers and further. Following all the calumnies of the film and Sedlar, the Chancery Office of Mostar, would have a moral obligation, as well as human and civil right, that for all these calumnies, to bring the defamers before the earthly courts and thereby defend the personal integrity and the episcopal dignity of the two leaders of this local Church. It is humanly and ecclesiastically hard to look at and allow everybody, whenever it comes to their minds, to irrationally slander the shepherds of these local churches and bring distress to the hearts of the faithful.

The Psalmist, aware of the time in which he lived, exclaimed: "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My my hope is in thee" (Ps 39:7). Therefore, knowing that the only Righteous and True judgment is that of the Lord, before whom we will all appear, faster than we think, we entrust to Him the life and work of our shepherds. And to our readers we convey: The Truth always sees the light of day no matter what darkness or grave it may be hidden in!

Mostar, 7 June 2017

Fr. Željko Majić

Vicar General

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/sedlars-calumnies

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**The True Madonna and the "Post Office Manager"**

10. February 2017.

*Foto: Arhivski snimak*

The talk Pope Francis held on 25 November last year, with the Major Superiors of Religious Congregations, published in the Vatican daily newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* on 9 - 10 February 2017, contains a section dedicated to the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which deserves special attention. Speaking on the Marian topics chosen for the future World Youth Days, all geared towards the next World Youth Day to be held in 2019 in Panama, the Holy Father underlined the importance of devotion to the **"true Madonna! Not to the Madonna – Post Office Manager, who sends out different daily letters saying: 'My children, do this, and then the next day: Do something else'. No, this is not the Madonna. The true Madonna is the one who gives birth to Jesus in our hearts, and this is the Mother. This fashion of the Madonna as a superstar, as a protagonist who places herself in the center, is not Catholic"**, is the way the Pope distinguishes the true from the false Madonna.

Some websites tie this to the "Medjugorje phenomenon". Let us recall some facts. In the first 5 years (1981-1985) there were about 120 female and male "seers and visionaries" in various parishes throughout Herzegovina with many messages, just like the postal services! Of these "seers", over time six became "regular": 2 boys and 4 girls, now all adults and family people. Of these six, three of them have been having "apparitions" every day for the last 37 years, and one of these three, a female "seer", has been having an "apparition" every 25th of the month since February 1987, and sending messages to the world. The other three have "apparitions" once a year, and one of them has an "apparition" every second day of the month and has been sending messages to the world from August 1987 onwards. The three that have "apparitions" once a year, live in the area of Medjugorje, while the other three that have "apparitions" every day live outside of Medjugorje. All of this however, is understood as being part of "Medjugorje".

From what has been outlined above, the accumulative results show that from June 1981 to February 2017, there have been about 47,000 "Medjugorje apparitions" in various places of the world. These daily, monthly, annual "apparitions", "revelations", "messages" are becoming hard even for a computer to keep up with.

The position of the bishops of Mostar, of the late diocesan Bishop Pavao Žanić (1981 to 1993, died in 2000) and of the present, regarding the "Medjugorje phenomenon" has been constant and consistent: There is no evidence, no indication, that these are authentic supernatural apparitions, visions or revelations. On 29 January 1985, Bishop Žanić wrote to Father Rene Laurentin, the

chronicler of the Medjugorje events, that he felt sorry that the “Gospa of Medjugorje has become a ‘counter clerk’ to whom many questions are posed, including the most ridiculous...”.

The evidence against the authenticity of the “apparitions” is much more convincing than the enormous amount of commercial, economic, financial, building, publishing, property, touristic and parapsychological propaganda that is supporting, promoting and popularizing this phenomenon which is primarily based upon falsehoods and fabrications. The Mostar Diocesan Chancery earlier published a booklet by Bishop Pavao Žanić titled: “The Truth about Medjugorje” in 1990, in several languages, and the book: “Mirror of Justice” in 2001, that present factual arguments against the authenticity of the “Medjugorje phenomenon”.

During his morning Mass of 14 November 2013, Pope Francis said that we cannot imagine the Madonna “as if she were a Post Office manager sending out messages every day” (Official Diocesan Gazzette, 3/2013, p. 309). At the time this was understood as referring to Medjugorje and not refuted by anyone.

Here once again, the Holy Father repeats almost literally his earlier thoughts, that have been published in the daily*L'Osservatore Romano*, pointing out the right devotion to the “true Madonna! Not to the Madonna – Post Office Manager, who sends out different daily letters saying: ‘My children, do this, and then the next day: Do something else’. No, this is not the Madonna. The true Madonna is the one who gives birth to Jesus in our hearts, and this is the Mother. This fashion of the Madonna as a superstar, as a protagonist who places herself in the center, is not Catholic”

All Catholic devotion and faith is directed to God, for it comes from Him, tends towards and leads to Him. Our Lady as the Seat of Wisdom, through God's providence is our Helper.

**Virgin most prudent, pray for us!**

Mostar, 9 February 2017

+ Ratko Perić

Bishop of Mostar-Duvno

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/true-madonna-and-post-office-manager-0

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## The Twelfth Anniversary of the Death of Bishop Žanić

12. January 2012.

*Foto: nepoznato*

On the occasion of the twelfth anniversary of the death of Msgr. Pavao Žanić, the late bishop of the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno and Apostolic Administrator of Trebinje-Mrkan, his successor, Bishop Ratko Perić celebrated the evening Holy Eucharist in the Cathedral of Mary Mother of the Church in Mostar, for the repose of the soul of the deceased bishop. Some of late Bishop Pavao's assistants concelebrated in the Mass: the pastor of the Cathedral parish Msgr. Luka Pavlović, the Chancellor of the Diocesan Chancery Fr. Ante Luburić, and the choir master of the Cathedral Fr. Dragan Filipović. Bishop Ratko spoke to the faithful on the heroic stance of Bishop Žanić towards communist ideology, thereby disproving the recent attacks against his noble Episcopal character, while also being aware that he must tell the truth about the bishop so that lies and slander not be spread against him!

***

Twelve years have gone by since on this very day of 11 January, that the Bishop of Mostar-Duvno, Msgr. Pavao Žanić passed away at the Firule Hospital in Split. He was buried two days later in the cemetery of Kaštel Novi, in his family's tomb, as personally requested in his Last Will and Testament.

**"Collaborator?"** In the second half of 2011, more than usual, some have accused Bishop Žanić of allegedly being a "collaborator" of the UDBA [Yugoslav secret police]: moreover that he succumbed to the pressures and threats of the UDBA and thereby changed his position on the so-called "apparitions" of Medjugorje. It is as if he initially accepted the "apparitions" as being true and then, under communist threats, denied their authenticity. It is also significant that this now comes from those who are defending in this fashion the "mystery" of Medjugorje. Unfortunately, one of those who has joined this sad march is the "visionary" Marija Pavlović – Lunetti in the book "Viaggio a Medjugorje" [Journey to Medjugorje], published by Paolo Brosio last year in Italy. On page 133 of this book one can read this question and answer:

*Brosio*: "The police sought from him [Fr. Jozo Zovko] that he deny the apparitions and Marian faith, but Fr. Jozo always refused".

*Marija*: "The communist police called the then Bishop Msgr. Pavao Žanić to the Commissariat of Mostar and ordered him: 'You must deny everything and nothing will happen to you' and so Žanić denied everything".[1]

**Show the evidence!** It is strange how the "visionary" boldly testifies this claim as if she personally went with Bishop Žanić to the "Commissariat"! And she says this without providing any information on the date, without any quotes and evidence? Does the lady "visionary" have any evidence,

especially in writing, even from the communist UDBA, in order to prove this "claim"? It is unclear why Marija, who repeatedly met with Bishop Žanić from 1981 to 1987 in Mostar and Medjugorje, did not personally tell this to the bishop himself, especially when the “visionaries” passed on “Our Lady's message” that the bishop must recognize Medjugorje! The “visionary” provides no evidence for her arbitrary statement, yet definitely remembers that she, Marija Pavlović, along with Vicka Ivanković and Jakov Čolo, on 14 January 1982 came to the Diocesan Chancery, in order to bring “Our Lady's message” to Bishop Žanić that he “exaggerated” in resolving the centuries-old “Case of Herzegovina”. This is when the bishop came to the realization that the “visionaries” were in the service of false religious “advisors” in the painful “case” regarding the transfer of some of the parishes. Would the “visionary” Marija be prepared to swear on the Gospel that she is telling the truth about her bishop at that time?

**A look at the documentation.** Last November, the local Bishop Ratko Perić asked the honourable Mr. Almir Džuvo, Director of the Intelligence and Security Agency of B-H in Sarajevo, to allow him access to the UDBA reports in connection with Bishop Pavao Žanić and Medjugorje. The Director kindly complied and made available in photocopy more than 30 documents from the years 1981 to 1988. Not one of the documents makes any mention anywhere, of any kind of communist coercion or threats under which Bishop Žanić would have made a “denial” so that nothing would “happen” to him, as the “visionary” “informed” the public in the Italian language. Moreover, in several reports that were sent during these years from the security services of Mostar to their higher offices in Sarajevo, it is clear that Bishop Žanić did not want to meet with the President of the Commission for Religious Questions on 14 July 1981. And being a persistent opponent of the communist system, it is explicitly mentioned that he is a “bearer of enemy activity” under number 1 in the documents dated: 31 January 1983; 7 November 1983; 8 December 1983; 4 January 1984; 7 March 1984; 24 April 1986. He was an ideologically principled opponent of communism during all his time in Mostar, from 1971 to 1993.

**The truth shall set you free.** In the miscellany on Bishop Pavao Žanić titled “The Truth shall set you Free”, Mostar 1992, there is an extensive discussion between the editor of this work Fr. Tomo Vukšić, who today is the Military Ordinary of B-H, and Bishop Pavao. The editor put forth the question: “*Many of your homilies contained criticisms of the communist authorities and ideology. I personally oftentimes listened to these criticisms. On what grounds did you base your convictions and courage?*” Fr. Tomo was associate pastor of the Cathedral parish of Mostar between 1980 and 1982.

**The Bishop replied:** “Being a principled opponent of communism – the universal lie – I often took aim against this lie. The communists had in their hands all means of intimidation against people, especially on the youth. The faithful were being ‘disciplined’ everywhere. Communism bathed the entire world in blood and despite this it still had its adherents. And yet, it disintegrated because it controlled everything for too long through lies, force and empty words. I did not end up in jail but I was the last person in Split to receive a passport.

I was constantly being eavesdropped. This was once revealed to me by a professor of English language. When we met, he told me that he would like to speak with me alone. He asked that I accompany him in his car and we then went to the outskirts of the city. He then confided to me that he was given the duty of listening in on my conversations. I asked him how he goes about this. He told me: ‘I don’t know how. I have my hours of eavesdropping duty on three lines, that of the English Consul, [Archbishop] Franić and [Priest] Žanić. I follow and write things down and I receive a reward since my salary as a professor is low’. Then he went on to tell me what I spoke about two days earlier

in my conversation with Dr. R. This convinced me that he was not lying. Afterwards, I invited an expert to check my telephone, but he didn't find anything suspicious.

While preparing a mission for the faithful in 1962-63, I was in charge of information and the preparation of necessary materials. Once, when I was not at home, they [the UDBA] entered my apartment and took away all the materials I had that were written by hand or typewriter, mostly sermons. After a while the communists started calling me at times in order to ask what I meant when I said this or that. They gave back some of the materials, but most of it remained confiscated. They said that they would need it. They also took away several tape-recorder reels which I only got back with great difficulty" (pp. 15-16).

This is what Msgr. Pavao Žanić was like, as a priest in Split and bishop in Mostar. And the testimony and documents provided effectively show that the claims made by the "visionary" are untrue. And only the truth makes us free!

[1] P. Brosio, *Viaggio a Medjugorje*, Milano, 2011, p.133:

*Brosio: "La polizia gli chiedeva [a padre Jozo Zovko] di rinnegare le apparizioni e la fede mariana, ma padre Jozo ha sempre rifiutato".*

*Marija*: "La polizia comunista convocò il Vescovo dell'epoca, monsignor Pavao Žanić al commissariato di Mostar e gli intimarono: 'Voi dovete negare tutto e non vi succederà nulla' e così Žanić negò tutto".

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/twelfth-anniversary-death-bishop-zanic

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**Mostar: THE MEETING OF THE APOSTOLIC VISITOR AND APOSTOLIC NUNCIO WITH THE DIOCESAN BISHOP OF MOSTAR** 21. July 2018.

On Saturday, 21 July 2018, the Diocesan Bishop Msgr. Ratko Perić received Archbishop *ad personam* Henryk Hoser, S.A.C., Bishop-emeritus of Warszawa-Praga, the recently appointed Apostolic Visitor with special character for the pastoral reality of the parish of Medjugorje in the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno. The mandate of the Apostolic Visitor to Medjugorje is of "a temporary duration *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*" (at the disposition of the Holy See).

Archbishop Luigi Pezzuto, Apostolic Nuncio to Bosnia-Herzegovina, accompanied the Apostolic Visitor from Sarajevo.

In an hour long conversation with the Apostolic Visitor and the Apostolic Nuncio, the Diocesan Bishop expressed his respect for the decision of the Holy Father Pope Francis on appointing Archbishop Hoser as Apostolic Visitor to the parish of Medjugorje, manifested his willingness towards necessary co-operation and wished him God's abundant help in his Apostolic Visit, which begins tomorrow, Sunday, 22 July.

While noting the fact that the final ruling on the authenticity of the "Medjugorje phenomenon" is reserved to the Supreme Authority of the Church, the Bishop unambiguously reiterated the permanent position of the Chancery Office of Mostar, that is, of the former Bishop Ordinary Pavao Žanić (1980-1993) and the current Ordinary, that on the basis of the numerous investigations, it does not hold as authentic, any "apparition", any "message", any "secret", any "parchment", of which the local Bishops regularly informed the Holy See and the Catholic public. Amongst these unbelievable apparitions of the "Medjugorje phenomenon" are also included those of the first seven or ten days of the year 1981, of which the Diocesan Bishop gave an argumented explanation, which has already been published in **Croatian**, **English** and **Italian.**

The Apostolic Visitor said that he has been appointed exclusively for the pastoral reality in Medjugorje and that his task is to strengthen the unity of the Church.

The Bishop added that this fraternal encounter, for which he also sincerely thanks the Apostolic Nuncio and the Apostolic Visitor, serves towards strengthening true peace and unity in this local Church.

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/mostar-meeting-apostolic-visitor-and-apostolic-nuncio-diocesan-bishop-mostar

## Međugorje: The Letter of the Congregation to the Bishops' Conference of USA

08. November 2013.

The Press Office of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, known as Catholic News Service, reported that on 21 October 2013, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, upon the request of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop Gerhard Ludwig Müller, informed Msgr. Ronny Jenkins, the Secretary General of the USCCB, as follows:

Apostolic Nunciature

United States of America

3339 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20008-3610

21 October 2013

PN 3980

Reverend Monsignor Jenkins,

I write at the request of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who asks, that the Bishops of the United States be advised, once again, of the following (cf. my letter of 27 February 2013, of the same protocol number). Thus, his Excellency wishes to inform the Bishops that one of the so-called visionaries of Medjugorje, Mr. Ivan Dragičević, 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.Dragičević will be receiving "apparitions" during these scheduled appearances.

As you are well 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, 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 order, therefore, to avoid scandal and confusion, Archbishop Müller asks that the Bishops be informed of this matter as soon as possible.

I take this opportunity to present to you my sentiments of profound esteem, and remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ

[signature]

+ Carlo Maria Viganò

Apostolic Nuncio

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NUNZIATURA APOSTOLICA – STATI UNITI D'AMERICA

3339 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20008-3610

21 ottobre 2013

PN 3980

Reverendo Monsignor Jenkins,

scrivo dietro richiesta di Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefetto della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, che domanda che i Vescovi degli USA siano nuovamente avvisati di quanto segue (si veda la mia lettera del 27 febbraio 2013, recante lo stesso numero di protocollo). Pertanto, Sua Eccellenza vuole informare i Vescovi che uno dei cosiddetti veggenti di Medjugorje, il signor Ivan Dragićević, sarà presente ad alcuni incontri programmati in diverse parrocchie della nazione, durante i quali presenterà il fenomeno di Medjugorje. Si preannuncia, per di più, che il signor Dragićević avrà delle "apparizioni" durante queste comparse programmate.

Come lei sicuramente sa, la Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede sta conducendo indagini su certi aspetti dottrinali e disciplinari del fenomeno di Medjugorje. Per questa ragione, la Congregazione ha affermato che, per ciò che riguarda la credibilità di queste "apparizioni", tutti debbono accettare la dichiarazione, del 10 aprile 1991, dei Vescovi dell'ex Repubblica Jugoslava, che recita così: "Sulla base delle ricerche sin qui eseguite, non è possibile affermare che si tratti di apparizioni o rivelazioni soprannaturali". Per quanto detto, pertanto, ai chierici e ai fedeli non è consentito prender parte a incontri, conferenze o pubbliche celebrazioni nel corso delle quali si dia per scontata la credibilità di queste "apparizioni".

Quindi, per evitare scandalo e confusione, l'Arcivescovo Müller domanda che i Vescovi siano, quanto prima, informati di questa questione.

L'occasione mi è gradita per esprimerle tutta la mia stima

sinceramente suo in Cristo Carlo Maria Viganò, m. p. Nunzio Apostolico

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/medugorje-letter-congregation-bishops-conference-usa

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## Let us receive the Lord worthily and venerate the Madonna properly!

10. July 2017.

*Foto: Arhivski snimak*

**The Bishop's Homily**

**Medjugorje, 15 June 2017**

**Let us receive the Lord worthily and venerate the Madonna properly!**

**Dear Candidates for Confirmation!**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!**

In the greetings that are addressed to me from candidates for Confirmation in many parishes, I oftentimes hear how you are aware that you are living in times of great challenges, where the winds of this world are pushing or pulling you in the wrong direction: towards disobedience to God's commandments, lies and theft, drugs and various forms of selfishness. These are your everyday battles, but also those of your brothers and sisters, parents, godparents, and all of us. In these battles young friends, you are our hope and we are trusting in you. Hence, today is a great celebration not only for you and for your families, but for the Church in Herzegovina and the entire Catholic Church, for it is the Solemnity of the Body and the Blood of Christ. Today you candidates will receive Holy Confirmation in this parish whereby the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit will be conferred upon you.

**Currents and crosscurrents**. Soon after beginning his Petrine ministry, the Holy Father Pope Francis at a Mass of Confirmation in St. Peter's Square, spoke to candidates the following: The Lord "gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention, my young friends: to go against the current; this is good for the heart, but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage! There are no difficulties, trials or misunderstandings to fear, provided we remain united to God as branches to the vine, provided we do not lose our friendship with him, provided we make ever more room for him in our lives." (Homily, 28 April 2013).

**While growing up** to the age of the use of reason, which is our sixth or seventh year, and even before that, our parents are constantly teaching us the basic principles in life: what is *good* that should be done and what is evil which we must avoid. What is the *truth* that should always be spoken and what are lies that must be avoided. What things are *wonderful* to strive for and what things are bad that must be eradicated from you and from your home. We also learn to distinguish one's own property from another's.

**In preparation for First Holy Communion** in the 3rd or 4th grade of elementary school, our parish priest teaches us that it is a sin to disobey God's commandments. This means the first three that refer directly to God as well as the other seven that refer to our human actions, all of which originate from God and by which we will be judged. Sin is the transgression of God's law not only by outward actions but also by inner thoughts and desires. Our catechist teaches us already in preparing for our first confession, that we tell our sins, that is, the falsehoods, the bad and the ugly things we have done, and to repent for them, which means, to express our sorrow for having offended God and our neighbor, and decide to do wrong no longer. Only then, after being repentant and having received absolution, and accepting our penance, can we then approach Holy Communion to properly and respectfully receive the Body of Christ.

Therefore, we must not receive the Holy Eucharist with a grave sin on our conscience that we have not confessed and repented for, and for which reparations have not been made. St. Paul clearly teaches us: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." (1 Cor 11: 26-29). Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians points out three words concerning the sinful reception of the Body of Christ: being *unworthy*, *guilty*, and having no *discernment* of conscience.

Dear candidates and all you faithful! We cannot avoid keeping in mind all ten of God's commandments that are under attack by various subtle proposals and plans, in educational reform and in various social deformities that go against human nature. You young people are increasingly living in such communities where families are in crisis, where marriages are at times weakened due to infidelity, which results in a source of great suffering for children and for young people. There are real challenges. Let us pause briefly to examine some of the disorders that are visible to the eyes of the world, present in the daily media, and yet are scandalous to the little ones in the faith. By doing so, let us thereby show how capable we are to go against the current, with the help of the gifts of the Spirit, from Wisdom to Fear of God.

One of God's commandments, the sixth in the series, prescribes: *You shall not commit adultery*: neither in thought, nor in speech or actions. Let us take the case of when a person in a family is unfaithful to their spouse, their lifelong companion, with whom he/she contracted a valid marriage in the Church, and lives or sins with another married or unmarried person, thereby cheating on their legitimate spouse. Regardless of the reasons for their separation and the motives for their new relationship, such persons are not authorized by anyone, least of all by God's commandment, since they are objectively living in a state of grave sin, to receive the Holy Eucharist. We will however, as the Holy Father Pope Francis encourages us, take care of, follow, assist and engage in the Church community such persons, but always respecting Jesus' law on the indissolubility of a valid marriage and the worthy reception of his Most Holy Body. The ninth commandment of God additionally mentions not to sin by desiring: *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife*. Impurity and adultery can also begin through desires, because God judges the thoughts of our hearts, not only our speech or external actions.

- Candidates! Be as pure as Christ! Be as pure as Christ, if you want to receive the Eucharist Christ properly!

God's seventh command is: *You shall not steal*. To steal means to take without authorization some good that belongs to someone else against the rational will of the owner. This involves taking someone's object, money, goods or land. It is worth mentioning here that one must not even wish to steal, which falls under God's tenth commandment: *You shall not covet your neighbor's goods*. If you steal as a young man, the reputation of having stolen something will always follow you, as will the reputation of being honest follow the young girl who never stole anything.

- Keep your hands to yourself!

The eighth commandment of God states: *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*. Lying is knowingly telling a falsehood, twisting the objective truth, falsifying actual facts or one's own thoughts. Lying is behaving against one's beliefs. Lying is saying a falsehood with the intention of deceiving. Lying means to say something against wisdom, to say something against a healthy mind. Jesus calls the devil the "father of lies" (John 8:44). Pope Francis mentions: "A liar knows how to cheat, knows how to deceive people" (Homily in Santa Marta, 10 February 2017). This means that a man is closest to the devil when he is lying and spreading falsehoods.

Calumny is spreading a falsehood against one's neighbor in order to ruin his/her reputation. For instance, a young girl from the village who is good and morally upright, is slandered by the worst of lies just so that her boyfriend will not take her for his wife. Just imagine what kind of a crime this is!

Malicious gossiping is telling some truth about the other but emphasizing the other's negativities and sins. Are you called to participate in this? And where are you spreading this? But, if for instance, you know that a person is in a civil marriage with someone and wants to marry in the church with

another person, you are obliged to notify the parish office of this if the person concerned has been mentioned in the wedding banns. This then is not gossip, but a responsible reply to a wedding notice.

- How to behave towards slander? - Whatever you do, it is better to suffer from slander than to slander others.

**What was the relationship of men to Jesus?** When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, his people did not receive him or his mother Mary or Joseph, even in private accommodations. The Jewish King Herod wanted to kill him as soon as he heard that he was born. People hurled all sorts of slander against him, some even blasphemous, such as: that he did not obey God's law; that he performed miracles with the help of Beelzebub - the chief of the devils; that he seduced the people; that he was a fraud and glutton. Some estimated that he was not worth more than 30 pieces of silver; that he did not rise from the dead but that the apostles had stolen him, and similar wickedness.

**What is the relationship of the world with Jesus' disciples?** The disciples of Christ have also been defamed by incredible slander up to the present: through invented deceptions and attacks in the media. The world once said that Christians and their leaders were cannibals, because they meet on Sundays and eat the Eucharist Christ. That they are also fighting against society, not respecting imperial laws, that they are domestic traitors, collaborators of world powers, etc. The liars often defended their lies with even worse slander, because lies cannot be defended by the truth. As soon as you tell the truth, all lies fall apart! And as the slander and lies became worse, the ministers of the Church became all the more genuine and closer to the suffering Christ!

**Oh Eucharistic Jesus!** Awaken the consciences of all those who behave lightheartedly towards God's commandments and receive You, in your Body, while not respecting the sixth and the ninth commandments!

Help all those who do not observe the seventh or tenth commandments, who want to steal, whether in little or great things, to smarten up!

Eliminate every lie and falsehood, all deception and deceit from our society and our lives!

In particular, we pray to you, oh eternal Truth, to eradicate all the stain of human deceptions, lies and curses from the transgressors of your most holy Mother, here in Medjugorje and throughout the world. We honor Our Lady above all the saints, angels, powers and supremacies. We honor her according to the Sacred Tradition and the living Magisterium of the Church. With our minds we acknowledge, with our hearts we believe and with our tongues we confess her unique religious truths: her Immaculate Conception untouched by the stain of original sin; her permanent and never defiled Virginity; that she is the Mother of God and her Assumption in body and spirit to the glory of heaven. Preserve her honor from all human fabrications. Do not allow this most holy name amongst humankind to be associated with stories that do not correspond to the truth, to incredible appearances, invented secrets, false signs, innumerable pre-programmed apparitions with messages, and to an improper touching of the body of the alleged phenomenon. Let us instead, practice true Marian devotion that leads us to You, in truth and love, and awaken in us the desire to properly obey all of God's commandments and be your witnesses in the world. May we honor Our Lady with true Christian devotion, as the one who has brought your Blessed Body into this world and who has preserved in her Immaculate Heart the testimony that we proclaim today in your Gospel.

And may you, Lord, have mercy on us all!

Oh most Blessed Virgin Mary, we humble pray for your motherly forgiveness for all the abuses of your holy name for selfish material and promotional media purposes! Most wise Virgin, Mirror of Justice, Throne of Wisdom, pray for all of us, especially for these candidates who today receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that they may cooperate with them their entire lives. So be it!

Source : https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/let-us-receive-lord-worthily-and-venerate-madonna-properly

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## THE LETTER OF CARD. SCHÖNBORN TO BISHOP PERIĆ

16. January 2010.

The diocesan Bishop of Mostar-Duvno, Msgr. Ratko Perić, sent a personal letter on 2 January, to His Eminence Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, after his stay in Medjugorje for the New Year 2010, and on the same day a communique was released expressing his surprise regarding the Cardinal's statements and his visit to Medjugorje. Upon his return to Vienna, the Cardinal has had several interviews in various media. In an interview with *Orientierung*, on 10 January, he expressed his opinion „that he did not violate the right of a Bishop and of a Cardinal!“

In mid January, the Cardinal participated, as a member, at the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and on the morning of 15 January he was received in a private audience by Pope Benedict XVI. On the afternoon of the same day, the Cardinal sent a letter in German from Rome to the Bishop of Mostar by fax. The part of the letter which refers to the Cardinal's visit to Medjugorje follows:

*Rome, 15 January 2010*

*Excellency! Dear brother* in Christo,

*I have received your recent letter dated 2 January. I regret if you have the impression that my pilgrimage to Medjugorje did a disservice to peace. Rest assured that this was not my intention.*

The Cardinal ends his letter with the following words:

*The Mother of God and her divine Son will certainly lead all things towards that which is good. In this trust, I greet you fraternally united in the Lord and remain,*

*Yours,*

*+ Christoph Card. Schönborn O.P.*

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/letter-card-sch%C3%B6nborn-bishop-peri%C4%87

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## Mostar: The Bishop's words of Gratitude during the Evening Ceremony

13. September 2017.

*Foto: Cnak*

First of all, I thank you all for your presence here this evening and greet all those that the Vicar General, Fr. Željko Majić greeted both individually and collectively, beginning with Cardinal Vinko Puljić.

***An unworthy servant***. Every day for 25 years now and sometimes twice daily on feast-days or Sundays, in the Eucharistic prayer I have prayed: "Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth, with your servant" John Paul, or Benedict, or Francis our Pope, "and with me your unworthy servant". With great hope, I pray to God and I sincerely believe that I am His unworthy servant; unworthy of the Holy Orders of the Presbyterate and even more unworthy of the Episcopate. Everything is a gift from God, for which I am grateful to the Lord. At the same time, it is a task that has been entrusted to me through the Church, as a test of the mind and freedom, that is, as a trial between the court of Gabbatha and the crucifixion at Golgotha. A task that one must respond to with one's life, in the hope of resurrection.

**Not only unworthy – but nothing.** While aware of his exalted apostolic ministry, St. Paul nevertheless did not only write that he was unworthy, that amongst all sinners he considered himself the "foremost of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15), but he decisively wrote to the Corinthians: "I ought to have been commended by you. For I am not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, *even though I am nothing*" (2 Cor 12:11). Exactly this: though I am nothing – *Tametsi nihil sum!* This is our episcopal and apostolic definition. *Nihil sum* before God. However, since the most merciful God considered Saul "faithful" and chose him "for his service" (1 Tim 1:12), the Apostle gave us an example of how we should be grateful for God's infinite love towards us.

**The appointment by the Pope.** On 29 May 1992[1], when St. John Paul II decided to appoint me as coadjutor-bishop of Mostar and I was informed of this on 1 June, by Cardinal Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, who sought my consent, I responded a few days later by saying that all the difficulties of that time and the consequences of war, deter me from accepting such a demanding ministry. Yet I added, that I would not want to go through life without the Pope's apostolic blessing. And how could I earn his blessing if I were not to accept his appointment?

**Through many persecutions.** In accepting the decision of the Holy Father twenty-five years ago to become coadjutor to the bishop Ordinary Pavao Žanić, I took as my motto the words of Sts. Paul and Barnabas "It is through many persecutions that we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22) I chose this not only because the Church in Herzegovina – as well as in Bosnia and Croatia – had been affected from the outside by the war, with all kinds of hardships, but also because of the internal phenomenon of disobedience and the existence of some systematic falsehoods in the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno, aware that there are always present great adversities in the struggle towards complete obedience and the real truth. The answer to the first question was, among other things, the posthumous book by Fr. Marko Perić, *Hercegovačka afera* (The Herzegovinian case).[2] We sought to resolve this original "case" exclusively through the Holy See from 1993 to 2005.[3] It was concluded on paper in the year 2000 by the acceptance of the *Declaration of Obedience*, yet in reality, there remains some residue with a few censured priests along with their supporters.

**The implementation** and aim of the Pontifical decree *Romanis Pontificibus*, was to achieve justice for the diocesan clergy and the parishes assigned to them a hundred years ago in 1899. Here I would like to thank the Franciscan brothers and the members of the Franciscan General Curia, as well as those from the parishes who willingly accepted, as did others who came over time as newly ordained religious or returnees from foreign missions, who thoroughly accepted the implementation of "Romanis Pontificibus" thereby manifesting themselves as reliable associates in parish pastoral ministry for the good of the Province and this entire local Church.

**The phenomenon of Medjugorje**. Besides many public texts on the alleged apparitions in Medjugorje, the Chancery Office also published the books: *Ogledalo Pravde (Mirror of Justice)*[4] and *Istina će vas osloboditi (The Truth will set you free).*[5] I am quite convinced, as my predecessor Bishop Žanić was convinced, that falsehoods cannot be proclaimed as truths especially not in the Catholic Church, regardless of all the media hype and the current illusory triumphant claims. I firmly believe that true and authentic public devotion to Our Lady, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, cannot be built upon the sand of inauthentic apparitions! I'm deeply concerned that one day the entire truth will arise to the surface! And here I have advocated – as did my honorable predecessor – and I am still striving to defend the most holy person of Our Lady from human fabrications, and in this the Church must also be and remain "the pillar and bulwark of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Regarding this phenomenon, it would be praiseworthy if we were all to let the truth of Jesus set us free from all kinds of earthly attachments and interests, and that we live *in plena veritate et caritate* – in complete Christian truthfulness and charity, thereby honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary in the way the Church's Magisterium suggests and seeks from us.

**The invented accusations** that are so heavy and so defamatory regarding the "collaboration" of my predecessor and of my "agreements" with the sworn enemies of the Church, and this without any blackmail and supposedly at my request, must be confronted in another way and in another forum. I would only mention one thing here. For years before I was ordained, I accompanied at times Bishop Pavao, even at his encounters with the Holy See, where the not so minor scandals associated with

the very beginnings of the so-called apparitions in Medjugorje were presented and discussed. I was a personal witness to the profound suffering of our dearly departed Bishop Žanić. And I often wondered why such a phenomenon, which presents itself as something fruitfully good and spiritually healthy, is so often endorsed at the general level with countless fabrications, deceptions, attacks and monstrous calumnies? Even now I ask the same question: whose work is this? And who needs this?

**Expressions of gratitude**. I am grateful to the Lord for this quarter-century he has given me to preach the Gospel by word and mouth, to administer Christ's sacraments and to canonically guide the dioceses of Herzegovina for the greater glory of God, for the growth of the Catholic Church, for the salvation of souls and the good of the Croatian people. For all my faults and omissions, I humbly ask the Lord for forgiveness!

*I am grateful* to the Holy See who directly followed my work. Only to her did I made on oath of fidelity to, by placing my hand on the Gospel. Only to her did I give an account of my work. I only called upon her for help to resolve the inherited "case" and to elucidate the publicized "phenomenon". Only to her did I send over 2700 documents on Medjugorje from the archives of the Chancery Office, in which hard facts are written that contain the truth. Every day I listen to stories in the media and from other sources that do not correspond to the truth. I have believed in and still believe in the words of Jesus: "Tibi dabo claves Regni coelorum" (I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven) Simon, son of Jonah (Mt 16:19). I have spoken with total parrhesia – with open and responsible freedom, and sincere respect before Popes, the Cardinals of the Holy See and other officials, and I also received their respect as well.

*I am grateful* to God for my faithful assistants at the Chancery and for the book: "Sjeti me se kada u raj dođeš!" (Remember me when you come into your kingdom) which they prepared for this occasion. I am likewise grateful to those priests ministering canonically in the parishes of Herzegovina, the religious sisters of various Congregations, as well as all the faithful, for their faithfulness to Catholic teaching, for their unity in Christian love, for their promoting spiritual life, for the renewal of the churches that were destroyed and the construction of new buildings.

*I am grateful* to all my brother bishops from both Conferences of Bishops that minister to the Church amongst Croatians, for our regular annual meetings and many others, as well as to the members of other Bishops' Conferences for exchanging their fraternal invitations, their cooperation and understanding.

*I am grateful* to all those persons and institutions that are in the service of productive peace, responsible freedom, the creation of good interpersonal relations and the employing of the unemployed in this part of our homeland.

I have supported and still support contacts with the representatives of the Eparchies of Zahum-Herzegovina and Primorje, and the Islamic religious community of Herzegovina. These contacts are not at the level of lofty ecumenical and theological discussions; however, we do not want to extinguish the flame of common interpersonal exchanges and greetings for holy days. True ecumenism and dialogue has a future, but false ones do not.

At one point in the past I was quite ill. I am grateful to God who gives us health, who hears the prayers of faithful souls and makes use of excellent doctors and their expertise and humanity, and amongst all of them, I must particularly mention Dr. Mato Škegro from Zagreb. May God grant all of them, his many rewards.

*I am grateful* to all those who these past days have written or called, or who came to Mostar to thank the Lord our God together, from whom I joyfully invoke an abundance of His graces and blessings! Special thanks also to Cardinal Josip Bozanić, who called and sent a written message.

*I am especially grateful* to Pope Francis who for this occasion sent his personally signed message, which for me is a sure sign that for these last 25 years I have strived to work according to the Pope's apostolic blessing, which I emphasized in accepting this ministry.

Once again, I thank you for your presence and attention this evening, for your human and spiritual support. And as the Holy Father often says: "Go forward with courage" (Avanti, con coraggio!) May everything be in faith and love, to the praise and glory of the Holy Trinity!

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[1] *Annuario Pontificio* 2017, p. 485.

[2] M. Perić, *Hercegovačka afera.* Pregled događaja i važniji dokumenti, Mostar, 2002.

*(The case of Herzegovina.* An overview of the events and important documents) Mostar, 2002.

[3] The official meetings with the Franciscan fathers from the Province and the General Curia, at the invitation of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, were held in Rome: the first in April 1993, the second in October 1995, the third in February 1996, the fourth in March 1997, the fifth in November 1998, the sixth in December 1999, the seventh in November 2002 and the eighth in October 2003. The Minister General signed the declaration *Put zajedništva u Crkvi u Hercegovini – The Path to Unity of the Church in Herzegovina* on 1 March 2005.

[4] *Ogledalo Pravde*, Biskupski ordinarijat u Mostaru o navodnim ukazanjima i porukama u Međugorju, priredio D. Kutleša, Mostar, 2001.

(*The Mirror of Justice*, The Chancery Office of Mostar on the alleged apparitions and messages in Medjugorje, edited by D. Kutleša, Mostar 2001).

[5] N. Bulat, *Istina će vas osloboditi.* Nepouzdanost izvora i nedoličnost poruka. Studija o nekim međugorskim pitanjima (1986.), Mostar, 2006.

(*The Truth will set you free*. The unreliability of the sources and the improperness of the messages. A study on some of the questions of Medjugorje (1986), Mostar, 2006).

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/mostar-bishops-words-gratitude-during-evening-ceremony

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## THE GENERAL'S STUBBORN CALUMNIES

05. August 2017.

*Foto: Arhivski snimak*

We are truly sorry that once again we must put the word calumny into the title of an article, hence we apologize to our respected readers. Yet how else can we describe this renewed malicious attack against the Bishops of Mostar, the late Pavao Žanić and the current Ratko Perić? Despite our previous reply, considered not only by us but also by many who have read our answers, to be a reasoned rebuttal of all the lies and calumnies, the defamers and their leaders have not stopped. These past few days (this time without the famous request for $ 4.99 through the social media and some of the local and "national" web sites), the public has been offered another defamatory film that slanders the shepherds of the Church in Mostar. Unlike the first "movie" authored by a certain Drozd and Bezael, which was "supported" by *Nazareth production*, this latest work has as its only character the same General Maksimov from the film "From Fatima to Medjugorje" and a lady "journalist" without a name. This half-hour conversation repeats all the rubbish that was spread in the previous "movie" without providing even a single piece of evidence or a document. Although there is no signature of the author or the producer, it is clear where the wind is blowing from and what the aim is. In the absence of arguments to contradict the spirit guiding the spiritual shepherds of Mostar defending God's truth, the dignity of the Madonna and the image of the Church, they are resorting to a malicious attack *ad hominem – to the man*, that has no connection with the truth or human honesty.

The latest film of General Maksimov in fact, provides nothing new except that he met six times with bishop Perić in Rome, in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. Later on we will deal with this, yet for a better understanding, we point out to our readers our previous replies: Suradnici Udbe i KGB-a ("Collaborators" of the UDBA and KGB), Calumnies in Film and Sedlar's Calumnies.

**General Maksimov**

Everyone who has even superficially followed this media lynching of the Bishops of Mostar and our answers can clearly see that this latest "cinematic" enterprise is a reaction to our replies. However, in the absence of arguments to reject the Truth, lies are repeated. This seems to follow one of Goebbels' sayings: "A lie repeated 100 times becomes true". However, every lie remains a lie, while the truth will always come to light: "The more you try to hide it, from where you never would have thought, exactly there it comes more to light" as Marin Držić (a famous Croatian author) said during his time.

General Maksimov wants to present himself as a truthful man, a conscientious task-maker, with no other interests than the protection of order: *Our services are not "notorious", for we did not deal with "lies", we were very thorough in our processing of individuals or groups. Of course, we were*

*known to be unpleasant, but this was all in the interest of the defense of communism*. According to his own words, he entered the service of the KGB [Soviet secrete service] to defend communism in 1966 on the recommendation of his father who also "spent his entire life in various positions in the KGB". Only three years later, in 1969, after having spent only a year in "Czechoslovakia", he was honored with the rank of colonel. We all know what Czechoslovakia suffered and survived at that time. Would it now be considered improper to pose the question of how not just individuals and minor groups, but also entire national groups of both Czechs and Slovaks were "unpleasantly" treated, that a thirty-year-old, after only three years of service could become a colonel? Related to this topic and a cause for concern to us is: how can the "testimony" and "truth" of those who sent millions of people to death become so unquestionable that - with this irrefutable proof – they use this to attack those who have devoted their entire lives to the Truth and who have suffered in their lives due to various “truths” of the UDBA [Yugoslav secret police] and KGB? This question begs for a serious psychological study. However, we do not need any studies to prove the truth on bishops Pavao and Ratko of Mostar. Similarly, as we have said in the previous replies, we are not writing this response in the hope of arguing against the defamers and false witnesses, but to strengthen in the truth and that which is good, those whom this type of cinematic poison can bring discomfort to the heart.

**Bishop Žanić**

Regrading bishop Žanić, the general reiterated the same previous slanderous claims, yet for the second time in his media address to the public, he does not provide even a single letter of the "incriminating document" that made the Bishop reject the "gift from heaven", that is, the appearance of the Blessed Virgin in his own diocese! He cannot truly think that his empty words are sufficient and that an objective and reasonable viewer and reader will think that the secret services would only have one copy of the "document" which they surrendered in full trust to the Vatican and remained without any material evidence of their allegations? By reading the available documents from the archives, it is apparent that each document was made in multiple copies and delivered to higher instances at various addresses. They were also kept in the archives of the secret services that was operative, as well as in the file of the examined person. In these documents, at least amongst those that were kindly opened to us upon our request to Sarajevo, there in the brackets beside the name of bishop Žanić, there was never written a "S" for *suradnik* - collaborator, but exclusively OO for *operativno obrađen* - "operationally processed" with the note at the end of the document that he is an "enemy activist", often under the ordinal number 1. To have in front of you this kind of documentation and to claim that bishop Žanić was a collaborator of the UDBA since 1981, is nothing but diabolical slander, the fruit of those who have surrendered their minds and hearts, their names and services, to the father of lies. In this "Year of Bishop Žanić", which we commenced on 19 May last, in his native place - Kaštel Novi, in Croatia, and which we will conclude, God willing, on the hundredth anniversary of his birth, on 20 May 2018 in Mostar, we will write extensively about his relationship to state authorities and his behavior both during communism and during the democratic changes of the nineties of the last century.

**Bishop Perić**

General Maksimov once again as a nonsensical soldier states: "Yes, I was introduced to Ratko Perić immediately in December 1982. Comrade Kuznjecov brought me to a meeting with him. From then, we met 7 times up until 1989." To the question of the “journalist”: How often did you contact Ratko Perić after 1989? Maksimov replied: "I saw him personally one time in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008." We have already written about the alleged encounters from 1982 to 1989 in the replies entitled *“Suradnici” Udbe i KGB-a – “Collaborators” of the UDBA and KGB* and *"Calumnies in Film"*,

but also in *“Sedlar's Calumnies”*. Therefore, we do not consider it necessary to discuss this any further, however, since the general expanded the time frame and doubled the number of meetings, we should briefly look at these new shameless calumnies of the general.

Even though Maksimov tells the journalist that before filming the interview he had refreshed his memory: "Before I came to this filming, I looked at my personal diary in which I always wrote everything, so that I could do a more faithful report on my service," he does not consider it useful despite all the media hype when it comes to the Bishops of Mostar, to confirm his claims, if not with documents, which obviously do not exist, then at least with his own diary records, in which he “always wrote everything”. But he obviously is a "craftsman" who knows that specific dates, times and places of encounter, when fictitious - and in this case they are - can easily be challenged. Because he himself knows that "the very intelligent and highly educated man", as Maksimov describes bishop Ratko, keeps his own diary as well as the institution he serves. Starting from the assumption that Catholic Bishops often travel to Rome - specifically to the Vatican, especially the bishop of Mostar, he mentions off the top of his head, a list of years of meetings in Rome from 2000 to 2008. For the time being, let's just say this: regarding the years listed, bishop Ratko did not even go to Rome for two of these years! This was because the "Herzegovinian case" was resolved in principle already in the year 2000! Which precise years Msgr. Perić was not in Rome we will keep to ourselves, until Maksimov stirs up as much military courage as he has of defamatory boldness, and instead of facing the camera without documents, he stands in front of the Bishop with the papers, which the Bishop publicly invited him to do in the reply "Calumnies in Film".

With a refreshed memory in the new film, the general recalls the names, dates, places and topics during the meetings with the representatives of the Vatican, as well as the “comrades” from the Yugoslav secret services. Yet the identity of the “common friend” who was the contact person all along - the mediator and organizer of the meeting with the rector and bishop Ratko, is not mentioned at all. We believe that to those who desire to come to the truth it remains unclear why the general is hiding the dates, documents and identity of the key person. With his own words he has sown a great amount of evil. From a man who claims his service and of course he himself of not being "infamous" and "never lying", after our description that all his words are nothing but blasphemous calumny, the least one would expect would be for him to bring to the light of day the documentation on the basis of which he makes his claims and to invite witnesses.

In answering the journalist’s question whether he possibly blackmailed or forced the Bishop to collaborate with him, the general replied: “We did not blackmail him with anything. He came to us to do the ‘business’ that no one else could do. He had been convinced into this by the priest in Rome who connected us. No blackmail, just pure business.”

And that “pure business”, as we had already written earlier, according to the general’s claims consisted of: You destroy the Franciscans in Herzegovina, and I will destroy Medjugorje. We have previously responded on how the “business” ran up until 1989. But what is interesting is the fact that from the last meeting in 1989 until 2000, there is no contact between the two. Everyone, even someone who is only somewhat familiar with the circumstances in Herzegovina knows that many things happened exactly during that time and that, if there was any “collaboration”, it would have only intensified. After the democratic changes, a war broke out in this region which in its worst forms did not spare Herzegovina. It was a war which was supported by the secret services, even the one that general Maksimov was a part of. How is it that the powerful general did not intervene, if he could not protect all of Herzegovina from war, at least to save the Chancery and the Cathedral, into which the long anticipated “business partner” was meant to move into, be consecrated and, empowered by episcopal ordination, and put into practice the “deal”? How is it that he did not

“protect” him from a violent removal from his own apartment and long-hour shameless detention in captivity in the neighbourhood of Cim in Mostar in 1995? These would be reasonable arguments for rational minds, but Maksimov with his calumnies has parted with rationality!

The reality however, is completely different. Even before he was ordained a Bishop in 1992, Monsignor Perić, like everyone else, could read the April 1991 Zadar declaration that denied the supernatural nature of the events of Medjugorje. We repeat once again: There is no document or public statement of Rector Perić in which his viewpoint of the Medjugorje phenomenon can be seen. And regarding the Herzegovinian case, this developed as follows: Just after taking over the administration of the dioceses of Herzegovina in 1993, bishop Perić, exclusively and according to the Church plan, in accordance with Canon law and the directives of the Holy See, initiated talks on the implementation of the 1975 decree entitled *Romanis Pontificibus*. Nothing more and nothing less than what was decided by the Decree. The talks were held without the mediation of anyone outside the Church, involving only those persons and institutions that were responsible for the matter. These meetings were held in Herzegovina and in the Vatican up until 2000. Therefore, all this during the time frame when there was no contact between the Bishop and the general. We therefore rightly ask: does general Maksimov wish to suggest that he influenced some other parties in the Church conversations: from the Franciscan Provincial administration in Herzegovina or the Franciscan General Curia in Rome or the Congregations of the Holy See or even the members of the Franciscans’ General Chapter held in Assisi of 1997 where it was decided that the *Romanis Pontificibus* decree should be implemented instantly and in full, after which, through the mediation of the General Curia and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the concrete implementation of the Decree with all the decisions of the Curia and the Holy See was agreed? Even if for an instant we were to believe in the authenticity of Maksimov’s claims, how could one not ask: if bishop Ratko was not blackmailed by anything and it was all just a job to be done on the basis of “you give me – I give you”, what could then make all the other interested parties under pressure from the KGB and UDBA, succumb under the “unreasonable hatred of bishop Ratko towards the Franciscans”? This is a dangerous and poisonous theory that is the foundation of the film and the interview and which we consider that even the masterminds behind the defamatory film “From Fatima to Medjugorje” did not count on. Therefore, we consider this attack on the Bishops of Mostar not just an attack on them personally but on the Church as well; not just in Herzegovina but the universal Church, no matter how often some insist on saying that “two Bishops are not the entire Church”.

**Conclusion**

Our Lord Jesus was diabolically slandered by the Pharisees that he exorcized demons out of people with the satanic power of Beelzebub (Mt 12:25-29). Jesus very simply did, however with divine strength, exorcize the possessed people he met or those that were brought to him. He only could not exorcize the Pharisees who intentionally sinned against the Holy Spirit with their diabolical slander. It is not entirely clear why general Maksimov joined in the action of offering his “help” to tear down a Province of around two hundred Herzegovinian Franciscans instead of jealously guarding his Soviet imperialistic system. And yet it collapsed like a house of cards in 1989-1990! Possibly due to Pope Saint John Paul II and the Holy See, with whose clerics general Maksimov, as he brags, maintained contacts up until his almighty SSSR helplessly and irretrievably disintegrated!

During the opening address at the seventieth regular meeting of the Bishops’ Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Banja Luka on 13 July this year, the President of the Conference, Cardinal Vinko Puljić, among other things, said: “We know all too well the old UDBA method of creating division and distrust among people. To succeed in this, they accuse an individual Bishop as a collaborator of the UDBA as they did with the late bishop Pavao Žanić and the current bishop Ratko Perić in Mostar.

Likewise, some authorities want to ‘silence’ bishop Franjo (Komarica of Banja Luka) to not to point out the injustices and therefore they find it easier to accuse him. The tactics of old UDBA cronies has always been the same: a good offence is the best defence”.

But the best defence is the Truth that the Mostar Bishops have always been preaching, fighting for and ready to make a greater sacrifice for than the vicious attacks of the authors of defamatory film scenarios, the masterminds behind it all and the protagonists themselves. Our intention with this statement is to refute these lies with the truth. We repeat once again: We are not so naïve to believe that with this reply we will bring the unscrupulous liars to the Truth. Our wish has always been and remains, to faithfully encourage our respected readers who are disturbed by this type of blasphemous calumny and invite them to always stand by the Truth that will set us all free.

*Fr. Željko Majić*

*Vicar General*

*Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/generals-stubborn-calumnies*

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**Mostar: CONCLUSION OF THE “YEAR OF BISHOP ŽANIĆ”** 23. May 2018.

*Foto: Cnak*

Mary Mother of the Church Cathedral Hall, 21 May 2018

On Monday 21 May 2018, on the feast of Mary Mother of the Church, co-patron of the Cathedral, which is celebrated as a solemnity in Mostar, a solemn Holy Mass presided by Cardinal Vinko Puljić was held before a packed church in concelebration with ten archbishops and bishops, including the Apostolic Nuncios Luigi Pezzuto from Sarajevo and Petar Rajič from Angola, as well as about 40 priests. After the Eucharistic celebration, the main celebrant led special prayers for the deceased at the tombs of the three bishops buried in the crypt, Petar Čule, Marko Perić and Pavao Žanić. Subsequently, many of the faithful, along with religious sisters, seminarians, priests and bishops, went down to the cathedral hall to participate in the commemorative symposium. Along with the musical interludes of Lucija and Ksenija, as well as the introductory words of Msgr. Željko Majić, Vicar General, the master of ceremonies Ana invited a good number of participants to present their, "five minute", testimonies on Bishop Pavao Žanić:

Most Rev. Marin Barišić, Archbishop of Split-Makarska;

Most Rev. Petar Rajič, Apostolic Nuncio to Angola;

Most Rev. Mate Uzinić, Bishop of Dubrovnik;

Father Ivan Ševo, O.F.M., Vicar of the Franciscan Province of Herzegovina;

Father Ivo Šutalo, Episcopal Vicar for the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan and parish priest in Trebinje;

Mr. Srećko Vučina, who spoke on behalf of the lay faithful.

Bishop Žanić's recently published collection of works: *U vjeri, nadi i ljubavi - In Faith, Hope and Charity*, was presented by Most Rev. Želimir Puljić, Archbishop of Zadar, President of the Bishops' Conference of Croatia. All the written testimonies deserve a special place in the planned future anthology.

The closing words were articulated by Most Rev. Ratko Perić, the local Bishop, who read his introductory and final part, and here now we publish his entire written text along with the conclusion of the "Year of Bishop Žanić".

**I met Father Pavao Žanić** for the first time when I was a newly ordained priest in Rome in June of 1970 and he was the Rector of the Minor Seminary in Split. He led thirty seminary-graduates on a pilgrimage to the Eternal City and it fell upon me to be their guide from the Vatican to the Lateran and surroundings. Towards the end of that same year he was appointed bishop-coadjutor of Mostar. From then on until his death, for 30 years I followed his episcopal ministry and life from Trebinje, Sarajevo, Rome and Mostar after his retirement. If true friendship is described as "idem velle, idem nolle" – agreement in likes and dislikes, as the late Sallust would say, then I can modestly say that I have endeavored to listen to the voice and follow in the footsteps of Bishop Pavao who was a truthful, upright and fearless Pastor. Like the biblical metaphor that Joshua pronounced: “Sun stand still at Gibeon, and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon!” (Js 10:12), we too would like to "stop" the 23 sunsets of Bishop Žanić’s years in the valley of Mostar and observe them from this historical distance on the centenary of his birth.

**The Draft Plan** of 9 May 2017 regarding “The Year of Bishop of Žanić”, on the Centenary of his birth (1918 - 2018), by God's grace became an **Implementation Plan**. The course of the Year was solemnly marked, first of all by the publication of 11 significant articles in the diocesan monthly magazine “Church on the Rock”, followed by a commemorative Mass on the anniversary of his passing on 11 January 2018, then by the publication of a collection of works dedicated to him entitled: *U vjeri, nadi i ljubavi - In Faith, Hope and Charity*, and by the crowning event of the transfer of his bodily remains from Kaštel Novi (Croatia) to the bishops’ crypt in the Cathedral of Mostar on the 2nd of this month.[1] As with every academic project, such as this one on the Year of Bishop Pavao, during its implementation, various practical improvements and adjustments were made towards the set purpose. The purpose was to evaluate the doctrinal-sacramental-administrative activities of the Bishop, initially as Coadjutor-bishop for 10 years (1970-1980) and then as Ordinary for 13 years (1980-1993), his systematic planting of pastoral seeds, which over time developed and brought forth fruit to this day.[2]

As a faithful coadjutor alongside the Ordinary Petar Čule, he followed all the activities with all his co-responsibility, thereby offering to this local Church all “five talents” along with the other five acquired (Mt 25: 15-16):

**From 1971, the Herzegovinian Affair**. Even though the Holy See immediately after his episcopal ordination in 1971 entrusted him with resolving the "affair" - because the other side promised that the question would be resolved immediately if a bishop was appointed in Mostar from outside of Herzegovina - he asked that everything remain in the hands of Bishop Petar and that he would do whatever he could. Thus, a mixed commission comprised of diocesan clergy headed by the coadjutor Pavao and Franciscan clergy led by the Provincial Superior or his Vicar was formed. The commission met three times that year: in Bijelo Polje, Mostar and Humac. Nothing was resolved, instead it all became even more heated. In August of 1972, Bishop Stefan Laszlo of Eisenstadt in Austria, was appointed as Apostolic Visitor for Herzegovina. Several meetings were held under his leadership in Zagreb in the autumn of 1972, then in July and September of 1973. There were no results. The BCY (Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia) was included, but again no progress was made. Then meetings were held in front of Representatives of the Holy See in Rome in February of 1974. Finally, the Papal decree *Romanis Pontificibus* was issued on 25 June 1975, approved by Pope Paul VI. in specific form – *in forma specifica*. Due to the non-implementation of the Decree, sanctions were then imposed which were still in effect even after the Bishop's retirement in 1993.[3]

**From 1971, with the erection of new parishes**, the coadjutor Pavao stood alongside the Bishop Ordinary Petar, in all things. With the arrival of numerous new priests (from 1969 to 1975: 42 newly-ordained diocesan priests), 10 new parishes were established, namely 5 in the diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan: Hutovo 1971, Čeljevo, Stjepan Krst and Neum 1974, Aladinici 1977, and 5 in the diocese of Mostar-Duvno: Raskrižje 1971, Vinjani Hercegovački 1972, Gabela Polje 1977, Zagorje and the Cathedral 1980.

**Bishop Žanić as Ordinary**, erected another 5 parishes in the diocese of Mostar-Duvno: Gorica-Struga 1988, and four parishes in the city of Mostar, dedicated to the four holy evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, 1993. He closely followed as best as he could, the construction of the churches and parish rectories. In this area he showed a sensible strategy in the administration of both dioceses. In all of this, he manifested special care for the minor and major seminarians, while at the same time, he maintained a sincere relationship with the diocesan and religious priests.[4]

**The theme of the Family** was particularly close to his heart from the early days as Coadjutor in 1971 and then as Ordinary from 1980 onwards. He devised various pastoral strategies - lectures, films, meetings, messages, articles - to improve the situation of families in Herzegovina.[5] For more than 20 years he was the President of the Commission on the Family at the BCY and member of the Pontifical Council for the Family. He was open to the needs of the missions in the Third World through financial aid and in particular by sending priests *ad gentes*. He once spent a month in 1983, visiting Croatian missionaries in Tanzania and Zambia.[6]

**The construction of the Cathedral which began in 1975** was under his supervision and he participated in the celebration of the consecration of the Mary Mother of the Church Cathedral in 1980, when he took over the administration of the dioceses. He also oversaw the construction of a retirement home for priests in **1981** and the restoration of the Chancery building and residence in **1982**.[7] All three of these large buildings were devasted during the war in 1992 and remained out of use for several years. At that time, the Bishop felt like the biblical Job, to whom everybody came to inform him every so often of catastrophic storms and thunder from the sky. Even though he was overwhelmed by the destruction of the large buildings to which he invested his health and his hopes, he remained faithful to his ministry to the very end, loyal to God and to the Holy See. A thorough restoration of these buildings was necessary, and he was able to bless some of them.

**In 1977, the Shrine of the Queen of Peace**. Bishop Žanić was known as a Marian devotee who simultaneously spread a healthy devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He gave his full support to the creation of the Shrine of the Queen of Peace in the diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan in 1977, erected by Bishop Petar. For over eight years, Bishop Žanić led the liturgical celebration of the Queen of Peace at Hrasno on the second Sunday of May (1978-1979, 1980-1985, 1989), preaching and encouraging pilgrims to pray to Jesus' physical and our spiritual Mother.

Bishop Pavao was highly regarded as a preacher and a successful leader of pilgrimages both at home and abroad, especially during his time as Coadjutor.[8]

**In 1980 he established the monthly magazine "Church on the Rock"**, as the primary source of information and pastoral aid. During his administration, despite the war, the monthly was published in 150 uninterrupted issues. Over the years, the monthly has gathered more than 30 priestly authors and the Bishop himself most often participated with his introductions, statements or reviews. The foundations of the periodical were set so well that so far 450 issues had been published. Since 2003, that is, for the last 15 years, the monthly has been extended to 42 pages. The publishing house under the same name, which is also the work of Bishop Žanić, published 30 books during his time and to this day, a total of 150 titles. These books are an indisputable source of not only pastoral information, but also of systematic teachings in the Magisterium, spirituality, morality, and national education.[9]

**From 1981 he followed the Medjugorje phenomenon** from the beginning and personally suffered profoundly because of all the contradictions regarding the "apparitions", "messages", "secrets" and disobedience. From 12 October 1981, the apparition in Medjugorje presented herself as the "Mother of God and Queen of Peace", yet since 2 February 1982, she recommends that the "Feast of the Queen of Peace" be celebrated on 25 June, because the people began to gather on the Podbrdo mountain that day. Over time, he both personally and through two commissions, studied the phenomenon, engaging the Episcopal Conference and the Holy See in seeking out the truth on the enigmatic manifestation. In connection with this question, he published Church instructions and decisions in February 1982, in October 1984, in July 1987 and in May 1990.[10] In 1985 he wrote: "I'm racked with pain for my Mother the Church who will experience a great scandal [...]. I'm racked with pain for the dear Madonna who has become an 'office teller'".[11]

Through the affair and the phenomenon, he was exposed to the world and he held himself bravely in relation to the curious world media and religious fanatics. "I know that there will be good, pious souls that will not understand me, and I will look like an enemy of the Madonna. I have been to Lourdes several times and in other shrines related to apparitions approved by the Church. I am defending the truth, defending the Holy Church, and I pray to God that I will be able to sacrifice my life for this."[12] Can there be any greater testimony?!

**He was a co-organizer in 1981**, along with the other bishops of the Metropolitan see, and a participant of the 100th anniversary celebration of the re-establishment of an ordinary Church hierarchy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the leader of the Herzegovinian Pilgrimage of gratitude in Rome in 1982.

Soon afterwards, in 1984, he was the main promoter of the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan and he obtained from the Holy See a decree elevating the one hundred-year old parish church in Trebinje to the Cathedral of Trebinje.[13]

**He established the Diocesan Caritas in 1982**, which along with the monthly *Church on the Rock*, has become the main tool of pastoral activity, which over time expanded into various departments and today employs nearly 80 people.[14]

**In 1987 he opened a Theological Institute**, which due to communist terror had to be closed or renamed into Adult Catechism, however in 1993 the original titled was re-established as the Theological Institute of Mostar, which was also approved by the Holy See as a university institution last year. The institute gathers qualified priests and laypeople as lecturers, and in the 30 years from 1987 to 2017, out of 609 enrolled students, 244 graduated as catechists or high school teachers. All this was possible because reasonable plans were put in place that could withstand in the long-term, as Bishop Žanić imagined them and with valuable co-workers.[15]

**"Collaborator" or "enemy" of the communist regime?** He was followed by the enemies of God and the Church through technical and operational aids in Split as well as in Mostar, and there were several informants who reported the Bishop's words and moves.

*Police profile* - Between 1941 and 1971 – "... he did not sympathize with Pavelić, but according to his statements, 'following the traditions of his fathers, he sympathized with the policies of Radić and Maček and above all was for Croatia as an independent state.' [...] He began his enemy activity against the social order immediately after the war through verbal instances in front of likeminded people. Through his sermons to believers he often abused religion for political purposes, spreading disbelief in the stability of the order, attacking atheists, the socialist system, he called communism the "ideology of confiscation", spoke of the inevitability of a Third World War as the only way to 'get rid of the savages' /1947./. He advocated refusing any kind of co-operation with the authorities, with whom any dialogue should be 'harsh and disobedient' because cooperating with the authorities means helping them to 'liquidate us' /1964./. Communism he said, will collapse because it is 'the cause of all the misery in the world.' - In Split, he gathered around himself a group of extremist priests and reactionary intellectual clerics. In that circle, he took severely hostile enemy positions, attacking the socialist system and communism in general. He is actively monitoring developments in the country and in the world, and all that is negative he attributes to communism and socialism. He is a critic of all the measures that are being undertaken regarding international relations and self-management. Through such positions he was stirring up national and religious intolerance. In a vulgar way, he insulted, slandered the highest state-party leadership, especially comrade Tito." This is from the secret report on the priest and Bishop Pavao Žanić in October of 1971.

AN ENEMY, NON-COLLABORATOR BETWEEN 1971 TO 1990 – "How is it that not even a single document ends with Žanić's name as a 'source' but always a 'an enemy operator'? Can a person who is considered all the time as an enemy operator at the same time be a collaborator?! The Split SDS - Secret service and the Mostar SDB, in their time, also concluded that there is no longer any need for operational processing – that is, for following Bishop Žanić's work. But the Mostar SDB did this only in 1990 when Bishop Žanić was no longer considered fit for military service – with his removal from the Defense Plan and considered incapable for exceptional circumstances – with his removal from the Extraordinary Opportunities Plan which, by chance or not, also coincided with the collapse of Yugoslavia".[16] He could have found satisfaction in seeing the collapse of communism as an inhumane and ungodly system that for 45 years oppressed local peoples and nations, and wanted to eradicate religion or at least subjugate it towards their malicious goals. Neither succeeded.

**Conclusion**. This Jubilee Year has shown that we had in the person of Pavao Žanic a Bishop of national rank, a lover of truth and justice, a marvelous builder of human, family and ecclesiastical relations, a virtuoso of faith, hope and charity, a sharp and indomitable opponent in the classical position of religion and nation, towards the ungodly regime. Enriched with new knowledge gathered in this second tome, dedicated to him in gratitude, we hereby proclaim and conclude the "Year of Bishop Žanić", thankful to God for his magnanimous gift! We believe that even more will be said and written on this faithful servant of the Lord in the future, in an even greater and better way, to the

glory of God's love and truth, to the honor and respect of Bishop Pavao and to the benefit of our local Church.

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[1] http://www.md-tm.ba/clanci/mostar-katedralna-zvona-pozdravila-biskupa-za...

[2] Cf. T. Vukšić, Editor, *Istina oslobađa* (The Truth Liberates), Zbornik – Collection of works on Bishop Žanić, Mostar, 1992.

[3] Cf. M. Krešić, „U rješavanju 'hercegovačkoga slučaja'" (In Resolving the Herzegovinian Affair) in: Ž. Majić – B. Goluža, Editors, *U vjeri, nadi i ljubavi*, (In Faith, Hope and Charity) Mostar, 2018., p. 177-219.

[4] Cf. L. Pavlović, „Briga za duhovna zvanja i odnos prema svećenicima" (Concern for vocations and relations with priests) *Idem*, pp. 81-85.

[5] Cf. K. Puljić, „Promicatelj kršćanske obitelji" (Promoter of Christian Families) *Idem*, pp. 46-61.

[6] Cf. I. Štironja, „Doprinos misijskom poslanju Crkve" (Contributions to the Missionary works of the Church), *Idem,* pp. 71-80.

[7] Cf. A. Šarac – A. Luburić, „Graditeljska nastojanja, djelatnost i brige" (Architectural endeavors, works and concerns) *Idem*, pp. 153-176.

[8] Cf. M. Šutalo, „Pastoralac" (Pastoral Shepherd of Souls) *Idem,* pp. 62-69.

[9] Cf. B. Goluža i I. Drmić, „Osnivatelj Crkve na kamenu", (Founder of Church on the Rock), *Idem*, p. 31-43.

[10] Cf. I. Turudić, „U potrazi za istinom o 'međugorskom fenomenu'" (In Search of the Truth on the 'Medjugorje Phenomenon'), *Idem*, pp. 221-238.

[11] The letter of Bishop Žanić to Fr. René Laurentin, 29 January 1985, Prot. 100/1985.

[12] P. Žanić, *Međugorje* (Medjugorje), Mostar, 1990, p. 16.

[13] Cf. I. Puljić, „Apostolski administrator Trebinjsko-mrkanske biskupije" (Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan), in: *U vjeri, nadi i ljubavi,* pp. 87-98.

[14] Cf. A. Komadina, „Utemeljitelj Biskupijskoga caritasa" (Founder of the Diocesan Caritas), *Idem*, pp. 99-120.

[15] Cf. A. Pavlović, „Utemeljitelj Teološkoga instituta u Mostaru" (Founder of the Theological Institute of Mostar) *Idem*, pp. 121-151.

[16] Cf. Ž. Majić, „Čovjek neustrašivi" (A Fearless Man), *Idem*, pp. 239-262.

Source: https://md-tm.biskupija-mostar.ba/clanci/mostar-conclusion-year-bishop-zanic