

MEDJUGORJE AND THE FLOW OF GRACE

By

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Part I

One can readily admit to the flow of grace at Medjugorje. Adherents and promoters are quick to point to the usual signs of grace: confessions, conversions, and the practice of prayer and penance.

If apparitions are authentic, that is, if they possess a supernatural origin they come from God. Therefore authentic apparitions, such as Lourdes and Fatima, may be called a '*causa instrumentalis*' (instrumental cause) of grace.

If apparitions are false, that is, if they do not possess a supernatural origin they do not come from God. False apparitions may appear to be associated with the flow of grace; but by rights this grace belongs to the Holy Catholic Church because this Church is the source of all grace going out through the whole world due to the presence of the Blessed Sacrament within her. All grace flows from the Catholic Church's sacramental life. Grace never flows from frauds and deceptions, nor from anything that is false. In places of false apparitions grace completely bypasses the 'apparitions' as they can never be a '*causa instrumentalis*' of grace. This means that God **never** uses false apparitions as instruments of grace.

Consequently the first thing that must be stated, and which must be rigorously maintained, is that the **exterior** manifestations of grace do not prove the authenticity of apparitions! Grace can flow if the apparitions are either true or false because the sacramental life of the Church can be present anywhere on earth completely independent of apparitions.

Vatican II states, in *Lumen Gentium*, that "the grains of truth and holiness found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church rightly belong to the Church of Christ and possess an inner dynamism to Catholic unity" (#8). If apparitions are false they are automatically outside the Church, then the "grains of truth and holiness" found in these places of fraud and deception do not belong to, or come from, the deception! These "grains of truth and holiness", according to the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, belong directly to the Holy Catholic Church. As stated above, they belong to her sacramental life. It is because of this that these grains of truth and sanctification "possess an inner dynamism to Catholic unity". That is, they possess an inner dynamism **away from the deception** and toward obedience to the teaching and authority of the Catholic bishop in charge of investigating the 'apparitions'.

If the inner urge of grace towards Catholic-unity-in-obedience (working, as we saw, whether the apparitions are true or false) is blocked in any way by private, personal and subjective convictions and attitudes (which is often the case when people attribute the flow of grace to false apparitions), then grace is thwarted and becomes ineffective. This, of course, is a very serious matter. It is highly presumptuous to attribute grace to false apparitions no matter how tempting this might be.

It is a sobering thought to realise that presumption in the area of God's grace and mercy is one of the sins against the Holy Spirit and for that reason is a serious obstacle to grace. Grace thus blocked and rendered ineffective will not produce the fruits of holiness and truth God meant it to produce when He bestowed it through the sacramental life of the Church. In other words, the conversions would then only be apparent and exterior. Such conversions lack that inner drive to unity-in-obedience, and would not have a lasting effect until the blockage is removed. The same goes for devotional practices. These, too, will become merely externalised if associated with the rash and presumptuous belief that the grace to do such devotions comes from spurious apparitions. Such presumption will also block grace obtained from authentic sources.

Another sin of presumption that is often associated with the matter of private 'revelations' and 'visions' is the attitude that the Church will have to approve them because "we" think they are so good and holy and simply cannot come from the devil ...

From the moment the obedience of the Lamb of God became the breakthrough for grace, rendering to nought the blockage caused by the disobedience of our first parents, all disobedience, whether individual or corporate, has remained **the** fundamental obstacle to grace and to its inner dynamism to Catholic unity. 'The world' and 'the earth' live in utter disobedience to God and His Commandments; in total defiance of the Gospel of His Son; and in complete rejection of the authentic teaching of His Catholic Church. Followers, and even more so **promoters**, of false apparitions would do well to consider their position in the Catholic Church in regard to this necessary virtue of obedience; lest it is the root of their disobedience which prevents grace and makes them part of 'the world'. God has always built in, *as the cornerstone of proper scrutiny into alleged apparitions*, obedience to the findings and authority of the local bishop.

It is not difficult to prove that disobedience to the Bishop of Mostar is blatant in Medjugorje, even to the extent that the anti-Catholic and anti-God world of communism started to promote the 'apparitions'. Not only has this courageous and valiant Bishop been completely vilified by an international chorus of Medjugorje adherents for his rejection of the authenticity of the 'apparitions', this disobedience has been instigated and sustained by the 'apparitions' themselves.

God has always built obedience to the local bishop into the proper attitude toward alleged apparitions. His Holiness Pope Pius XII has, on at least two occasions, taught the universal Church that the Papacy considers the local bishop to be the first and principal authority in apparition cases. (See his 1957 encyclical on the centenary of the apparitions of Our Blessed Lady at Lourdes, and his letter to the Bishop of Namur, Belgium, 7th

Dec, 1942; in Don Sharkey, *The Woman Shall Conquer*, p 130). Medjugorje is no exception to this Papal attitude. If blatant vilification of the Bishop of Mostar and the widespread disobedience to his episcopal authority prove the happenings at Medjugorje to be false, then Medjugorje is outside the Church. Therefore the grace flowing at Medjugorje does not come from the ‘apparitions’ but comes from the sacramental life of the Church, bypassing the false phenomena. People who in this case adhere to the ‘apparitions’; and worse still, maintain that grace flows from them; and even worse still, in a most unholy presumption, declare that the flow of grace proves the ‘apparitions’ to be authentic, create a severe obstacle within themselves to the overwhelming fullness of the Church’s sacramental life which can be present anywhere on earth. The sad part is that this obstacle remains long after the ‘pilgrims’ have returned home ...

Part II

The foregoing study of how and why grace can flow in places where there are false apparitions is confirmed by two Catholic Bishops – both speaking in the context of Medjugorje – to be in line with Catholic Teaching. **Mgr Henri Brincard**, the Bishop of Puy-en-Velay, is the bishop responsible for the French Association of Marian Organisations. Here he is responding to a question put to him at an assembly of the Bishops of France. During the course of his response he draws on a declaration from **Bishop Peric** of Mostar, which can be found in Bishop Peric’s book *Priestolje Mudrosti* (Seat of Wisdom) p 62. [Emphases added].

“The examination of the events [of Medjugorje] must **precede** the examination of the fruits. **When this order is not respected errors of judgement can arise.**

If we examine the events of Medjugorje in the light of the fruits, what do we observe? It is first of all undeniable that at Medjugorje there are returns to God and ‘spiritual’ healings. ... One could not deny these good fruits *in situ*. ... But can we say that they continue in our parishes? Difficult question, for we must note unfortunately that the susceptibility, even aggressiveness, of some partisans of Medjugorje towards those who do not share their enthusiasm is such that in some places it **provokes serious tensions which attack the unity of the People of God.**

From where do the good fruits, observed in an indisputable manner at Medjugorje, come? A declaration of Bishop Peric, our confrere of Mostar, may on this point usefully enrich our meditations:

‘The fruits, so often mentioned, **do not prove that they flow from apparitions or supernatural revelations of Our Lady.** In the measure that they are authentically Christian, they may be interpreted as a **product of the normal work of divine grace**, by faith in God, by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, and by the Sacraments **of the Catholic Church.** And this is to say nothing of the negative fruits.’

Finally, it is opportune to ask ourselves if the events of Medjugorje have produced good fruits in the visionaries who, at least during the duration of the ‘apparitions’, must by their life be the first witnesses of the grace of which they say they benefit. From there it follows that we ask ourselves the following questions: ‘Have they obeyed the Bishop of Mostar? Have they respected him? ...’ Such questions and still others yet, are **habitually part of a serious investigation** into an event of apparitions. In order for the investigation to arrive at a solid conclusion, **it is necessary that these fundamental questions receive a clear and objective response.**

We would like to say nothing about the doubtful or even bad fruits. **But truth obliges us to say that they exist.** Let us quote, as examples, the calling into question, **even to the point of defamation**, of the Local Ordinary as well as the **disobedience with regard to his legitimate authority**; the exacerbation of the Herzegovina ‘question’ following the words attributed to the ‘*Gospa*’, words in favour of the Franciscans and **against the Bishop** (cf. Pavao Zanic, Bishop of Mostar, *Official Statement: Medjugorje*, March 1990).

The Second Vatican Council’s teaching on Collegiality is fully endorsed by Bishop Brincard in word and example. Catholics have the right to expect that his example of collegiality is matched by their own bishop. Bishop Brincard continues [Emphases added]:

“I have no authority to pronounce any ecclesial judgement whatsoever on the events of Medjugorje. **I am therefore the first to have to give an example of obedience**, notably in **respecting the pastoral decisions of my confrere of Mostar and in complying with joy to his wishes.**

I do not see how I can go to Medjugorje without giving my support, **by the very fact of my arriving there**, to the events whose discernment rest henceforth with the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina. **Such support would fly in the face of a traditional teaching of the Church**, recalled in *Lumen Gentium*, and applicable to all the successors of the Apostles: ‘Individual bishops, insofar as they are set over particular Churches, exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them, not over other Churches nor the Church universal’.

My wish, which I share with you, is to be able to further in my diocese a real renewal of Marian piety, in having frequent recourse to the habitual means which the Church puts at our disposal and which the **Holy Father does not cease to recommend to us.**”

According to Medjugorje promoters hundreds of bishops have gone on ‘pilgrimage’ to Medjugorje over the last twenty years. From what Bishop Brincard has said, it is evident that bishops who go on ‘pilgrimage’ to Medjugorje sow confusion and division

amongst the People of God by their bad example. Through their lack of collegiality they must be counted as being responsible for keeping Medjugorje ‘alive’ amongst Catholics.

It is certainly possible to separate Catholics from the Church by having them follow bogus messages while mistakenly thinking that they are following Our Lady. It is not possible to separate Our Lady from the Church, as the following quotes from the Second Vatican Council’s ***Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*** (*Lumen Gentium*) will show. These quotes are taken from the concluding chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter VIII “Our Lady”.

“Redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to him by a close and **indissoluble tie**, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God. ... But, being of the race of Adam, she is at the same time also united to all those who are to be saved; indeed ‘she is clearly the mother of all the members of Christ ... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head’. Wherefore she is hailed as pre-eminent and as a wholly unique member of the Church, and as its type and outstanding model in faith and charity. (#53)”

By reason of the gift and role of her divine motherhood, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with her unique graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also **intimately united to the Church**. As St. Ambrose taught, **the Mother of God is a type of the Church** in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion. (#63)”

But while **in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection**, whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. Devoutly meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church reverently penetrates more deeply into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her spouse. ... Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her lofty type, and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things. (#65)”

“The mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and **beginning of the Church** as it is to be perfected in the world to come. (#68)”

It was not Vatican II that downgraded devotion to the Mother of God

We return to Bishop Brincard's response to the question: "Is there an authorised and official position of the Church concerning the events which motivate pilgrimages to Medjugorje?"

"The norms relative to the discernment of private revelations, published on 24th February 1978 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, signed by its Prefect Cardinal Francis Seper, specify that **'It belongs in the first and foremost to the Local Ordinary to investigate and to intervene'**."

The norms of 1978 further specify that 'the intervention of the Sacred Congregation may be sought either by the Ordinary after he has fulfilled the obligations incumbent upon him, or by a qualified group of faithful. In the latter case vigilance will be exercised that recourse to the Sacred Congregation not be motivated by suspect reasons (for example, wanting to lead, by one fashion or another, the Ordinary to modify his legitimate decisions, or to have the sectarian position of a group ratified, etc)'.

Up to this day, only the Bishops of Mostar – Bishop Zanic, then Bishop Peric – and the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference have expressed a judgement on the events of Medjugorje. ... These episcopal interventions occurred after long and laborious investigations, several elements of which are not known to us. **It is to be noted that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith never expressed the least reservation regarding these judgements when they were published.** Bearing in mind the authority which this Congregation recognises pertaining 'first and foremost' to the Local Ordinary, in matters of discernment and intervention, it would not be wise to take lightly that which successive Bishops of the diocese of Mostar-Duvno have said. ... **The history of the Church teaches us that Rome always remits *in fine* to the authority and competence of the Local Ordinary."**

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* Pope John Paul II taught the entire Church that St. Louis de Montfort is a "witness and teacher" of both "authentic Marian spirituality" and its "corresponding devotion", and that he is a "sure point of reference" to "look to and follow" in "the present phase of history". In his treatise *True Devotion to Mary* St. Louis teaches us about Our Lady's profound humility (TD #2):

"Her humility was so profound that she had no inclination on earth more powerful or more constant than that of hiding herself, from herself as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God only."

The reservation with which Our Lady revealed her identity in Fatima and Lourdes fits perfectly with St. Louis' teaching concerning Our Lady's humility. Medjugorje does not fit with St. Louis' teaching. Having failed the first examination set for them by St. Louis, the fabricators of Medjugorje, in this unholy caricature where pride and self promotion come to the fore, confirm that they do not qualify as witnesses of authentic Marian spirituality, and that the words that were allegedly spoken to them were not spoken by Our Lady.

Where can we find a voice strong enough and final enough to warn Catholics where the allurements of spurious messages/appearances is leading them? For this we again turn to St. Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion to Mary* (#90), to hear what this great Marian Saint has to say about false devotions:

“Today, more than ever, we must take pains in choosing true devotion to Our Blessed Lady, because **more than ever before**, there are false devotions to Our Blessed Lady which are **easily mistaken for true ones**. The devil, like a false coiner and a subtle and experienced sharper, **has already deceived and destroyed so many souls by a false devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that he makes a daily use of his diabolical experience to plunge many others by this same way into everlasting perdition**; amusing them, lulling them to sleep in sin, under the pretext of some prayers badly said or of some outward practices **which he inspires**. As a false coiner does not ordinarily counterfeit anything but gold or silver, and very rarely other metals, because they are not worth the trouble, so the evil spirit does not for the most part counterfeit other devotions, **but only those to Jesus and Mary – devotion to Holy Communion and to our Blessed Lady** – because they are among other devotions what gold and silver are among metals.”

“... **into everlasting perdition!**” Strong words! We had better believe them! Everlasting perdition does not mean ‘a long time in Purgatory’. It means what it says: everlasting perdition: **hell for eternity!** Remember it is none other than Pope John Paul II who has designated St. Louis de Montfort's writings as “authentic Marian spirituality”, and St. Louis as a “sure guide” to “look to and follow” in the “present phase of history”. Thus if so safe a guide as St. Louis de Montfort holds up to us that by a false devotion to Our Blessed Lady, the devil has already destroyed so many souls, and “daily succeeds” in destroying so many more “into everlasting perdition”, then it is high time that Cardinals, bishops, priests and layfolk sit up and take notice.

False devotions to Our Blessed Lady are rampant in many dioceses side by side with otherwise orthodox looking devotions and practices. In this instance Catholics may try to weaken the force of St. Louis' teaching against these false devotions by reassuring themselves that these false devotions cannot really plunge them “into everlasting perdition” because the bishop who allows these false devotions to be present also encourages them to accept that which is good and orthodox. After Our Lord's teaching on ‘fruits’ and ‘trees’, and His insistence of judging the latter by the first, it was St. James who in his letter took up this question and made it crystal clear for all ages when he wrote:

“My brothers, this must be wrong. Does any water supply produce a flow of fresh water and salt water out of the same pipe?” (Ja. 3: 10-11).

“Brothers, this must be wrong ...”. These words have the Holy Spirit as their Author and they stand for all times and for all places and circumstances. If Medjugorje is a perversion of true devotion to Our Lady and an instigator of disobedience to Holy Mother

Church, and the flow of these evils of false devotion and disobedience into a diocese intolerable, then what is sometimes trotted out: “But the Bishop appears to be so orthodox regarding the Blessed Sacrament, or in his opposition to abortion and aberrations in the liturgy, etc.” **cannot** be taken, according to St. James, as being a separate flow of fresh water coming out of the same pipe that produces Medjugorje. History shows that all those who during the Reformation accepted the aberrations of Cranmer, Luther, *et al* in the illusion of ‘drinking from their good points’, got themselves so poisoned that they all walked away from the Catholic Church and became Protestants right up to this day! There are still no exceptions: there never will be!

By now it is an easy matter to show beyond reasonable doubt to any fair minded and honest person that Medjugorje is not Catholic, and that it was invented precisely to be anti-Catholic. Medjugorje is far from being ‘neutral’; it is tailor-made to produce **one** thing to perfection: a pre-determined and pre-meditated effect and result. If a bishop insists that we must see his good points and accept them as his guarantee that Medjugorje is authentic (i.e. two opposites coming out of the same pipe), then his good points are being used to mask evil in order that it will enjoy wide acceptance, which of course is the height of hypocrisy! With the result, according to St. James, that **the whole supply becomes polluted**: “Brothers, this must be wrong”.

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