



# Pilgrims' PEACELETTER

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*On the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month, Our Lady gives a message to the world through the Visionary Marija. These are her recent messages.*

#### November 25, 2024

"Dear children! In this time of the grace of expectation, I desire to call you to prayer for Advent to be prayer of the family. In a special way, little children whom I tenderly embrace, I encourage you to prayer for peace in the world; for peace to prevail over peacelessness and hatred. Thank you for having responded to my call."

#### October 25, 2024

"Dear children, At this time, when you are celebrating the day of All Saints, seek their intercession and prayers so that in union with them, you may find peace. May the Saints be your intercessors and example, that you imitate them and live holily. I am with you and intercede before God for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call."

#### September 25, 2024

"Dear children, God has sent me among you, to love you and encourage you to prayer and conversion, for peace in you and in your families and in the world. Little children, do not forget that true peace comes only through prayer, from God Who is your peace. Thank you for having responded to my call." (With Ecclesiastical approval)



## LONG-AWAITED NEWS FROM THE VATICAN: A "GREEN LIGHT" FOR MEDJGORJE!

In a historic move, the Vatican has officially granted the "nihil obstat" (nothing stands in the way) to the devotion and spiritual experience that began in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in June 1981. This marks a significant moment for the millions of faithful who have followed the alleged apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as the Queen of Peace, which six children first reported in the town over 40 years ago.

#### A Long-Awaited Decision

The Vatican's decision comes after decades of in-depth investigations, inquiries, and studies. This is now formalized in the document "Queen of Peace," signed by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and approved by Pope Francis on August 28th. The document was released on September 19, officially putting an end to a decades-long debate about Medjugorje.

At a press conference held at the Vatican Press Office, Cardinal Fernández, on behalf of the Dicastery, expressed the relief of pilgrims worldwide: "This determination indicates that the faithful can receive a positive stimulus for their Christian life through this spiritual proposal, and public worship is also authorized."

#### Spiritual Fruits Without Affirming Supernatural Origins

While the Vatican recognizes the abundance of spiritual fruits associated with the Medjugorje experience, it stopped short of affirming the supernatural character of the Marian apparitions themselves. Cardinal Fernández clarified: "We do not welcome these messages as private revelations because we do not have the certainty that they are messages from Our Lady, but we welcome them as edifying texts that can stimulate a beautiful spiritual experience\*.

(Continued)

The Vatican's approval allows the faithful to adhere to the devotion surrounding Medjugorje, emphasizing that "many positive fruits have occurred, and no negative or risky effects have spread among God's people," as noted by Cardinal Fernández.

### A Historical Path to Vatican Approval

The Vatican's formal recognition of Medjugorje devotion follows years of rigorous study, dating back to 2010 when Pope Benedict XVI established a commission led by Italian Cardinal Camillo Ruini. This commission, which included cardinals, theologians, and other experts, conducted a thorough investigation into the reported Marian apparitions and their effects. The report, submitted to Pope Francis in 2016, affirmed the supernatural nature of the first apparitions and made several significant recommendations, including placing Medjugorje under Vatican oversight.

In 2018, Pope Francis appointed a Vatican official to supervise the pastoral care of the site, further cementing Medjugorje's growing importance in the global Catholic community.

### The Role of Mary in the Life of the Faithful

Reflecting on the deep significance of Marian devotion, Father Stefano Cecchin, President of the Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, said, "God became visible through Jesus, and in the same way, Mary continues this work of inculuating with people, speaking their language, adopting their skin color, their clothing, and also becoming part of the people themselves all over the world." He emphasized how central Marian devotion is to Catholic life: "We have studies that clearly show this worldwide—every family desires their own Madonna, so to speak, dressed in their traditions because they feel her as their own mother."

Father Cecchin's remarks highlight the universal nature of Marian devotion, particularly in Medjugorje, where more than 40 million pilgrims have visited since 1981, seeking spiritual renewal.

### Looking Forward: Pilgrims Welcome

With the Vatican's official green light, the faithful are now encouraged to continue their pilgrimages to Medjugorje, to deepen their faith through this unique spiritual experience. Cardinal Fernández's words mark the culmination of decades of investigation, offering clarity and direction to millions of believers worldwide: "The faithful can go freely on pilgrimage to Medjugorje, to experience the spiritual fruits that have matured there and receive a positive stimulus for their Christian lives."

As Father Stefano concludes, "She is the one who opens the way that leads us to Jesus. In fact, Paul VI, the great Paul VI, said we cannot be Christians if we are not Marian."

Medjugorje remains a place of pilgrimage and spiritual growth, now with the full support of the Vatican, allowing millions to find peace and faith through the Queen of Peace.

***(Our gratitude to EWTN Vatican for providing the article above: September 29, 2024.)***



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## From My Heart

*Sandy Tobin*

Dear PPC Family,

My heart is so full that it is spilling over with love and blessings. In recent months, there have been some bumps in the road, but the love of “Mama Mary,” family and good friends have sustained us

Some years ago, Our Lady asked Father Leon, (now in Medjugorje), to tell everyone, on her behalf, something most extraordinary. **“I love you as if you were my only child.”** Think about that for a moment. She is talking to you and me, telling us that she loves each of us with the same intensity that she loves Jesus! There’s more:



The Visionary Vicka, said: **“Our Lady says, ‘When you have problems and difficulties, you feel like Jesus and I are far away from you. But, on the contrary, we are ALWAYS near you.’”**

As I wrote in our last *Peaceletter*, this past September’s pilgrimage to Medjugorje would be our last. Sadly, we knew the day would come, but I could never imagine it until this past year, when the aging process kicked into high gear.

One day, Mike made a comment that we were getting old. I quickly replied: **“Honey, we’re not getting old, we’re there.”** Between the two of us, we take enough prescriptions and supplements to choke a horse. We have a new appreciation for afternoon naps, and “going out” means a trip to the doctor’s office. (I would like to get a t-shirt that says, “If today is a weekday that ends in “y”, I must be in a doctor’s office.”)

I’m sure you get the picture. And, yes, I know, some of you appear in similar photos.

This past summer, I was diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation (A-Fib). Just walking across the room would leave me out of breath. Medication helped some and I had an appointment for a cardiac procedure to be done on September 30<sup>th</sup>. We were scheduled to leave for Medjugorje on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The cardiologist said, “Don’t go!”

“But I *have* to go,” I cried. “This is our last trip and we have to say ‘good-bye’ to people we love. There are people there who depend on us and we must reassure them. And 48 people are traveling with us. We can’t let them down!” Seeing my tears, the doctor reluctantly said, “Then go!” I almost kissed him.

Every one of our pilgrimages has been blessed, but this one was extraordinary! To begin with, the entire group was amazing. They came from across the USA: from Maine to California, Washington State to Florida, and many points in-between. A quiet observer would have thought they were all close friends from the start. We’ve never seen an entire group so spirit-filled, enthusiastic and congenial. For us to have this group, including three priests, at this particular time, was a special gift from Our Lady, for sure.

Mike and I went to Medjugorje a week ahead of the group. That gave us the opportunity to get some rest and attend to some humanitarian work to enable us to focus on the group upon arrival. Unfortunately,

the A-Fib came along for the ride and kept me from doing many things, even Mass on some days. But the love I felt from Mike, my wonderful husband of 51 years, Zeljka (our guide and interpreter), Zlata, (Vicka's mother), the Ivankovic Family and staff at the pensione, our many Medjugorje friends, the people we serve, and our pilgrimage group, was heart-warming, to say the least. Despite some difficulties, I knew I had made the right decision to make the journey.

But there was something more. I was keenly aware of Our Lady's presence, much the same as when we previously had the privilege of being with Vicka during her apparitions. Of course, I didn't see the Mother of God, but I felt her there, when I was alone in our room, missing so many blessed moments, like climbing Apparition Hill, visiting Vicka's apparition room, and more. Mary's presence was strongest at Mass, followed by those daily encounters, during prayer of the Rosary at the church, when she blesses everyone present and receives our prayers and petitions. You were *always* included.



It came as no surprise that I felt Our Lady among us when our group was all together at the house. In an amusing sort of way, I half expected her to take a seat at the table and lead us in saying grace! And there was no doubt in my mind that she was on the altar with Father Ryszard, Father Dan, Father Paul, and all of her "priest sons," at every Mass.

A highlight of the pilgrimage was our trip to Mostar to visit our dear friend and favorite Medjugorje priest, Fr. Svetozar Kraljevic. Now assigned to the Franciscan Monastery in that city, he welcomed our group with open arms. We celebrated mass in the day chapel of the Franciscan church, re-built since being totally destroyed during the Bosnian War. After mass, Father gave us a talk and we joined him for lunch at the Franciscan Center.

It would take many pages to tell you about all of the experiences we have had with Father Svet over the years. He is a holy, kind, gentle, intelligent and humble priest from whom we have learned so much. He can also be very entertaining, and we have several “Father Svet Stories” to prove it. Here’s just one, for your enjoyment:

Years ago, Father Svet was assigned to the monastery in Humac, not far from Medjugorje. He returned to the monastery one evening, after hours, when all the doors were locked. Having forgotten his key, he began to walk around the building, peeking through the windows, hoping he would see someone who could let him in. No luck. All lights were off and no one could be seen.

He circled the building again, in search of a second-story window where the lights were on. Eureka! Someone was still awake! With that, he picked up a stone, threw it up at the window, and “bullseye!” It hit the window! No response. A slightly larger stone would make more noise. He tried again and, again, no response. The final stone was the biggest of them all. He threw it up, it hit the window, and guess what happened? He suddenly realized that he was striking the window of his own room!

The lights were on but no one was home.

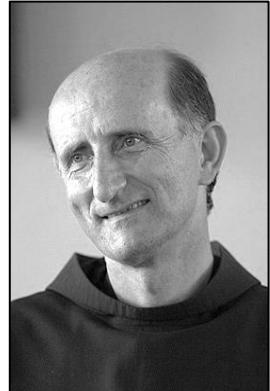
It was a tearful good-bye for the three of us, but Father promised to visit us the next time he is in the USA. The guest room is ready.

The mass on the Feast of the Cross was very special. Our Pastor, Father Ryszard, was the main celebrant. Annie, Mike and I did the readings and the Prayers of the Faithful. Father gave a special homily and the congregation responded with a round of applause. You will find a copy beginning on Page 7.

Among those in our pilgrimage group, there was one person who stood out from all the rest. Her name is Ann Dorgan, affectionately known as “Annie”. We’ve known her since she was a child and followed her life’s journey—from starring in a Ritz Crackers commercial as a teenager, to having her own consulting business where she coached and advised corporations and individuals all over the world. At one point, her career took her to Seattle, Washington but we always kept up with her, thanks to her mom, Lee Callaghan. (In this *Peaceletter*, I’ve previously written about Lee who has lived a life of service to God and others. At 94, she still lives on her own, and has a ministry to 60 people whom she texts, one at a time, every day—with a prayer, an encouraging word or something that makes us smile. She is the friend who gifted us with our first pilgrimage to Medjugorje, in 1987, and set the stage for what would become our life’s mission.)

In 2019, Annie went to Medjugorje with us and we began to talk about future possibilities for her with Pilgrimage Tours and its’ sister corporation, Pilgrims’ Peace Center. At our first group meeting in September, we joyfully announced that Annie would be taking over our pilgrimages, beginning with the next one, in May, 2025. In true form, she immediately got to work with the present group, filling the gaps left by my absence, and much more. She was and is amazing and got two thumbs up from the group.

Annie is Our Lady’s answer to our many prayers. We couldn’t imagine just shutting down when we were no longer able to travel but, if we could not find someone who is in love with Jesus and Mary, one who is kind, loving, enthusiastic, great with people, fully capable, as dedicated to our mission as we are,



Father Svet

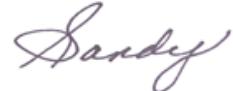
and totally trustworthy, we would, regretfully, close up shop. But Our Lady reunited us with Annie and chose her to carry on this ministry. When you meet her, the choice will be obvious. (*See more about Annie on Page 10.*)

We are going to continue PPC's humanitarian work through the transition to having Annie at the helm, and will serve in a supporting role thereafter. Our benefactors have lessened in number due to age, illness and death, so the challenge to keep this ministry alive is greater than ever. Those who continue to support PPC, some who have been with us for many years, encourage us and give us a measure of confidence about going forward. We thank you for your loving kindness and generosity. Your prayerful and financial support mean everything and we pray that you will support Annie through this transition and after, in the same manner as you have supported us. Thank you!

Saying good-bye to Medjugorje was heartbreakng, but this holy place will remain with us forever. The people of Medjugorje are a part of us. They will always be in our hearts and prayers and we are grateful to all of them, especially those we have come to know and love.. Most of all, we give thanks to the Mother of God for her apparitions in Medjugorje, and for inviting us, and millions of others, to come and have a personal encounter with her in this beautiful oasis of peace. For it is in Medjugorje that Mary reveals herself to us as our Loving Mother, and brings us directly into the heart of Jesus, her Divine Son.

We'll still be involved as long as we are able. Anything good that we have done has been in and through the Mother of God who deserves all the credit. We hope we've earned the right to be remembered as being faithful, loving, giving, caring and grateful—small pieces in the beautiful mosaic that is Medjugorje. That is how we see and will remember you, with the eyes of our hearts.

With love and prayers from both of us,




## A NEW WHEELCHAIR FOR DAVID!

We first met David at the St. Joseph the Worker facility for handicapped children. He was using a borrowed wheelchair. His parents could not afford a new one. Watching their son struggle with even more challenges, caused by an ill-fitting chair, was painful.

David's brother and Zeljka's son came to Zeljka and asked if Pilgrims' Peace Center might be able to help David. Zeljka sent details on the chair and we were on a mission.

Although PPC's Partners and Apostles of Love are few in number, you have huge, loving, generous hearts. With the money wired to Zeljka, the wheelchair was ordered by the time we left for Medjugorje!

The chair was coming from Germany and had not arrived by the time we left Medjugorje, but the grateful parents made sure to come and thank us. The mother was in tears. On behalf of David and his parents, we pass their thanks and their sincere promise of prayers to you who made this "miracle" happen. You know who you are.

The chair has since arrived and is perfect! (There are additional attachments, as well, not shown in this photo.) David loves his "new wheels" and is all smiles—except for the camera!



## THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

**Homily of Fr. Ryszard Stradomski  
Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024 – Medjugorje**

Good Morning! I am Father Ryszard Stradomski, originally from Poland, and the Pastor of St. Benedict Catholic Church in Crystal River, Florida. I am here with my parishioners, Mike and Sandy Tobin, who are celebrating their 173<sup>rd</sup> pilgrimage to Medjugorje since coming here for the first time in 1987.

There are 47 of us from all across America, who are here with the Tobins, as they thank Jesus and Mary for 37 years of bringing people to Medjugorje. They are also grateful for the privilege of providing food, housing, medical care and more to the local people of this region, during their times of greatest need. We wish Mike and Sandy a happy retirement although we know their pilgrimages and humanitarian efforts will continue.

I have a question for you: Have you ever thought about what I call “The miraculous transformation of the cross”? This is truly something to contemplate. Crucifixion is believed to be the most painful death ever known to man. But how is it that the cross, an instrument of torture and death, has been transformed into a holy symbol?

At its core, the cross represents the merging of two, polar opposites: the brutality and horror of human cruelty and the transcendent love of divine sacrifice. It stands as a powerful reminder of the depths to which humanity can sink, but also the heights to which eternal love can rise through acts of compassion, sacrifice and forgiveness.



**Fr. Ryszard**

Through his extreme suffering, Jesus gave us a profound example of selflessness by bearing the full weight of humanity's sins. Yet, by his brutal death on the cross, Jesus gave us the possibility of redemption and opened the gates of Heaven for all eternity. From that very moment, the cross became a symbol of divine love, forgiveness and spiritual renewal.

The transformation of the cross into a holy symbol invites us to reflect on our own, personal crosses, the burdens we bear, and the transforming possibilities that lie within our own struggles. The cross is a testament to the power of love and the enduring hope that can be found, even in the darkest of times. When we embrace the cross, as Jesus did, pain can be turned into wisdom, anguish into hope, and death into eternal life.

According to legend, the True Cross was found by St. Helena during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 326. She actually found three crosses on Golgotha, which corresponds to Sacred Scripture's description of Jesus being crucified, along with two criminals. But which cross was the cross of Jesus?

A woman dying of a terminal disease was brought to St. Helena and allowed to touch the crosses one by one. When she touched the third cross, she was completely healed and the cross of Jesus was identified.

Today, pieces of the True Cross are preserved in the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Rome, in the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and embedded in the big cross on the top of Mt. Krizevac, among other locations.

In 1933, Pope Pius XI requested the whole Catholic world to erect crosses on dominant mountains in honor of the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crucifixion of Jesus. Later, on the peak of Medjugorje's tallest mountain, 1,770 feet high, the **men** of Medjugorje erected that massive cross we see today, 33 feet tall and weighing fifteen tons. The **women** of Medjugorje would like us to know that it was the **women** who carried those fifteen tons of concrete, up the mountain, on their backs! Those were some **STRONG WOMEN!**

When the cross was finished, the mountain was re-named Mt. Krizevac, or "Cross Mountain" and became a Hallmark of Medjugorje long before the village even appeared on a map, or the Apparitions began. Looking back, it appears that the erection of that cross was a foreshadowing of great things to come.



3" x 5"

Back home, in my parish in Florida, we have a tradition of taking a plain, wooden cross, that fits in the palm of your hand, to someone who is sick or suffering. The palm cross is a tangible means by which we can hold tight to the promises God has given us, that He will never leave or forsake us.

Today, on the feast of the cross, I invite you to find a cross similar to this one, have it blessed, and take it home as a special reminder of this day. Hold onto it when you pray and let God take your hand in His. Through this prayerful experience, we can embrace the problems of our human condition, seek meaning in our own struggles, and strive to be compassionate and forgiving in our relationships with others.

When we truly embrace the cross, with the anguish and darkness of the crucifixion, the transforming power of the resurrection and salvation may be revealed to us **anew**, as the promise of eternal peace comes to rest in our hearts.

Then, by God's grace, when He calls each one of us, we can sing:

**"I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
and exchange it some day for a crown."**



God bless you.

**A PILGRIM'S MEMORIES**

**"My pilgrimage to Medjugorje was absolutely the ultimate, most magnificent time of my life....feeling our Holy Mother alive amongst us. I was blessed to smell Mary's roses at the Blue Cross. Glorious!"**

**Shirley Madla Komick - California**



*You are warmly invited to join us for a special Mother's Day*

## **PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE**

Get to know your Heavenly Mother more personally, who says,  
*"I love you as though you were my only child."*

Come join us for 9 days that can change your life! The pilgrimage to Medjugorje takes place where apparitions of the Blessed Mother have been occurring for the past 43 years and still happen daily.

With 37 years of experience, and directing more than 170 pilgrimages, *Pilgrimage Tours* enjoys a close relationship with Medjugorje, the priests, visionaries and villagers. Because of these relationships, you will be able to experience unique things compared to other pilgrimages. For example, you will be staying at Zlata Ivankovic's home/pensione, the mother of visionary Vicka, and you will be guided on the tour by Vicka's first cousin, Zeljka Rozic. Though we cannot promise you will meet a visionary, you will hear first-hand accounts of miracles and memories heard nowhere else.

***Our May trip will celebrate the USA Mother's Day Holiday on May 11th! This pilgrimage is for everyone as well as a special occasion for ALL mothers! Bring families, friends, or get away alone for a well-deserved renewal! Husbands, fathers, children, how about surprising the mother in your life with a gift to Medjugorje? Imagine the look on her face!***



Our Spiritual Director for this pilgrimage is **Father Michael Dion**. He is fluent in both English and Spanish! We are blessed to have him share with us his priestly spirituality, and his love for our Mother!

### **OUR PILGRIMAGE PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

- Round Trip Airfare, including taxes and luggage fees to Croatia, and private motorcoach to Medjugorje. Air-conditioned accommodations in twin-bedded rooms with private baths, double occupancy, at the beautiful pensione of Visionary Vicka's family. (A few single rooms are available with an added charge of \$350, first come, first served.) • Two delicious, home-cooked, meals are provided daily. • Excellent English-speaking, local guide/interpreter: Zeljka! Zeljka Rozic is first cousin of the visionary Vicka, and has 40 years' experience guiding pilgrims in Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. • Daily Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation; Eucharistic Adoration; Prayer of the Rosary; Presence at the Church during Our Lady's apparitions; Prayers for Healing; Climbing the Mountains; Talks by visiting and local priests, and visionaries when available. Other activities are exclusively part of Pilgrimage Tours and may be announced during the week. You will have plenty of personal time for self-prayer and reflection, shopping, and rest. • Optional participation in hands-on humanitarian activities in and around Medjugorje through Pilgrims' Peace Center, the sister organization of Pilgrimage Tours, will be announced.
- **TOTAL PACKAGE PRICING** varies based on your departure city. For those departing from **Tampa, FL** your package price is **\$3,800**; for those leaving from **Seattle, WA**, your package price is **\$3,950**. If neither Tampa or Seattle is your nearest, major airport, please call for your package price from your city. **(10% off all packages for Pilgrimage Tours' Alumni)**. We guarantee a high-quality experience at the lowest price. It is our mission to bring many pilgrims to Medjugorje and we do our best to make it as affordable as possible.

**SPACES ARE FILLING UP QUICKLY! CALL OR EMAIL FOR YOUR REGISTRATION FORM TODAY!**

ANNIE: 206.931.1865 – annie@pilgrimagetours.org

### **A SEPTEMBER PILGRIM SHARES**

***"My Medjugorje experience with Pilgrimage Tours was a life-changing experience. It deepened my bond with Our Holy Mother more than I could have imagined. It is an incredibly spiritual place, rejuvenates the soul."***

**Kurt Hettermann – Maine**



## MEET ANNIE!



Ann Callaghan Dorgan (“Annie”), is a brilliant, accomplished, spirit-filled woman, all wrapped up in wholesome goodness and the love of Jesus and Mary.

Her professional career is impressive, to say the least. In addition to founding her own consulting firm, Annie has worked as an executive advisor and coach to individuals and corporations all over the world, including Microsoft, Gates Foundation, Google, Amazon, T-Mobile, New York Life and Boeing, to name a few. She has also been a Board Trustee and Strategic Advisor to global non-profit humanitarian boards for more than ten years.

You might be asking yourself why someone with Annie’s talent and credentials would give up such a lucrative career to lead pilgrimages to Medjugorje. Let’s let her tell you herself.

### **Passing the Torch**

“Like many privileged Americans living a secular life where education, career, money and comfortable living was made a priority, I found myself knowing it wasn’t enough. Though running a business for 20 years, and serving some of the biggest brands in the world brought plenty of material abundance, my spiritual abundance was lacking; from the age of 25 through 45 years old, it was almost non-existent.

I’ve always known, trusted and believed in God, in the Trinity, in Mary, Saints, and Angels. That was never a question. However, did I have an intimate relationship with God? No. Even though I had been raised in a very devout Catholic home, and had been to Medjugorje two times prior to 2019, I was easily distracted by the less important things. Today I still describe myself as Jesus’ reluctant bride.

But in 2019 during my Pilgrimage with Pilgrimage Tours, which was my third trip to Medjugorje, everything changed. You could say that God graced me with the hunger to know Him, and Mary brought me to Him. The contemplative time climbing Apparition Hill, joining the thousands in the Mass and the Rosary, going to confession, was enough to bring me to my knees in gratitude and praise. An inner voice orientated me, “Look to Mary, she will teach you everything you need to know.” I felt held, taken care of, and with the permission of a priest, I received communion.

Upon my return to the US, my prayer life continued to grow. I was doing my best to practice in the ways Mary calls us to pray. Specifically, Mary expresses that we attend to 5 primary pillars to convert our own lives, to help transform others, to cultivate peace, and to ward off Satan. Mary refers to these as ‘The Five Stones to Ward off Your Goliath’ as David had 5 stones to ward off the actual giant. These five stones are: Prayer (especially the rosary—Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries, daily), Fasting (Wednesdays and Fridays on bread and water), Bible (have in a public place in the home and read every day), Confession (monthly), and the Eucharist (greatest prayer of all/transubstantiation).

From 2019 through 2024, my faith increased. I decided to take a year sabbatical to rest from a rigorous career, to deepen my faith, to be still, and listen to the Holy Spirit. Sandy and Mike have always been friends, and since our trip in 2019, we stayed in touch. When they mentioned they were wanting to retire and that perhaps the torch of the sister organizations, Pilgrimage Tours and Pilgrims’ Peace Center, could be passed on to me, we all three were open to the possibility and put it to prayer. I knew when they announced their last trip, I had to go. We thought it would be a good test drive to see if passing the torch was what the Lord wanted.

During the first two days of the trip in September, I remember being very tired from the travel, saying to Mary, "Mary, this travel is rigorous and not very convenient. You'll need to hit me over the head with a hammer if you want me to lead these organizations!" Not 24 hours later, the hammer started to lovingly hit.

Sign number one: Sister Briege McKenna is my confirmation sponsor. I said to myself, "Wouldn't it be nice to see Sister while I'm here?", only to chuckle to myself knowing she was scheduled to be in Poland at the time. But God has His ways, and miraculously, while waiting in line to get into Mass, who is walking straight toward me, just a few feet away, but Sister Briege McKenna. Out of 365 days a year, we "just so happen" to be 3 feet away from each other on the same day. I hadn't seen her in 40 years! We were reacquainted to say the least!

Sign number two: In Mass that morning, the inspired celebrant said, "If you are here, you were called. If God calls you, it will not be convenient. Do you think it was convenient for Mary to say, 'Yes', or Joseph to wed and protect the Holy Family, or Peter to leave his full net of fish and home-life to follow Jesus? No, it wasn't convenient. We need to say 'yes', regardless of the inconveniences it may bring." Okay, I'd have to be deaf not to hear that one.

Sign number three: The miracle of the sun. The three times I had visited Medjugorje prior to this past September, I had heard other pilgrims say they witnessed the miracle of the sun, but I had not seen it. I thought, 'Well, as Jesus said, blessed are those who believe without seeing', and thought the miracle of the sun was not for me. On the last day prior to leaving however, I had been at mass followed by adoration. While walking to the pensione, I was drawn to look at the sun. Mind you, it was 12:00 Noon, clear skies, and 90 degrees—VERY BRIGHT!

At first I was afraid, I looked away, then drawn again, I looked at it and there it was, the 'round Eucharist like disk' as people describe it, in front of the sun, protecting my eyes while dancing and jumping joyously. I went to my knees and gazed at it for about 6 minutes. Trying to capture it on camera, unsuccessfully, I heard this sweet and calming 'voice' say, "My dear, this is for you too." It was as if Mary was to say, you are among my children, and this moment with the sun is also for you.

After the first two signs, I said, 'Okay Mary, I say 'Yes', and I won't look back. Now how? I heard a stilling response, "Don't overthink it, I'll take care of everything." And I believe it. Since we've returned, Sandy, Mike, and I continue to follow the Hand of Mary. We have scheduled the next trip for May 5<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and people are already signing up. We have the gift of Father Michael Dion joining us as our Spiritual Director, and the transitioning of the organizations are in motion.

Sandy and Mike have built a solid infrastructure over the years which Mary and Jesus want to see continued. So my career now takes a turn toward obedience to this mission. Together, we ALL can see to it that the torch stays aflame. Thank you Mary, thank you Trinity, thank you Sandy and Mike, thank you pilgrims; may we continue to be in service and adhere to His call, coming to us through His Holy Mother."



**ANNIE AND ZELJKA**  
**Our Lady's Dream Team**

**A PILGRIM'S DESCRIPTION**  
*"I made my 15th pilgrimage to Medjugorje with Pilgrimage Tours/Pilgrims' Peace Center, this past September. It is a place of peace and prayer. I like to call it "the front porch of Heaven!"'*

Jan Young – Iowa



**PILGRMS' PEACE CENTER  
PILGRIMAGE TOURS, INC.  
9132 W Wisteria Lane  
Crystal River, FL 34429**

**TO:**

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## **A TOBIN CHRISTMAS STORY**



Our oldest son was born with congenital hypotonia. Doctors predicted that, hopefully, he would walk between the ages of two and two and a half. He would never crawl but would, one day, just get up and walk. (Hard to believe.) There was nothing to do for him but wait, hope and pray. Meanwhile, we were also awaiting to adopt a baby through Catholic Charities. Christmas was coming soon and I was eager to hold this precious child in my arms. My mother, a very practical woman, said, "You're not going to get your baby until Jimmy can walk. God knows that carrying a two-year-old around, and a new baby, would be too much." A few weeks later, we came home from choir practice and found Jimmy, with my parents, right where we had left him. He was sitting on the floor, playing with his blocks, a favorite pastime. He looked up at me and said, "Jimmy gonna' walk by self." **Then he stood up and walked!** He never stumbled or fell and held onto nothing. It was as though he had been walking for months. I wrote in his baby book, "Jimmy walked for the first time on **November 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:22 p.m.** Three weeks later, that exciting call came from Catholic Charities. "We have a baby for you!" Through my tears, I asked all the questions. The baby was a **girl!** She was three weeks old, born on **November 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:22 p.m!** Incredible! The next morning, she was safely in my arms and on her way home. This beautiful miracle had Jesus and Mary written all over it. We named her "Christine Marie" in their honor. We had her for 50 blessed years; but the miracle shared by Christy and her brother, remains in our hearts as **unmistakable proof** of how intimately Jesus and Mary are involved in the lives of each and every one of us.

## **OUR CHRISTMAS WISH FOR YOU!**

**It is said that, "Those who do not have Christmas in their hearts, will not find it under the tree."**

In St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he says, "Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So, two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God." *2 Corinthians 12-13*

This Scripture passage reminds us of you, our PPC Family. You have Christmas in your hearts all year long. For that, we are grateful. We pray that this Christmas will be especially blessed for you and all the members of your family. Merry Christmas!



*Mike, Sandy and Annie*