

August 2, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Over the last many weeks we have been considering whether time and history is moving toward the fulfillment of Christ's promises for the ultimate triumph of His Kingdom. We have reflected on Jesus' prophesies about a time of tribulation, a time of peace, and ultimately His second Coming in glory. We have also been reflecting upon some of the writings and prophecies of the Saints, popes, and other visionaries in the history of the Church. The appearances of Jesus, Mary, and the Saints in messages of private revelation to believers over the last several centuries have given an insight that we may be moving toward a definitive time where humanity will be awakened to the Lord in a miraculous way and have an opportunity to repent and turn back to Him before some of the foretold events of the coming of Christ's Kingdom occur. As we have mentioned before, we are not bound to accept or believe in "private revelations" given in addition to Scripture and Tradition. However, if they do not contradict Scripture and Tradition given us by Jesus and His Apostles, and if they are not condemned, or are even approved by the Church, we may do well to integrate them into our belief and practice of Faith. Application of these messages in our lives may help us to be better prepared for the events that will take place even possibly in the near future. Moreover, Christ is always calling us to a deeper conversion to Him now no matter what the future may bring.

One of the most recent instances of messages from heaven is the reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to six young people in 1981 in a small village called Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina (formerly in Yugoslavia). These six young people who were between the ages of 12 and 21 at that time began receiving messages from the Virgin Mary on July 24, 1981. July of this year marked the 39th anniversary of these messages. The names of the six young people who are now well into their maturity are Ivan, Jakov, Marija, Mirjana, Vicka, and Ivanka. Some still receive messages and some do not. On the 25th of each month a public message comes from Our Lady to the world.

Mary came to reeducate us on how to live a Christian life. She encourages during almost every apparition to recommit ourselves to five essential ways every Christian is called to live as a disciple of Jesus. Please consider reintroducing these five practices into your life of faith and you will be drawn closer to Christ. Our Lady urges conversion of heart to her Son through Daily Prayer (of the Rosary), Fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, Daily Reading of the Bible, Confession at least monthly, and participation at Holy Mass. She also encourages participation in Eucharistic Adoration. On July 25, 2020, the 39th Anniversary of the first apparition, Mary encouraged us with these words she gave to Mirjana:

Dear children! In this peaceless time in which the devil is harvesting souls to draw them to himself, I am calling you to persevering prayer, so that in prayer you discover the God of love and hope. Little children, take the Cross in your hands. May it be your encouragement for love to always win, in a special way now when the Cross and faith are rejected. You be a reflection and an example with your lives that faith and hope are still alive and a new world of peace is possible. I am with you and intercede for you before my Son, Jesus. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Mary reminds us that it is so important to get back to the basics of being real Christians because so many of us have forgotten how to live life with God and many are lost in a place of unhappiness because of it.

While these apparitions and messages of the Blessed Virgin Mary have not been officially sanctioned by the Catholic Church, the Holy Father has recently allowed pilgrimages to Medjugorje to resume after a period where the Church was cautioning against official pilgrimages there until there would be official approval of the apparitions. The move by Pope Francis to allow official pilgrimages again is a sign that approval of the original apparitions and messages may be pending.

In addition to the public messages and other personal messages, Mary told the young visionaries they were to receive 10 "secrets" from her. When each had received the 10 secrets, she would stop appearing to them. At this point, most of the visionaries have stopped receiving the visions, so that could mean that the time to the fulfillment of the promises will be occurring soon.

*"Once Our Lady has stopped appearing there will be three warnings given to the world. These warnings will be in the form of events on earth. They will occur within Mirjana's lifetime, and Mirjana will be a witness to them. Ten days before each of the warnings, she will advise the priest she chose for this task (Father Petar Ljubicic), who will then pray and fast with Mirjana for seven days. Then, three days before each warning is to take place, Fr. Petar will announce to the world what, where, and when the warning will take place. Fr. Petar has no choice, and must reveal each warning. After the first warning, the other two will follow in a rather short period of time. That interval will be a period of great grace and conversion. After the permanent, visible, supernatural, and indestructible sign appears on the mountain where Our Lady first appeared in Medjugorje, there will be little time for conversion. For that reason, the Blessed Virgin invites us to urgent conversion and reconciliation. The permanent sign will lead to many healings and conversions before the secrets become reality. According to Mirjana, the events predicted by the Blessed Virgin are near. By virtue of this experience, Mirjana proclaims to the world: 'Hurry, be converted; open your hearts to God.' The ninth and tenth secrets are serious. They concern chastisement for the sins of the world. Punishment is inevitable, for we cannot expect the whole world to be converted. The punishment can be diminished by prayer and penance, but it cannot be eliminated. Mirjana says that one of the evils that threatened the world, the one contained in the seventh secret, has been averted, thanks to prayer and fasting. That is why the Blessed Virgin continues to encourage prayer and fasting: '**You have forgotten that with prayer and fasting you can ward off wars, suspend natural laws.**' "* Taken from www.medjugorje.org/overview.htm

Whether we believe the veracity of the apparitions, the messages themselves, and the many conversions and miracles that have taken place when people have visited this place are certainly a sign that God is working in our world today to bring us back to Him so that we will be prepared for the coming of His Kingdom. We urge everyone to live the five spiritual weapons that Mary calls us to live so that the world will be converted to her Son and avert what appears to be a difficult time ahead for all people of the world. Jesus and Mary you are our only hope! Hear our prayer for peace and conversion of heart! Help us to be ready for the days ahead always living with hope and trust in you!

As we have mentioned week after week, it is time to pray, especially the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, time to repent and come to Confession, time to come to Eucharist Adoration and Holy Mass if you are physically able, and time to fast, do penance and acts of charity for the conversion of others. As we have also been encouraging over the last four

months, please remember that the grace of Christ that we receive in His Sacraments is our sure refuge during these days. We are all being called to find refuge in Confession and to Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. Once again, included below, is the liturgical schedule with additional Confession times, Mass times, and adoration times. Weekday Mass times may be adjusted on special days so please remember to check the parish Mass intention section of the bulletin to confirm weekday Mass times. Please remember the Catholic precept to confess sins in the Sacrament of Penance and to receive Holy Communion at least once during or near the Easter Season. Confessions are done in a socially distanced way in the church or outside on the parish grounds. We have many extra confession times scheduled. If you are unable to come to church or someone is homebound and in need of any of the Sacraments, please let us know and the priest or deacon will come to you! May the Risen Lord come soon!

In Jesus and Mary ,

Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ and Deacon Ed