

## Mary, Best Evangelist in the World Today

Dear Friends,

Let me begin this evening by sharing a marvel with you. God is so gracious. He gives us so many chances to “get it right”. We could have got along with one Gospel in the New Testament, but He gave us four! We could have got along with just Medjugorje, or just Damascus, or just Kibeho, or just San Nicolas, or just Amsterdam, or just Naju, or just Hrushiv, or just Akita, or just Betania, or just Cuapa, not to mention Fatima and Lourdes; but He has given us all of them, and more besides!

In particular, He confirmed Amsterdam for us by Akita, half-a-world away in a totally different culture. And He compels us to take Our Lady’s mission in Medjugorje seriously by substantially duplicating it in San Nicolas, Argentina, simultaneously, half-a-world away. This is such a grace because, although there has been controversy around Medjugorje from the beginning due to the local politics – both church and civil – there has been no controversy at all around San Nicolas. The settings are so different, the visionaries are so different (six children in Medjugorje, one grandmother in San Nicolas), the manner of experiencing the apparitions is so different, even the confirming signs are different. But the mission and the contents of the messages are largely the same. The non-controversial one serves to substantiate the controversial one. If you have trouble with Medjugorje, you can ignore it and still end up in the same place spiritually by paying attention to San Nicolas. What a grace!

Because the messages at San Nicolas were all finished by February 11, 1990, the Church was able to follow its usual guidelines and accredit their validity **after the fact**. They were published in Spanish with the Bishop’s “Imprimatur” on November 14, 1990. The visionary, Gladys

Quiroga de Motta, is still alive, a quiet stigmatic today whose holiness and subsequent life have adorned the beauty and power of the messages she received. But because the messages at Medjugorje are still on-going after almost 34 years, the Church has not been able to apply its normal procedures of accreditation. We are still in the thick of it. But there are strong signs that the Holy Father, who supported Medjugorje while Cardinal/Archbishop of Buenos Aires, will soon underscore its validity and importance.

Assuming that Our Blessed Mother's mission at Medjugorje is authentic, we might well ask why she would choose a place for it where conflict was inevitable, under a hostile Communist regime for 10 years which fed the world a whole string of lies about what was actually happening there, and also in a terribly divided Church community in which neither side was prepared to acknowledge anything good about the other side. Doubtless she had her reasons, among which was the quality of the faith of local people – strong though far from perfect. But even more to the point, Medjugorje is ideally located to serve as the launching pad for revitalizing the Church in Europe and for reconciling Christians of all kinds – Catholic, Orthodox & Protestant, also Christians and Muslims.

This latter fact has already proved its worth in Europe. Cardinal Schoenborn, the Archbishop of Vienna and the chief architect of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, who spent Christmas in Medjugorje a few years ago and hosted visionaries Marija and Ivan in a great celebration for a packed congregation and hundreds of priests at his cathedral in Vienna, has said that seminaries in Austria would be empty without Medjugorje, but because of Medjugorje they have the finest crop of seminarians he has yet seen. So while the controversy goes on, the Church reaps the benefits worldwide; and people, like our own kids and their kids, are irrevocably converted to the Catholic Faith. Medjugorje is

rightly called “the Confessional of the World”. Every priest who hears confessions there is overwhelmed by the sheer number and variety of people whose lives are invaded and forever changed by their encounter with Heaven there. Since God has given me the grace to hear confessions in four languages, you can ask Carolyn what state of awe, exhilaration, and exhaustion I am in after serving Jesus there in a confessional for hours on end.

For the sake of all these people, in a location at once remote and accessible, it has been worth all the predictable controversy hands down, in my view. You can ask some of our local pilgrims for their opinion.

And it stretches around the world. The Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, thanks to hundreds of pilgrims who followed their Bishop to Medjugorje, has been remarkably revitalized. In the words of retired Bishop Denis Croteau, “Medjugorje is all it is claimed to be.... I’ve tried all sorts of things in my diocese to transform my faithful, because we live in a dysfunctional society, and I have spent thousands and thousands of dollars on sessions and workshops. But after having spent all that money, I did not accomplish 10% of what is accomplished here in one pilgrimage.” I can tell you as one who knew that diocese well 25 years ago and who spent a week there recently, the Bishop is not exaggerating. They have experienced a resurrection from the dead up there. That’s all you can call it.

I’ll have to skimp on the fascinating details in order to compress the rest of this into the allotted time. But let me once again advise you that you can find those details reliably set out in very user-friendly fashion in God-Sent, both for San Nicolas and for Medjugorje. The Internet is also a valuable resource for both of them.

So what can we say briefly about San Nicolas, Argentina?

On September 25, 1983, Gladys Quiroga de Motta, a grandmother with no formal education and no knowledge of the Bible or theology, told friends that she had seen the Virgin Mary that day. Thus began a series of almost daily apparitions numbering nearly 1900 in all, that lasted until February, 1990, most of them involving messages from Mary, but seventy-eight of them involving messages directly from Jesus. During this period, the local Bishop had three audiences with the Pope, initiated a Commission of Inquiry in accordance with Church law – including an extensive investigation and a report of the results by the great Mariologist Fr. Rene Laurentin – and provided pastoral oversight and support to Gladys. The beautiful sanctuary requested by Our Blessed Mother and dedicated to her under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary was built on the riverside location she had indicated to Gladys, to be accessible to all people. And the simple fearless messages, most of them brief and to the point, spoke and still speak from the heart of the Mother straight into the heart of her children, by the thousands, drawing them back to Jesus out of a life of bondage to alcohol, drugs, satanic music, easy sex, violence, all the ingredients of hell-on-earth.

It's fascinating to read how Fr. Laurentin applied the various measures of authenticity to Gladys to determine her reliability. She passed them all with flying colours, including hand-writing analysis by European experts who had no idea whose hand-writing they were analyzing. But as often happens, God supplied an additional confirming sign tailored especially for this situation. At the end of many of her messages, Our Blessed Mother appended a passage from Sacred Scripture which throws additional light on the message and draws people deeply into the Bible. These passages come from all parts of the Bible. Their astounding variety and aptness, coming through biblically illiterate Gladys, on top of all the other evidence, make it all but impossible for any of us, including theologians and Church leaders, to dismiss her messages.

A few years ago I went through the messages in detail, arranged them by subject, and shared them with our Bible study group in Bashaw over one winter. It was fascinating. That's how I learned that all the basic messages of Our Mother received by the visionaries in Medjugorje were also being given by her at the same time to Gladys de Motta in faraway San Nicolas in southern South America! So it doesn't really matter which one you quote: you'll be getting the same message in two different contexts, with parallel results in the lives of people.

As far as the actual contents of the messages are concerned, they are a mixture of tender and urgent appeals and of basic teachings of the truths of the Faith. The appeals are from a mother's aching heart aimed at her wandering children, calling them to return through her to Jesus who alone can protect them from Satan's determined efforts to deceive and destroy them. She can be very graphic and specific in spelling this out: Referring to a notorious nearby discotheque, she warned in essence: "Do you realize that the places where you now are hanging out are the very gateway to hell? You have no business being anywhere near such places. Satan is there using drugs, easy sex and diabolical music to cut you off from God and take you captive. Jesus is not in those places. There is nothing there for you but death. Come to your Mother while you still can and let her lead you back to Jesus. Come back to life!"

As for her teaching, it is possible to say that the catechesis offered by our Blessed Mother in both places, San Nicolas and Medjugorje, is a feminine version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which is essentially and rightly a masculine work. They dovetail beautifully, complementing each other like husband and wife. This is far from the first time that the teachings of the Church have been commended to the faithful by the teachings of the Church's Mother.

If you were to ask me now who my favourite theologian is, I would have to tell you that it is Mary. I find it impossible to compare her teachings and insights to those of anyone else, as if you could set them side by side on an equal footing. Hers is not just one opinion among others, any more than Jesus' teaching was. Because she perfectly mirrors the teaching of her Son, she, like Him, teaches as one having authority, and not like even our best contemporary theologians. For some, she is a breath of fresh air. For others she is a stone of stumbling. How can that be? Well, if I am heavily invested in a point of view at odds with Church teaching (on subjects like the role of women, the authority of the Pope, the priesthood, the meaning of the Mass, etc.) and I discover that she supports Church teaching, I will find it easy to think of reasons for ignoring her. I have a few friends whose **stated** reason for paying no attention to Medjugorje is that it has not yet been accredited by the Church. But their **real** reason is that she is so obviously not “pro-choice”, or that she is so obviously in favour of “traditional marriage”.

Back to Argentina, the messages given through Gladys were simple, varied and rich in content. Let me share a few of them with you now.

She spoke much about the special dangers facing the young. Here is an example: **“My dear daughter, how sadly lost youth is! Drug addiction and the easy life – that’s the ideal the evil one has set before the young. Sin, committed in so many different ways, makes them stray further and further from God. If only they will turn their eyes toward the Mother of God, the Mother will make them find God again. If only they will enter deeply into the Mother’s heart they will be able to hear the Lord’s voice.”**

*(September 21, 1987)*

Early on she announced the purpose of her coming and her messages: **“My daughter, because of a few good people, many bad people will be saved. I mean that with prayer, the constant prayer of true Christians, many will reach salvation. This explains why I am coming to you and what I am telling you, which, in the final analysis, is the Lord’s Word. A soul cannot be saved without being converted.”**

*(December 15, 1986)*

On February 18, 1983, she had lamented: **“In all the places of the world where my messages have been given, they would seem to have been preached in cemeteries. (Think of France!) People did not respond as the Lord wished. That is why your people were chosen...to respond to the call of the Lord. Read Ps. 107B:35-42.”**

So many of her messages from Medjugorje are echoed here. She says, for example, that the frequency and length of her visits on earth in our day are the direct result of the faithless times in which we live and the fact that the eternal Father has sent her to us because the world, having rejected the Son, will find it harder to reject the Mother. She spoke often of the importance of our Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Rosary as our weapon against Satan, of the need to meet Jesus as often as possible in Mass and Adoration, and of her own place in our life and devotions as our heavenly companion. She often unmasked evil for us in her messages and gave us many pointed prayers. She asked all of us, but especially priests, to be faithful to the Holy Father, whom she called “Christ’s humble servant”; and she gave Gladys many fascinating flashbacks on what it was like to be Jesus’ mother at various points during His earthly life.

If you google “Our Lady of the Rosary, San Nicolas” you can have a virtual tour of her lovely sanctuary there, and you can participate in the joy of the young people from all over South America whom she has drawn back to Jesus and to the lively celebration of our Catholic Faith.

With this brief taste of San Nicolas, we move to Medjugorje for another brief taste that I hope will give you an appetite for even more.

We are going to end this evening by asking Mirjana in her own words to give us the basic Medjugorje account of the coming and message of Mary there as Queen of Peace. But first I want to recommend to you, besides God-Sent, the books by Wayne Weible (especially The Message), by Fr. Svet Kraljevic (especially The Apparitions of Our Lady at Medjugorje and Pilgrimage), by Janice T. Connell (especially The Visions of the Children) and others by Sister Emmanuel, Fr. Rene Laurentin, Denis Nolan, and many more. She has come, she tells us, to show the world that God is real, and that Heaven, hell, and purgatory are real. She asks priests to believe strongly, to be men of prayer, and to be available to the people. She is our John the Baptist, she says, calling the world to repentance and openness to God’s future. She says that by seeking to build a civilization without God we are instead building a hell on earth. We are not to forget that life on earth is short and eternity is forever, that all religions are to be respected although they are not all equal, and that God loves all people equally. And she warns that the woes of the Western Church can be healed only by a return to the confessional. Medjugorje itself is the model for this. We’ll hear more about this tomorrow night at our Lenten Penitential.

And now I will cede the last words to Mirjana. These are excerpts from a talk she gave in Chicago on September 12, 1998. It is similar to talks we have heard from her in Medjugorje itself.

[Excerpts from Mirjana's Saturday Talk, Chicago, September 12, 1998]

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You know that His Holiness John Paul II loved Medjugorje and paid a lot of attention to Our Lady's messages, as we have learned from his private correspondence with friends in Poland, published after his death. You may not know that when he visited Argentina in 1987 he made a special trip to Rosario, the cathedral city for San Nicolas, and granted an audience to the local Bishop to encourage him to study Our Blessed Mother's messages through Gladys and to promote them in every way he could.

Why? Because by this time there was no question in his mind as to who is the most effective evangelist in the world today, who is our John the Baptist.

Our Father  
Hail Mary  
Glory Be  
Hymn  
Blessing