

Message and Meaning of Medjugorje

Sermon delivered in Medjugorje by Fr. Dave Heney, April 24, 1998

Background: In 1981, several young people in the village of Medjugorje (Med-ju-gor-ria) in a war-torn area of the former Yugoslavia reported receiving daily visions and messages from Mary about peace and conversion to Christ. In 1998, I visited Medjugorje for the first time. This sermon is my understanding of the meaning of the messages and was delivered at St. James Church in Medjugorje on Friday of the Second Week of Easter, April 24, 1998. The Gospel is John 6:1-15; the Multiplication of Loaves.

I mentioned at the start of Mass that I'm from Los Angeles. Well, I'm also a little nervous. I have wanted to come here for several years, and today I feel honored to pray with you this morning, and also to wear these vestments given by the people of our pilgrimage group. They are wonderful people and come from many different parts of the west coast of the United States. We actually met for the first time at the airport, yet became good friends quickly. Let me welcome all of you, as friends, also, from wherever you are, to this special place. Can I see by a show of hands how many of you have just recently arrived in Medjugorje in the last few days? Well, I know you have jet lag, so I won't talk long!

I was very happy to arrive here last Saturday night. I was even happier two days later when our luggage arrived. (...*Alitalia!*) You see, our group is on pilgrimage here. It seems our luggage was also on pilgrimage, ...just different from ours.

I was so glad to see how our group became friends so fast. Of course, wearing the same clothes for a few days we wondered how long we would remain friends. Our great guides, Lydia and Sylvia, did a great job taking care of us and getting our luggage safely to us.

I remember those first few days here. It was not warm and sunny as it is now. You see, I'm from California so when the temperature gets below 60 degrees, I call 911. Last Sunday and

Monday it was raining and cold, ...and I was cold and wet. But let me tell you what was happening inside my heart. I remember my thoughts as I walked around town. I would see someone walk by and say to myself, "I wish I had that person's coat," or "I wish I had that nice big umbrella," or "I wish I had that person's bigger hotel room." Little thoughts of envy, jealousy, and desire would creep into my heart. I know it was just about little things but they become the seed for more serious problems. Those thoughts of jealousy and envy deep in our heart can cause real unrest. We look at what others have and desire them and that causes us to *not have peace*. We get a deep and unsettled feeling of inner turmoil and unrest. We are just not at peace with ourselves or anyone else. We might even blame God for our troubles.

At any given moment the world can be divided into those who *have* and those who *have not*. It may be about things like warm clothes, or money, or deeper spiritual things, even here in Medjugorje. We might wonder why that person has access to the visionaries, or some special spiritual event, or a better touring schedule, and I don't. We might resent that this person has *more* faith in God or Mary than ourselves. We might resent another's *lack* of faith. We can see this jealousy among nations as well; Croatians have this land while Serbs have that, or Muslims want this or that legal privilege. In the U.S. we wonder why this person has *that* job or lives in *that* house and drives *that* car and we don't. We get jealous about what others *have* and resentful about what we *don't have*. These are the

beginning stages of a cycle of resentment that, if unchecked, can build to violence and even death. From Cain and Abel to right here in Medjugorje we can still get filled with envy for what another has and we don't,...and still we cannot find peace.

Today we heard the Gospel of the multiplication of loaves. Perhaps on that hilltop in Israel Jesus heard the same kinds of comments I was making myself right here in Medjugorje. He had just finished speaking when the apostles realized it was time for lunch. But not everyone had food. On that hilltop also there were "haves" and "have-nots." Perhaps Jesus heard people saying similar comments like, "I wish I had that person's lunch, or I wish I had those loaves and fishes," or even, "I'm glad I'm not as stupid as that person who didn't bring any lunch at all!"

Jesus knew He would have to do something. These comments, if left unchecked, could also lead to violence. The problem wasn't just hunger. It was jealousy, desire, envy, and want. If the problem was "not having" or coveting, desiring, and getting another's food, then Jesus would resolve it by giving food in *abundance*. He would flood them with bread, more than they could possibly eat. He began with the food they brought Him (He did not create it out of thin air) and multiplied it, making over twelve bags of leftovers. Only God can provide this vast supply of food for the soul. From this "fullness" the people would no longer desire *taking* from each other. From this fullness they would no longer resent the fullness of others. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is a miracle of fullness, of abundance, or plenty. This fullness and abundance would finally bring *peace* to the crowd.

Peace is the very name that Mary is called here in Medjugorje. She is the QUEEN OF PEACE. Look at the five "steps" from the messages of Mary. They are the five ways to finding peace between each other, with God, and within our self as well. Each one brings the fullness and abundance of

God's love. From that experience of fullness we discover ourselves finally at peace with God, each other, and our self. When we feel God's abundant love it conquers unrest and brings peace.

Mary talks about these five ways to receive this love. **(1) Prayer** and praying the rosary moves our heart and brings an experience of the presence of God and the fullness of His love right to us. **(2) Scripture** moves our minds to understand the fullness of God's love. **(3) Confession** brings the unbelievable fullness of God's forgiveness, which is undeserved, and always seems like too much for our sins. **(4) Fasting** reminds us, by doing without things for a day or two, of the "fullness" we have already and have always had. Finally we come to **(5) the Eucharist**, 2000 years later, is still bread that brings peace. Jesus is still working this miracle today and right here at this Mass. We will actually take the Lord inside of ourselves to fill us up. As you receive Him at this Mass, let your hearts be opened to feel that fullness that can only come from God.

With this powerful feeling of the fullness of God's love inside your heart we will not resent another's good fortune, we will not look down on those in the "have not" group, or be jealous of those who have a lot, (even their umbrellas). Of course, we need to practice these five steps everyday. Old habits die hard and we need to have a daily or weekly reminder from where this fullness comes. At this mass let us renew our promise to practice these five steps, "to live the message of Medjugorje." We need to. Look at the peace that will come. With this fullness of God's love for us we will be glad to welcome those who believe in Medjugorje, *as well as the unbelievers, or, as Mary calls them; those who have not felt God's love yet.* With this fullness we can precisely live the love that will inspire them. God will give us so much that at the end of the day we can lie down on our bed at night and have so much love in our hearts left ...*that we could fill over twelve bags full!*

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