

E. Michael Jones' *The Medjugorje Deception*

Vindicated by Pope Benedict XVI

Last week, Pope Benedict XVI stripped the priestly powers from Fr. Tomislav Vlasic for his part in running the shame known worldwide as "Medjugorje." Twenty years ago, E. Michael Jones warned the world in his book *The Medjugorje Deception* that the whole enterprise at Medjugorje was a work of the devil from top to bottom. But twenty years ago throngs of people were so enamored by the possibility of Marian apparitions at Medjugorje that Jones was often ridiculed as a spiritual bigot. As Scripture states, the reward comes to those who wait, and so it has come to Dr. Jones. Fortunately, as you will see in this interview, he is too humble to take credit, so I told him that I would do it for him. I inquired of Dr. Jones to allow me to post the exclusive interview he recently had with one of the largest and most popular Serbian newspapers, *Politika*. In it, Jones condenses his book down to a few short statements. From it, you will learn the real reason Medjugorje was so popular. It was all about politics and money, the usual motivations for godless people. Without further ado, here is the interview.

Robert Sungenis

Politika: According to the report issued by Vatican on Sunday, the Pope Benedict the Sixteenth had defrocked the Catholic priest Tomislav Vlasic, responsible for establishing a cult of Our Lady in Medjugorje in Herzegovina. This happened 28 years after the first Medjugorje apparition and raises many questions. First, and as is known, the question of Medjugorje has been neglected by Vatican for such a long time. Does the new Pope have some new visions about this phenomena or some new facts, that is what has made him make such a decision?

Jones: No, I don't think there has been any new information about Medjugorje for at least ten years. The main difference is the pope himself. When I met with then ordinary of the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno, Bishop Pavao Zanic, in 1988 he told me that Cardinal Ratzinger, who is now Pope Benedict XVI, was in complete agreement that the so-called apparitions of Medjugorje were a hoax orchestrated by the renegade order of Franciscans in his diocese. Bishop Zanic then told me that he presented the same evidence to Pope John Paul II. "And what did the pope say?" I asked. "The pope said nothing," Zanic replied. This confirms what I learned in my meetings with Cardinal Ratzinger. He was convinced that Medjugorje was a hoax from the beginning. The main reason for the inactivity in Rome was Pope John Paul II. The main reason for recent activity is Pope Benedict XVI, not new evidence.

Politika: Stripping of rank is the most severe punishment for severe crimes. In this case they have been tolerated for 28 years. In the Middle Ages one could easily be burnt at the stake...

Does the Pope's decision mean that Vatican is determined to stop the whole story about Medjugorje or just to punish one of its culprits, one big Franciscan businessman?

Jones: I think this is the first step in the Vatican's campaign to delegitimize Medjugorje. Anyone familiar with the story knows that the apparitions were the creation of two Franciscan priests: Tomislav Vlasic and Jozo Zovko. Children do not create world-wide movements generating millions of dollars a year in revenue.

Politika: What do you expect to happen next?

Jones: When the true story gets out, bishops across the world will begin to ban the "seers" from their dioceses. This has already happened in the Diocese of Joliet, outside of Chicago. Ivan Dragicevic cannot longer show up in parishes their and fleece unsuspecting Catholics of their money.

Politika: How will the Croatian bishopric react?

Jones: The Croatian bishops in general will say that the findings on Vlasic confirm their verdict of "non constat supernaturalite," which was handed down in 1990. Bishop Ratko Peric will say that the defrocking of Father Vlasic will confirm what he and the late Bishop Pavao Zanic have said all along. Medjugorje was the invention of a renegade and rebellious groups of Franciscan priests who have used this hoax to enrich themselves financially at the expense of unity in the Church and of good relations with the Orthodox.

Politika: Apart from Franciscan, some other monastic orders have also supported Medjugorje. What will happen to them?

Jones: Juridically, nothing will happen, but there will be widespread disillusionment when the denial that has been going on for so long becomes impossible to maintain any longer. Bishop Zanic said that the ultimate fruits of Medjugorje will be division and disillusionment in the Church.

Politika: Medjugorje has to do with abuse of the psychological and spiritual state of the people from the areas suffering from poverty and faced with various turbulences. It was easy to manipulate with them, as testified by the earliest historical events all over the globe. In this case, huge amount of money were at stake, people even bequeathed their inheritances to the church, leaving their families without them. How will this problem be solved?

Jones: If you're talking about donations to the rebellious Franciscans of Caplinja, Siroki Brijeg, Medjugorje, etc, those assets are held by the Franciscans in trust for the Church and could be appropriated by the bishop of Mostar. Whether they can be returned to the people who gave them under false pretenses is another matter. However, the real issue here is not Church law. The real issue is police enforcement of the law. When Bishop Peric when to Caplinja to talk to the

rebellious priests there, he was physically assaulted. Neither the Vatican nor the Bishop has a police force that can enforce canon law.

Politika: If we look back, we can see that all through the history and in many regions, during turbulent times, social crises, insecurity, spiritual fall... take place, there are many more such things and phenomena attributed as miracles, salvation etc. People believe in seeing saints on tree barks, there are stones in churches and monasteries which are only to be touched and one is saved from all troubles and sufferings... Does this happen today in developed and peaceful countries?

Jones: It depends on what you mean by developed and peaceful countries. It certainly has happened in the United States. Why it happened is a matter of conjecture. In my book *The Medjugorje Deception*, I claim that Medjugorje was one of the sequels to the cultural revolution which took place in the United States in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. When confronted with a Church that seemed determined to destroy itself, many Catholics sought refuge in what seemed to be a reassuring message which came directly from the Blessed Mother. The result of the Church's inadequate response to modernity was a host of phony apparitions, and of the Medjugorje was the most famous, largely because it corresponded in time to the Reagan Administration's eventually successful crusade against Communism.

Politika: None of the pilgrims to Medjugorje. have ever seen anything, there is always some medium who can see the Virgin Mary, whereas a large crowd of people 'communicate' with her, believe in what they actually don't see. Visions can be hallucinations rather than actual seeing, but all this goes so far so that the medium is glorified. What will happen to those media? It could happen that they now claim that they have seen Gospa again sending word to the Pope to bring the Franciscan back...

Jones: First of all, I disagree with you when you say that the pilgrims who have gone to Medjugorje have ever seen anything. Shortly after the publication of *The Medjugorje Deception*, I got a call from a Unitarian from Boston who had gone to Medjugorje with a number of pious Italian ladies from Boston. He then related the following incident: While standing in his room waiting to go down to dinner, he saw a naked woman walk through the open doorway to his room. She then walked across the room and then walked through the wall. Medjugorje, I learned from a priest who heard confessions there for years, is infested with evil spirits. This charge came out one year ago when the bishop of Mostar released his dossier on Tomislav Vlasic. In addition to sexual improprieties, Vlasic was also guilty of trafficking in spirits. Hence, the demonic infestation at Medjugorje.

As St. John of the Cross said, "The devil rejoices when people seek private revelations." That is so because they are so easy to fabricate.

Politika: Based on some talks with some Croats and some reports, it can be concluded that Medjugorje. is a mass movement which, on a subconscious level, excuses the bloody things

done, mostly, against Serbs, but also against Gypsies and Jews, unfortunately, by certain number of Croats known as Ustasas? What is your opinion about this?

Jones: There are many levels to the Medjugorje phenomenon, and one of them may very well be the collective guilt which the village felt because of its role in the massacre of Surmanci, which took place just on the other side of the apparition hill. There were also numerous links between the Medjugorje branch of the Franciscans and the Ustashe. I personally saw the pictures of Ustashe soldiers on the wall of the monastery at Siroki Brijeg when I visited there. Jozo Zovko deliberately injected a political note into the apparitions when he put the garb on the altar during the early celebrations of Mass at the time of the first apparitions in 1981.

Politika: What is your opinion about the fact that some Croatian government officials have neglected, or even supported, Medjugorje? What is the importance of such a political support?

Jones: Medjugorje was a crucial element in the resurgence of Croatian nationalism which led to the break-up of Yugoslavia. After the break-up the late Franjo Tudjman went to Medjugorje. From a nationalist point of view, it didn't matter whether the apparitions were genuine or not. What mattered was whether they could be mobilized politically. I do not know how the current Croatian government feels about Medjugorje or the still significant tourist revenues which it brings in. But I do know that in places like Split whenever I talked to Franciscans, I encountered skepticism about the apparitions. Medjugorje is an operation of one particular group of Franciscans who have had a long history of rebellious behavior and who are a disgrace to the Catholic Church.

Politika: What do we do with Medjugorje? What do we do with the fraud lasting for 28 years now?

Jones: All we can do is to continue to tell the truth. My hope is that the recognition of the truth about Medjugorje at the highest level of the Catholic Church will lead to reconciliation – particularly between Catholics and Orthodox in the Balkans – and the healing of the wounds which this hoax has caused.

Politika: What you claimed 20 years ago and what you have proven in your book, has been justified at the highest place by the Holy See. A nice satisfaction for your long lasting work. How do you feel about it?

Jones: I believe that the truth is great and that it will prevail. But in the meantime 28 years of inactivity on the part of Rome has allowed this lie to take root in parishes all across America (and in Europe as well). Uprooting that error after so many years of negligence is going to be a formidable task. On a personal level, I live in a diocese which allows advertisements for pilgrimages to Medjugorje to run in its diocesan newspaper. I live in a diocese which writes positive articles about each year's Medjugorje conference, also held in this diocese. The local

bishop in fact was scheduled to concelebrate Mass with Jozo Zovko, even though Zovko's faculties had been suspended by both Bishop Peric and Bishop Zanic.

So in terms of the local church, there is no recognition whatsoever on the part of the clergy or the laity that I was right about Medjugorje. Whether that will change is something I cannot predict, but as Christians we are told not to look for vindication in this life. Our reward is in heaven.