



FROM THE HEART OF
The Pelican
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Editorial

SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE

DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

IN LATE JUNE, WE HAD THE unforgettable privilege of making our annual retreat in Medjugorje, a small village in Bosnia-Herzegovina which has allegedly been receiving daily visitations from the Blessed Virgin Mary since June, 1981. The surprise trip—graciously dropped into our laps weeks before the departure date—felt like a personal invitation from the Mother of God herself to come to her favorite village for the 40th anniversary of her apparitions. We have had from the beginning of our foundation a special place in our heart for Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje, exemplified in our official title of *The Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Peace*. The pilgrimage was all one could want and

more: we stayed at the visionary, Mirjana's, guest house and spoke with her every day; we climbed Apparition Hill or Mount Krizevac every day; we went to two Masses (English in the morning, the international Croatia Mass in the evening) every day; we listened to very inspiring talks, every day; and we prayed and laughed and had great fun with fellow pilgrims every day! It was a blessed time all around. Thank you, Mother Mary!

I would like to share with our readers one particular incident on the trip that spoke to my heart. We were invited the last day of our pilgrimage to have lunch with a Canadian couple, Patrick and Nancy. When we arrived at their home (a veritable castle!), we found about six or seven other guests who had also been invited. At one point during the meal, I was conversing with an Italian priest and happened to mention that during my time in Italy some years ago, I found that palm reading and

Nancy (below) in the chapel at her "castle" (right).



other dark arts were unfortunately rather prevalent. The priest immediately agreed and said it is still a major problem. As he was about to say more, the hostess happened to approach the table and overheard what was just said. Immediately, in a commanding voice for everyone to hear, she proclaimed: "We don't speak like that at this table or in this house! All conversation in this house must be positive and uplifting according to the words of St. Paul: *Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only*

such as is good for edifying . . . that it may impart grace to those who hear (Eph 4:29) and *Let your speech always be gracious*” (Col 4:6). The priest playfully responded—gesturing towards me—that the nun had started the conversation, so Nancy turned to me and repeated what she had just said with dramatic emphasis: nothing negative is to be spoken in her house. I was immediately convicted. She was right. What good is it to bewail the troubles of the world, our country or our Church? Who benefits from such speech? Doesn’t such negative talk only amplify the evil and give it more power? There are a good number of people who feel depressed and fearful due to the current situations, so why draw attention to these? Did not Christ come to bring victory to every human situation? Are we of such “little faith” that we focus on the evil rather than the good? All of this has come to mind since Nancy’s kind rebuke. I share it with you in case it speaks to your heart also. I, for one, want to be a confident disciple of the victorious Christ, a joyful child of Mother Mary who always speaks with positive words of encouragement and thankfulness, even while asking us to pray for deliverance from the evils of our time.

In the same vein, during a talk Mirjana gave to us pilgrims, she reminded us that Our Lady does not want us to criticize anyone and this especially holds for priests, bishops, and the Holy Father himself. Rather, if we see anything that disturbs us in them, we should silently pray for them. She impressed us all by saying that for her, and for the village, it was *unthinkable* to ever say anything negative about a priest. They are Our Lady’s “favored sons” and she continually asks the faithful not to judge them but to pray for them. They are tempted like everyone else—indeed, more so. They need strengthening through our prayers. Mirjana told us that they will be the *bridges* that bring us through the time of purification to the era of peace. We need



The sisters with Mirjana.

then to build them up and not tear them down. Responding to her call, let us resolve to be humble servants who bring positive joy to every conversation while praying for all our brothers and sisters to remain strong in the Lord. Amen? Amen! +



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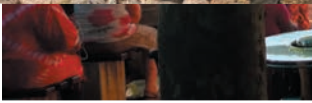
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fasting (on Wednesdays and Fridays). We encourage and challenge our readers to consider putting these into practice, one step at a time until all five practices are a vital part of your life. And then bring it to your parish! In the editorial, Sr. Gertrude has shared one of the graces she received on the pilgrimage. Sr. Scholastica and Sr. Regina will now relate how they were impacted.



News & Updates

PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE:

Undisputably, the most exciting event in the first half of 2021 was our trip to Medjugorje. We were blessed to be there for the 40th anniversary, along with tens of thousands of pilgrims and 358 priests concelebrating at the beautiful Mass on June 25th. It was truly a Catholic experience to be surrounded by people from all over the world, honoring our Lady in prayer and song. This little village has so effectively put into practice Our Lady's instructions to them that it in turn is transmitting to the world how to live a life of peace and joy. Any parish or community that follows its lead will find itself renewed and invigorated with new spiritual energy and life. The basics are simple: rosary (daily), scripture reading (daily), Mass (at least once a week), confession (at least monthly) and

Sr. Scholastica. In many ways my pilgrimage to Medjugorje was life transforming. Though I had no experience of the supernatural phenomenon which is quite common among pilgrims, I did receive a poignant lesson on one of my last days in Medjugorje. It was about 10:00 pm and I was puttering around my room when I heard some



pilgrims in the lobby of our hotel repeating the Hail Mary. I smiled as I thought what a lovely sound to hear as I prepared for bed. In the morning, I discovered that one of the priests who was on pilgrimage with us had asked the pilgrims to pray the Hail Mary in order to help the deliverance process of a young lady who was manifesting some signs of demonic possession. Though my room was the room closest to the lobby and though many pilgrims who were much further from the lobby heard the young lady's screams, I did not hear any screaming. The lesson therefore for me was that with prayer we are able to silence or drown out the voice of the enemy whilst heightening the voice of God. [Editor's note: Praise God, the young woman seems to have left delivered from her demons. We were told that a former boyfriend had introduced her to the dark arts through the Ouija board. Her mother and another friend had brought her to Medjugorje seeking Mother Mary's help for her.]

Sr. Regina. I think that the greatest grace I received in Medjugorje was simply to have personally experienced the peace and joy of the place itself; it was like being immersed in the Blessed Virgin Mary's presence, and reminded me of the final phrases of the *Salve Regina: O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.* Such a peace really was freeing, loving and sweet. But at the core of it was Our Lady's "fiat," her acceptance of God's will which she offered so many times in her life and which she has taught the people of Medjugorje to imitate through the countless messages she has communicated there, which resulted in this deep, sweet, joyous peace. I experienced other great graces: I saw the power of the Hail Mary and the rosary to free a soul in demonic bondage (I was in the lobby!); I also received a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit at Mass; but most of all, I returned with a desire to try more and more each day to live this Medjugorje experience with the hope that by imitating Mary, the people I encounter in my day-to-day life might really see Jesus living in me.



THE FARM: When our Maremma sheepdog, Abby, had a litter of seven puppies at the end of January, we had tons of fun raising these little fur balls until their departure to new owners. This was our first experience with puppies and we had a lot to learn from watching them very carefully the first few weeks (to make sure mommy didn't accidentally roll over and inadvertently smother any of them), to cutting their toe nails after a few weeks so they wouldn't cause bleeding while nursing, to keeping them out of trouble as they discovered more hiding places on the property! At four weeks, they were climbing out of their whelping box and it was time to put them in the shed. As they got older the playful interaction between them and Abby was delightful to watch. They sold in record time, given that this breed is very popular among livestock farmers. Maremmas bond with the animals they are introduced to and defend them against predators. Since we obtained Abby, we have had no problems with coyotes, foxes, hawks or any other predator. They are natural guardians, making their rounds and alerting their owners to anything out of the usual. They will not harm people but will bark and let you know that strangers are around.

After all the fun with the puppies and realizing the monetary benefits of raising Maremmas, we bought a male for ourselves. We picked up **Bruno**, a bright-eyed attentive puppy, on our trip to Florida and he seems to be a perfect match for Abby. Besides, he keeps us young and laughing!

THE Finding IN THE Temple

JERUSALEM WAS A BIG city. Every year at Passover Jewish pilgrims from all over the world flocked to the city for the feast of Passover. Luke tells us that the Holy Family was in the habit of going up to Jerusalem for the feast every year. It was common to travel in large groups which included extended family members and acquaintances from one's own village. It's therefore not surprising to find that Mary and Joseph thought the child Jesus was somewhere in the company of the group as they set out for home after celebrating the feast. It seems that it wasn't until the evening of the first day that he was noticed as missing.

One does not have to be a parent to realize the emotion which must have gripped Mary and Joseph as they retraced their steps to Jerusalem in search of Jesus. The search lasted three days . . . till they found him in the temple, in dialogue with the learned religious leaders of the day. The leaders seem to be a benign group who were open to listening to this young man, for Luke says: "All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Lk 2:47). This is in contrast to the leaders some eighteen years later who will rather take offense at his words and wisdom. Furthermore, Luke tells us explicitly that Jesus was twelve years old, which means that he had reached his Bar Mitzvah, the age when a young man left childhood and the particular care of his mother to take his place alongside his father and other men. Jesus was therefore stepping into his maturity and taking the first steps in his mission. Right there in the house of his Father he was revealing himself—interpreting the scriptures in a surprisingly new way to those who were open enough to allow their understanding to broaden.



We also added **two little piglets** to our farm menagerie in early May. They are a circus unto themselves. Sr. Regina has managed to win over the larger of the two (Spare-ribs) who now likes belly rubs, but the little one (Pork Chops) is a wiry fellow with a less approachable nature and a penchant for complaining! We hear, though, that Porky recently approached Sr. Regina for a pet. Lesson: never give up even on the most unpromising creatures!

The **garden** got some added attention this Spring as we tried to build up the soil using natural farming methods and our yield looks like it will be better than last year's. But it's far from what we would like to see. A greenhouse might be a partial answer and so we are presently looking into that option.

In early June we spent **a few days in Florida**, helping a relative move and visiting old friends from Jacksonville to Ave Maria. It was a blessed reunion with many dear ones we hadn't seen in years. We thank them all for their graciousness and hospitality. ☺



MARY'S SINCERE QUESTION

This is where Mary and Joseph found him. In fact, Jesus seemed so engrossed in his activity that he was emotionally unaware of the pain he had caused his parents. Mary chided him on this seeming lack of sensitivity to their three-day frantic search for him. Note that Mary does not ask him why he abandoned the group or why he didn't tell her or Joseph where he was going. Rather, what is puzzling to her is his present unconcern about their own feelings. She must have intuited a change in him, a realization that this was not like the son she knew so well. This change is confirmed in Jesus' answer: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49)

Let's think about this. Jesus probably did not intend to give the slip to his parents. It's unimaginable that he had acted deceptively. If he decided to act in a way that was not expected of him, he obviously did so *in obedience to the will of his Father*. Note also that Jesus gave no explanation before leaving them, just as Our Lady had given no explanation to Joseph when she conceived the Child

Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. God can and does ask someone to do something without informing those around them. This is his prerogative. It's very possible that others may want us or expect us to do something different from what we know the Lord is asking of us. We must follow God's will and not worry about what others have not been given, namely, the grace to understand at the moment. Even parents' jurisdiction has divinely established limits: a father cannot order his son to tell him matters of conscience which belong to the sacrament of confession; a person receiving the call to the priesthood or religious life needs to answer that call, regardless of the opinions of family and friends. Jesus' answer shows us that there are boundaries between the human and the divine.

Luke says explicitly that Mary and Joseph "did not understand" what Jesus meant. Nevertheless, Mary humbly accepted. In the answer she received, she must have sensed a challenge to her way of looking at her son. At the Annunciation, she was told only that her child would be the "Son of the Most High." Now her son for the first time is referring to the God of Israel, the "Most High," the One for whom the Jews had built their temple, as his "Father." And his loyalty to this Father trumped his allegiance to every human relationship. Mary's continual pondering of this mystery of her son beckons us to do the same.

Note that just as Mary couldn't fathom why Jesus was acting in a seemingly insensitive way, so Jesus seemed genuinely surprised that his parents wouldn't have known where to find him. It was they who had always taught him to constantly do the will of God and to put God first in everything. Now that he had come of age, didn't they realize that he was doing just as they had taught him? As Mary embraced her son in relief that she had found him, I can imagine her chiding herself and silently acknowledging that he was right.

LESSON IN MISUNDERSTANDING

There is also a lesson to be learned from the genuine misunderstanding imbedded in

this story. Here are the two holiest people on earth, Jesus and Mary, not understanding each other for a moment. They were both coming at his actions from a different perspective. We all have moments like that: two good people both with good motives, mis-communicating because they are presuming the other one sees the situation just as they do. Misunderstanding does not have to lead to separation or to dissatisfaction. Once clarity has been restored to the situation, it is possible and virtuous to go on normally thinking only the best of each other. Mary went home to Nazareth with a deeper understanding of the Child which God had entrusted to her.

SEARCHING FOR JESUS

Are we too called to *search for Jesus*? Can we too *lose him*? Sometimes we may be asked to grow from a very familiar relationship with Jesus to a more mature one, through not having him as we used to. In the spiritual journey, if we are truly intent on doing the will of God, we will lose sight of Jesus at some point. He will purposefully disappear. Maybe more than once. If so, don't panic; just realize that this is part of the journey. When you find him again, you will know something deeper about him: that he is with the Father and leading you

to the Father. He separates himself from us in order to create in us a longing for himself that will bring us closer to the Father.

I also see in Jesus' words to Mary an invitation for her to see this event from the perspective of God. God's will is so paramount in the spiritual journey that adherence to it will give us an experiential knowledge of both Jesus and the Father. Jesus is leading the way, and through his enigmatic actions, he initiates a human separation from his mother which leads to reunion with her at a deeper spiritual level.

The Scriptures say that Our Lady pondered Jesus' words; surely she came up with some very profound realizations of what his words meant, but she doesn't seem to have shared these with St. Luke. But really, her silence on this points to the fact that it's not meditations that are the fruit of pondering Jesus's words, but following her son in his act of obedience to the Father. Mary learned to put aside the human elements in their relationship, in order to grow alongside her son as he took the first baby step in his mission. Let us imitate her and develop a deeper understanding of God's will in our own lives.* +

* I am indebted to Fr. Federico Suarez in his book, *Mary of Nazareth*, (1956/2003) for a few of the insights in this article.



AS WE GO TO PRESS WITH THIS EDITION OF THE *PELICAN*, we have learned that *an adjacent property is on the market*. We are interested in this land because it will provide needed pasture space for our cows. If our readers would like to help us towards purchasing this land, your donations will be very gratefully received! And many thanks to all our Benefactors and Sowers for your help this past year! We are so blessed to have you in our lives and to experience your love and kindness! ♥ God bless you!



For those new to our mailing list: the Sowers are those who kindly donate \$100 a year to the Monastery, which is especially helpful for our every day expenses. For all donations, please make your checks to:

Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Peace, 687 Moss Rd.,
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