

Companions on the Journey

May 12, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

In August of 2007, I went to Medjugorje as part of a group of forty or so pilgrims to the place where there are claims that Our Lady has been appearing to six visionaries for many years. In the group were my two brothers with one sister-in-law, some friends of many years and many others from different parts of the United States. I had been invited to visit there many times both by parishioners and by others who found the experience to be life-changing and for the better.

Finally I decided to go even though at that time my mother was living with me in what was the old rectory at that time. My sister and some other family members took turns staying with my mother for that week. Our particular group of pilgrims stayed in the inn operated by one of the visionaries, Ivan Dragicovich, a simple man of faith. On the Thursday evening of that week priests from all over the world gathered in a local chapel at the time of the apparition of Our Lady. We were kneeling and praying the rosary perhaps 55 or 60 priests from all over the world. At 6:40PM Ivan went to the front of the chapel and knelt down. The room began to grow in intensity. There was a real buzz. I could feel the intensity and I could feel a new presence in the chapel that had not been there before.

In that moment I opened my heart in prayer in a way I had never prayed before. I did not hold back anything in my prayer. I prayed for the Lord to enter into my soul. I prayed for Mary to be there for me. Suddenly I found myself praying these words: "Mary, would you be the mother for me that my mother wanted to be but was not able to be." Until that moment I never knew I had thought that of my mother. My mom did not have an easy childhood. She grew up in an alcoholic household where every six weeks or so her father would start drinking and not stop until the family went looking for him and brought him home. It was a very difficult childhood and there were scars she carried into her marriage and her family life. There was a dynamic at work that touched and affected all of us in a negative way.

But in the moment I asked Our Lady to be my mother I knew her answer was "Yes." I knew that I needed her to be my mother, as real as my physical life mother. More real, actually. And Mary has always been there for me since that time. And I pray her prayer every day. I do not miss. Mary is available and approachable. You can speak to her like she was in the room with you because she is, she shares in her Son's victory over sin and death. I love my mother and on this Mother's Day I will offer Mass for her intention. I believe she now lives with God in the kingdom of heaven. But I also am thankful for Mary who will always

be the mother is most desperately need. I encourage the men in our congregation to consider entering into a relationship with Mary our Blessed Mother. Just talk to her from your heart. Tell her what you desire her to do—to help with your responsibilities and the different roles assigned to you in this life.

And to all our dear mothers on this Mother's Day do not be reticent to turn to Mary and speak to her of what you need from her and from her Son. She wants nothing more than to go to her Son to comply with your requests.

In the Peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry