

Bishop ?ani? Did the Will of God

**An Interview with Bishop Pavao ?ani?
(Bishop of Mostar from 1970-1993), & A
Friend of Medjugorje**

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**On October 8, 1987, in a recorded
conversation with the Bishop of Mostar,
Pavao ?ani?, A Friend of Medjugorje
questioned him about (then) recent
negative statements carried in American
newspapers that purportedly the bishop
had made concerning Medjugorje. It was a**

private meeting. The only other person with them was a young Croatian translator by the name of Berta.

This conversation helped to form a conviction that shaped A Friend of Medjugorje's understanding of the Church and its relationship to Medjugorje over the years. Namely, that God does not want Medjugorje ?approved? by the Church, at least for now. A Friend of Medjugorje believes God has placed Medjugorje neither in nor out of the Church for its protection. This conviction has been confirmed many times throughout his experiences with Medjugorje and is discussed in depth in his writings throughout the years. This face to

face encounter with Bishop ?ani? and later other encounters on several other occasions, gave deeper insights and discernment on the Medjugorje situation.

At the time of this meeting, A Friend of Medjugorje had already come to believe strongly in the apparitions of Medjugorje, being one of many who had heard about Medjugorje in 1983, he began following it and experienced a profound, life-changing conversion in Medjugorje in 1986. He was also a deeply loyal Catholic and in the midst of confusing reports in the media concerning Medjugorje, he wanted to understand the view of Bishop ?ani? and help dispel false reports through the Caritas of Birmingham newsletter that he

had begun writing and publishing to spread what Our Lady was doing in Medjugorje.* Not having personally met Bishop ?ani? before, he found him to be very approachable and likeable. The Bishop was very accommodating, even though he knew A Friend of Medjugorje was a believer in Medjugorje. It was apparent that Bishop ?ani? also appreciated the opportunity to express his opinions concerning Medjugorje to anyone who would listen.

Their conversation was friendly and cordial, but Bishop ?ani? did, in fact, confirm that he had made the negative statements against Medjugorje and had sent them to the American press. A Friend

of Medjugorje, in the hour he met with the Bishop, tried to unravel the reasons the Bishop was so against Medjugorje, presenting questions respectfully, as would a mediator who desired to help bridge two opposing sides. He believed at the heart of everything were misunderstandings and miscommunications. He, however, found Bishop ?ani? immovable in his opinions.

Bishop ?ani? laid out his arguments of why he did not believe. A Friend of Medjugorje was familiar with Bishop ?ani??s view before meeting with him, and knew also that though Bishop ?ani? had communicated his concerns to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who was the head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith

in Rome, that the Vatican, rather than accept Bishop ?ani??s negative recommendation, removed from him the authority to decide the fate of Medjugorje, placing the responsibility within the hands of the Episcopal Committee of Yugoslavia. A Friend of Medjugorje asked Bishop ?ani? why he felt that this had happened. The following is a portion of the interview:

A Friend of Medjugorje: ?There are people saying that never has a commission been taken out of the hands of a bishop and given [over] to Rome?[Your] commission was pulled and that is one justification they give saying, not for nor against but [that] this has never happened before in Church history. In other words, in many articles it says never before in Church history has a commission

revelation] been pulled from the local bishop.?

Bishop ?ani?: *Always in the Church history, commission was consisted by the local bishop. After what happened in Garabandal, in Spain, and after the negative conclusion of the commission, three times allegations were coming to Rome asking Rome to come there to send their (Vatican) commission, but Rome didn't want to send its commission. In 1978 was written a new decree about apparitions and it was said in it that if the thing is very unclear, very misty, in that case then the Holy See has to deal with it.?*

Implied in this answer was that the Holy See saw that the situation in Medjugorje warranted the intervention of the Vatican. By the end of their time together, A Friend of Medjugorje had come to the conclusion that Bishop ?ani? fully ?believed? he was right in his judgement against Medjugorje. Nothing was ?unclear? or ?misty? for him. Yet, though they stood on opposite sides of Medjugorje, A Friend of Medjugorje genuinely liked Bishop ?ani? and his opposition puzzled him. The interview continued:

A Friend of Medjugorje: ?Let me ask this then. If the bishop of Fatima [had been] against Fatima to begin with?I mean he was emphatically saying that it was false, and in the end he came out for it [only] after the

that he did not go there [while the apparitions were taking place]?[In this situation with Medjugorje, could] there be a possibility, a small percentage of error that you hold open that you could be in error concerning this, given the other apparitions [in Church history] where usually, historically, the priest and the bishops were against it to start with??

Bishop ?ani?: *?Every case of apparition is a case for itself. In some cases of apparitions after certain time it?s possible to conclude this is not from Our Lady. And in other cases it?s possible to say this might be of Our Lady. In some cases also we never would be able to find out was that from Our Lady or it wasn?t. It depends on proofs pro or contrary.?*

A Friend of Medjugorje: *?Would you say that this is not from Our Lady, but maybe that there would be a small percentage that it could be in the end??*

Bishop ?ani?: *?For me, for myself, there is not one percent for possibility.?*

A Friend of Medjugorje: *?Who would it be from??*

Bishop ?ani?: *?From that one where in a 100 apparitions it is said Our Lady is here.*

Illusions, it can be illusions, hypnosis, auto-hypnosis, auto-suggestion, that can be perhaps psychological states and impressions.？**

(Over the past 20 years, the scientific investigations conclusively demonstrated that none of the above apply to the visionaries of Medjugorje, and in fact, the testing and evaluations revealed that the visionaries were without deceit and that they were in fact seeing something supernatural.)**

A Friend of Medjugorje: *?So you do not actually claim that it?s diabolical.?*

Bishop ?ani?: *?I have never claimed that. But rumors have raised that I have said that.?*

A Friend of Medjugorje: ?Many [rumors].

(The translator tells the bishop that A Friend of Medjugorje wants to correct some.) Yes, that?s what I?m trying to do.?

Bishop ?ani?: ?You can?t correct it.?

A Friend of Medjugorje: ?No??

A Friend of Medjugorje: ?Everybody I have talked to, as far as the pilgrims go, seem to change their way of life coming here. And it does seem to do them much good. Is it necessarily bad that this is taking place, whether or not it is from Our Lady??

Bishop ?ani?: ?That?s not bad, but it?s bad they believe that all is from Our Lady. When I was in Lourdes once, I was kneeling in front of the cave/grotto and I began to cry. And one of my priests was laughing at me. And that truth of the apparitions, it doesn?t depend on my tears or on my laughter. And I left Lourdes touched. And he left as a tourist, that priest. All who are coming here they are full of impressions that Our Lady has appeared here. They are touched and they are ready for tears. But that?s not proof that Our Lady is here.?

A Friend of Medjugorje then broached a subject that he had been considering concerning the bishop?s resistance:

A Friend of Medjugorje: *?I know you believe solidly in what you say, but could it be that you are perfectly serving God's purpose for what the plan He has here? Perhaps this is going on [the apparitions of Our Lady in Medjugorje] and God wants you, the bishop, to take that position [that the visions are not from God].?*

Bishop ?ani?: *?I regard that I have to do like I'm doing now and that this is God's will what I am doing.?*
1

From this interview with Bishop ?ani?, A Friend of Medjugorje began to consider the question, ?Was God purposely blinding the bishop from being able to perceive Our

purpose that could not yet be seen?? There were other puzzling events that suggested this was true. Why, for example, did God grant Archbishop Franje Frani? from the neighboring diocese of Split-Makarska several interior locutions of Our Lady, experiences which made him a firm believer in the apparitions, but did not grant Bishop ?ani? the same grace? Our Lady knew, God knew, Bishop ?ani? had the power to approve Medjugorje, yet he received no such confirmation while Archbishop Franje received a supernatural experience. Fr. Jozo Zovko, pastor of St. James Parish in Medjugorje, also received this extraordinary grace. Why, then, did Bishop ?ani? not receive a sign? A Friend of Medjugorje has spoken about this contradiction many times. Following is

from a talk A Friend of Medjugorje gave in

December 2006:

?Does God, perhaps, get tired? Does it sap some of His energy when He gives the supernatural power to Our Lady to come to appear upon the earth to the visionaries? Does He say, ?Whew, I?m tired after that?? Is He tired after 30 years of doing that? Is He sapped [of His energy]? If it was important to God to have Medjugorje approved, Our Lady could appear to the Bishop of Mostar and straighten the picture out real quick. Read that message: no apparition to the bishop. That is a message

. Why has an apparition not been given to the local bishop? Some say, ?Well, it?s not meant to be given to the bishop.? That?s not true either.?

?Archbishop Frane Frani? from Split went incognito to Medjugorje because he wanted to see for himself what was happening in Medjugorje. He went into the apparition room, knelt down and Our Lady gave him an interior locution. And he believed in Our Lady of Medjugorje to his death, right there in Split, 2 ½ hours away from Mostar.

Medjugorje did not fall into his jurisdiction, but he frequently visited the village. I met him there, talked to him on several occasions before he died. So God gave that sign to him, an archbishop, but not the Mostar bishop? It's not because the bishop is evil.

Read the message

. God has not given the bishop of Mostar a sign. That is a message

. What is that saying? God doesn't want Medjugorje approved. Why? Because there are many elements in the Church that would

Our Lady, believe it or not, is coming for nonbelievers, not just Catholics. This is not a Catholic thing. Our Lady is coming for Muslims. Our Lady is coming for degredated people who, if the Church approved the apparitions would say or think, ?Oh, well, that?s just a Catholic thing.? What I am saying very clearly and want you to listen to very closely is

Our Lady doesn?t want the Church to approve Medjugorje

. It?s not in the cards. After 30 years I think the Bishop of Mostar, whose position I respect, would have been convinced by now, or even the Pope. Medjugorje is in the most perfect situation to expand right now because it is within the graces of the Church, under Canon Law, as private revelation, and there is no structure over it.

No structure to stop it. Medjugorje is free.?₂

End

A Friend of Medjugorje often quotes the Scripture passage, Isaiah 1:18, which states, ?Come now, and let us reason together says the Lord.? There are mysteries hidden not only in the words of Our Lady, but also in Her actions and even in Her silence to be discovered by those who desire to meditate and reason through what is taking place in Medjugorje. These discoveries confirm the faith of the believer in the apparitions of Our Lady and encourage the nonbeliever to look more deeply into the events of Medjugorje. As they were saying goodbye, A Friend of Medjugorje asked Bishop ?ani? once more what could be done to

resolve the difficulty between the parish house of Medjugorje and his office. The Bishop stated, *“There is too much to resolve, too many statements, rumors of all kinds and media distortion. We will never be able to retract from everything that’s gone around the world.”*

There was another special occasion when A Friend of Medjugorje met Bishop *“ani”*. It was in the summer of 1988 or 1989. A Croatian friend arranged a meeting between Bishop *“ani”* and the visionaries. The meeting was planned but not all of the visionaries were free to go. Visionary, Marija, was happy to meet with Bishop *“ani”*. She gathered gifts to bring to him. Marija asked A Friend of Medjugorje to go

with her and sent him to get Ivan, Vicka and Jakov. Ivan and Vicka both were unable to go, so it was only Marija, Jakov, the Croatian friend and A Friend of Medjugorje.

The meeting was historic as it had been years since Bishop ?ani? had met with any of the visionaries. When the four of them arrived they saw that Bishop ?ani? was waiting for them at the top of the steps, just outside the entrance of the diocesan office, alone, with a smile on his face. He walked down a large staircase to the parking lot to greet them while they were getting out of their car. He warmly reached out his hands and took Marija?s hands in his, greeting her by name without a need of

introduction. When he approached Jakov, he repeated the gesture to shake the young man's hand, but called him 'Ivan' rather than Jakov. All of them suppressed a smile, not wanting to embarrass the bishop that he had misnamed Jakov. It had touched them to see this unexpected graciousness on the part of the bishop to go out of his way to come to them upon their arrival and to show them that he remembered them. But, it also made a strong impression on A Friend of Medjugorje that Bishop 'ani' hadn't seen any of the visionaries in years. Jakov was about the age Ivan had been when they last saw each other, with a distance of about six years between the two. Bishop 'ani?', going from his memory of his last meeting with the visionaries, thought Jakov was Ivan, because Jakov

had grown taller. This manifested in the realization of just how disconnected the bishop was to the visionaries and everything happening in Medjugorje.

The witness of Marija with Bishop ?ani? also made, not a small, but a great impression on A Friend of Medjugorje; it was more than amazing. He saw in her witness the manifestation of what Our Lady had been teaching her all these years. Marija embraced the Bishop ?ani? and spoke to him as if he were a dear grandfather or favorite uncle. She brought out her gifts to him, staying close beside him, helping him open the gifts, joyful and exuberant. There was nothing artificial or forced in her manner. Marija genuinely

was expressing her respect and affection for the bishop, a love she had learned from Our Lady. Bishop ?ani? was visibly pleased and very cordial.

It was easily apparent that Bishop ?ani? did not know the visionaries; he was not at all familiar with them. After seeing how well the meeting went with Bishop ?ani? and the two visionaries, A Friend of Medjugorje became convinced that if the bishop were to only spend a few days with the visionaries, he would become a believer. But that was not to be. War came to the region a short time later, putting the question of Medjugorje on hold for many years. Bishop ?ani? retired from the office of the bishop in 1993, before the war

ended. The meeting with the two visionaries was the last time A Friend of Medjugorje had the occasion to see and speak to him. Bishop ?ani??s successor was Monsignor Ratko Peri?, who has been just as negative towards Medjugorje as Bishop ?ani?. He also has never personally met the visionaries.

Was it God?s design to keep the visionaries separated from the bishop? So many priests, bishops and cardinals over the years have been moved by the witness and love of the visionaries. Why did God allow this disconnection between the visionaries and the bishop? Why did he not give Bishop ?ani? a sign, an interior locution, an apparition of his own when He allowed

**this special grace for Archbishop Frani?
and so many others? These were the
questions A Friend of Medjugorje was
asking himself as he witnessed and
participated in the events as they unfolded
in Medjugorje. In a writing he published in
1990, entitled "Bishop Frani?, What Went
Wrong??", he laid out other questions that,
at the time, had no answer:**

**"Could it be that the local Communist
authority, seeing the bishop against the
visionaries, would back away having more
confidence that this was not some anti-
government plot?"**

"Or could it be that Our Lady wanted to

show us we have to be obedient to Church authority and, at the same time, the Church must not abuse its authority? Regardless of how we understand the situation, Our Lady certainly calls us to be obedient and to submit it to prayer.?
3

Bishop ?ani? was being used by God to keep Medjugorje in a neutral position for the protection of Medugorje; not approved?not condemned. Had he been for Medjugorje, had he approved the Medjugorje apparitions from the beginning, the powerful force of conversion that Medjugorje has become through the freedom granted it would never have happened, as the bureaucracy in the Church would have harmed the purity of

Medjugorje.

A Friend of Medjugorje came to understand that *non constat de supernaturalitate* ⁴ was the perfect place for Medjugorje to be, because as private revelation not condemned by the Church, the declaration gave freedom to the faithful to follow Medjugorje and to spread it. In this position, it has been protected from elements within the Church that could move to suppress the apparitions, suppress Our Lady's words, or move Medjugorje in a direction different than what Our Lady desires. There can be no question that Bishop ?ani? was being used by Our Lady to protect Medjugorje, doing the will of God in the position he held. As A Friend of

Medjugorje recently said:

“Bishop Vukobratović, who presided, and Bishop Peric, who now presides over Medjugorje must not be judged as not doing God’s will. There are those of the clergy who are kept from recognizing the Truth so that God’s plans can be fulfilled. God sometimes allows adversity for a purpose. It is in God’s design that Medjugorje is not to be approved, for the sake of the fulfillment of Our Lady’s plans.”

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***The first issue of the Caritas Newsletter was printed in January, 1987. This monthly publication has continued through the years, along with another monthly**

publication published by Caritas of Birmingham entitled, Words of the Harvesters. A Friend of Medjugorje also writes a monthly epistle on the second of the month messages for Caritas of Birmingham?s website, Medjugorje.com, which are also printed and sent in the mail to Caritas supporters.

1. Bishop Pavao ?ani?. Interview with A Friend of Medjugorje at the Diocesan Office in Mostar in Former-Yugoslavia. 1987.

2. ?A Talk to Pilgrims,? A Friend of Medjugorje; in The Tabernacle of Our Lady?s Messages at Caritas of

**Birmingham, Caritas, AL. December 11,
2006.**

**3. "Bishop Vukobratovic, What Went Wrong?", A
Friend of Medjugorje, Caritas, AL; St.
James Publishing, 1990. Print.**

**4. "Non constat de supernaturalitate?
means it is not "moved, demonstrated,
evident that the supernatural is involved":
but the door is open for continued
investigation. This is different from the
term "constat non de supernaturalitate"
which means that it "has been proven"
there is nothing supernatural taking place.
This would be a condemnation of the
apparitions, which has not taken place
concerning Medjugorje.**

**5. ?We Must Go to a Higher Truth,? by A
Friend of Medjugorje, June 2015, Caritas,
AL.**
