

## Some clarifications to understand the Interfaith dialogues

There is an account in the Medjugorje literature of our Blessed Mother telling the visionaries that a Muslim woman named Pasha is the holiest person in the village. The visionaries responded, "But Pasha is a Muslim," and Mary acknowledged this fact. This announcement of course, was a striking revelation to all who followed Medjugorje's messages from our Lady of Peace.

But let us try to understand why our Lady chose to bring this up. What was Our Lady's purpose in passing on to us such a revelation? Was She trying to teach us that we are not supposed to judge people by appearances or by hearsay or by religion, as to do so would differ from God's judgment who knows each one's hearts? Does this mean that God is unjust? Never! Did He not say to Moses: *"I have compassion on whom I will, and I show pity to whom I please."*? (Ex 33:19) We should never forget that in Scripture St. Paul advises us in *Rm. 14:10*, *"you should never pass judgment on a brother or treat him with contempt, as some of you have done. We shall all have to stand before the judgment seat of God."* Therefore, let us remember what is written in *Isaiah 55: 8-9* where God says: *"for My thoughts are not your thoughts, My ways are not your ways – it is Yahweh who speaks. Yes, the heavens are as high above the earth as My ways are above your ways, My thoughts above your thoughts."* God judges not by religion, but by the morals and virtues the heart of the person contains. Could it have been that this woman's heart was pure and child-like? Could she have loved God and all the people around her as well? Let me also remind you what Jesus told us in the messages of TLIG: *"I had once said that everyone in Judgment Day will be judged according to the measure of the love they have had while on earth,"* (TLIG Messages, August 5, 2000).

Of course there were doubts from Christians who questioned whether this Medjugorje message really came from our Blessed Mother, because here again, when Heaven offers a view of God's way of judging that is completely different from our own judgment, our pride and our entrenched prejudices toward others do not let go easily. We prefer to doubt what Jesus, or our Blessed Mother say in their messages rather than accept, trust and believe in God's righteousness.

Moreover, let us also see another message from the Queen of Peace of Medjugorje when she explained to the seers that God is the God of everyone and that it is man who makes divisions. This is what the Blessed Virgin Mary says when She also 'emphasized the failings of religious people, especially in small villages' — for example, *"Here in Medjugorje, there is separation between Serbian Orthodox and Muslims,"* said seer Mirjana Dragičević Soldo. *"This separation is not good. The Madonna always stressed that there is but One God, and that people have enforced unnatural separation. One*

*cannot truly believe, be a true Christian, if he does not respect other religions as well.”*  
(Daniel Maria Klimek, *Medjugorje and the Supernatural: Science, Mysticism, and Extraordinary Religious Experience*, Oxford University Press 2018, p. 41.)

All of us on this planet belong to God and are God’s children. Another seer, Vicka, one day explained the way our Lady made her understand our creation. She said: *“Nothing is a coincidence. Everything is a project of God. Before God made this world, He planned each one of us. The Blessed Mother told me He knew us. He called us by name before He made the world. Each of us is totally known and loved by God before we are placed in our mother’s womb. He selected the century in which we would be born: our nationality, our family, our sex, our strengths, and our weaknesses. Everything we are and we have from God are gifts.”*

(<https://www.medjugorje.com/medjugorje-today/medjugorje-headlines/tragedy-of-realization.html>)

And in another passage our Blessed Mother revealed to the seers in Medjugorje: *“Tell this priest, tell everyone, that it is you who are divided on earth. The Muslims and the Orthodox, for the same reason as the Catholics, are EQUAL before my Son and me. You are all my children. Certainly, all religions are not equal, but all men are equal before God... Those who are not Catholic are no less creatures made in the image of God and destined to rejoin someday the House of the Father.”* (*The Final Harvest*, Wayne Weible page 85-86)

It is essential to understand this difference. Our Lady of Peace tells us that certainly all religions are not equal, but all men are equal before God. Doctrines and souls are not the same thing, so we must never confuse these two aspects. Below is an interview with the seer Ivanka Ivanković and Fr. Svetozar Kraljević on February 1983. (Fr. Michael O’Carroll, *Medjugorje: Facts, Documents, Theology*, p. 254)

**Fr.:** It is important that people of good faith, regardless of denomination, not be turned against each other. But tell me more about this. What did the Madonna say about this?

**I:** The Madonna said that religions are separated on the earth, but the people of all religions are accepted by her Son.

**Fr.:** Does that mean that all people go to Heaven?

**I:** It depends on what they deserve.

**Fr.:** Yes, but many have never heard about Jesus.

**I:** Jesus knows all about that; I don't. The Madonna said, basically, religions are similar; but many people have separated themselves, because of religion, and became enemies of each other.

**Fr.:** I thank you, Ivanka, for this conversation and testimony!

So now we know, and we should have known, that nothing escapes God, and nothing occurs at random. We should stop questioning God! There are no coincidences with God. God knew us before we were born. He knew everything about us. As He said in the messages of True Life in God, *'I knew you before you were born.'* (cf. *TLIG Messages*) Sometimes, we tend to take this sentence symbolically, trying to interpret it in different ways, but we should not. Indeed, He knew us before we were born. *"If there is some point in which you see things differently,"* affirms St. Paul, *"God will make it clear to you; meanwhile, let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are"* (Ph 3:15-16).

I was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, as most people know by now. This date on which God chose that I be born is significant to this apostolic mission He was intending to give me before the world came to be, to call all the Churches to reconcile and unite in their diversity. The 18<sup>th</sup> of January is the first day of the week of universal prayer for Unity. At the time I was born, this date was also the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

In the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, one piously keeps the venerable relic of the Chair of St. Peter – an old wooden seat, dating from the first century which Roman Senator Pudens, converted by the apostle Peter, had offered him, and where Saint Peter usually sat down to teach, during his stay in Rome until his martyrdom. Later, this wooden seat became a symbol of papal authority (See) and was subsequently used by several of his successors. Since 1653, by order of Pope Alexander VII, the venerable See, covered with a bronze chape made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, is now located high at the very back of the apse of the Basilica of St Peter of Rome.

The Lord infused in me, through the Holy Spirit, although I was born in a Greek Orthodox family, and am still an Orthodox, the desire to defend the Chair of Peter. We know that the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness, and for sure, I couldn't be weaker than at God's calling. I was surely unable to even fathom that one day I would be chosen to obey the call for unity and be sent forth to many nations calling out to them for prayer, repentance, reconciliation, peace and unity.

Of course, when I defend the Pope and his Chair from those who are, even now, furiously trying to uproot Pope Francis, I am looked upon by some of my Orthodox people as a traitor, a Judas. But my conscience, in union with the Holy Spirit, assures me that we should remain faithful to this Pope. Even when Jesus was not happy that Christians were judging the Pope and had given me a message to send out about this, those who already had a negative opinion about this Pope did not believe that this message came from Christ! Some even mocked me, not only because I am an

Orthodox defending Peter's Chair and the Pope himself, but because ironically, I am persecuted by the very same people surrounding this Chair! I'm not gaining anything by defending this Chair of Peter and the Pope, but the Holy Spirit urges me to do so. Nonetheless, God was aware the entire time that this would happen, and He had told me of such persecutions from the very beginning of my call. And so, this is where my strength comes from: in being conscious that God is on my side; I do not fear. I do not waver or worry because He is in control of everything!

According to God's plan, alongside our birthdate, even the name we carry is important. My name, Vassiliki, means daughter of the King, or, royal. My second name, which is Paraskevi, also has a symbolic meaning: **'prepare the way to the Lord'**. Parenthetically, it also means 'Friday.' I have been preparing the way to the Lord, with the help of the Holy Spirit who says that Jesus' Return is imminent, by spreading His messages around the world, calling people to repentance and conversion; calling them to turn their lives into an unceasing prayer; calling the Churches to reconcile; telling them that these are the last days of mercy and grace from our God. They should be prepared and pray; they should reconcile as we are at the verge of these dramatic events that were foretold!

I have shared my spiritual experience about the time when God the Father for the first time approached me and spoke to me. As He spoke, it was as if I knew Him! It was as if I had met Him before. And not only that, He made me feel secure and that I was at home; not at my home on earth, but at my home in Heaven. Suddenly, my earthly father did not count as before, for he too was an instrument so that I could be born. This awareness was not just a feeling in me, but I knew! I knew in me without any doubt, that God is my true Father and no one else, that I am the bone of His Bone and the flesh of His Flesh. And so, the words of Christ asking that we should call our Creator Abba are so important and so true! But have we ever penetrated them fully and understood them thoroughly? I knew in these moments of bliss that I indeed belonged to God, that I came from Him, that I was His seed, and that I was His.

Moreover, His simplicity and His paternal way of speaking to me was awesome. His tenderness was so natural and so consoling, filling me with warmth and security during His presence. These few minutes in which He spoke to me will be forever treasured in my memory, for they will be unforgettable. His presence and His way of speaking with me was as though it was not the first time in which he spoke to me, for the tone of His Voice was as though I heard it before! It was so familiar that I felt kin to Him. At that moment I felt that peace, security and freedom that we should have when we talk to Him, without fearing, knowing that we will not be misunderstood, for He would be there to listen with delight to His child. This spiritually undeserved experience with God the

Father made me realize that I would want to be with Him forever because I knew without a trace of doubt that I descend from Him and that He is my true Dad!

We, therefore, all descended from Him. He is Infinite Love. He loves everyone in the same way, as He told me in the TLIG Messages, no matter who we are or in which country we were born. He carries no hostility in Him, no trace of prejudices, no trace of darkness, for He is pure Light. So, with what right are we then to be hostile to people who happen to inherit faiths other than Christianity? Who are we to judge? Have we become so pompous and so sure of our righteousness that in keeping our distance from other people who are practicing other faiths we are doing the right thing, and consider this is pleasing to God? St. Paul reminds us in *Rm. 2:1*, “*So no matter who you are, if you pass judgment you have no excuse. It is yourself that you condemn when you judge others, since you behave in the same way as those you are condemning.*”

If we live with prejudices we need to be healed. The Spirit of the Lord is constantly and with power opening the way and drawing us to reconcile and make peace with everyone. And most importantly, ***Jesus wants us to show His love through our acceptance of others, and to look at others as children of God; to love them as God loves them.*** Our Blessed Mother emphasized this in many of Her messages to the seers of Medjugorje, and as a lesson for all of us.

Jesus led me in my mission step by step, very gently. The way He prepared someone like me is no less than a miracle; to educate me who was ignorant to the Scriptures, ignorant to Church matters, totally uninterested in religion, never having had any catechism, a person who never prayed or went to Church, but who lived only a jet-set lifestyle. His instructions that are divine led me slowly into the way He wanted me to become one with Him “*Allow Me to mold you like I want you to be...*”, He used to tell me. (cf. *TLIG Messages*) He wanted me to be a witness to unity, or as He said: ‘*be the icon of unity.*’ (cf. *Sept. 30, 1993, TLIG Messages,*) He wants everyone to be an icon of unity.

For several years the Lord was instructing me to understand that He wants me to gather all the Churches in order to reconcile and shatter the barrier of our division. This barrier that stands separating us is none other than Satan himself. However, was I able to gather the Churches together as He wanted? Yes, this could only be done by allowing Him to lead me with trust and without questioning Him. And so, with the collaborators whom He provided me with, ‘laborers to His rich Vineyard’ as He called them, we worked on gathering the Churches together. Our biggest success was when 24 Church denominations of clergy gathered in our pilgrimage and celebrated Mass around one altar! The number of clergy members was close to 120, accompanied by 700 lay

people. During our pilgrimages, the Spirit of the Lord takes over and fills the clergy members' hearts with the thirst for wanting to be one, showing us that what unites us is far greater than what divides us. It is something that is not forced upon them, but a desire within them to share one Cup and eat from the same Bread. Maybe this action of existing as one Church in its diversity is a vision of the future; we were living it ahead of our time.

A few years after this eventful pilgrimage, I was sent to Taiwan to witness. The Archbishop Joseph Ti-kang was very open to the messages of *True Life in God* and received me with a warm welcome. He firstly had me speak to his priests about how the Lord is calling us to unity in diversity, and I thought that this was easy, since Jesus had trained me, giving me many messages on that theme; therefore, I knew what to say. But later that afternoon, the Archbishop called me in to say that he had invited several officials (around 20 of them) from other religions and that he would like for me to give them an interfaith talk. I was taken aback because I had never spoken before to people of other faiths. Totally unprepared, complaining to Jesus that He should not give me such electrical shock surprises, I said, 'que sera sera...' That meeting went so well, and so smoothly, that it even touched their hearts. One Muslim was weeping because through the words he heard he felt so loved, and finally, so completely understood by a non-Muslim.

So, this was the very first step through which Jesus was drawing me into interfaith dialogues. He immersed me into this slowly, subsequently meeting an Imam and a Venerable Buddhist on my trip to Dhaka who came to my meeting. They were invited among the Christians. When the Venerable of Dhaka found out that one of his monks had gone there, he reproached him for not telling him to attend as well. Consequently, the Venerable sent note that he wanted to meet me, and so I accepted his invitation. And that is how I discovered Venerable Mahathero Suddhananda, - who actually passed away recently, may God rest his soul - and saw the work he was doing. He was raising orphans through a school and then helping them enroll in universities. He was a loving father to them, and so True Life in God offered the Venerable help through our Beth Myriam's funds (charity for feeding the poor). From thereon, Venerable Suddhananda, invited me several times, to offer me the Peace Gold Award Medals for promoting peace and reconciliation in the world. My talks at his monastery were heard by Buddhists monks, Hindus and Muslims as well as Christians. A Muslim professor, who was present, liked my talk so much that he invited me the next day to speak to the students of the Muslim university. At that same time, the Hindus came over to me and asked me to give a talk as well to the students of their university.

When the war was still going on in Syria and the city of Homs was destroyed, while Aleppo too was being attacked, I was invited to go over there and do a series of TV interviews with Lea the interviewer from Télé Lumière. I had no hesitation about whether I should or should not go to a place where there is still an ongoing war. If Christ is sending me there, I should go. I started my journey in Beirut. Télé Lumière arranged the interfaith dialogues with me, along with the Imams and Sheikhs from the Druz, Shiite, and Sunni denominations of the Islamic religion together with different Metropolitans and Bishops. After all, Lebanon's population is mixed; Muslims and Christians live in harmony together. The theme of these interviews was 'How-to live-in peace with everyone' and about the messages of *True Life in God* that God is sending to the whole world.

I was accompanied by Fr. Rolf Schönenberger. He confided to me that he had never participated in an interfaith dialogue, but he did not hesitate to participate, trusting on our Blessed Mother who would guide him, and relying on the Holy Spirit to give an excellent talk. The first meeting interviewed by Télé Lumière went marvelously well. Among those present were Bishops, and Sheikhs from the Druze, Shiite and Sunni denominations. After the interview ended, the Shiite Sheikh Mohamed Ali El-Hajj asked me if I was able to talk to his people the following day. I was leaving that day and so this was not done. However, he arranged that I return to Beirut and be the key-note speaker at a gathering he prepared with Muslims and Christians.

Later, the inter-faith mission program had us travel from Beirut to Syria via Damascus by car, meet there in a Church, and from there travel to Homs where two heroic priests keep our Beth Myriam active among ruins. From there, after our visit, we continued north to Aleppo by car, an eight-hour trip on a dangerous road with snipers behind the hills. When we arrived in Aleppo, I was invited to meet several Sheikhs and Bishops for interviews who welcomed me with joy and love. Some interviews were held in Churches, others in holy sites. So now and then, while on this trip, I would contemplate how the Lord was guiding me, without any searching to involve myself with interfaith dialogues, as these were placed in front of me; it was as if I was sucked right into them!

When I returned home from Syria, I was tempted one day to have a small doubt, asking myself if this was what the Lord really wanted. He never fails to show me, when I'm sincere, whether I'm doing His Will or not. I discovered shortly after I had returned home that Pope Francis was visiting a mosque and was embracing an Imam out of respect. He was surrounded by Imams. This reminded me as well of the time when St. Pope John Paul II had visited a mosque and had contacted the Muslim people. So, these interfaith encounters were not coincidence.

Many people just do not understand unity in diversity and its value – even less when they hear that I am drawn to interfaith dialogues. They do not clearly see the Pope's initiative for interfaith dialogue either, or it is often misunderstood. They do not understand the Holy Spirit's initiative that the Pope is only acting via his devotion and fidelity to God.

The Holy Spirit is giving impulses for Peace and Unity among all mankind. The Pope shows us profound humility and courage to follow what the Holy Spirit wants, even though he knows that there will be people who will not understand, and that he will be attacked mercilessly. Many voices are still gossiping out there, saying that the Pope is aiming to make a new world order and a one-world religion. So, every time he hugs a Muslim, he is accused and persecuted by voices saying, "See! he is a traitor to Jesus – he sold Jesus down the river - he is an antichrist!"

People do not understand that our Lord Jesus and our Blessed Mother in these last days call us to peace and unity – they do not get it – they do not listen to our Blessed Mother's words in Medjugorje – what She said about the Muslims. They ignore the words, "Peace on earth to men of Good will" no more than the Jews understood Jesus' healing on the Sabbath when the man picked up his bed. They retorted, "How can He dare work on the Sabbath?" They did not get it... Nor did they understand that God made the Sabbath for man and not man for the Sabbath.

My approach thus to non-Christians is an approach of respect, of brotherly love, but above all: of transmitting Jesus' love to them. I was brought up in Egypt - a country full of Muslims, good Muslims. Our neighbors at home in Heliopolis were Muslim and were from good families. My parents had a good relationship with them, and we lived in peace.

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta worked with Hindus. She loved them as her own children. She witnessed Jesus' love by showing them charity and embracing them in Christ's Name. She never had any prejudice in her and never differentiated between Christian and Hindu, showing everyone the same love and tenderness. She never forced them to change their faith but left them free to choose. She was an example of what Jesus represents, and for this reason she became a Saint. For our Savior was born and died not only for us Christians, but for the whole of His creation. He came to redeem all of us. He showed His love not only to the Jews, but also to the gentiles. His love is for the whole of His creation.



We should remember two things: God knows us for what we really are. And the second: we should not to forget that we are ambassadors of peace and unity for Christ who is appealing through us.

Vassula



The Holy Spirit loves to shape unity from the most beautiful and harmonious diversity.



God is with those who seek peace.  
From heaven He blesses every step which, on this path, is accomplished.