

MEDJUGORJE

A place where Heaven meets the earth

FATHER IVAN TURIĆ: TESTIMONY



Father Turić

JESUS IS MY BEST FRIEND

Interview with Father Ivan Turic conducted by Dr. Ignaz Hochholzer and Vitomir Damjanovic, 13 September 2013 in Vrgorac

Father Ivan Turić was born in 1940 in Zupa, in the diocese of Split. For many years he worked as a missionary in Texas and in Buenos Aires in poverty districts, in favelas. From childhood, he had a close relationship with Jesus and the Mother of God. As an altar boy, he heard about Saint. Padre Pio, who inspired him to a special devotion to Jesus Crucified and the Eucharist. It is known as Padre de la Rosa - a father with a rose.

- *When did the thought of the priesthood first appear in my father's heart?*

"As an altar boy, I looked with admiration at the priest who was celebrating the mass of the holy mass at the altar. I was so inspired by the accompaniment of this mystery that I dreamed in my heart to become a priest one day. When I was 9 years old, I was on a pilgrimage in Sinj, one of the Marian sanctuaries near Split. Then I wrote to the Mother of God on the card the deepest request of my soul: "I would like to become a priest." Later I attended primary school in Imotski, a small town near my family home, then in Zagreb to secondary school, there I passed my secondary school-leaving examination. After graduation I wanted to study theology in Germany. Earlier, I spent a short time in Vienna. One day I was sitting hungry on a bench in a botanical garden. In Vienna, I did not know anyone, I did not have friends there, and the money was also exhausted, so that I found myself in a situation where I could not buy anything to eat. Then I took my rosary in my hands and began to pray. There was a sister who came by and spoke to me next to me. After a moment of conversation, she realized that I came from Croatia. Then she started to speak Croatian. It turned out that before the Second World War she lived in a monastery in Croatia. So God sent Sr. El Salvador to me, which led me to a priest who, in turn, gave me 500 shillings. Thanks to this amount, I was able to go to Altötting, where I stayed for two months. Later, I returned to Vienna to begin my theological studies.

- *What was the meeting with Father Pio?*

- Even while I was an altar boy, I learned from a sermon about a holy priest through whom God works many miracles. I thought, "Ah, if I could once confess to him and attend Mass that he celebrates..." When I started my studies in Vienna and had a holiday after the first year, I received financial support from friends and good people. I have been saving for a long time with the intention of going to Italy, to Padre Pio. It was 1962. From Vienna I went by train to Foggia. Late in the afternoon I changed there to the bus, which I reached through the mountains to San Giovanni Rotondo. On the way, I prayed for the grace of meeting Padre Pio and being with him on the Eucharist. Immediately after arriving I found a place to stay. When the next day I stood in front of the church, a man came to me and he turned to me in Croatian: "I am a personal doctor of Padre Pio. Would you like to see him?" I replied that's why I am here. We waited before entering the monastery, because Padre Pio talked to a group of Americans. After a quarter of an hour, they left the room. In one moment everyone waiting kneeled, and Father Pio blessed everyone. Then he came to me and said, "Ivan." He spoke to me by name, although he saw me for the first time. "Ivan, you will be a priest and your life will be marked with a cross." I was very surprised by his words. I did not know if what was happening was waking or sleeping. In one moment everyone waiting kneeled, and Father Pio blessed everyone. Then he came to me and said, "Ivan." He spoke to me by name, although he saw me for the first time. "Ivan, you will be a priest and your life will be marked with a cross." I was very surprised by his words. I did not know if what was happening was waking or sleeping. In one moment everyone waiting kneeled, and Father Pio blessed everyone. Then he came to me and said, "Ivan." He spoke to me by name, although he saw me for the first time. "Ivan, you will be a priest and your life will be marked with a cross." I was very surprised by his words. I did not know if what was happening was waking or sleeping.

He blessed me and went to his duties. We were left alone and a doctor who asked me to be an altar-boy at Holy Mass, which my father would be celebrating. He introduced me to a brother in the sacristy who was especially concerned with Padre Pio. The sacristan's brother showed me the church and the altar where Father Pio celebrated the Holy Mass. He emphasized: "When Padre Pio celebrates Mass and after transubstantiation, Jesus is on the altar, and thus no longer bread and wine, then the appearance of Padre Pio also changes. His face shines." Everything that my brother talked about, I experienced the next day. Padre Pio talked with Jesus present on the altar. He gestured, his face changed, he looked at him. And I looked at it with the feeling of being deeply touched by God. This experience has concentrated my life on Jesus.

- Did you receive a father's cross from Padre Pio?



A cross received from Padre Pio

- Yes, exactly the cross I wear. He gave it to me the next day when I was with him. It is a cross in which there are relics. I always carry it with me. But Padre Pio did not mean this wooden cross, but the cross of my life.

My mother was illiterate, but she raised us very well. She kept telling us that we would never step in someone's word, not interrupt during one's conversation. And Padre Pio talked with Jesus. However, the sacristan's brother instructed me: "If the dialogue of Padre Pio with Jesus is prolonged for more than half an hour, move closer to him and let him know that there is a Holy Mass to continue."

During these ten days when I was in San Giovanni Rotondo and had the opportunity to serve as an altar boy, I only went to give Padre Pio a sign to continue the Mass. He made a miracle for me, he opened my eyes - he made me see Jesus, present at the altar in the holy host. That's why I always offer him a rose. Jesus is my best friend.

- Father was ordained priest in Houston in 1968 ...

- I could not go back to Croatia. The communists gave me a passport with the intention of imprisoning me when I returned to my homeland. That's why I stayed in Houston, Texas for a long time. I worked in many parishes, and I was a chaplain of sailors. Houston is the largest port city, the second largest port in the United States.

- He has 27 years of experience in missionary work behind him. When did your father leave for the first time on a mission?

- At that time, my bishop knew that there were about 450 faithful in one priest in Houston, while in Argentina - 35 thousand. I had the soul of a missionary, so he agreed to my request to go to Argentina.

- Did the father also experience revelation?

- Already in Texas, I experienced the clear action of the Holy Spirit in my soul. I could compare this experience to the singing of angelic choirs. In the diocese of Rosario, in the favelas, the Latin American district of poverty, when I woke up one night, I saw the Mother of God on the wall. I was not alone in the church, so I asked other people if only I can see her. But they saw her too. Mary made a gesture to approach me. I went immediately and She made the sign of the cross over me, blessing me and said, "Be blessed, you and all your future. Let this blessing save you from all disease, accident and temptation of evil spirit. Give this blessing to others. "

It was the Mother of God from Medjugorje. I recognized her.

I knew that my hands were blessed by the bishop with the words: "Let your hands be blessed, and all that you bless." Yet something made me feel as if my hands were sluggish. It was only after the words of Mary that I experienced them as if they were free. I wanted to bless the children, the poor and the sick more.

- Did this happen before the apparitions of Medjugorje began?

- It was 1986, five years after the beginning of the apparitions. In fact, I saw the Mother of God. After revealing the next day, I went to the city. As I walked along the crowded streets of the South American city, for the first time I happened to let someone from the crowd of unknown people kneel beside me and ask for my blessing. Later similar situations happened more often. And I did not feel fear anymore. That is why I am so grateful to Mary for this grace of deliverance.

- When did your father come to Medjugorje for the first time?

- Three years later I suffered from terrible back pains. I could not get up in the morning. Because of pain, I once sprained my ankle walking along the streets of favela. Then I went to Croatia to my parents. I greeted my family and immediately went to the Mother of God to Medjugorje, which lies about 50 km from my family home.

When I arrived there, I was surprised by the number of people gathered there, especially the sick. It turned out that there was a lasting mass with prayer for healing celebrated by Fr. Tardif, whom I knew from Argentina. After Communion, Fr. Tardif turned to the Mother of God and asked for the grace of healing for the sick here and throughout the world. Hundreds of priests participated in prayer. I was a witness when the poor people got up and walked, and the blind regained their ability to see. They all experienced healing through Mary's cause. I forgot about myself, about my suffering, because I focused completely on the action of God, which I saw so clearly in this church. It was only later that I realized that the pain of the spine had passed, in addition, irretrievably. And this is also grace, for which I thank the Mother of God from Medjugorje.

- Would father want to share some experience that is associated with Medjugorje?

- I had the opportunity to see the great love for Our Lady, the Queen of Peace, in Argentina. There are a lot of very poor people who have almost nothing and would like to see Mary from Medjugorje so much. I was spiritually accompanying a community of the faithful who worshiped Mary very much from Medjugorje. The community had a desire to come to the Eucharist once a week to join me in church, or favela, just to the district where such misery prevailed, especially among children. When the community came, crowds of children and other faithful surrounded her. Everyone clung

to the figurine of Our Lady of Medjugorje, which was brought by members of the community. There was great joy, and for me it was a miracle experience.



Father Turić - "father with a rose"

- Father has a very interesting "name" ...

- Ah yes! Father with a rose. From the time I celebrated my first Mass, so far, I am taking a rose whenever I go to celebrate the Eucharist. She is not meant to serve as an ornament, but it is a sign of Christ's priesthood in my soul. After transubstantiation, when bread becomes the Body of Christ, the Blood of Blood, and His Presence is so close, then I offer Jesus this rose. And after the Eucharist I give or send a rose to a person who is ill or someone who looks after a sick person. Another time I give it to the person who celebrates the birthday. The rose is a blessing that comes directly from the altar of Jesus Christ.

- Did he meet the father of Cardinal Bergoglio - Pope Francis?

- Yes, I met him. We could often concelebrate the Holy Mass together, especially during the difficult period of dictatorship. Together with other priests and faithful, we first expected his attitude towards political and economic events, in order to preserve the unity of views with our shepherd. He was an authority for us. He never rushed, but he did not delay in pronouncing a firm sentence.

- This year was a father in the hospital of the Brothers of Mercy in Vienna. What was the special experience of this time?

- The German word "soul-shepherd", literally caring for souls, is the most beautiful word defining the priest's ministry. Wherever the Lord sends me, I try to get in touch with man.

Immediately after entering the hospital room, I noticed a man suffering from cancer. I greeted him and introduced myself. And he kindly told me: "Father, I do not believe in God, but I will accept my father as a friend." I often helped him at night, sometimes I called my sister. After a few days, I heard that I was like an angel to him. When I went to church, I told him: "My friend, I am going to entrust you to our Friend." Then he asked "Jakiemu?". I showed him the cross I received from Padre Pio. He smiled, even when this gesture was a great difficulty for him because of the pain. When he was transferred to another unit, I thought I had to find him before I left home. He called me through his wife and said: "Father Ivan, my father's father will not leave until my father absolves me." He had the possibility of confession.

- He has a father in Jesus, his best friend, and in Mary a guardian and guide - that's for sure. Would father want to add something to the end of the conversation?

- It is not surprising that the Mother of God cares for her children. When is my mother especially looking after us? When we are sick or have problems. In our life it is similar - when we are experiencing difficulties, our friends help us. I will repeat what she taught us, children, our mother: Dear children, do not forget about gratitude to God and people for the goodness that you have done. Heaven is grateful to us - we accept the gratitude of Jesus, because it is the hearing of his gratitude to our efforts and approaching him that opens us even more to his favors, to longing for him and enabling us to respond with his love and readiness to do his will. Our Lady also goes out of gratitude to each of us, rewards her faithfulness and our efforts. It supports the Croatian people to continue on the path it proposes.

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