

***Andrija Zovko (Andy) – the self-sacrificing and unselfish person who spreads the wonders of Medjugorje.***



**At first he was an obedient and faithful person who spread messages, only later to discover his numerous gifts: healing of spiritual and physical diseases, freeing people from evil spirits... So far he has taken 147 trips all over the world not recording the number of healings, although he knows of 113 instances of casting out evil spirits.**

Andrija Zovko was born on May 17, 1937 in Medjugorje and spent his youth in the post war period in the poor region of Herzegovina, without any perspectives or freedom of religion. For that reason, as well as for economic ones, he left his birthplace in 1964 for Germany, and then later went to America.

He heard about the events in Medjugorje very quickly. In order to find out the truth about the stories that began to spread he called his very devout and God-fearing sister, Mara. With complete confidence she confirmed that the miraculous events happening were true, that Gospa (Our Lady) was revealing herself to children. Inspired by her witness, after only two weeks he started to spread the truth and the messages of Medjugorje in his area in Chicago.

Like every beginning, this one was also very difficult. Andrija maintains that although it was tough he heard a voice inside telling him to continue. He didn't give up; rather he gained more and more strength. In 1985 he

asked Gospa (Our Lady) through one of the visionaries Vicka, “In what way should I continue spreading the message?” He received his answer, “Spread the messages just the way you hear them.” Aside from this he received a confusing task in which he was told, “Encourage people to pray.” He was afraid because he had no idea how to begin. He often asked himself how he should encourage people to pray when he wasn’t a priest, nor even a layperson serving the Church. However, his task was clear. He continued his calling with all his strength.

That’s how he discovered his first gift of prayer in 1990. His encounter with Marija Pavlovic, the visionary, in Medjugorje in November of that year was also pivotal. She asked him if he would like to join her on the hill where Gospa (Our Lady) revealed herself at the blue cross, where Marija was to have a vision at ten o’clock in the evening. He accepted her offer. Andrija states, “During the vision I held a cross in my hand and prayed to the Blessed Virgin to bless that cross and to help me heal the spiritually and physically sick. At that time I didn’t hear or see anything, but I felt a special inner peace.” On his way to Chicago he stopped in Zagreb for five days to visit his brother, Kazimir. On the third day of his stay in Zagreb his brother went into a coma. At two o’clock in the morning his sister-in-law called him and told him that Kazimir was dying. Andrija got up, took his cross and prayed over him. It was the first time that he had taken the cross and prayed over someone. His sister-in-law said that his brother was in a coma for more than 45 minutes. Andrija didn’t stop, he just continued praying. His brother’s body looked dead and at one point he opened his eyes. He didn’t know how to describe what happened to him, or whether he had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but soon he recovered and is now in good health. When he returned to Chicago he had an appointment in Las Cruces, New Mexico from January 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> in 1991. When he finished his speech about Medjugorje and the messages he mentioned his experiences and the case with his brother in Zagreb. The people asked him if he would also pray

over them and he accepted, although he had never prayed over anyone before. After he placed his hands on the first person, she fell and rested in the Spirit. On that evening all the people testified that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. That's the first time Andrija was convinced that he had truly received the gift of healing in Medjugorje. When he consulted priests about this they told him it was a gift from God and that he must use it humbly.

When he returned to America he started taking groups of people to Medjugorje. Every year he took two groups, one in October and one in May. Providence allowed him to find his own priest and Spiritual Director, Fr. Charles Becker, who also went through his own conversion. They continued to work together. Fr. Charles Becker would offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, hear confessions, and gives speeches, and Andrija would pray for healings of all kinds, wherever they traveled. Fr. Becker likewise leads Medjugorje prayer groups all over Chicago.

The word about Andrija's gifts quickly spread around the world, and at the request of different priests and bishops he began traveling around the world. However, he maintains that he only goes where people invite him. Since then he has had many travels throughout America, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, even the distant Philippines and Korea.

The years and a difficult life have taken their toll on Andrija's body. He has had three strokes. After the first stroke he offered up his illness to God as a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. He also had four heart attacks. The fourth time he had open-heart surgery and diabetes problems. He remained as such and never prayed for his own recovery; rather he asked that God's will be done. Despite all of his health problems he succeeded in taking 147 trips around the world, where he had to stand for hours and pray over each person individually. The fruits of his gift began to accumulate, but he didn't even count their number. The only

number he kept track of was the number of people who were freed from evil spirits: 113.

Andrija continues to spread the messages with self-sacrifice. He struggles with his own difficulties and illness, but he always finds time for people in distress, physical or spiritual. With his typical smile he spreads the message of peace and conversion and acts as a mediator for the fruits of his gifts.

*Based on an interview with Andrija(Andy) Zovko by Fr. Ivica Majstorovic, OFM pastor of Blessed Alojzije Stepinac Croatian Catholic Mission, Chicago,IL. and translated by Fr. Jozo Grbes, OFM pastor of St. Jerome Croatian Catholic Church, Chicago, IL.*

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