

Church's stance on Medjugorje/ Can we receive Communion?

Q. What is the Catholic Church's position on Medjugorje? (There is a parishioner who says that the Blessed Mother has a daily message for us.) (Coshocton, Ohio)

A. As of this date, there has been no official determination by the church as to the authenticity of the Marian apparitions to which you refer. In 1981, six young people claimed that Mary was appearing to them at Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia. Since then, a number of church commissions have studied the veracity of those claims, but no formal and definitive conclusion has yet been issued by the Vatican.

A report published in 2017 by the website Vatican Insider said that the commission established some years ago by now-retired Pope Benedict XVI had voted to accept the first seven appearances of Mary in 1981 as authentic, but had expressed doubt about the more-than-40,000 apparitions that have allegedly happened since then.

(Three of the six original visionaries say that Mary still appears to them with messages each day, while the other three say that they see her now only once a year.)

In 2017, on a plane returning to Rome from Fatima, Portugal, Pope Francis, while seeming to be open to the legitimacy of the original Medjugorje visions, cast some doubt on their continuance. "I prefer Our Lady to be a mother, our mother," the pope told the journalists, "and not a telegraph operator who sends out a message every day at a certain time."

Meanwhile, though, more than two million pilgrims come to Medjugorje each year to visit the site of the purported visions, and clearly their faith is deepened. In May 2018, Pope Francis appointed the retired archbishop of Warsaw-Praga, Poland, as his personal envoy to Medjugorje to see that the pastoral needs of these pilgrims are served, including the hundreds each day who seek the sacrament of penance.

On that 2017 flight from Fatima, Pope Francis had noted that countless pilgrims to Medjugorje are converted. "For this there is no magic wand," said the pope. "This

spiritual-pastoral fact cannot be denied.”

Q. My husband and I are both Catholic. We had separated for four years (he had borne a child outside of our marriage), but we reconciled earlier this year and have forgiven each other.

My question is this: What is required for us to begin again receiving the Eucharist? (We had both stopped receiving.) I have gone to confession myself, but I still don't feel free to receive the body and blood of Christ. Please advise. (City of origin withheld)

A. I thank God for the reconciliation of your marriage and for your willingness to forgive. As for holy Communion, you yourself are able to receive right now — especially since you have been to the sacrament of penance recently. Perhaps, though, you would feel more comfortable if you spoke to a priest personally; he could assure you that you are in God's good graces and ready to take the Eucharist.

(And know that the Eucharist, as sublime a gift as it is, is not meant as a reward for perfect people. Instead, it is food for the journey, nourishment for those struggling every day to do what God wants.) Your husband — if he has not done so already — should of course go to confession before receiving Communion.

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