
News Updates

MEDJUGORJE ON THE MOVE

In the summer of 1981, six Croatian children said they had been receiving daily visitations from the Virgin Mary. In the nearly two decades since, more than 20 million people have made pilgrimages to a shrine in Medjugorje, a small town in Bosnia (the former country of Yugoslavia). From the United States alone, more than 150 Marian Groups have visited the site of the purported visions. The visionaries and their "Apparition Hill" have become a lucrative industry.

Now, for those in the United States seeking a message from the mother of Jesus through the Medjugorje visionaries, travel to the war-torn country is no longer a necessity. Ivan Dragicevic, one of the visionaries, is drawing thousands in meetings across this country. According to Jan. 17, 2000, *Newsweek* magazine, "Devotees come to watch him commune with Mary, then translate her messages to the crowd." Dragicevic, now 34, says the Virgin Mary usually appears to him at 6:40 p.m. — apparently regardless of the city in which he is conducting his intermediary rituals. From Boston to Dallas to Oakland, Calif., Dragicevic finds himself a celebrity in America and a man in demand, the magazine reported.

Dragicevic says Mary appears to him with "black hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, a white veil and a crown of stars." He also says he has seen heaven.

The Medjugorje visions have never been verified or sanctioned by the Catholic Church, either locally or universally. In 1987, the bishops of Yugoslavia stated that "one cannot affirm that supernatural apparitions are involved." Likewise, the Vatican offers no endorsement, saying it is continuing to investigate the reports.

—MKG

UFO SIGHTINGS INCREASE IN CHINA

China is a country where reports of the supernatural and unearthly are normally suppressed by the communist leadership. However, in the recent past few months, "China is buzzing with a rising number of UFO sightings," according to an Associated Press news story. In December, people from more than a dozen cities reported UFO sightings. In Pusalu, a poor farm community 30 miles from Beijing, villagers said they saw a person-size object, bathed in golden light and slowly moving skyward.

"Some of these sightings are real, some are fake and, with others, it's unclear," said Shen Shituan, the honorary director of the China UFO Research Association. Shituan is also president of Beijing Aerospace University and a rocket scientist. His UFO research association claims a membership of 50,000.

UFO watching, interest and research continues to grow in China. A bimonthly magazine about UFO sightings has a circulation of 400,000. While the state-run media service also has acknowledged UFO sightings, a representative for the Communist Party said, "Some say it was caused by an earthquake. Some say it was a UFO. Some say it was a ray of Buddha. I'm telling everyone to call it an auspicious sign."

Others offer added skepticism. Geremie Barne, a Chinese culture watcher from the Australia National University suggested, "All of that sort of millennial fear and trepidation fits in so nicely with Chinese cosmology — and also the Hollywood propaganda that everybody's been lapping up."

—MKG

HINN SAYS TBN WILL RAISE DEAD VIEWERS

Undaunted by the news media's debunking of his claim that a man was raised from the dead at one of his healing crusades, Benny Hinn presses on with divine revelations of worldwide resurrections.

"I'm telling you, I can feel the anointing talking here. People are going to be canceling funeral services and bringing their dead in their caskets, placing them — My God, I feel the anointing here — placing them before a television set, waiting for God's power to come through and touch them," Hinn told Paul and Jan Crouch and their Trinity Broadcasting Network viewing audience last fall. The program originally aired live Oct. 19, 1999. It has been replayed several times on TBN, including Jan. 7, 2000.

Of course, according to the controversial faith healer, the television sets will need be tuned to TBN. "You're going to have people raised from the dead watching this network. ... People around the world who will lose loved ones will say to undertakers, 'Not yet, I want to take my dead loved one and place him in front of that TV set for 24 hours,'" Hinn announced to the network's followers.

Hinn also alleged that God was showing him "rows of caskets lining up in front of this TV set." "I see them

(continues on page 23)