

*Interview:  
Alfons Sarrach, a Catholic writer and journalist from Germany*



Alfons Sarrach was born in what was then the Free State of Danzig in 1927. He grew up in a German-Polish culture. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939, he personally witnessed the outbreak of World War II. Ten members of his family were immediately sent to a concentration camp due to the fact that they opposed the National Socialist Regime. Sarrach's own family followed only a few months later. These events naturally had a formative influence on his way of thinking.

In the nineties, "Der prophetische Aufbruch von Medjugorje", ("The prophetic start of Medjugorje") appeared on the market, recognised by a reputable foreign press as one of the most outstanding titles of the century just ending. Under the subsequent title "Medjugorjes Botschaft vom dienenden Gott" ("Medjugorjes Message of the Serving God"), certain characteristic features of a new culture were outlined. Sarrach has become the catalyst for a change of view regarding politics and theology and has paved the way towards a new image of God. (See: <http://www.sarrach.com>)

In June 2006, Sarrach returned to Medjugorje to thank God, because of his healing from cancer. Lidija Paris interviewed him.

***How did you come to learn about Medjugorje?***

I visited Medjugorje in the year 1987 as a sceptic. More and more people came to me asking me my opinion of Medjugorje. At that time, I was working on a book about the apostle Thomas, who was a missionary in India. In addition to my study of the gospels at the time, I was also studiously involved with ancient Egypt, Rome and India, and all of that was enough for me. But people repeatedly remarked how shameful it was that I, a catholic journalist, was not sufficiently interested in Medjugorje. My wife advised that I had no other choice but to go there. In 1987, together with our three Indian children, we visited Medjugorje at Christmastime. Initially I spent my time merely observing, but after one week of this something had changed in me. We had been staying in Miletina in the house of a family that arranged a meeting for us with the visionary Marija Pavlović. I had a long conversation with her, and thus the ice was broken. It became obvious to me that Medjugorje was something exceptional, a completely unusual event anticipating the approaching new millennium.

I had always tended to be preoccupied with the future. A few times in my life, I had a kind of intuition for future events. This feeling would not leave me while in Medjugorje, an intuition that Medjugorje was the crossroads for the upcoming third millennium. I was not so much interested in the visionaries themselves, despite my very deep conversation with Marija Pavlović. I rather spoke with other people, with the members of the prayer group for example, in order to figure out what attitude was the Mother of God engendering here. What was most important to me, was the reaction in the souls of those who lived through these unfolding events.

### ***How can you separate this education, emanating from the Mother of God, from the prevailing mentality and the family education imparted in Herzegovina?***

It was clear to me that, precisely because of the prevailing values, the Mother of God chose Medjugorje. In my opinion, she found the suitably natural conditions here. I also believe that here, in Herzegovina, the least perverted family consciousness was to be found. Here, she could still build on a healthy nature that was no longer to be found in other areas of Europe. It is often said that grace presupposes nature. I have observed people and families here, and the relationship between children and their parents and between the parents and the children. It was clear to me that the Mother of God did not choose the destructive western civilization setting. God became man neither in Athens, nor Rome, nor in Alexandria, but in Israel. At that time, the Jews were the only Monotheists in the world. They possessed a unique and truly great religious authority, Temple and Scripture. It was to this untainted, but otherwise apparently insignificant Israel, that Jesus came. He used the prevailing natural conditions to introduce a unique Revelation. This comparison occurred to me forcefully here in Medjugorje. I found a similar atmosphere here to that which prevailed in Israel then. I also noticed that the first Christians, those who knew the message of Jesus, could not remain silent. They had an interior fire which they had to carry to the rest of the world. The very same has happened here in Medjugorje. Those who came to Medjugorje could not be silent either. The departed Bishop of Fulda said once, during a large Medjugorje Conference in the Cathedral of Fulda, in front of approximately 8.000 people: "The followers of Medjugorje are a stiff-necked race!" They have this need to communicate to others what they themselves have experienced here.

### ***What exactly is to be communicated?***

In my opinion, it can be summarised quite simply: The world, the way it is today and the way it has been for thousands of years, was governed according to the division of power. There were those who exercised power, and those others who were victims of power. This pattern of thinking is still very deeply rooted in human nature, not only in political life, but also in the family. The fathers have a saying, whereby they claim they are the Patriarchs. This pattern was broken through here and, in my opinion, it was replaced by radically new thinking in terms of serving rather than ruling. When Marija Pavlović told me that the Mother of God was appearing in a grey dress, everything became crystal-clear to me. Grey is the colour of serving.

This was one awareness. The other was the fact that western civilization is wholly influenced by the statement of the famous French philosopher Descartes: *Cogito ergo sum. I think, therefore I am.* But here in Medjugorje, while I was kneeling in front of the church during one particular apparition, it became clear to me that the Mother of God is breaking through this philosophical tenet. *Cogito ergo sum* applies no longer but rather *Amo ergo sum. I love, therefore I am.* Human understanding is a prisoner of space and time. Love breaks through space and time.

While I was with my group on Podbrdo, we stood for a long time before the grey cross of the third day of the apparitions. There symbolically expressed, in my opinion, is the core of the messages... Mary in a grey dress before a grey cross and a grey background... Peace with God and among men. This peace is possible only if you live in the spirit of serving. No one is afraid of the person who is serving. The one who serves does not spread around the panic of subjugating power.

### ***You overcame a serious illness recently?***

One year ago I was extremely ill to the point of death. I was bleeding grievously, losing a litre of blood, and I had to be taken urgently to the hospital, where a malicious blood cancer was diagnosed. I wanted to know, how long I had to live, because I wanted to prepare myself... The doctor said six weeks to two months, perhaps even a little longer. He suggested chemotherapy, warning however that it was possible that the body might reject it because it was perhaps too late... after one or two chemotherapy sessions death could ensue! I looked at him and said: "You know, Mr. Professor, I am looking forward to it. The day of my death will be the most beautiful day of my life. Therefore I would like to experience it consciously. Promise me that you will not try to prolong my life in any artificial way. I would like to die in full consciousness." He was surprised. Other doctors and nurses came and said: "We want to be with you when you are dying. We want to see whether you will continue to think in this way right to the end... whether you can persevere with your desire to die this way".

The chemotherapy was duly administered. They told me that every fever attack was potentially dangerous. If it surpassed 38 degrees, I would have to go immediately to the hospital, as I could die within 24 hours! It transpired that I had to be brought very quickly to the hospital twice... On one of those occasions the doctor told me that this was the last minute... I would not survive the night. But after the fifth chemotherapy session I was thoroughly examined, and the doctor informed me that the cancer was gone, although it was still expected to be there! Full remission! While he did not dare to say that I was healed, I was allowed to live a normal life, as if I were completely healthy. I did not know whether I should be happy or sad... The doctor said to me: "Take the chance and write another two books!"

My whole attitude had been based upon my experience of Medjugorje. I have spoken with many people here, and they always emphasized that time and eternity were one. Already today we live in eternity, and we should live as we would if we were already living in eternity. For me, this is the secret behind my probable or supposed healing.

The day before yesterday I experienced Adoration here. I cried and asked God, "How have I deserved this grace?" Those people praying before the exposed Blessed Sacrament foreshadowed for me the eternal Adoration. It is a piece of heaven on earth. People from all cultures, from all parts of the world, adoring before Holy God... this cannot be as deeply experienced anywhere else in the world... not even in Rome... people so deeply moved that they switch completely off and pray single-mindedly.

### ***These apparitions are different from those in Lourdes, Fatima, La Salette or elsewhere. Why, do you think this is so?***

We stand on the threshold of the collapse of western civilization. We observe a totally secular Europe without God and without interrelating with the Christian message. It is dreadful. We have a Christian continent that wants to deny its own roots, and this will precipitate the collapse. It has already begun. The politicians experience increasing difficulties in trying to make people understand that we cannot any longer maintain our social system because of the age profile of the population! In Holland, as in England, when you are over 70, you are denied treatment! An acquaintance of mine in London, 72 years old, had contracted cancer. The doctor told him: "Over 70 we do not give any treatment any more!" This will become the norm. This will become widespread practice simply because they will no longer be able physically to care for the already too numerous old people. On this issue, Medjugorje is a great hope. In Germany, wherever there is a renewal, the roots invariably stretch back to Medjugorje! Therefore one can really speak of the intervention of Heaven, because Medjugorje contributes in one way to the acceleration of the collapse, by announcing something new. Father Kenntenich, a famous Marian prophet from Germany, said once: "If God allows something to break down, it is only in order to build something new". While we experience the collapse of western civilization, we also experience God wanting to make something new, something that will make people happy.

### ***Why is the Church delaying recognition?***

We should see this delay in a positive light. In my opinion, those who came to the faith through Medjugorje are tested in this way and are thereby strengthened in the faith. This promotes the maturation process of Medjugorje. Also, a hastily granted recognition could have negative consequences. We have to struggle through. I possess an exchange of letters with Cardinal Ratzinger concerning Medjugorje. He knows exactly what I myself think about it. He has also read my books. Mons. Perić has spread wrong information, claiming that the Pope was laughing at Medjugorje. He wasn't laughing but smiling! This can in fact be interpreted positively. If he wanted, he could have said something, but he said nothing. He just smiled. Concerning Medjugorje, Benedict XVI will pursue the same line as John Paul II.