

SHARING OUR LADY'S GRACE



A VISIT TO THE MIRACULOUS IMAGE AND GROTTA
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT LAKEVILLE, CT



BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

These words spoken by Christ from the cross gifted his mother, Mary, to be mother of all humankind. The same loving hands that once cradled Jesus continue to reach out to us today...guiding, encouraging and supporting us whenever we call upon her holy name.

From time to time through the centuries, Mary has appeared supernaturally on earth with messages of special urgency at critical moments in history. Guadalupe, Rue du Bac, Lourdes, Knock, Fatima, Kibeho...all of these and more have seen the Virgin Mother coming to her children, calling us always to return to her Son. Yet never has there been an appearance of the magnitude of Medjugorje, the remote mountain village in Bosnia Herzegovina where Mary has made her presence known daily since June 25, 1981. Today, more than 60 million pilgrims have visited this sacred place...many returning again and again to witness the most important event of our time. One such pilgrim is Michael Stanton of Lakeville, Connecticut. In a remarkable story of faith and devotion, this Medjugorje visitor would himself become the visited.

A FAITH JOURNEY

Mike Stanton first journeyed to Medjugorje in 1987. He returned again in 2005, then at least once or twice a year in every year thereafter. He began leading groups of pilgrims to the village and developed an extensive website devoted to the Medjugorje phenomenon. Through all of these activities Mike gained a wide circle of fellow believers, both in the United States and



elsewhere. In fact it can be said that activity on behalf of Our Lady of Medjugorje became the centerpiece of Mike's daily life. He lived quietly with his mother, Kay, in side-by-side houses joined by a common garden room with large glass doors overlooking an exterior patio. And it was there on a winter's day that something totally unexpected happened.

FROM HEAVEN SENT

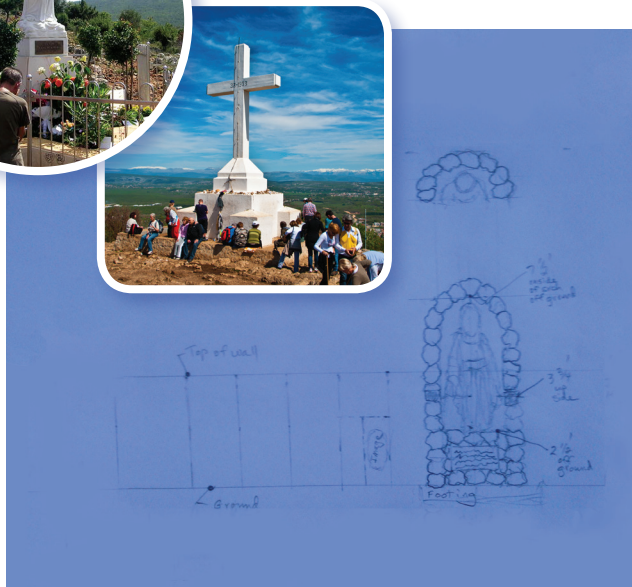
Mike himself describes the moment: "January had been a busy time. I had sponsored a daylong retreat with noted Irish speaker and Medjugorje advocate, Jim Browne, at St. Mary's Church in Lakeville, along with a group visit to the Divine Mercy Shrine at Stockbridge, MA. This plus several car trips to get people to and from the Hartford-Springfield airport. On January 25 my home was private and quiet again, but I was definitely not myself. That day found me irritable, negative and a bit worried. I felt under 'spiritual attack,' eventually asking several friends to pray for me."

"The next morning I felt much better and put the bad day behind me. That afternoon I went to prepare dinner for my mom and me and her nursing aide. As I looked out of the sliding glass door to the patio area, the gray cement retaining wall looked 'busy' with shadows, shapes and figures. My eyes were immediately directed to the bottom of one section of the wall. There to my amazement was the face of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The image was identical to the face of the statue of Our Lady of Grace at Tihaljina, the image that has come to represent Medjugorje throughout the world. I was awestruck. I felt humbled and blessed beyond measure that Mother Mary would come to me with this great grace, and I rushed to share the news."



MOTHER AND SON, SON AND MOTHER

As much as the Blessed Mother had visited Mike, she had also come to Mike's mother who had been ill for a prolonged period of time. Together they looked with wonder at the miraculous image that seemed so much a message of hope and transformation. Going back through family photos, Mike and Kay could see evidence that the image was beginning to develop perhaps two or more years earlier, but that day – January 26, 2017 – was the time it was fully revealed by Our Lady and could be shared.

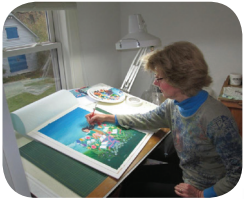


A MESSAGE FROM IRELAND

Among those called by Mike that first day was Jim Browne in Ireland. A few days later Jim called back. In prayer he had discerned a message for Mike from Our Lady...a message to build a grotto alongside her image, a place of prayer and conversion. Jim and Mike had preliminary discussions about dimensions and details, but nothing definite was settled.

Then another message. A month earlier, Jim had been in Medjugorje for the Christmas Day apparition of Our Lady to visionary Vicka Ivankovic-Mijatovic. He had been moved to bring two large statues of Our Lady of Grace, as seen at Tihaljina, for blessing. One would go to his prayer room in Ireland...initially he had no idea about the other. But now, after a January day spent in prayer, Our Lady made her wishes clear to Jim. The second statue was meant for Lakeville.

Our Lady also instructed that the grotto structure was to contain two stones brought back from Medjugorje, one from the site where the second of the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary, the Visitation, is commemorated. The other stone was to come from beneath the cross on Mount Krizevac. And there was to be a specific Medjugorje message engraved on a marble tablet...her Christmas 2016 message to the visionary Jakov Colo.



THE GROTTA RISES

Building the grotto the Blessed Mother had requested would be no small task but details fell into place easily, as if directed. Mike had a mason in mind and began looking for a phone number on a bill from the last project they had done together. He was a Polish man, Mariusz Tkaczyk. And there at the top of the bill was the date...June 25, 2015, a Medjugorje anniversary. It hardly seemed a coincidence.

Over the next weeks Mike had the image on the wall blessed by Father Francis Vivacqua and made a blueprint of the grotto with dimensions sized to accommodate Our Lady's statue. Then on the recommendation of his daughter, Stephanie, he commissioned artist Katie Atkinson to create a watercolor rendering of the proposed structure to guide all who would be involved in its construction.

The work began in earnest in May, 2017, and continued for the next five weeks. Timely donations covered the entire cost. Mike returned from his May Medjugorje pilgrimage with the two stones the Blessed Mother had requested. Jim Browne came later in the month, personally delivering the Our Lady of Grace statue. This lovely ceramic figure proved to be fragile and there was concern that it could endure the cold Connecticut winters. Its home became the garden room overlooking the patio and Mike set out to find a more durable alternative. A statue made of resin in the exact dimensions needed was found...it honored the Immaculate Heart of Mary, feast day June 24, the very first day of the apparitions at Medjugorje. She is presented in the grotto standing among rocks in memory of her visit on Apparition Hill that day.



THANKSGIVING AND PASSAGE

It seemed fitting that June 24th was also the day the grotto was finished. As planned, a celebration was held the next day. Attending were those who had worked on the project, a group of Mike's fellow Medjugorje travelers, and family and friends from the Lakeville area. Father Vivacqua was on hand again to bless the grotto and offer thanksgiving. Through Our Lady's grace a place of peace and conversion had been created, he said...now all was entrusted into her loving hands.

As summer became autumn, Kay Stanton's condition worsened. She and Mike spoke often about the image of Mary, the grotto and what would become of her home. Comforted by the miraculous presence of Our Lady just outside her window, she passed away peacefully on October 14th, 2017.





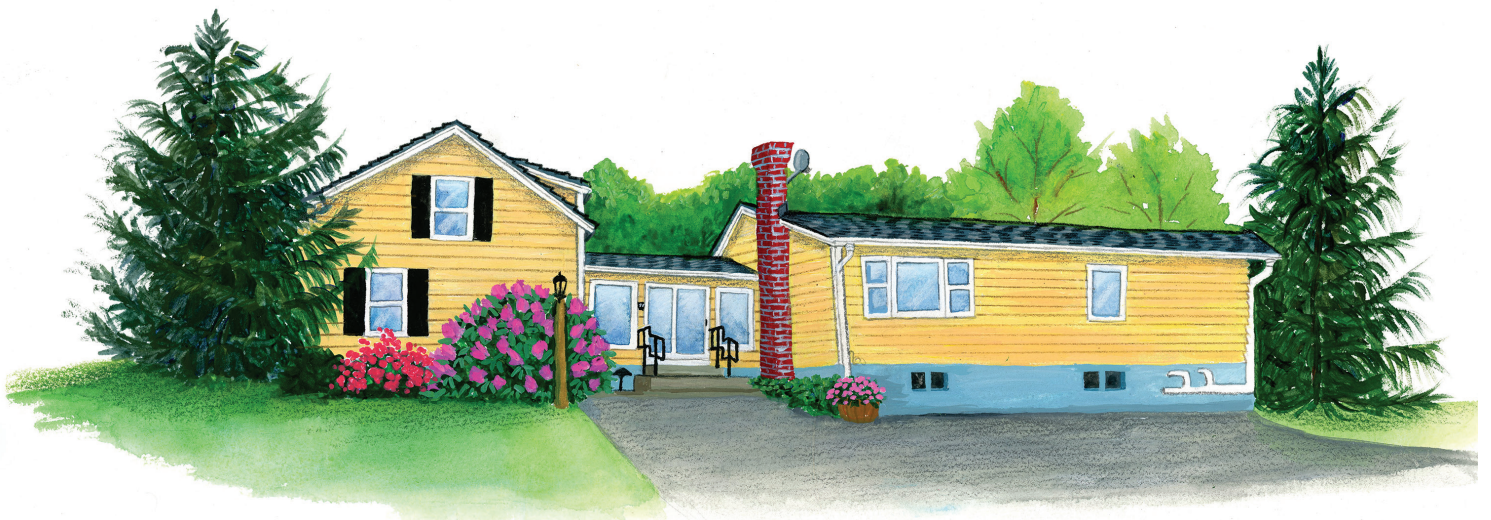
A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Following the plans they had made together, Mike set out to renovate and refurnish his mother's home. Once more the task seemed to come together easily. Opening in January 2018, the new Mary's Grotto retreat house is designed to accommodate overnight stays. A spacious central living area provides an ideal setting for group prayer or personal quiet time, and a fully equipped kitchen also is available. Whatever the weather or season, the garden room allows visitors direct access to Our Lady's image and grotto...a place of peace, petition and healing so welcome and so needed in today's peaceless, secular world.

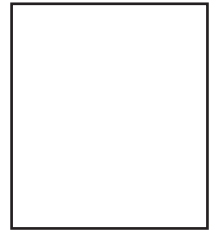
STAY AND PRAY

Set among the rolling hills of western Connecticut, Mary's Grotto and retreat house await you. Come to Lakeville... stay and pray before the miraculous image and grotto of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Come share in Our Lady's grace.



Mary's Grotto
P.O. Box 766
Lakeville, CT 06039
860-435-9976
www.betweenfoldsofhermantle.com



“Dear children! Today, on this day of grace, in a special way, I am calling you to pray for peace. Children, I came here as the Queen of Peace and how many times have I called you to pray for peace. But, children, your hearts are restless. Sin is preventing you from opening yourselves completely to grace and peace which God desires to give you. To live peace, my children, is to first have peace in your hearts and to be surrendered completely to God and to His will. Do not seek peace and joy in the things of this world, because this is all passing. Long for true mercy and peace which come only from God; and only in this way will your hearts be filled with true joy; and only in this way will you be able to become witnesses of peace in this peaceless world. I am your mother and intercede before my Son for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.”