

# TWO REFLECTIONS BY PARISHIONERS ON THEIR RECENT PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE... AND ON MARY'S MEALS

## A) Maria Igoe



On Tuesday 24 September a group of 9 boarded an early morning flight at Edinburgh Airport and headed for Dubrovnik. We were met at Dubrovnik by a minibus, which transported us the 3-hour journey to Medjugorje. We arrived in Medjugorje at 2.30pm and were immediately filled with the peace and joy of this wonderful place.



There are many special places to pray. We said the rosary under the trees in the sunshine and prayed Stations of the Cross around the Statue of the Risen Christ.

We relaxed and chatted together over a coffee or soft drinks and enjoyed the pleasant company. There are beautiful walks and those who are fit can climb the hills, Apparition Hill and Kricevac. We met up with 5 others from Edinburgh and 2 from Falkirk joined us.

Then on 1 October another 8 came from Edinburgh and 2 from London. Some had come for the Mary's Meals Pilgrimage. Bishop Keenan of Paisley came to join the Pilgrimage, along with Father Frankie Mulgrew from Birmingham, the son of the comedian, Jimmy Cricket. Magnus McFarlane Barrow updated us about Mary's Meals and Father Frankie gave an inspirational talk.

At the 10.00am Mass in English, we were used to seeing 30 priests on the altar, during the busy times, but there were often 40 priests and more. The church was packed, and many had to sit outside. The priests generously gave their time for the sacrament of Reconciliation. Bishop Keenan made himself available to the crowds who queue patiently to receive the sacrament.

The priest I went to was from Tulsa, USA.

We had lovely weather, with only occasional rainstorms. We are very grateful for our accommodation, close to St James Church, and to our hosts for their generosity.

The local people have a strong faith. Their faith is everything to them. It saw them through Communism and poverty.

We have booked our flights for next year. We fly on Tuesday 29 April and return on 13th May. It is possible to go for one week.

If you are interested, please contact Maria Igoe - 07981333219.



## **B) Dr Gerry McPartlin – MARY’S MEALS**

By a happy chance, the week that I spent in Medjugorje earlier this month with Maria Igoe and others from St John’s and St Mary Magdalene’s coincided with a Mary’s Meals pilgrimage. Mary’s Meals has long been my favourite charity, and it was a pleasure to hear more about its work and meet many of the good people whose voluntary support means that, incredibly, the charity’s administrative costs are a mere 7% - 93% of donations are spent directly on charitable activities.

In 1992, whilst the rest of Europe looked on in horror at the ethnic cleansing and other atrocities in the Balkans, a young fish farmer and shinty player living in Dalmally decided to take action. Nine years earlier, as a fifteen-year-old, he had been to Medjugorje, and so was particularly moved by the suffering of the Bosnian people. He appealed for food, clothing and medicine and borrowed a truck to deliver it all to Mostar, the nearest town to Medjugorje. From that inspired and heroic first step he went on to found an international charity, now known as Mary’s Meals. His name is Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow. According to Time magazine, he has become one of the world's 100 most influential people, and Mary’s Meals now provides a daily school meal for nearly 2½ million children in 17 countries such as Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi and India, where poverty and hunger prevent children from gaining an education. For countless children this simple meal has been a game changer, enabling them to obtain an education and escape from poverty. Gift Thomson, from Malawi, who was recently a St John’s parishioner whilst studying at Queen Margaret University, was such a beneficiary.

One of the most powerful and moving documentary films I have seen is ‘Child 31’, which describes the work of Mary’s Meals. It can be found on YouTube and lasts just over half an hour. I would strongly encourage all who care about child poverty to watch it. If you would like to know more about Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow’s remarkable story, I can also recommend his book, ‘*The Shed That Fed Two Million Children*’ (Magnus’s office is a shed his father built in the garden of their family home).

Mary’s Meals needs just £19.15 to feed a child for a whole school year. If you would like to help Mary’s Meals to feed more children, you can find out how to donate at [marysmeals.org](http://marysmeals.org).