

BLUE CROSS: STORY AND PRAYER.

My name is Podbrdo. I came into life many billions of years ago in human terms. There was a big bang and suddenly I was hurtling through something called space into a friendly galaxy of other strange material and then I became part of something called a planet. I seemed like a mountain, full of amazing things like trees and streams. I knew that I had a purpose, something inside me said, 'just wait, and you will see.' So I waited, strong and powerful, a mighty mountain. Then the years passed and the weather wore me down. I lost heart. From being mighty I became small, worn and broken. No longer mighty trees adorned me but broken stones and wiry bushes, ready to tear human beings to pieces if they tried to climb me. I lost hope, but, there was still the little voice, 'not long now.' Just as I was ready to give up hope, suddenly, a light, more beautiful than I had ever dreamed of appeared. Then the gentle rustle of a wind and the patter of young feet swept over me, carried by that wind to reach the light. The light, that beautiful light, became a figure of such beauty. A beauty that didn't just float above me but filled me, transformed me. The God Bearer had come to me, a little hill, lost, forgotten among the mountains and I carried her as a gift to the world, never to be forgotten.

Such is the story of our little mountain, now known as the Hill of the Apparitions, known across the world forever. Near the top is the beautiful cross where Mary, Theotokos or God Bearer, appeared on June 24th 1981 at 6pm to six young people. Now began a journey that continues to this day. At the foot of the hill is a space now known as the Blue Cross where Mary often appears to young people and pilgrims to help them on their journey. The spot was not chosen by pilgrims but became a place of refuge when Communist police, trying to stop these young people reaching the Mother of God, closed off the rest of the hill. A final fruitless attempt to deny to human beings the presence of God's love.

God our Father, you brought us to life. Always this creation of yours has but one purpose, to receive and return your amazing love. Help us as we gather, little people on your little mountain, to know and grow in your love. Help us to always await your presence, your light that we might become bearers too of that light to the world.

APPARITION HILL: STORY AND PRAYER.

This Hill of Apparitions, truly a mountain among mountains, places God's Word at the heart of this story and all stories of God's creative work. It sets it after the Exodus, the work of God freeing his People from all kinds of slavery. The Exodus story of the Bible is not a unique story of God's intervention in human history. God intervenes every day to set people free from the slavery brought by human sin. His care for creation is unlimited and unceasing. However, he has a plan to bring about a new world, a new creation. Amazingly it is our broken world, renewed and restored to life, resurrected. That plan is called the Word. That Word caused the world to be created in its image, startlingly revealed not as an 'it' but as a 'he', Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed One, the Christ. The mountain in the desert of Sinai was the point when God and humanity came together to fulfil the ancient promises, to begin to fulfil the faith of Abraham. Time and time again mountains remind us of that promise of redemption. Even the Hill of Calvary points towards future fulfilment.

Now we have a little mountain again revealing the Mother and Child on that fateful day of June 24th 1981. Mary calls her children 'little angels' to describe not only her mission but theirs. Angels are messengers of God's promises to humanity. The messages of Mary reveal what her task is and the name she has been given, Queen of Peace. She proclaims that peace in a land that has undergone centuries of slavery and violence. A people tested by hundreds of years of persecution for their Faith in the redeeming power of Christ. Truly this is an Exodus story like the ancient story and like that story meant for the whole world.

God our Father, thank you for the gift of life through Christ your Son. He has set us free from our slavery to sin and the brokenness of our world. This we believe and this we trust despite our frailty and weakness. We pray for the strength to continue our journey of faith that on your mountain we may receive the grace of being, like Mary, messengers of your Peace.

FIVE STONES: STORY AND PRAYER.

All of the mountains surrounding Medjugorje seem like mountains of stones. To climb them means clambering over and around stones of all shapes and sizes, often jagged and broken. They are not beautiful like the Alps or many other mountain ranges covered with beautiful trees. They have a stark beauty that challenges our frail human capacity to master our world. The Cross Mountain which dominates our village is precisely that faith in the face of human suffering and weakness. The triumph of the Cross is the experience of reaching that Cross, with others, on our journey of faith.

The sign of the cross is the commitment to a journey of love. It is a sign of our brokenness and the power of God to bring healing out of that weakness. It is the sign of the Suffering Servant, so beloved of Isaiah, who sets his people free. This has to be our journey, embracing our wounds as signs of shared healing in company with others.

At the heart of the messages of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, is the cross. Many times they have been called the Five Stones, matching the Five Wounds of Christ. At the beginning of our journey these five messages draw us in the footsteps of Mary as she followed Christ on the way of the cross. Peace comes through embracing our wounds, our brokenness, and offering them to Christ through Mary. Shalom means 'may all your brokenness be made whole', hence the journey of the Cross.

1. Peace.
2. Faith.
3. Conversion.
4. Prayer.
5. Fasting.

God our Father, you call us to the journey of Peace. Help us to discover in our own hearts that mountain that leads to our peace that we might then be able to share that gift, through Mary our Mother, with our world.