

ENGLISH ECHO 78

Our Lady's message of 25 November 1990:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to do works of mercy with love and for the sake of love for me and for all your and my brothers and sisters. My dear Children, with everything that you do for others, remember to do it with great love and humbleness towards God. I am with you and each day I offer your sacrifices and prayers to God for the salvation of the world. Thank you for responding to my call.

HOW OUR LADY TEACHES TO DO WORKS OF MERCY

Our Lady continues to invite us to spiritual life. She is inviting us in this message to offer ourselves once again, and at the same time she helps us fathom its meaning. She invites us to live this offering of good works and sacrifices for love of her and for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

Without this love our works are empty and cannot obtain results. As is usual, though, Our Lady does not want to keep us for herself, but she offers us to the Lord, and that is why she says, "Dear children, all that you do for the others, do it with great joy and humbleness towards God."

With these words, Our Lady shows us how to act correctly in God's presence. When we are open to God through being humble, joy grows in us because we have discovered God and God and His Love act in us. That way, our deeds are no more just ours, but God is acting in them, and in our sacrifices. God and His Love are present in our deeds.

Therefore, our works, done with the Love and Mercy of God, obtain results. Through our works, the world will be nourished on God's Love and Mercy acting in us. We see that Our Lady gathers all our good works and sacrifices and she purifies them in Her Heart, but she teaches us how to remain open to God, how to live the right relationship with God, with our prayers and good deeds, so that we are humble and joyful.

These two words complete one another. Humbleness opens us to God, but it is not enough on its own. When we are small before God, God is big in us and He makes our works and the joy in our hearts bear fruit. So if we meet God in humbleness, we will be filled with joy and love and these are signs of the Presence of God in our hearts and in our works.

Oh Lord, I kneel before You and I offer You my life, my works, my prayers through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I do it for the love of my Heavenly Mother and of my brothers and sisters.

Oh God, I kneel before You and I want to lose everything so that You will live in me.

Lord, I want to die within myself because all the sins and problems come from my human ego, but when You are in me and You are completely free, then the world's salvation comes from me and my works.

Oh God, I plead You, come and live in me, make me die so that You can grow in me. And in particular, during this month of preparation for Christmas, oh Lord, grow in me as You grew in the Womb of the

Virgin Mary, as You grew in Her Heart; grow in me, in my brothers and sisters, to the fullness. I don't want to give myself to the world, and not even my works, but I want to give You and Your works.

Stay in me Lord, make my offering bear fruit, so that Your gifts in me can appease the whole world.

May the Blessing of the Almighty God descend on all the pilgrims and on all those who read or listen to these words. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Tomislav Vlastic'

ANOTHER TWO YUGOSLAV BISHOPS MAKE OFFICIAL VISITS TO MEDJUGORJE

Mons. Marin Srakic, auxiliary bishop of Dakovo in north east Croatia and member of the board of examiners studying the events of Medjugorje, visited on the evening of 5 November and remained till the morning of 7 November. The first evening he presided at Mass and announced that he had come on behalf of all the Yugoslav bishops to pray and praise the Lord. The day after he climbed Krizevac just like all the other pilgrims and during the evening Mass he held an animated homily on the Virgin Mary and her mission.

The following day, after morning Mass, he went to Mostar where he met with the Franciscan Provincial Father before going to the bishops' Curia. Mons.

Srakic was friendly and showed interest in the events at Medjugorje.

Also Mons. Janko Spenesec from Subotica in Serbia visited on the 24th and 25th November. He presided at evening Mass on both days and preached on the Sunday. On Saturday he climbed the hill of apparitions together with Fr. Leonard Orec.

The bishop made it known that the Episcopal Conference would meet on the 27th and 28th November and that Medjugorje would be one of the main topics, and for this he asked for prayers.

The new and happy relations between the Yugoslav bishops and Medjugorje clearly indicates that so far they have not been able to find anything negative where faith and morals are concerned. There is still no official document, and until the Commission has finished its work and forwarded a report to the Vatican, not even a public declaration can be made about the events.

And whether or not the events in Medjugorje can be called supernatural, a conclusion cannot be expected while the apparitions are taking place.

(Fr. Slavko)

LATEST NEWS: The bishop of Dubrovnik has announced his forthcoming visit to Medjugorje.

Ivan has been in America for some weeks.

Vicka is also absent.

Don't forget the meeting for young pilgrims to be held in Medjugorje at new year's eve.

MEDJUGORJE: A GREAT MARIAN SHRINE

This is the day made memorable by the Lord, what immense joy for us (Ps 117)

We should accept this gift with joy and humbleness without boasting. For the many who desired opening their hearts to Mary but feared disobeying the Church, this is a relief and liberation. But everything is put to good use by God who does not like to force people into believing, and He always brings events to completion at the right moment, "because everything is subject to his power, and there is no one who can withstand him in his will" (Est 4:17b).

God has allowed a long period of waiting and trial before this sound and liberating decision; it was a time during which hearts were purified and matured, and faith strengthened. We know that gold must be tested in a crucible and that "God severley tests those who are close to Him to search their hearts" (Jdt 8:27).

God's actions are asserted in man's contradictions, as the former must triumph over our sins.

It is also honest to acknowledge the negative consequences of the ecclesiastic delay in the Divine Mercy's schedule, because God visits man, but man offers resistance. People fear being tricked and hence resist the grace and so the whole church suffers. The incredulity of Capernaum impeded Jesus from working miracles, and hence from saving souls.

We all must acknowledge our responsibility in this lessening of grace, in particular if we have lost time in reasoning.

Now is the time to pray and to be vigilant, for once Medjugorje is an "official" shrine it may be easier for us to go there, but it is also more likely that when we go our hearts will be more tepid and we won't have that true spirit of sacrifice. Soon the place will be included in the itineraries of the biggest tourist bureaus who are perfect at organizing trips to religious shrines, but they won't provide for the spiritual side of things.

Medjugorje must remain a starting point where people find conversion, where spiritual growth begins. It must be a privileged point where spiritual exercises can be held.

So let us help Our Lady protect this oasis of peace.

Fr. Tomislav said in a recent conversation: "In my opinion, every shrine should have people who consecrate themselves, who leave everything behind them; and these people would be the nourishment of the shrine. Those who offer themselves to God, who joyfully offer themselves completely, day after day, are necessary to a shrine."

Serious work, however, needs to be done with the parish and with those who hear Our Lady. The parish is in need of special guidance, different to that of the pilgrims. It is difficult to guide a parish where there are so many pilgrims.

It would take the presence of at least 20 monks to organize properly so that the parish could grow and become a model parish for the whole world, as Our Lady has always wished.

People must advance, however, it is through consecration that they bear fruit, and then around these groups and communities may flourish. Priests, guides and pilgrims all, would then find new strength and nourishment for their souls.

Fr. Angelo

WOMAN, ENEMY OF SATAN

"You Cannot Be Slave to Two Masters"

In the very beginning when Satan tempted our ancestors, he bared open his evil will. Nothing has changed! Also today, Satan wants to take us away from God by making us rebel against the Lord's word. Satan wants to destroy the Divine Plan which is a plan of peace and love and happiness. Satan's enemy, Mary Immaculate, is the humble handmaiden who obeys God. She gives us the Saviour and she wants to lead us back to the way to peace.

In February Our Lady said: "Completely decide for God and do not allow Satan to enter your lives through those things that damage yourselves and your spiritual lives" (25 Feb. 1990). She has reminded us often that we cannot be slave to two masters. Deciding completely for God means to renew over and over again that radical choice made with the baptismal promises. Renouncing Satan is to express a will to exclude the devil from daily decisions by faithfully observing God's Word, and to pray without stop so that our union with the Lord is nourished.

"I wish to protect you from all that Satan offers and through which he wishes to destroy you" (25 March 1990). Satan has much to offer us, especially when it comes to the three major vices of pride (of power), satisfaction of wealth, and pleasures of the flesh. Those who fall into these temptations end up destroying themselves because the fruit that they reap in the end is corruption of the flesh and damnation of the soul. Yet many fall, and it is because of man's free consent that "Satan is strong and is trying to destroy you and trick you in many ways" (25 Sept. 1990). The devil is dangerous because we do not keep watch, St. Peter warns us, and so we must be "strong in our faith." St. James affirms: "Satan would flee from us," if we would only resist him.

Also at Medjugorje the battle between the devil and the Blessed Virgin is underway in full strength. "Satan is trying to destroy my plans and to obstruct the plans that the Heavenly Father wishes to realize here" (25 Sept. 1990). This is why the apparitions, and the messages, continue. The Heavenly Father has a plan for peace that has not yet been entirely realized; and He is putting His plan into action through the Queen of Peace. Satan, however, is furious: "Satan is strong and with all his might he wishes to destroy the peace that comes from God ... I wish to help you and to take you back to the way of peace" (25 Oct. 1990).

This October message reveals two desires: Mary's desire and Satan's desire. Satan wishes to destroy peace; Mary wishes to lead us on the way to peace. With this in mind she invites us to live the messages of peace. I believe that with this last phrase the Blessed Virgin refers to all the messages that she has given in Medjugorje (on prayer, the Eucharist, the Rosary, fasting, conversion, confession, reading of the Bible). These are all messages of peace because they bring us to the fulfilment of God's will, and this is where peace lies; so let's not look elsewhere for it, because we would look in vain.

Q. Can you teach us a prayer to Our Lady that we could all recite, that sends away Satan?

A. Well, there are many. The best one is the Rosary. There is one, however, for which St. Pious X granted indulgence in 1908. It goes like this: "Oh august Queen of Heaven and Sovereign of the angels, who received from God the power and mission to crush the head of Satan, we humbly ask that you send us Heavenly legions so that, upon your command, they will pursue the demons, fight them in all places, suppress their audacity and drive them back into the abyss. Amen."

Q. How is it possible that man who is an intelligent creature can prefer Satan to God, hell to Heaven?

A: Man is an intelligent creature, but he is also free. Yes, of course, there are things that are difficult for us to understand, for instance the mystery of evil. Let's look at the facts, however. Even though Satan was created good and the most beautiful of all angels, he was the first to rebel against God, and he was completely aware of what he was doing. He thus became the unhappiest of all demons. Man too, in this

time of trial, can give in to the voice of the liar, just as Adam and Eve did; he can fall into the alluring traps set by Satan of the flesh and the world. Each one of us has experienced how it is possible to fall into fault and knows how it is possible to rise again from sin. We also know, however, how it is possible to be lead into bad habits to the point of refusing those thousand occasions that the Lord offers us for our conversion. Thus, we ourselves, are responsible for our own destiny.

(13th and last of the series.) Fr. Gabriel Amorth

**RATZINGER SAYS:
CHURCH IS BUILT UP BY WORKS OF GOD AND JESUS' FORGIVENESS
NOT BY HUMAN ACTIVITY**

According to Cardinal Ratzinger many want to create a better church through reformation with the introduction of new democratic ideas and structures.

But at the Meeting in Rimini the Cardinal underlined the real problem behind the crisis: "A Church that rests on the decisions of a majority is a purely human church ... where opinion would substitute faith. The Cardinal said that for Michelangelo the true image of the sculpture is already inside the block of stone and that all the artist does is remove the superfluous stone from around it. Likewise, for the image of God to shine in man, he must first of all accept to be purified by the Sculptor who is God.

On activism Cardinal Ratzinger said: "Many people think that the more one is active within the church the more he is Christian. The fact is, however, that a person is Christian if he lives on the Word of God and on the Sacraments and if he puts love into practice. It is not necessary for him to be part of church committees. We do not need a more human Church, but a more divine Church!"

"Freedom in the Church is not at all guaranteed by the introduction of democratic principals, but by the fact that everyone accepts that we are subject to and bound to the Word and the Will of Christ. 'Now this Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is also freedom' (2 Co 3:17)."

Cardinal Ratzinger also pointed out that the aim of the Church is not to keep us occupied, but to open the road towards eternal life. He then invited all to applicate what he had said to our personal lives: In fact, removing the superfluous is also necessary on a personal basis if we wish to be free. It is not always the image of God in us that leaps to the eye ... We see the deposit of dust and dirt that has formed over the image. We all need the real Sculptor, Who removes all those things that spoil the image. We are in need of forgiveness that forms the nucleus of every real reform.

The Cardinal continued by saying how remission of sins has a fundamental role in the decisive stages of the formation of the Church: ... The Church is not a community of people which 'does not need a doctor,' but a community of converted sinners who live by the grace of forgiveness, and in turn transmit it to others ... Forgiveness in itself has nothing magic about it, but neither is it pretending to forget. It is instead a real process of change, carried out by the Sculptor.

The powerful Creative Word of God makes the pain of change work on us and thus becomes an active transformation... The nucleus of the spiritual crisis of our times has its roots in the darkening of the grace of forgiveness...

Each one of us becomes closer to the image of Christ present in us when expiating our sins, and in this way, we really do become similar to our brothers, who are also the image of God ... It is a process of dying and of being born: I am torn from my isolation and I am accepted in a new community; my ego is

enclosed within the ego of Christ and is thus united to that of all my brothers. Only from this deep renewal may the Church be born from each single person.

That community is made up of all the Saints, starting from Abel and Abraham and from all the witnesses of the hope that the Old Testament speaks of, of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, His apostles, Thomas Becket and Thomas More, and the Saints of our time such Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein and Piergiorgio Frassati.

It includes all the unknown souls, whose faith is known by God alone. Men of all times and places make up this community, whose hearts are prolonged in the hope and love for Christ...

The only determining majority which can decide the spiritual journey of the Church is made up of the Saints. They translate the divine into human, the eternal into time. They are our teachers in humanity, that do not abandon us, not even in suffering and solitude. To the contrary, even at the time of our death, they walk by our side.

... Those who have nothing to say about suffering and pain except that we must fight against it, deceive us ... A human existence without pain does not exist, and those who are unable to accept pain, evade that purification that matures us...

There's more to life than our biological existence. Where there is no more reason for making dying worthwhile, then not even life is worthwhile...

Paula

News From the Blessed Land

by Fra Slavko Barbaric

* Bishop Komarica visits Medjugorje. His visit was the cause of much joy and satisfaction for all concerned. Mons. Franjo Komarica, President of the Commission which is examining the events of Medjugorje, greeted the faithful saying he came on behalf of all the bishops.

Mons. Komarica stayed on to converse with the monks till late into the night. All problems tied to the events of Medjugorje were discussed openly.

The long-awaited meeting with the President of the Commission was a positive one, especially because it put a stop to the idea that the monks and the pilgrims were being insubordinate.

It seems that now the events of Medjugorje will be taken more seriously, and that the bishops will be taking more interest in it.

MEDJUGORJE EVENTS

Youth From the East

One of the organizers of Youth 2000, Bernard Ellis, sent us an article written by Gabriel Meyer for "Mary's People" which tells of heroic episodes of the Polish and Hungarian pilgrims.

"Many Poles had to spend nearly half a year's salary to attend the event. On their return home, friends pledged to support them for the rest of the year.

Two operators from Hungary discovered on arrival that a destitute 85 year old woman had stowed away on the bus from Budapest as she wanted to kiss the ground where Our Lady walked before dying. When conference organizers sought to supplement the meager rations which Polish and Hungarian pilgrims had brought with them, the East European pilgrims refused, saying that they were on a pilgrimage, not a vacation. They were finally persuaded to accept a little cheese and fruit to add to their bread and milk.

One conference worker made the following observation: Lives are genuinely touched here. Young people come here not even knowing how to pray the rosary or what adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is. The difficulty is that they are returning to a spiritual wasteland. Without a strong parish life, who will nourish what young people have discovered here?

Fr. Angelo responds: My dear young friends, Even if you do not find help in your parish, any other priest who cares about spiritual life will be able to help you, but it must be a priest who draws his ministerial strength from the Spring (i.e. Jesus). Unfortunately, many priests are pressured by exterior things and busily attend to the parish and thus try to keep up appearances. They forget, however, that their most important mission is to give the Spirit, the salt, and the new life to their parishioners - they cannot, however, give what they do not possess.

It is not up to us, however, to blame anyone. We are all guilty - but God is merciful to all of us; and He wants to start with you, to rouse the people around you back to life (and even your fellow parishioners). Even if the parish priest and the parishioners oppose you, you must always reply with greater love and more prayer. Not arguments or criticism, but Love always wins in the end.

In the meantime, find a priest not too far from home to help you, or a prayer group where the members deeply live their relation with God and with their fellow men for the Love of God.

If you can find neither, God will make something blossom around you. Then there's always the Blessed Sacrament - Jesus is there all for you. He is the Bread of the desert. You must believe, implore and sanctify yourself, but do not protest. God will make the desert bloom around you.

Fr. Angelo

100 Priests attend spiritual exercises with Fr. Tomislav

This was the third year running that spiritual exercises for Italian priests was organized at Medjugorje by Fr. Urbano Pittiglio of Pescara. There were approximately 100 priests attending. The exercises, held from 12-16 November, were held by Fr. Slavko Barbaric. The theme was reconciliation, and Fr. Slavko spoke especially about the important moments prior to and after confession. It was along the lines of his booklet, "Give Me Your Wounded Heart."

Fr. Tomislav also spoke to the participants and impressed everyone when he prayed over them all with Psalm 138. On the 15th they all did the Way of the Cross up Mt. Krizevac and administered the Sacrament of Reconciliation to each other.

MANY VOCATIONS BORN AT MEDJUGORJE!

Newly Ordained Priest says how Mary Changed His Life

"I don't know how many priestly or religious vocations have been awakened by Our Lady at Medjugorje, but I do know that mine is one of them.

I went there seven years ago, nearly by chance. I was 23 years old and in my fourth year of studies at University. My chances of getting an excellent job were optimal. When I had returned home, however, I felt a strong desire to totally consecrate my life by becoming a monk or priest. I left everything and entered a monastery. Now, by the grace of God, I have been a priest for 20 days...

Only just two days after my ordination, I returned to Medjugorje. It was not something that I had organized, nor even hoped for, but that various circumstances had brought about. It was as if Our Lady had wanted me to close that ring that She had opened for me, or better, as if She had wanted to place Her 'seal' on my vocation. All the time I remained there in Medjugorje, I shouted to Her my thanks with my heart brimming over with joy. It seemed almost a dream to be there celebrating the divine mysteries.

To all those young people who, at Medjugorje, feel the mysterious and fascinating call to belong to God, who feel a new 'presence' in their souls that pushes them to perfectionism in Christianity, who feel siezed by 'something' indescribable, who know of a new presence of Mary and Jesus in their hearts, I say: Do not be afraid to leap out. Don't look at what you will leave behind, but at what you will earn, because if you do take the plunge, you will finish straight into the arms of the Blessed Virgin and She will never abandon you.

Our Lady of Medjugorje is calling, how can we not listen to Her? Oh, Queen of the hearts, pray for us!
(11 Nov. 1990)

Fr. Serafino Matteo

(From the Children of God Community, directed by Fr. Divo Barsotti in Florence.)

FR. TOMISLAV ON PRAYER GROUPS

Q. Is the prayer group that began 4 years ago still together?

A. Yes, but we must understand that all groups are transitory from a psychological or sociological point of view, because at a certain point in time people get married, or go elsewhere, and they mature. With time groups start closing in and come to a standstill. Decisions must be made in groups, for instance with regards to vocations, because it is possible that vocations for the consecrated life, or say for married life born are born in groups. If we want to see the fruit of our prayers we have to help others make these vital decisions. This is representative of stability.

VON BALTHASAR

**"Make clear distinctions between what comes from God and what from man.
Better to have faith without having seen."**

H.U. Von Balthasar, famous theologian of our times, was interviewed by Fr. Tomislav on 15 October 1983.

VB. I have no doubt about the authenticity of the events.

FR. T. Why is this?

VB. Everything is so consistent: the messages are simple, people are heeding the messages which are a continuity of messages given by the Blessed Virgin in precedent apparitions. I have only one thing to say: yours is a great responsibility. You must be very careful in distinguishing what really comes from God and what instead comes from man.

What is happening in Medjugorje truly is from God! The difficulty, however, is in interpreting the facts. From this point of view the children are very reliable. I repeat, though, that the great danger lies in the interviews they undergo.

FR.T. We have tried as much as possible to put a stop to the questioning.

VB. You wrote (...) that faith is more important than vision. The children are in great need of assistance and if they understand that faith is greater than vision they will be saved.

FR.T. I have learnt by experience that it is important to write about theology regarding Mary to encourage the faithful to advance in their faith. Certain theologians speak about Mary in a clerical way but that doesn't have a real place in theology.

VB. I understand perfectly. Our Lady represents the real Church. She is the Church. Ephesians 5:27 says: "Only she is the Immaculate Church." She shows us the way the Church should be. This is the meaning of the apparitions.

FR.T. I think that if we priests, together with the bishops, lived the way Jesus taught us then Our Lady would not have to appear.

VB. Yes, but it's not just a question of bishops and priests. The whole Church must listen.

FR.T. Do you think the Pope has introduced something new into Mariology?

VB. All the Popes in the last 100 years have looked upon Mary as the centre of the Church.

NB. Von Balthasar was made Cardinal but died two days before receiving the purple at the end of June 1988. He became a Jesuit priest in 1929 but with the permission of his superiors he left the Society of Jesus in 1950 to dedicate his life to a community called St. John's Institute which he founded together with the German mystic Adrienne Von Speyer.

Von Balthasar was a "spiritual friend" of Adrienne for 27 years. In the afternoons she dictated to him the visions she received the night before.

VISIONARIES CANNOT SUBSTITUTE PRIESTS

Q. Do the visionaries of Medjugorje let themselves be guided by priests, or do they consider their only guide to be Our Lady?

Fr. Tomislav responds: Our Lady says to the children to "entrust themselves to the priests." Not only does she respect the priestly role, but she urges the children to turn to the priests for practical questions, though her recommendations are always and only "invitations." Priests are the guides chosen by God for His people.

Some priests look for guidance and advice from the visionaries, but it should be the other way around. The visionaries have become aware of certain things and they transmit these to others, but they are not capable of offering spiritual guidance to others or of resolving their problems. Just like everyone else,

they need to be guided in their spiritual lives; and no one but a priest can do this.

Anyone who receives extraordinary gifts must be very cautious when it comes to their spiritual lives; they need a guide if they wish to protect their inner selves.

If they have a spiritual guide and submit themselves to the guide with docility then all will be fine. For those who do not have one, or even worse, do not want one, saying they are guided directly by Our Lady or Jesus Himself, then we should seriously doubt the sincerity of the person concerned.

MARY'S SCHOOL

YOUTH 2000: DAY 4 (Mary and the Cross)

Do you want to be visionaries? Then love!

From love and sacrifice comes happiness

Become a living Eucharist

Wounds transformed into love become glorious wounds, and Jesus is Risen

May I ask a very serious question? Do you wish to become visionaries? Isn't there anyone who would like to be a visionary? Do you wish to be perfectly happy? Do you wish to reach the stage of continuous prayer where adoration is joy? Yes!!! (in many languages). Do you really wish for this? What will you do to attain it?

I hope that each of you will reply in your heart.

See, St. John says in chapter 5 that the Judaeans could not see because they did not possess the love of God. St. John identifies love with light. So if you want to become that perfect love, you will be perfect visionaries. You will see God in everything, everywhere, even in the darkness of death. Jesus says to the Judaeans, "You do not want to come to Me to receive the light." We have come to answer. Perfect life is perfect love.

Our Lady then wants to bring us to being perfect visionaries. I have called the world to a life of sacrifice, but few understand what this means. I will try to explain this call to you. Our Lady in Fatima asked the visionaries to offer many sacrifices to save the world. Two of the visionaries sacrificed their own lives. Here too, Our Lady is calling us to sacrifice our lives, or rather to offer them for the salvation of the world.

Our Lady is looking for people who will offer their lives for the salvation of the others. What does this mean? This means becoming a living Eucharist. This means that just person in the Bible that God uses to save the world. The call of Jesus to a perfect life is at the same time a call to perfect sacrifice. The apostles, friends of Jesus, did not end up being martyrs by chance (except for St. John). This does not mean that we must all become martyrs. We must, however, die within ourselves to live the resurrection of Christ in us. Now you can understand that sacrificing the life is normal, and that without sacrificing it we cannot reach the new life. This can be realized in the soul of a person that loves God without limits.

A theological explanation can be found in the word that refers to Our Lady: Co-redeemer. Observe Our Lady under the cross. She loves immensely and Her heart suffers immensely because the Love of God is suffering immensely. The Mother wants to take all God's sufferances and suffer in His place. A creature reaches the perfect purpose in doing this. The Mother is ready to take the responsibility for all sins so that the child does not suffer. In this act, Our Lady is united to God.

Now, Our Lady only wants that sin no longer exists in the world, but love. In this act, the faith of Our Lady reaches its summit. In this act, the pureness of Our Lady reaches its positive side, which is love. And thus God can live freely in a creature. See how God is wonderful. The relation between the Son and the Mother reconciled all the creatures.

Now down to the hard facts: How can you be united to the sacrifice of Jesus? By having the attitude that Jesus had on the cross. If in every difficult moment, you are able to say, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. If with every cross we are prayer for everyone, forgiveness for everyone, and abandoned to the Father for everyone. Then we will rise on our cross and Satan will not be able to do anything.

Let's see: St. Francis explains what perfect happiness is. If you are insulted, if you are not understood, if you are beaten up, if you are rejected even by those closest to you, if you are hungry, if you are cold: nobody, however, can take away your joy. This is perfect joy: to be on any cross and not be perturbed. This is how St. Francis could say: My God and My Everything. This is why Our Lady has invited us to offer small sacrifices, to climb always higher. I know that Our Lady asked the people of the prayer group to go barefoot up the mount, on the rocks and amidst the thorns.

My spirit then, stays alert and can confront any problem. So if your heart is so big that it can accept these situations without being disturbed, then we have perfect happiness. These are the beatitudes. When you will be persecuted, abandoned, rejected, then rejoice. Who can rejoice whilst in difficulty? Those who offer themselves to God without limits. At the same time, that person reaches continuous prayer and joyful adoration - because the creature is no longer conditioned by anything else.

Recall that at the beginning I asked you all a serious question. It is easy to desire perfect happiness, it is difficult to reach it or live it. But don't fear. If you feel the desire to take on this journey, Our Lady will provide for everything. For this I will give you concrete indications, but later on. For now, let's sing ...

I asked you a serious question before, and now you have to answer. I say to you: you will be obliged to answer. Why? You are on the cross. You have your crosses and you will end up on the cross of death. You will be forced to choose eternal life or eternal death. Choose the perfect life or the less perfect life. I say: you can choose between life and death. If you have ever been offended during your lives, or if you have ever been sick, or if something has closed up inside of you, even spiritually, then this is death. A person becomes withdrawn through egoism and self-centredness and this leads us to death. Our offering of ourselves leads us to ecstasy, i.e. away from death. Our offering makes us blossom.

Just as egoism is the fundamental problem of a spiritual life, a total offering of oneself is the summit in a spiritual life and this is our liberation and purification. In this perfect ecstasy you will become perfect visionaries. You see, a total offering prepares us to a total freedom. This is why Our Lady said, You cannot be slave to two masters. The total decision for God leads to the beauty of a flower, the freedom of a bird.

So you are forced to choose between being visionaries or not. In this spiritual journey, it is very important to understand this. All your past sins and tragedies become important. In your offering Jesus transforms the wounds into His Glorious Wounds. So that our tragedy from the past becomes the profundity of God's love. Now I am making the whole of creation new. (Rev 21) Do you want to become really young? This leads us to eternal youth.

Mary wants people willing to sacrifice their lives for their brothers.

When our wounds are transformed our life becomes transformed. The life of the Risen Lord will be in us, and then our offering to God is God Himself. He will recognize His own image. This is truly wonderful! One more thing: this is not theory. There are some among you who feel these things. Our Lady came to Medjugorje because it was part of God's plans. You too are all programmed starting from your conception. I know many people who were created for this call, and when I preach they say, "Yes, I have been feeling this for years." These people must recognize their call and should respond.

They are called to be united to Love just like Jesus and Mary. These people will understand in their hearts what God wants from them. One sure thing is that without Our Lady's help we could never reach these heights. If we decide for this way Our Lady will impress in our hearts her seal of love.

I invite all of you to participate in Christ's priesthood. How? You decide! Tell Our Lady that you are willing to sacrifice your life for your brothers and sisters.

"How many souls will you give me," you might say; but also say: "Am I ready to suffer? Am I ready to bear the consequences of other people's sins in order to save them?"

St. Seraphim of Russia once decided to do the novena for the Assumption but only on condition that he would save 1,000 souls. Then he stopped and said to himself: "Perhaps I have asked for too many." He then had a vision of how men fall to hell and he heard Jesus' voice say: "You will have a thousand souls, but you asked for too few. "

We participate in the grand Sacrifice of Christ through sacrifices, fasts, prayers, etc. We are all called to sacrifice ourselves for this offering. From the profundity of your participation, the profundity of your love can be seen. And this depends on your participation in the Eucharist and this is the sign if you have decided. Finally, I wish to tell you something about myself. When Fr. Slavko asked me to participate in this week, I doubted. I knew that I could have offered myself during this week for thousands of people. I accepted to participate in this meeting with the hope that some of you would answer to this call, and that every day you will be able to save thousands of people. Our Lady wants it.

So let's pray for the Lord to give us His Love so that we can hear this call. (A 15 minute pause follows. Everything that we offer for love is important, even the dances.) (The sorrowful mysteries of the rosary are then meditated on.)

(At the end there were interminable Ave Marias with people clapping hands. In the evening, Adoration till 10.00 p.m.)

A notice: those of you who feel a particular call to offer themselves without limits to the Lord, may write their names and desires on a piece of paper and hand it in to the organizers. I will organize a meeting with these people to help them understand what is going on in their hearts and what is important for their spiritual journey.

(From a registration.) Fr. Tomislav Vlastic'

The Beggar Who Was Always Happy

(Received from Fr. Petar)

Tauler was a devoted priest and always prayed to the Lord to show him the quickest way to perfection and holiness. He prayed eight years for this grace until he heard a voice say to him: "Go out. You will find a person the steps of the church. He will show you the way."

The priest went out and found a beggar on the steps. With surprise he thought: "What could this poor wretch show me?"

Nonetheless, he went over to him and greeted him: "Good day."

The beggar replied: "I thank you for your greeting, but I cannot recall when I have not had a good day."

The priest said to him: "Well then, I hope that you will be happy every day of your life."

"Thank you," replied the beggar, "but I truly do not know when I have ever been unhappy, for I am always happy."

The priest asked him to explain better, and the beggar told him: "I always have nice days, because I always accept whatever God hands out to me, even hunger, contempt, or poverty; and I praise Him. So you see all my days are good ones.

A bad day does not bring unhappiness, but our own impatience. I am joyful because I know that nothing will happen to me if God does not want it to happen and because whatever God wants for me is the best thing.

I am happy because the will of God is my happiness and my sweetness. All that God does fills me with happiness, and for this reason I am a thousand times happier."

BROTHERS FROM EAST ARE CALLING**Voyage of Peace in Russia**

Msgr. Hnilica, Fra Leonard and Marija Pavlovic visit Russia

Blessed Virgin guides the pilgrimage

Bishop Hnilica describes his voyage to Russia which began on 18 October, and says it was a plan by Providence, where Our Lady changed the plans they had made.

The flight from Bratislava to Moscow was cancelled. They had to cross over all of Slovakia and reach the Russian border by car. This way Our Lady could reward persons that heroically spread her Name in a country where Christians were heavily persecuted. There was a Slovakian doctor who had spent 18 years in prison - he and his friends were present for the apparition to Marija.

The next day, Bishop Hnilica found himself in his home town. It was right on the fifth anniversary of his mother's death, who was his first teacher in faith and to whom he owes his priesthood. He was able to pray over her tomb. The Heavenly Mother then took them to the house of a Jesuit priest, Her great apostle, where the apparition happened in front of a large group of catechists.

On Saturday the 20th, they happily crossed the border in a place where it was usual to carry out meticulous controls. It was a strange concession that allowed them to overtake a long line of cars, and then a policeman let them pass through the controls very quickly without checking them. The hour of the apparitions was near - the first in Russian territory. This time, too, the people who were reciting the rosary in the first church that they came across were rewarded with the apparition. Marija spoke to the people always after the apparition, especially about the events of Medjugorje, saying, "Many people from

all over the world come to Medjugorje, except from Russia. This is why we have come here to you."

In the Ukraine with sub-zero temperature
Moving Confirmation in the freezing cold.
How two children got the whole town to church.

Sunday 21st, at Seredno, the Bishop administered confirmation to 170 people (youth and adults). It was the most moving of thousands of confirmations that he has administered. They were in the open for two hours, with icy winds blowing. Many were freezing. These people have suffered greatly and the church was opened by public acclaim and then repaired. All the women of the town presented themselves every day to the local leader until he finally gave in. The church was too small to contain all those people. Everyone wanted to express their gratitude after the Mass, they were really enthused, and they all wanted to talk. But how poor they were! Marija was so moved by the sight of a barefoot old woman that she took her to a shoe shop, wanting to buy her some, but there were none to buy.

The longest and most moving apparition occurred at Mukachevo, after having said the rosary, in the beautiful church dedicated to the Coronation of Mary. The apparition was not one long one, but broken into two. Marija spoke with simplicity to the people about the apparitions, Fr. Leonard also spoke. The people listened and prayed. They didn't want to leave. Prayer is essential for a Christian life, otherwise there is no contact with God. Where people pray more, the more fruits can be seen: like at Medjugorje.

This church had been abandoned and was closed for some time. Two children, however, driven by the love for Mary, managed to enter every day to pray. Other children then started joining them; then some adults and then little by little, the whole town gathered at Mary's feet to pray. Those people then decided to restore the church - and they did a wonderful job with great sacrifices.

Monday the 22nd they arrived at Uzhgorod, capital of the lower Carpathian province, but after a three hour wait in the freezing cold, the aeroplane, overbooked, left without them. Our Lady took them to a very poor house where a priest lived. He was originally Polish and had already been to Medjugorje. Our Lady rewarded him, as Marija received an apparition in his house. "We slept in a shack, but oh, what joy we felt!"

Two apparitions at St. Ludovico of Moscow.
Homily by Bishop Hnilica of Moscow

"Tuesday the 23rd we could finally leave for Moscow. We arrived in two and a half hours, for the cost of \$1.50 each. We arrived in the capital, but by then no-one was waiting for us. We were put up in Michael's house. Michael is head of the committee, generous, dynamic and father of four children. He is entrusted to care for the parish (priests do not count here), and we are his guests. The house had no furniture and very little food, but it was rich in serenity.

At 6.00 p.m. we went to the church of San Ludovico built by the French (40 x 50 metres), the only Catholic church open in Moscow. The parish priest, 70 years old, with a very Marian spirit, and Fr. Leonard concelebrated Mass.

The Gospel spoke of prayer and of being vigilant, which are the two things that Jesus recommends most strongly to his disciples.

"God desired many places for prayer ... so He came also to Medjugorje .. the world's fate is not decided at Moscow or New York, but in the Sanctuaries where people pray. There is no other place in the world where so many people gather to pray, where so many priests go (up to now 23 thousand), where there is

so much prayer and so many conversions.

Our Lady wants to renew the Church through confession and through the encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist. In that place where Christians gather to pray, there is an atmosphere of family, the people are of one heart and soul; prayer groups are formed, parishes are renewed. The difference between Medjugorje and Lourdes or Fatima, is that the Gospa appeared always in the same place, whereas here She appears wherever the young visionaries happen to be. We have been waiting three or four years for the right moment to come to Russia with the visionaries in order to bring the spirit of Medjugorje here. The most vivid and authentic spirituality is now radiating from Medjugorje. The best seed is needed here where life has been destroyed to make it grow back. The best forces must be brought here for the Church. The time has come to irradiate the Spirit of God over Russia."

Fr. Leonard then spoke in German (the Bishop translated into Russian). Everyone was moved because, finally, someone had remembered about them. The apparition occurred after the Mass, in front of the altar dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes which is found to the right of the main altar. It occurred at the same time as in Medjugorje and with the same prayers. Everyone wanted to listen to Marija: This is Mary's time... The fruit of the blood of the martyrs and of the prayers of the faithful can be seen here too now... The Gospa is spiritually guiding the church in Medjugorje with prayer.

In the heart of the Kremlin full of churches, and before the mute idols
Wednesday 24:

We visited the Kremlin and the Red Square. It was a sad sight inside Lenin's cold mausoleum. Soldiers make the visitors march through without letting them touch anything.

The soldiers tore away the bearskin that the Bishop wore on his head and stopped him from removing a Miraculous Medal from his pocket that he wanted to throw in a corner.

A blinding light radiates from the deified statue of Lenin! How ridiculous it was! What will soon become of this immense idol?

Under the wall of the Kremlin there are monuments to all the Russian heads of state, except for Kruscev: humiliated, he repented and wanted to be buried in an Orthodox cemetery.

We then visited the sacred places of the Kremlin: the churches dedicated to the Annunciation, to St. Michael, to Mary's Transition, to the Presentation of Mary to the Temple; and we found out that one of the guardians had a great desire for God. We then entered the Patriarch's church, the one dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, where we prayed with our brothers from the area for reconciliation between Catholics and the Orthodox. We threw a Miraculous Medal under the Patriarch's throne as a good omen. Also in the other churches, however, we prayed for Russia and for the conversion of atheists, aware of the mission that awaits the Catholic Church for the East."

On Thursday the 24th, another Holy Mass was celebrated in San Ludovico's. The people prayed together with Marija and continued praying even after Marija had finished. Fr. Leonard invited all the people present to come to Medjugorje, he said that accommodation would be found for all of them. One sad event was that Marija had her bag snatched whilst walking around Moscow with Claudia and lost her purse and passport. She anxiously cried, sorry for having ruined the voyage, but in her distress, she saw her humanity, that the apparitions cannot certainly take away. All was fixed up at the Yugoslav Consulate.

Our Lady did not give any particular messages during all that time, but took upon Herself all the

intentions of the visitors. The message of the 25th was given to Marija after the aeroplane had landed in Belgrade and mentioned the word peace six times: in fact, that is what Russia needs, peace, just like the rest of the world.

Fr. A (From a registered conversation with Msgr. Hnilica.)

APPEAL FOR RUSSIA

"Now that the atheist system which lasted for 70 years has ended, we must all help Russia," said Bishop Hnilica. Many are: "the needs of this Eastern Church: repairs to church buildings, printing works for religious material, radio and television.

There is a great need of prayer; help is needed for the seminarians and for vocations. There is also the Marian Centre of Moscow that needs support (Echo 76). God's enemy mobilizes his forces through militant atheism and consumerism, pornography and capitalism, and through the desire for wealth at all costs.

We must make an appeal ... to the Catholic industrialists too and to those who really want to help Russia... Russia and the other Eastern Bloc countries are at the moment in need of moral, spiritual and material help. We must tell the nuns, especially those of the enclosed orders, that now their time has come, that their sacrifices have never been worth so much as now - spiritual sacrifices, for the salvation of people. Each contemplative nun could adopt a priest for Russia, by praying for missionary vocations, and by helping him with her sacrifices. I would make the same appeal to the parish priests. There are many generous people in your parishes - people who would willingly offer prayers and sacrifices - and people who could offer a small donation.

But let's not forget the chalices and other religious articles that are not needed in our churches anymore - our Eastern friends have nothing and these things cannot be found there.

Paul Hnilica

** We are now called to help support our Eastern brothers not just spiritually, but also materially, due to the great famine that threatens Moscow and the whole of Russia.

Donations may be sent to Msgr. Paul Hnilica at:
Pro Deo et Fratibus, Casella Postale 6245, 00195 Rome, Italy.

MARIJA PAVLOVIC ON MEDJUGORJE TO EASTERN BROTHERS AND SISTERS

This is what Marija said to the people of Russia:

"Many people come to Medjugorje, except for the people from Russia. That is why we decided to come to you, because Our Lady wants the message of peace to reach the whole world."

(Bishop Hnilica pointed out that the church they were in was a Communist museum up to one year ago

and that pictures of Lenin and Marx were still hanging on the wall.)

Marija said that she entrusted everyone to Our Lady and that she had decided to present Russia to the Blessed Virgin every day.

"In our parish nine years ago, we started praying more ... then Our Lady came as the Queen of Peace and asked us to pray for the Peace that can come only from God.

She asked us to pray first in our hearts, then together with the family. Peace then descends on the family. When we have peace in our hearts and in the family, we can pray for world peace.

Our Lady asked that we live more like Christians, to go to church and to not leave the Blessed Sacrament alone. Our Lady asked that prayer groups start up. One of the fruits of Medjugorje is that many prayer groups have begun and they pray together in spiritual union.

The bishop and Fr. Leonard have already said many lovely things. I will tell you how we see Our Lady...

"

Marija briefly spoke about the history of the apparitions, and amongst other things, she said, "We were not children that prayed a lot. We were just like all other children. But then we understood that Our Lady was serious and that she wanted us to start praying... Our Lady told us that She wished to guide us, to teach us how to pray. She asked that we put God before everything else in our lives. So we started praying. We saw that our habits were at times rather heathen and that we needed to change.

Our Lady once said, "When you are in church you are good and holy, but once outside the church you are like heathens."

She asked us to give witness also in the places where we happen to be, like at school ... so we started changing and things around us started changing too ... Our Lady helped us to understand what was good and what was bad. She never said directly how we should do things, but She tells us to decide, indicating only what is good and what is bad. She gave us complete freedom every time. Our Lady helps us the way a teacher would, but She loves us like a mother... The eyes of Our Lady help us to understand things with depth, because they are blue and deep like the ocean... Once we asked Her why She was so beautiful and She replied, "I am beautiful because I love." So we decided to love more too.

Through Her messages, Our Lady calls all of us to choose the way to holiness. She said that She wants all of us to become holy. Mary showed us that there is another life; and She said that the only thing that we can take with us to the other life is holiness.

She said various times that this is the moment of grace.. We must pray and offer our work as a prayer.. Our Lady always repeats to pray more. I want to invite also all of you to pray and be united to us!

Drama and danger for Uniate brothers.

Cardinal Lubachivsky, at the synod of Bishops, dramatically revealed the situation of the Uniates in the Ukraine, who are not allowed to have their churches back and are subject to discrimination. Now authorities and the Pontifical and Orthodox Commission have decided to hold a referendum in the various parishes to attribute the relative churches to the majority. But then the minority Orthodox groups say: "Must we stay under the stars to pray, there where your numbers are greater?" If Christ's love prevails, it might be possible for both Uniates and Catholics to use the same church, like in the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

We must pray that humility and love will prevail, that "they be one" according to Jesus' wish.

Furthermore, given the political situation in the Ukraine at the moment, even Catholics are incited by the nationalist movements to take political revenge against Russia by seeking union with Poland (the part that came under Russian government after the war). The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is by now separating the whole population from the Patriarchate of Moscow, who they turn to only for a blessing.

Appeal for Christmas: save a life

According to the visionaries, Our Lady often speaks of accepting life with open arms, and of the crimes against life such as abortion.

Fr. Tardiff, during a prayer of healing at Ravensburg a few days ago, interrupted the prayer to say, "Jesus is telling me to thank the mother who decided today not to have an abortion even though the doctors had advised her to have one because of medicine she had taken which could deform the developing child. He is saying to me to tell that mother that she will have a healthy child and that He thanks her because she decided to donate the child to God." Everyone in the church applauded.

Through Echo we would like to invite everyone to decide for life. Let us offer prayers and sacrifices so that the Father will grant the grace to those thinking of aborting so that they may repent and change their minds; that He will grant children to sterile couples; donate health, love and graces to the new born; and grant peace to the world.

Ivano

ECHO CELEBRATES 6TH ANIVERSARY

On 21 November Echo turned 6. Its 7th year has now begun happily, and Our Lady showers graces upon us to encourage us to continue.

Be blessed now and always in Child Jesus and His Mother.

Happy CHristmas to you all, from the Echo family and Fr. Angelo