

Message of the Queen of Peace, 25 Sept. '94

Dear children, I rejoice with you and I invite you to pray. My dear children, pray for my intention. Your prayers are necessary to me. Through them I wish to bring you closer to God, for He is your salvation. God sends me to help you and to lead you to Paradise which is your destination. Thus, my dear little children, pray, pray, pray. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Mary wants to lead us to our destination, but we remain firm on the earth

I rejoice with you... With whom is Mary rejoicing? Perhaps with the children of the land that was graced with the presence of *Her beloved son who fulfilled the fathers' dream*, or could it be the irrepressible joy a Mother feels in seeing that Her children pay heed? For it is through praying that they help Our Lady lead "Her children" Home. Our Lady sees far beyond our earthly lives and rejoices at the fact that our *names are written in heaven* (Lk 10:20).

God sent me to help you and to lead you to Paradise. That is our destination. Life has no other meaning to it if not this. Our Lady reminds us what the real meaning of life is; that we are destined for the Kingdom of Heaven. This contrasts the present-day mentality which concentrates attention and efforts on earthly riches.

Infact, under the influence of this materialistic mentality we have gone as far as nearly eliminating (even from Christian preaching) the realities of death, judgement, resurrection, hell and heaven. Many, in fact, consider these, and the devil, to be fables for children. Consequently, people are no longer aware of their sins. More over, Christians have forgotten about the eschatological dimension of their lives (the eternal future that awaits us all) and have tragically fallen into line with the mundane expectations of development and progress in the earthly order that ignores the "diverse" aspect of a Christian whose hope is in the future and who considers his life of trial on earth as exile.

Pray for my intention. Our Lady asks that we put aside our requests (even though good) and offer all for our ultimate and eternal end in **God our salvation**. By doing so, we include all else, even the peace and goodness of this life. Our world is immersed in grave problems that seem to have no solutions. The political and social events seem to be its only concern. Our Lady leads us to the basics, to that which never dies, as if She were saying: *That which is not eternal is null. What gain is it for a man to win the whole world and ruin his life?*

Our Lady **needs our prayers**. *He who created you without you cannot save you without you* (St Augustine). *I prayed... I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me* (Ws 7:7) to understand that possessing

Mary invites us to imitate the Saints. The antique Church has always offered them to us as models.

God is worth more than all the earth's riches. The young rich man of the Gospel did not understand this, and I wonder if he is saved. *Salvation is not possible for men, but for God everything is possible* (Mk 10:22-27). This is why we must pray for our salvation.

Thus: **I need your prayers**. Could it not be that Our Lady is asking for the **Rosary**, the chain that takes us to God? With this message, are we not being called to prepare ourselves for the month of the Holy Rosary, the *weapon that defeats evil*? Let us take hold then of our Rosary beads and pray!

Our "modern" Christianity and the call to: "pray, pray, pray!"

Our Lady echoes Jesus' words: *You must pray always, without tiring* (Lk 18). Does our so-called modern Christianity believe though? For sure, people talk about prayer, but when it comes down to actually praying and seeing prayer as an essential part of Christian living, many turn their noses up and talk about the need to "change."

What happens in many parishes is that people who understand prayer is essential are put aside. Instead of *pray, pray, pray*, these others *do, do, do*, followed by prayer if time allows! Yet, *without me you can do nothing*, Jesus says.

Pray, pray, pray! Over these 13 years Our Lady has patiently and lovingly repeated this to us and we haven't yet realized that what **She is asking of us is a radical change**. It is because we are not open to God (who *always works*) that we have let ourselves become trapped by apparently gratifying canons, by worldly efficiency, thereby making our "missions" become shoddy and competitive forms of human efficiency. This has caused an ever-spreading sterility.

Mary invites us to what is man's main activity: prayer. Praying is letting God work. He sends His Spirit and His power, so that our talk and our works are done in *the name of the Lord Jesus*; yes, we move, but moved by Jesus' Spirit; we "fish," but in the name of the Lord. This way, it will be the Lord to return and save, not man, and we will *bear much fruit*.

Mary's prophetic voice, though, is not heeded by man. She wants us to see that we are facing the world's evils in the wrong way.

Our Lady's message of 25 October 1994:

Dear children, I am with you and also today I rejoice, as the Most High has given me the gift to remain with you, to instruct you and guide you onto the way of perfection. My dear children, it is my desire that you be a beautiful bouquet to offer to God on All Saints Day. I invite you to open yourselves and to take the Saints as your models. The Mother Church chose them so that they may be incentive for you in your daily lives. Thank you for having responded to my call.

I am with you to make you holy Imitate the Saints

"**I am with you**" is the most important and most repeated of the messages. Also today, **Mary rejoices because God has allowed Her to be with us**, in our times, in a special, extraordinary way, as a **teacher and guide on the way of perfection**. In fact, our destiny is this: *we were created to be holy and spotless and to live through love in his presence* (Eph 1:4); *you must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48).

I am with you - "We do not realize how much God has given us through Mary. Unfortunately, we will understand when it will be too late. God sent Mary to be with us in this time so as to take care of us, just as a Mother would. You all know how much trouble a mother takes in caring for her child, how many times she gets up during the night to check him - for in fact, even while she sleeps she is tied to him" (Fr. Tomislav 26-10-85). Our Blessed Mother will keep us under Her wings even during the »» pg. 6

How can we oppose Satan's powers with our "bullets" which are dampened by our endless meetings, debates, methods and programmes? They're nothing but a heap of paper. We make the devil laugh because of our stupidity - only Jesus can defeat him, and all we have to do is to use our faith, to ask in prayer. We, with all our methods, think we are serving the cause, but are we serving the right cause? In reality we are the ones being defeated. **Our Lady has come to tell us: God is your salvation.**

Fr. A.

Feast of the Family with Pope in St Peter's Square

"You are the domestic Church
you are joy and hope!"

World Meeting with Families, St Peter's Square, 8 October. Families from the 5 continents are gathered with the Pope. The service consists of prayers and songs, but especially of testimony given by families about their own experience of faith. We report part of the Holy Father's impassioned discourse, partly read and partly improvised:

"Family, what do you say about yourself?"
We already find an answer in early Christian times: 'I am the domestic Church.' We see the same parallelism: Family-Church; the apostolic and universal dimension of the Church on the one hand, the family, domestic dimension of the Church on the other. Both are nourished by the same sources. They have the same genealogy in God: in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit (...) and they both find their source in the mystery of divine Love."

Bringing up the theme of the Synod on Consecrated Life, the Pope said: "... these two themes are very closely related - because in the mystery of the Church, family and consecration go together. Are not married couples consecrated as it were to God in the sacrament of marriage? They are consecrated to create an environment of love and life. Yes, this is your vocation."

Speaking of the latest documents and catecheses on the family, the Pope said of Paul VI: "One of his unfading merits is that of having given the Church the Encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968), which in its day was not understood in all its importance but which, with time, has come to reveal all its prophetic content. In it, the great Pontiff indicated the criteria for preserving the love of a couple from the danger of hedonistic selfishness which in many parts of the world, is tending to lessen the vitality of families and render marriages almost sterile..."

He then put down his papers and improvised: "Beloved, these lights we see are lights that come from all over the world. Each family bears a light, and each family is a light! It is a beacon which must illumine the way of the Church and of the world in the future... Dear married couples, the communion of man and woman in marriage corresponds to the specific requirement of human nature. At the same time it is a reflection of God's goodness, which becomes fatherhood and motherhood."

Sacramental grace - first in Baptism and Confirmation, then in Matrimony - has poured a fresh and powerful wave of supernatural love into your hearts. It is love which flows from the inner depths of the Blessed Trinity, of which the human family is an eloquent and living image. This is a supernatural reality which helps you to sanctify your joys, to face hardships and sufferings, and to triumph over difficulties and moments of fatigue. It is a source of sanctification for you and a source of strength for self-giving. It grows by constant prayer and above all by your sharing in the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Strengthened by this supernatural help, be ever ready, dear families, to account for the hope that is within you.

May you always be examples of openness, dedication and generosity. Preserve, assist and promote the life of every person, especially the weak, the sick and the handicapped. Bear witness to love for life, and sow that love

abundantly. Be builders of the culture of life and the civilization of love.

In the Church and in society, now is the hour of the family. Families are called to play a primary role in the task of the new evangelization. From the heart of families devoted to prayer, to the apostolate and to the Church's life will develop genuine vocations not only for the formation of other families, but also for the life of special consecration, whose beauty and mission is being described during these very days by the Synod of Bishops.

Family, what do you say about yourself? 'I am,' Why do you exist? He who said: "I alone am what I am," has given me the right and strength to exist. I am, I am the family, I am the environment of love ... of life.

What do you say about yourself? I am gaudium et spes (joy and hope)."

The day after, 200,000 people from all over the world participated in the Eucharistic Concelebration presided over by the Pope. In his homily he said: "Today this is what Jesus tells all of you: 'Go to all the world and teach the families. Proclaim to them the Gospel of eternal salvation.' "

Cairo: the worst was avoided but value of life wasn't considered

It was due to the firm position of the Vatican and other nations, that the most negative parts of the document were removed, for example, the statement that speaks of "abortion as a method of birth control." No clarifications were made, however, with regards to fundamental problems such as the value of life, the rights of a family and the economic and social development of less wealthy peoples which is the only means of permitting responsible procreation. This you see, would have required an unthinkable adjustment on the part of the wealthy countries. The only way they think the world's population can be controlled is by reducing births (with the various means propagandized by them).

The fact that the Conference's final document talks about protecting the family and marriage, the social condition of the woman and other theoretical points, is positive. Msgr. Martino who headed the Vatican delegation to the Conference said: "The Holy See, however, because of her specific nature, does not think it opportune to consent to the operative chapters of the document." This means that, besides the vague humanitarian ideals affirmed by the Conference, the operative chapters contain are radically incompatible with the Christian faith. All of them mention abortion as though necessary to the public health and there is a notable lack of a serious plan for sex education that is worthy of man's dignity. The Vatican had to specify that it had not modified its moral position with regards to abortion, contraceptives, sterilization and the use of condoms in programmes for the prevention of AIDS.

At the end of this event that disheartens us all, it must be stressed that **the conflict between the Gospel and the UNO programmes, between the thought of Christ (1Co2:16) and the thought of the world** is not occasional, but is a consequence of a mentality that makes the so-called lay morality unacceptable for a Christian. In fact, in the official document of the Holy See, on the question of sexual ethics, we read: "the

Cairo Document is marked by an individualistic (thus egoistic) interpretation of sexuality, which does not give enough attention to the importance of reciprocal love and the capacity to decide, which characterize a conjugal relationship."

The conflict is destined to bare its head every time the so-called developed Western powers think up initiatives for questions concerning morality.

Under this light we also understand the European Parliament's reproach (29 Oct.) of the Vatican (thus the Pope) for its attitude in Cairo. It accused the Vatican of "diverting the discussion from the problems of development and over population."

In truth, this European pronouncement is laden with an individualistic mentality, which does not recognize the values of the family as the basic unit of society, and of responsible parenthood, and does not provide forms of solidarity for difficult or unwanted pregnancies.

Voices from Synod for Religious Consecrated life is choice of love

The Holy Father opened the Synod of Bishops on the 2nd October. The theme was *The Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and in the World*, to recall that: "religious communities are called to the duty of perfection, clearly expressed by Christ in his conversation with the young man: 'If you wish to be perfect' " (Mt 19:21).

In his Angelus reflection, the Pope said: "Their choice of life, especially through the practice of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, is nothing other than a great choice of love, one could say a 'super-abundance of love.' It comes from listening to Christ's voice: 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess... and come, follow me' (Mt 19:21). Answering this invitation places religious in the very heart of the Church... and they become a sign-existence: all that they do must echo the Apostle Paul's cry of love: 'For to me life is Christ!' " (Ph 1:21).

Consecrated persons, precisely because they are totally dedicated to God, also feel naturally devoted, in accordance with the charisms proper to each institute, to serving their brothers and sisters, especially the poorest. The consecrated person is by antonomasia the 'universal brother' whom his other brothers and sisters can always count on, finding in him someone who will listen, welcome and share. The most specific service asked of consecrated people today is that of reaching out to the greatest poverty of our time: many today, because they have rejected God, have lost the meaning of life. The consecrated person stands in their midst as a living prophecy of God's saving love, and for that very reason, as a witness of joy and hope, as the builder of the future in view of the kingdom."

The other Christian faiths, including the Patriarchate of Moscow, intervened at the Synod on 15 October. They all expressed their gratitude and happiness for being able to share this experience with the Catholic Church. The Lutherans and other reformed churches spoke of how consecrated life had been rediscovered by their communities: "Centuries after the destruction of every religious order, the Holy Spirit has moved also our communities, bringing forth the thirst of total consecration to God."

Some of the interventions by Bishops, such as **Card. Meisner** and **Archbishop Duval**,

Prayer is a live relationship with God who totally changes our life

seemed inspired by the Fathers of the Church: "After the secularization that made people lose their sense of God, all we can do to reach consciences is to testify with our lives where God is mirrored, because it is when we are possessed by Him that we become reasons for attraction and a promise of a fuller realization of one's own life. The religious are the most credible testimonies precisely because in them God's presence is made transparent."

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said on the 6th October: "Our life as religious and especially as women must be to thirst with Jesus by taking upon ourselves the thirst of our people... To be able to become true consecrated women we must more and more **fall in love with Jesus**. We must give love the first place in our lives. Our vows, our apostolate, our community life are all the fruit of our love-union with Jesus.

Our vow of chastity liberates us totally to contemplate God and to give wholehearted and free service to all men...

Mary was the first consecrated woman. We must become **pure and humble like Mary** so that we can become holy like Jesus. Our consecrated life should be one of loving trust, **total surrender and joy**, as were the lives of Jesus and Mary in the Gospel."

Singular homage to Pope amid joviality and emotion

Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, USA, paid homage to the Holy Father at the Synod of religious for the **16th anniversary of his election as Supreme Pontiff**. In a humorous tone he said: "Going by the news that the Pope is seriously ill and practically on his death-bed, I should ask myself: 'Is this the Holy Father here before me in the synodal hall, or is he a double, a counterpart?' A Pope as sick as you could never stay here hour after hour, day after day, so attentive and watchful, whilst more than a few of us are sleeping! We know only too well that you have no need for a double! You are the same Pope that we have known for 16 years, ever strong and untiring, who works more hours in a day than what the majority of men half your age could support. Yes, we can tell the world that you are ready to serve us a further 16 years."

The Cardinal then added: "Talking seriously, Holy Father, though we recognize you as the vicar of Christ on the earth, we also know that you are a human being and we love you and revere you as such. You suffer for Sarajevo and Rwanda, for Haiti and Irak, for wherever blood is spilt, for wherever other human beings suffer... You are torn to bits together with the children who are ripped away from their mothers' wombs. You cry for the world, just as Christ cried for Jerusalem. Holy Father, let me tell you about one of my priests who had both his legs amputated. That priest begged me to tell you that he offers both his legs so that your leg may heal soon."

A great round of applause broke out. Together with the Bishops, the religious and the representatives of the other Churches, we also applaud and wish to offer ourselves entirely through praying and working for the Holy Father. ***

Holy Father's new book launched in Italy, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, is to be published in 21 languages and 35 countries. The 224-page book, launched on 19 October is already a best-seller.

At the beginning of Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje the people immediately discovered a profound need for prayer. Quite simply, every soul opened itself up to God. It is only through prayer that we can approach God, but with the type of prayer that takes over our whole being, that carries us away to God.

The Church teaches us that the presence of Our Lady or of a saint, or even any particular moment of extraordinary grace, opens our souls up to God, making known to us the way to go to Him. We can approach God only through prayer, of the type that carries us away. Like the way a plant will turn to the sun, we also must turn to our Sun to find the centre of our existence, to discover the hidden treasure in our souls, to put God above all else, to be immersed in Him.

With the extraordinary presence of Grace, as in the case of Marian apparitions, man discovers how simple prayer is; he discovers how easy and natural it is to pray. All we need to do is create the right conditions in us, in our minds, our hearts, our families and in our days. If we do not make these preparations to encounter God, then our prayer becomes heavy, even impossible, and we anxiously start looking - in vain - for other teachers and books.

Prayer as a space for God. In Our Lady's message of 2 October 1986, She speaks of a *time to give to God for prayer, when no other person or thing is important, only God. My dear children, dedicate yourselves to prayer with special love.* You see, Our Lady prepares us and it is Her desire that we prepare in ourselves a space for prayer, that we understand the importance of prayer to the point of saying: "I now desire being immersed in God." This prepares us for a continual, daily aperture towards God, it helps us feel His presence, and we will be unable to stay without God. We will feel the need for God, to be joyful in Him, and His presence will be beneficial to us.

This is why Our Lady said: *consecrate yourselves every morning to my Immaculate Heart and your day will be different.* The aperture that comes from prayer will **totally change our life**. In prayer we encounter God in all His beauty and wealth, so you see we need to be with Him, we need this type of relationship all day long. This was normal for the saints and for uncomplicated people. If you read Genesis, chapter 24, you will see how Abraham fully trusted everything to God, even his future. When Abraham decided his son Isaac should marry, he was careful that all he did was according to God's will. So he sent his servant to his homeland to find a girl belonging to his same lineage. The town was distant and the servant's every step was done with God. He asked God to give him a sign, to take him to the right girl, the right family.

These days parents don't do this. They accompany their children only as far as the first girl/boy that comes along. It is done without being immersed in God. All things, all people, all events need to form this relationship with God. When we pray we form this relationship - not to remain for Him for only an instant, but to form a live relationship with Him. When a person lives a continuing relationship with God he discovers how all his words, desires and thoughts are part of God's plan for us. He discovers what Christian living is. This allows him to feel God's grandeur, the beauty of living with God.

Until we form a similar relationship, our

life as Christians remains superficial, we are not aware of the fact that God is the master of our life, that God gives us life, that He is the master of our past, present and future. We do not discover that in God lies all our problems and that from Him come all our answers to them, even for insignificant things.

We think it superficial the fact that the guests at the wedding of Cana were drunk, yet Jesus still transformed the water into wine. It seems irrelevant, doesn't it? How wonderful it is then when we understand how all things are in God, that we can count on Him in whatever situation, because He is present and He wants to be present. Jesus said how it still wasn't His time, yet His mother simply said: *Do what he tells you to do.* Father God wants to make us understand that **every man is dear to Him**. Do you know what this means? It means feeling loved by God from within, it is feeling God's love penetrate our whole being. All this can be experienced in prayer, when we are open from within.

Pray with the heart. Our Lady invites us to encounter God with prayer from the heart. **Our prayer, then, must prevail over every othersituation.** Why? For in whatever context or condition we may be in, we always receive more from God than from men or things. God always helps us, He always desires giving us what we need. With God we are happier, more serene and more joyful. When we pray with the heart it is because we are **in love with God** and in our hearts we feel that no one can love us as much as God. If we pray with the heart we are aware of how we are drawn to Him, and how no other thing can lead us to Him.

Mary, whodesiresbeingourguide, suggests we let our days be marked out by the **rhythm of prayer**. In the morning place yourself before God, invoke His Spirit and read the Gospel. Choose a word that strikes you the most. During the day take that word and put it in your heart, meditate upon it. Allow it to accompany you throughout the day. In the evening find the time to pray, to thank God, and to confide in Him, asking forgiveness for the wrong you did so that you may fall asleep in peace, allowing your soul to continue offering your prayer to God as you sleep.

Prayer and prayers. How should our prayers be? At this point, we must discern between prayer and prayers. There are many different prayers, eg. for communities, formal and vocal prayers, etc. Of course they are important since we, as human beings, live in the "form" of our human bodies and minds and in a social form. The important thing is that we recite them with the heart.

As you can see, our Christian life is immersed in prayer. Our Lady calls us in a special way to personal prayer, prayer in the family and the prayer of the Church. The core of this prayer is Confession and Holy Mass which serve as introductory Sacraments for this journey, for the life of every Christian.

Prayer, though, is not only important from an individual point of view, as it benefits the **entire Church and all of humanity**. In prayer we discover God's call for every man. Like St Francis, Moses had to pray to discover the treasure that was hidden in him.

We have often heard the Blessed Virgin say how even wars can be stopped with prayer. But which [type of] prayer can stop wars? The prayer that unites us to God can. We know Moses prayed with his arms outstretched while Israel was in battle, and as long as Moses prayed, Israel won. This is the power of prayer! Prayer is also a source of praise and adoration of God who makes us plunge into Him, be immersed in Him, to rejoice in Him.

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic - 22 Jan. 1994

New times: don't talk too much about Medj.: live the peace, spread it

The August '94 edition of the "What do you think of Medjugorje?" column in the Glas Miramagazine reports that Fr. Tomislav said in a homily in Medj. in June 1994:

"Do not speak too much about Medj., but do all you can so people may understand, so peace and joy may enter them. All this will be easy if in Medj. you fill yourselves with peace and joy and make the decision today to become bearers of peace and joy.

Filled with joy and peace, we race towards the events, not like those who spread fear for our tomorrow, but like those who rejoice for the encounter with the eternal Father and Jesus Christ. We are beginning a new time in our life; it is a new time for our family, for this parish and for the whole world. May the Queen of Peace place in our hearts Her peace, and through every pilgrim may this peace flow onto the whole world."

Reflections on Medj. by new provincial

When Fr. Tomislav Pervan was recently elected as the new superior for the Franciscans of Herzegovina, he spoke of Mary's presence in Medj. "I have felt strongly tied to Medj. since its beginning; and I was the parish priest from August '82 till October '88. Much has been written on Medjugorje; a great quantity of information has been recorded about it. Medj. is now part of the Catholic Church so much so that it has had, and I believe it will continue to have, a fundamental role in the revival of the Church.

I see in Medj. the fulfilment of an authentic re-proposal of the Bible and of biblical times, a new chapter in the history of the Church, an intervention by God who alone is the true Power in the context of the so-called great powers of the earth.

I am a realistic type of person, I studied theology in German schools and I know that modern theology and biblical science have gained a lot of ground. I am convinced, though, that it is the Holy Spirit, not science, who has the last word. The Holy Spirit is present with His action also today in the Church and in the world. In my opinion, His action in Medjugorje, through Mary, is unquestionable. The fruits are so great and numerous that denying them would be a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the judgements against said phenomena, the Church allows for three, not two, possibilities. She can say: "It is evident that said phenomena are real," or: "It is not evident that they are real," or: "It is evident that they are not real." The third judgement has never been pronounced by the Church with regards to Medj., even though some try hard to misinterpret the Declaration of Zara of '91 made by the Yugoslav Bishops' Conference." (*Nasa Ognjista*, Sept. 1994)

A river of love ... misunderstood

The mass media give little mention to the war in the former Yugoslavia, but the tragedy of a population still living out the nightmare of weapons and hunger continues. Their

tragedy does not interest the calculating international communities. The humanitarian convoys of the UN get aid into the risky zones when possible, but there is another fount that has continued delivering aid to the refugees and remote villages since the war began. It is the untiring work of lay people and religious. Yes, it was the Queen of Peace, with Her love, who induced these people into working so hard without tiring, who place their own lives at risk. The parish priest of Medj. said some time ago that 80% of the aid that went into Herzegovina came from friends of Medj. How important it is, though, to veil this charity with evangelical silence: *do not let your right hand know what your left hand does. Do not blow your horn when you give alms so as not to lose your reward.*

People are now giving less and this makes it even more difficult to continue organizing aid delivery because of the high costs involved. The volunteers, sensitive to the cry of help by these abandoned peoples, and inspired by the Mother who continues to call, keep on working with admirable enthusiasm, in subordination to pastors who do not acknowledge and who even oppose the reason behind their generosity: the presence of Mary in that land. These pastors gather up, give thanks and encourage, but they deliberately ignore the message for which the aid deliverers work.

We do not bear any grudges against them, of course. What we have said is simply out of admiration for the kind of charity that *cares not about what the others say, that cares not about its own interest, that benefits also he who disapproves, that keeps no count of evil received, that kisses the hand that strikes out.* This is Our Lady's style, for She, too, is treated in the same manner: ignored, unheeded and opposed. Yet She continues to call us, to offer us love and graces, that men may convert and avoid a catastrophic end.

This is the sublime charity of the Gospel, a spectacle unknown to men, written up in heaven in golden letters. *Fr. A.*

Present position of Church

Medj recognized as Sanctuary.
Investigations on supernatural continue
Pilgrims have returned, so has criticism

By *Fr. Barnaba Hechich*. The original title can be translated as: Regurgitation of old-hat interpretations and positions. It was published in the Catholic weekly of Zagreb called Glas Koncila ("the voice of the Council") on 11 Sept. the day the Pope was in Zagreb.

"Now that pilgrimages to Medj. have again become very numerous, the curia for the diocese of Mostar has started campaigning against the facts and official declarations regarding the apparitions of Medj. through distorting and disinforming articles in Glas Koncila. The intent is to discourage pilgrims and extinguish the facts - to do so they resort also to applying canonic pressure.

Appeal has been made to the famous Declaration of Zara, which was emitted by the Bishops' Conference on the 10th April 1991. The Declaration is presented as though it were a negative and definite pronouncement. Thus, standing by this affirmation, the phenomenon of Medj. has never existed, but is a falsehood invented for personal interest.

According to that Declaration, things stand as so: the Bishops in Zara placed

emphasis on two facts: the apparitions and the pilgrimages. Concerning the apparitions, they declared: 'On the basis of investigations **made to date**, it is not possible to affirm that [the matter] is one of supernatural apparitions and revelations.' This is a provisional verdict. In other words, the investigations were not complete or exhaustive enough to permit a definite verdict. So, the Declaration continues: 'Through its members, the Commission [of the Bishops' Conference] **will continue to follow the events of Medjugorje and carry out further investigations.**'

Concerning the pilgrimages (which are very important for the spiritual life of the faithful, thus the Church cannot permit herself not to show interest in them or to defer her interest to a time when a definite pronouncement will be made) the Bishops declared: 'In the meantime, the great gatherings of faithful from various parts of the world - who come to Medj. for religious or other reasons - necessitate pastoral care and attention, first by the local Bishop, then by the other Bishops - so that in Medj., and in collaboration with Medj., the promotion of a sound devotion to the Blessed Virgin conforming to Church teachings is ensured. With this in mind, the Bishops will emit special and suitable liturgical and pastoral instructions.'

The immediate reaction of the management of GK to the Declaration was positive. They said: 'For the many people devoted to Medj. all over the world, this Declaration will serve to clarify their consciences. In other words, **those who now desire going to Medj. for religious motives will know that their gatherings are the object of constant and responsible care by the successors of the Apostles**' (GK 5.5.91).

Thus, it is clear that with this Declaration all reservations that had been expressed with regards to 'non-official' pilgrimages to Medj., have been dissolved. As in the case of Lourdes and Fatima, pilgrims in great numbers visited the sites before they were publicly acknowledged. They were non-official pilgrimages, even though priests were available to assist them. Likewise with Medj., many pilgrims come, in groups and non: they are all non-official pilgrimages even though often assisted by priests. Moreover, the Hierarchy from now on, together with the local Church, intends organizing and furnishing spiritual assistance for the pilgrims - because: 'above all other things, the Church respects the facts, attentively evaluates her own responsibilities and with all regards, her main concern is to take care of the spiritual good of the faithful' (GK 5.5.91).

Though the outcome of the pronouncement of Zara is so clear, the Curia of Mostar is not happy about it. In citing the Bishops' Declaration, the Vicar General, Fr. Pavlovic, is careful to avoid mentioning the last words where it says that the Bishops' Commission will "continue to follow the events of Medj. and carry out further investigations." In his articles published in GK (10 July, 7 Aug. '94), he ignores the expression "investigations made to date." For him they are "the most responsible and serious... done over various years... that have covered all aspects." So, for him, they are "definite!" The Bishops' provisional pronouncement for him has become conclusive and resolute - in a negative sense of course. He concludes with: "This negative pronouncement by the Bishops

on the impossibility of affirming [the presence of supernatural] gives us the right to say that Our Lady has not and does not appear to anyone in Medj." (GK 7 Aug. 1994).

The Chancellor, Fr. Luburic, thinks along this same line. He says that 'the investigations made to date' have been transformed into 'competent investigations' - thus tending to exclude the provisional sense from the Declaration, giving it an ultimate sense (...).

[It is to note that the Church never expresses definite opinions on such events whilst the events are still in course.]

With the responsibility and authority as President of the Bishops' Conference, Card. Kuharic said with regards to the Declaration of Zara: 'After three years of study conducted by the appropriate Commission, we Bishops **have accepted Medj. as a place of prayer, as a sanctuary...** With regards to the supernatural factor of the apparitions, we have said that for now we cannot affirm that it exists; we still have important reservations. We therefore leave this aspect for further investigation. **The Church is in no hurry**' (GK 15 August 1993).

The action taken by the Curia of Mostar is indeed disappointing. Millions of people (including dozens of bishops and thousands of priests) look upon Medj. with feelings of gratitude for having found light, strength, peace, healing, conversion and incitement to live a more holy life. Moreover, the entire question concerning the authenticity of the facts has been entrusted to the Bishops' Conference which has said it will carry out further investigations. Yet despite all this, the Curia of Mostar is again trying to appropriate the problem so as to gain control of it! Without doubt, greater service could be done to the truth, the peace, the faith and the good of the faithful if they were more serene, more objective, more open and less factious about it all." *Fr. Barnaba Hechich*

The Bishop of Mostar on Medj.

Mons. Ratko Peric's intervention at the Synod of Religious concerned: "an inter-ecclesial thorn in his Church," revealing how: "the obedience professed by the religious is being greatly put to the test now that some parishes are passing from the hands of the meritorious Franciscans of the diocese. This also includes Medjugorje, a parish entrusted to a religious." He then speaks of the official position of the Bishops' Conference (as above) and adds: "The alleged apparitions create confusion and division, and not only in the local Church. Consequently, we await the Holy See to use her ways so that the unity of that particular Church may be made full and stable" (*Avvenire* 12 Oct. 1994).

We are grieved by the fact that not even the tragedy caused by the war with all its sufferings, not even the grace that has accompanied these years, have been able to appease the controversies within the Church where Our Lady came to bring peace. (In truth, the Franciscans offered the seven parishes to the new bishop, but because of their condition, he did not accept them.)

We are surprised that there was no positive acknowledgement of the fruits of Medj. in his discourse (at least reported by the media), nor of the quantity of aid that has reached the war-torn country thanks to the reality of Medj. In any case, the Queen of Peace arrived as far as the Synod, though only as a sign of contradiction. It doesn't matter how, but mention was made of Her (cf. Phil 1:18). * *

Bishop of Namur on Medjugorje: I went, I saw, I believe

On 25 August, Ivan visited Beauraing in Belgium where Mary appeared to 5 children for 33 times in 1932. Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Namur, Msgr. Léonard. The following is from his eloquent homily.

"(...)Which are the churches that please the Lord? Crowded churches. He loves them, because a crowded church for the Lord is a prophecy of what will be at the end of time, when **God's Kingdom will be everything in everyone!**

This vision of the Kingdom is seen in today's first reading (Rev 22:9): the Kingdom of Heaven is a gift of God who comes from above. The heavenly city opens its arms to the earthly city and is united to the history of our world. The angel speaks of this city as if it were a fiancée loved by Him and which will become His bride forever more. When all of us will form this Kingdom, we will be this Bride.

That is why the entire Church and the entire Kingdom are portrayed by a woman, the **Virgin Mary**. The 2nd Vatican Council tells us: *When we see Mary we see, in anticipation, how humanity will be, how the Church will be when she will become God's Kingdom*. We can think of **every Marian apparition** as an announcement of the holy city, of the Fiancée, of the Bride, that descends from her place beside God in Heaven. Therefore, what else could Mary be when She appears, if not the prefiguration, the sign, the anticipation of the Holy City that will descend from Heaven?

Today's Gospel uses a similar language. Nathanael was sceptic: *can anything good come from Nazareth?* (Jn 1:46). We must admit that each time Mary has appeared in the world, including those place where the apparitions have received Church approval, scepticism were the order of the day.

Scepticism and doubt always accompany Our Lady's apparitions! What, Mary is appearing to little Bernadette Soubirou who lives with her parents in Lourdes? What, Mary is appearing to three little shepherd children of Fatima? Mary is appearing in Beauraing, in a little corner of Belgium? Thus, we have the beginning of scepticism and doubt. The right way to feel, instead, can be seen in today's Gospel. When Philip says to Nathanael, *"come and see,"* he goes and he believes. For God's signs to be accepted, it is necessary for one to *go and see*.

With regards to the **apparitions in Medj.**, the Church has still not given her official definite recognition. We await it with trust and in prayer. Personally, I went there in 1984, I saw and I returned convinced.

Nathanael was struck by what he saw and he understood. His proclamation of faith is one of the most beautiful in the New Testament: *"Rabbi, you are the son of God, you are the King of Israel!"* (Jn 1:49). Nathanael went from scepticism to faith, because **he went, thereby allowing Jesus to touch his heart**. Jesus tells him: *"You will see greater things than that... You will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending"* (Jn 1:50-51). We can apply these words to the various apparitions in the world. Each apparition by Mary is Heaven laid open to the earth, it is Heaven that smiles to the earth.

Does Mary appear too much, speak too much? I am greatly impressed by Mary's insistence in talking to us. Just think how

Holy Father in Zagreb invokes Queen of Peace

The Pope spoke to an enormous crowd (more than 1 million people) which had gathered at the race course. John Paul II spoke to them about the journey that must be taken to bring peace back to the Balkans, using the *Our Father* prayer to emphasise the fact that we are all brothers. *Forgive and ask forgiveness; this is the only way for peace to return.* How can we invoke Our Father in heaven and hate our brothers? At the end of his discourse he prayed: *Queen of Peace, pray for us.*

There was a large group from Medj. close to the altar. Fr. Jozo, Fr. Tomislav Pervan and Marija Pavlovic were present, plus many brothers and sisters from the communities present in Medj. A group of young people were carrying a large "Medjugorje" banner with them and the Holy Father looked lovingly at them and blessed them.

The mere presence of the Holy Father was enough to transform the tense atmosphere of this stricken capital into a joyous occasion. President Tudjman said how he desired: "eliminating every form of nationalism from this territory."

many apparitions there have been in this last century! Rue du Bac in Paris, Pontmain, Lourdes, La Salette, Fatima, Beauraing, Banneux, Kibeho in Rwanda, Medjugorje... People often ask me why Mary is still appearing in Medj. after 13 years. Some say: "Mary talks so much! In other places, She only said a few words, appeared for only a few days!" Personally, I have no idea about Mary's reasons, about what She should say and do. I know that if Mary knocks at our door with such insistence, intensity and duration, then there must be urgent need.

Have you noticed how committed our Pope is to his mission as universal pilgrim? Have you noticed his force and insistence in drawing our attention to the world's present day problems, such as peace, true conversion and the family? He insists so much because he is convinced that these years are decisive years for the history of humanity. Personally, I see Mary's insistence in talking to us and in calling us in this light.

The fruits of Medj. are blessed fruits. I have witnessed these fruits myself. They are conversion, the re-discovery of prayer, love and peace, the return to the Sacraments, to the Eucharist, to penance and fasting.

If you truly desire peace in the world, in our families and hearts, then my invitation to you is to truly accept Our Lady's pressing appeals, in particular the ones concerning prayer and fasting. Jesus Himself tells us that *some demons can only be driven out by prayer and fasts*. I simply repeat what Our Lady tells us wherever She appears, and I invite you to true conversion through praying and fasting."

So the bishop's invitation is to create in every home a corner for personal and family prayer, to keep the churches open for Adoration, the Rosary and prayer (which is also the best way to prevent vandalism).

"If Jesus and Mary talk to us," the Bishop concluded, "it is not to frighten us, but to call us to conversion. All that you will do to better your praying and fasting, to open your hearts and to offer yourselves to Jesus, will be a blessing for all humanity. It will be a step towards peace in the hearts of men and in the world. Amen."

Fr. Jozo to war orphans and sponsors: Pray, to forgive!

On 17 and 18 August 1994, in Medj. and Siroki Brijeg, the 1st spiritual meeting was held for war orphans and their sponsors (who came from Italy, Holland, Germany and America). The children were accompanied by their widowed mothers.

The two days were marked by intense prayer and moving testimonies. The children's hearts were wounded but open to receiving consolation by other hearts full of understanding and loving care.

Fr. Jozo guided the Rosary during the climb up Apparition Hill, offering words of comfort and hope to the war victims, often taking the children by the hand. Some of the children did the climb with bare feet.

At the top, standing before the Cross, Fr. Jozo said: "The Queen of Peace invites us continually to be witnesses and promoters of peace. You must forgive and pray for your persecutors. You, mother, must think that the person who killed your husband could only hear the voice of Satan in that moment, telling him: kill and destroy. You must forgive and pray for them even if it is not easy. To receive the strength to do this you must pray every day and receive the Holy Eucharist. The things of the world do not belong to you anymore. With your sacrifice, you are united to Christ. Persevere, so that your sacrifice and the persecution you underwent may bear fruits of reconciliation and peace for the whole world." Vicka also intervened and spoke about Our Lady's messages.

These meetings for war orphans and sponsors will be repeated. For information, contact Fr. Jozo's delegates: Angela and Matteo Rossi, Via delle Grazie, I-54100 MASSA, Italy. Ph: 0585-436563. M. Rossi

News from the Blessed Land

(taken from Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

* **Pray for the Pope** - Our Lady has said to Ivan who was in Belgium, and to Vicka: *Pray for the Pope, for the Bishops and the priests.* According to Vicka, the Blessed Virgin wishes to realize a plan during these next few weeks, and She invites us to get together to pray for this intention of Hers.

* **The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross** (9 Sept.) drew big crowds, as it does every year. The big cross in Medjugorje was erected in 1933, and without doubt, its presence is meaningful to the events happening here, and to Our Lady who desired remaining next to the Cross of Her Jesus and Her people in this time of passion.

* **The month of the Rosary** has brought numerous pilgrims to Medj. from all parts of the world, who are taking advantage of the mild climate to come and pray on the hills.

* **Fr. Slavko** took the message to Poland and Germany. He has now left for Boston to celebrate the marriage of Ivan and Laureen (23 October). Best wishes for a holy family in the year of the family! Fr. Slavko will then leave for South America.

* **Vicka** said no to the many invitations received. She preferred remaining in Medj. to greet the pilgrims. The only trip she has planned is the one to Boston for Ivan's wedding, her father's health permitting.

* **Michele**, Marija and Paolo's little baby boy, was baptised on 25 Sept. by Fr. Slavko.

Hearts of distant are opening

* It was a **Protestant doctor** this time to have confirmed the events in Medj. He came to Medj. to see by himself what the apparitions were about - it seemed so strange to him. Like many Protestants, he thought the Marian cult was an obstacle on the way to Jesus. He arrived with uncertain feelings, but as soon as he neared the church, Jesus spoke to his heart and the doctor began crying like a child. The day after he could "hear" Jesus' voice telling him: *I asked my Mother to come here. She draws all the peoples here and leads them to me. All generations will call Her blessed.* After this, Mary became as a trampoline for him to get to Jesus.

* **A Swiss Pastor** who arrived in Medj. 5 days ago, told me: "There is nothing in my theology that opposes Mary's apparitions. Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus on the Tabor, so why couldn't the Mother of Jesus appear?" What the Protestants like the most is that Mary has repeatedly said, and often while crying: *You have forgotten the Bible!* If only the Catholics would listen to Her!

* In France, a **student in pharmaceuticals**, was refused a diploma because he had AIDS. Rejected by many because he was homosexual, he ended up taking a large dose of alcohol to then throw himself off a bridge. He awoke in hospital and saw before him a figure of a woman which at first frightened him, but later attracted and comforted him. "Maybe she's a saint," he told himself, in his religious ignorance. He left the hospital a weakened person - his lymphatic and nervous systems were destroyed. Time passed, and who knows how, he ended up in Medj., even though his doctors advised against it.

Once in Medj., he was surprised to see a statue in a shop - and then understood that the woman he saw in the hospital was the Madonna of Medj. He made the decision to never abandon Her from then on. When he returned home, his doctors were surprised, for after a medical exam he was found to still have the disease, but all symptoms had disappeared and his nervous and lymphatic systems were healthy.

Crowds pray with Fr. Jozo

From 29 Sept. to 5 Oct. Fr. Jozo visited various towns in Italy. The meetings were attended by many people who met to pray for life and peace.

We attended the one held on the 29th September. There were about 1500 people present. After the Rosary and Holy Mass, which was concelebrated by the monks from the parish, Fr. Jozo transmitted to us with the power of the Spirit the teachings of the Queen of Peace. Fr. Jozo urged us to love Crucified Christ, because the sign of love of the cross can be seen too little these days.

"Remaining before Crucified Christ means learning to forgive, for it was on the Cross that Jesus forgave his enemies. Our Lady desires putting us before the Cross, which is the only sign of salvation and love. If I do not love Jesus Who died for me how can I know His Word, or live the Eucharist? Everything is false if you are unable to love your enemies: *He who does not love his brother whom he sees, cannot love God whom he has never seen* (1 Jn 4).

Our Lady taught Jesus to accept the Cross. She does not take the cross from us, but She teaches us to love it and to bear it. From Jesus' Cross comes the Light that enlightens our heart."

During Mass his homily was directed particularly to families: "Joy, love, peace and light can be found in the Eucharist. Jesus tells

us: *'eat and drink in abundance, for you cannot live without Me.'*"

Mary asks us to **live the Eucharist**, to put it before everything else. She cries because we do not want to live it, we escape from it.

Why is it that the discotheques today are more crowded than the Church? Our Lady tells us that this happens because families don't pray, thus, faith cannot be born in the hearts of its members, nor can love for Eucharistic Christ be born in their hearts. When parents live out Christian values, these values become desires in the hearts of the children, because grace is always stronger than sin.

We must become bread that is offered, that nourishes, bread of love. The example that comes from the Cross is one of offering our life for others. If as a parent you desire doing something for your children, then renew yourself, renew the presence of the Eucharist in you.

Our Lady repeatedly asks us to also hold the **Rosary** in our hands, similar to the ten wise girls (cf. Mt 25) waiting for the Groom with lamps in their hands so as not to remain in the dark and thereby not be able to recognize the Groom on his arrival. Each *Hail Mary* is like a drop of oil that falls into our lamps, and we will not be in the dark if our prayer will be constant, for it will be our guide."

»» from pg. 1: sad moments that await us.

Our Lady wants us to be a lovely bouquet to present to God the Most Holy, for having called us to *take our place among the saints* (1 Co 1:2). A bouquet, however, is made up of many flowers. We cannot tend towards sanctity as individuals. We must be in communion with our brothers and sisters, our church and our community, with those who pursue the same scope, so that we may advance together and be presented together: *vis unita fit fortior!* (unity is strength).

Take the Saints as your models - Many Christians these days desire moving onto the "new." With this attitude, the Saints can be considered old hat. Man needs inspiration from those who have already fulfilled the Gospel in concrete, human situations. Man doesn't know what to do with vague ideals and deceptive spontaneities. The first Christian generation was inspired by the Apostles, by the faith of the martyrs, the holiness of the confessors of the faith and by the virgins, by the examples of the desert fathers and by the monks. The Saints of all times became such because they drew from the experience and the writings of these. So let us begin reading the Saints' autobiographies and other testimonies; let us visit their sanctuaries and their tombs, just as the first Christians used to do.

Our Lady shows us a way that has been neglected under the influence of this easy-going generation that tends to reject the past. History, though, is our teacher, it shows us how to live, and in the same way the Saints show us how to be sanctified. The Church teaches us all these things, so it is not by chance that she chose them to be inspiration for us. Not only do they serve as inspiration, but they also intercede before God for us and for all men. When we love, honour and celebrate for the Saints, we obtain the fruits. Let us heed Our Lady's advice. *Fr. A.*

The Holy Father has granted Plenary Indulgence under the usual conditions for those who shall go on pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto during the year of the Centenary celebrations from 9.12.94 - 10.12.95.

Can Satan impede God's plans?

People often ask this question, especially since Our Lady of Medjugorje has often said: *Satan wants to impede my plans ... Satan is strong and wants to annul God's plans.*

Lately, we must admit, we were all greatly disappointed by the cancellation of the Pope's voyage to Sarajevo. We fully understand his reasons: the Holy Father did not wish to expose the people that would have gathered to hear him to the danger of an armed attack. We must also consider what may have happened had they panicked in such an event. Nonetheless, we were disappointed, very much so. First of all, the Pope himself was disappointed; this voyage of peace meant so much to him. Then the peoples who were expecting him were disappointed. We must also admit that our hope had been nourished by Our Lady's message of 25 August '94 where Our Lady said She was praying with us for: *"the gift of the presence of my beloved son in your homeland."* She also said: *"I pray and intercede before my Son Jesus, that the dream had by your fathers may be realized."* (If the fathers' dream refers to the Croats, then it was realized with the Pope's voyage to Zagreb. Editor's note)

Is it possible that Mary's prayer, united to ours, had no effect? Is it possible that Her intercession went unheard? I believe the answer comes from reading on in that same message: *"Satan is strong and wishes to destroy the hope..."* Well, what can Satan do after all? There are two limits to the devil's power, very precise limits. The first is imposed by the will of God, who lets no one guide history, even though this is done while respecting the freedom He gave to each of us. The second is made up of man's consent. Let it be clear that Satan can do nothing to man if man is opposed to him. If Satan is so strong today it is because men give him their consent, because they listen to his voice, as our forefathers did.

To make it clearer, I shall give you some examples. When I sin, I break God's will over me, and for the devil this is a victory. It is a victory, though, obtained through my fault, because I consented to an act that was contrary to the divine will. Even in the great historical events the same thing happens. Think of the wars, the persecution against Christians, the genocides, the mass atrocities done by Hitler, Stalin, Mao...

It has always been because of human consent that the devil has had the upper hand over God's will, which is a *will of peace, not affliction* (Jer 29:11) - but God does not intervene, He waits. Like in the parable of the weed growing with the wheat, God awaits the time of harvest, and He gives to each person according to what he earned. Is this, though, a defeat for God's plans? No, it is the way in which His plans are realized, with respect for free will. Even when it seems that the devil is winning, we must remember that the devil always is the loser.

The best example comes from Jesus' sacrifice. There is no doubt that the devil used all his power to get Christ crucified - he obtained the consent of Judah, of the Sanhedrin, of Pilate... And then what? That which he believed was a victory in his favour, turned out to be a defeat. God's plans

Parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux soon to be made saints

Married couples as saints who sanctified themselves together with their children is not a novelty to the Church. Among the oldest known couples we remember Mario and Martha with their children Audiface and Abacum who were all martyred in Rome in 270 dc, and the Greek couple, Senofonte and Maria with their children John and Arcadio who were all confessors (6th century). We also have St Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea and doctor of the Church. Six members of his family are venerated as saints: his paternal grandmother Macrina, his parents Basil and Emilia, his elder sister Macrina, and his brothers Gregory and Peter who became bishops. Many also reached levels of sanctity just by carrying out their family duties, such as St Monica the mother of St Augustine and St Silvia the mother of St Gregory the Great.

This brings us to our present day. **Louis and Zélie Martin**, the parents of St Therese of the Child Jesus, are about to be sanctified. The decree was signed by John Paul II on the 26th March 1994.

Louis and Zélie Martin married on the 13th July 1858 and had 9 children. Though four of them died very young, the faith of Louis and Zélie remained strong and continued to grow. The other five, Marie, Pauline, Leonie, Celine and Therese, grew up in a prayerful and hard working family - Louis was a watchmaker, Zélie a lacemaker. The Martin family were renowned in all of Alençon for their generosity and many works of charity.

Zélie loved children "to the point of folly" - "they are God's blessings" - which is why she educated her daughters to be humbly and heroically subjected to the will of God, knowing that God loved them and desired being loved by them. Louis and Zélie both firm believers and totally trusting in God, were careful to do only that which was pleasing to God. This can also be seen in Therese's *Little Way*.

Zélie nourished her soul with the writings of St Francis of Sales and was inspired by the gentleness of this saint. She joined the Third Order. On his part, Louis was careful to be obedient to God in the family, at work and in the Brotherhood of which he was part. In Alençon he was known as the "Patriarch." He was a strong-minded man, but at the same time he could be affectionate and considerate. In the light of these examples, the religious vocation matured in all five daughters. They were not to enter the convent, though, until after the death of their mother who died at the age of 46. Zélie's

fortheworld's history (the history of salvation) are always realized. The ways taken to get there, though, are not the ones we think they are (*My ways are not your ways*, the Bible warns us - Is 55:8). God's plan is done while still respecting the freedom He gave us. We are the only ones responsible when we make God's plan fail in us. It is His will that *everyone be saved, that no one perish* (1 Tm 2:4). Therefore, I, and no one else, will have to pay the consequences, even if God's plan, which began with creation, will infallibly be realized.

Fr. G. Amorth

great trust in God helped her to accept her sufferings and offer Him her worry for her children, knowing that He would take care of them.

Louis and his daughters agreed to move to Lisieux to be close to the girls' aunt and uncle and their family. In their new home, called Les Buissonnets, Louis was an attentive father, dedicating his life to the girls and watching over their education. Though it sorrowed him, he gave his blessing to the two eldest girls when they decided to enter the Carmel of Lisieux. The other three would also make the same decision. In exchange God granted him great spiritual joy for having given over his most precious belongings. Louis saw it as the realization of the desire both he and Zélie had to enter religious life.

It cost him a great deal though when Therese, his little "Queen," decided to enter the convent. Therese herself describes his father's reaction: "When I told him I wanted to enter Carmel, he mixed his tears with mine, but he didn't say anything to dissuade me from entering. He simply objected that I was so young, but I quickly convinced him of my sincerity and urgency. He said how God was doing him 'a great honour' asking his children of him in this way." During a pilgrimage to Rome, when Therese decided to ask for the Pope's permission to enter Carmel (she was only 15), Louis consented.

Another great trial had been reserved by God for Therese's father: a physical and mental disorder. Though he had regained his peace after two crises he was to stay in the asylum of Caen for nearly three years. To a doctor he said: "I have always been accustomed to commanding and I see myself reduced to obeying, it is hard, but I know why God has given me this trial: I have never had humiliation in my life, I needed it." Therese had been in the Carmel 4 years when her father returned to Les Buissonnets. It was here that he died, after a long and painful decline. On the 28th July 1894, Louis reached Zélie in heaven. Therese died 3 years later of tuberculosis.

The saintly lives of Louis and Zélie was the seed that matured into fruits of holiness in their daughters, particularly in Therese. The official declaration regarding their saintliness is all the more effective in this year dedicated to the family. The example they leave us is the testimony that God calls us to holiness wherever we are; and that house, work, children, etc. do not impede us from reaching holiness, but can assist us as long as God occupies first place in our lives. *From the tree you will recognize the fruit*, Jesus tells us, but such extraordinary fruits also tell us that the tree too is extraordinarily vital. * *

* **The Court of Appeal** in Rome, on the 4th July 1994, declared null the proceedings against **Bishop Paul Hnilica** which began on 23 March 1993 for allegedly having received stolen goods. We rejoice at the news of the acquittal of this honest and disinterested bishop. The lie, the weapon used most to condemn innocence, has been unmasked.

Also **Renato Baron** was acquitted by the Magistrates' Court of Schio on 7 Oct. He had been accused of embezzlement. Five years of suspicion, controversy and legal quibble have thus come to an end. Renato affronted it all with immense patience and dignity.

Readers Write

Letterschosenfromthehundredsreceived:

* Readers of **Echo in Albanese** wrote from Shkodër, Tirana and Durrëss. One "group of faithful" said: "Echo in Albanese is a wonderful gift for we who have thirsted for so long for the Word of God. Our Lady's messages are a light that guides our hearts. They help us support the sufferings and to strengthen the newly born faith of our people. Thank you." The translator of the Albanese edition, Robert Prendushi, has received a computer from us to help him in his work. Providence is always ready to help those of good will.

* **From the Pacific - Hans Schjang and Christiana Acoba** distribute 300 copies of English Echo in Hawaii. They tell us: "Many readers call us to express their satisfaction, and to urge us to keep up the divine and blessed work for Mary."

* **From Kathmandu in Nepal**, Chirendra Satyal writes: "(...) Our small Catholic community (4,000 out of a population of 20,000) is growing. We had our annual Marian procession on May 31st. The first Fridays are also celebrated with a night-long vigil. Jesuit Father Antony Sharma, the head of the Catholic Church of Nepal, told me to 'thank you for the copies of Echo.' Our church now has its first photocopier, which we can use to make more copies of Echo." Chirendra then told us about a group of Italian mountain climbers who "tried to climb Mt Everest in May with a statue of Our Lady which they wanted to place on top. Because their leader died above the 5,000 metre level, the group gave up the climb and donated the statue to the Catholic Church in Kathmandu."

* **From Skopje** in Macedonia, Sr. Joselette wrote to thank us for the copies of Echo which she distributes to people who have never heard about Medjugorje. Macedonia has only just gained independence from Yugoslavia.

* **From Perth, Australia**: "I thank you so much for 'Echo.' For months I had been feeling dry and unable to pray. Today I received the Echo (113) and so much liked your article on 'religious fetishes.' It made me realize how I too had burdened myself with too many prayer formulas." (C. Watts)

* **From Aberdeen**, Australia: "Your bulletin is my life and my well spring, it has kept me alive and not allowed me to perish in the face of all the trials I have gone through over the last few years..." (Jennifer)

* **From Münster** in Germany, Sr. Hadburg said she "joyfully receives Echo each month. In it I perceive the universal action of God for our times. I pray that it may continue."

* **From Uganda** - "Now I understand that your bulletin is the means used by Mary to communicate with me. I have no doubt: Echo is Her voice." (Joseph Kassani)

SOLIDARITY

We are our brothers' keepers!

People are donating less but the need for food, medical and other supplies is still great. Let us continue giving them our support. Contact your nearest Medj. or Caritas centre. Donations may be sent to us for this purpose, if you indicate who the money is for. Send cheques to: Eco di Medj., C.P. 149, I-46100 Mantova, Italy.

* **Hospital of Mostar** - Thanks to donations received by friends of Medj., the hospital was able to buy important equipment. They send their thanks.

ECHO IS FREE - it lives on your donations. Personal cheques accepted. Please forward to Eco di Medj., Casella Postale 149, I-46100 Mantova, Italy. If you wish to communicate with us, **please forward your mail** to Echo of Medjugorje, Casella Postale 27, I-31030 Bessica (TV), Italy. Ph/Fax: 0423-470331

Bus service from Trieste to Medj. continues. Departure 6 pm daily from bus station (adjacent to train station). Return 6 pm daily from Medj. Return price Lit. 86,200 Ph. bus station Trieste: 040-360300 * *

Spiritual Retreats

Craig Lodge (in Scotland), is a Family House of Prayer. The house is set in 7 acres of beautiful woods and gardens. It offers a unique opportunity to step aside from the noise and rush of everyday living and to join in the daily prayer life of the house and resident Youth Community. There are many conducted weekends with emphasis on Adoration. Prayer groups and individuals are welcome. For information contact Calum and Mary Anne MacFarlane-Barrow, Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll PA33 1AR, Scotland.

* **"A Heavenly Journey"** by Veralyn R. Alpha - a fictional story based on historical and biblical facts. Available from: The Medjugorje Appeal, Unit J Lambs Bus. Park, Tilburstow Hill Rd, South Godstone, Surrey RH9 8JZ, England.

The White Army (int'l movement): *the message of Fatima to the children of the world.* It is an invitation to families and to their children to heed the Fatima requests. Padre Pio said: "The children with the rosary in their hands shall save the world." Usually priests are involved because they bless the children, say a Holy Mass for them, bring the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration and might say the Rosary with them. For more information, contact: The White Army, C.P. 135, I-67100 L'Aquila, Italy.

ECHO IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Italian: Eco di Medj., C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **English:** Echo of Medj., Cas.Post. 27, I-31030 Bessica (TV), Italy - ph/fx: 0423-470331. **French:** Echo de Medjugorje, 18 Allée Thévenot, F-39100 Dole, France. **German:** Echo aus Medj., C.P. 149, I-46100 Mantova, Italy. Fax 0376-245075 **Spanish:** Roger Watson, c/o Antonucci, Via Verrotti 1, I-47100 Aquila, Italy. **Catalan:** Amics de Medj., c.Carme 11 baixos, E-08700 Igualada-Catalonia, Spain. **Portuguese:** a) Gilberto Correia, rua de Brito 24, 4915 Vila Praia de Ancora, (ph.911181), Portugal; b) Servos da Rainha, Caixa p. 02576, 70279-970 Brasília DF, Brazil. **Dutch:** Int. Medj. Comité afd. Nederland-Belgie, Misericordeplein 12C, NL-6211 XK Maastricht, Holland. **Polish:** Czesława Mirkiewicz, ul.Ign.Krasickiego 21a/3, PL 30-515 Krakow-Podgorze, Poland. **Russian:** Dom Marii, Plotnikov 3, 121003 Moscow, Russian Federation - fax 007095-2415057. **Hungarian:** Fratemitas, 1399 Budapest, p.f. 701/85 Hungary - fax 36-11329001. **Romanian:** Ecou din Medj., P.O.B. 41-132, Bucharest, Romania; **Albanese:** Jehona e Medjugorje, L.1 p.10, LAC, Albania *Reduced editions:* **Greek:** Soeur Despina de la St Croix, 69 Rue Epirou, Agia Paraskave, 15341 Athens, Greece. **Czech:** Medzugorské ozveny, Ilbenstädter, Str.6, D-60385 Frankfurt, Germany. **Distributors:** USA: Peter Miller, POB 2720-230, Huntington Beach CA 92647 - ph. 714-374 0530, fax 374 9490. Mrs. Joanne Clark, 17503 Applewood Ln, Rockville, MD 20855. **Canada:** Giuseppe Bozzo, 8324 Nicolas Leblanc, Montreal Que H1E 3W5 - ph. 648-3420. **Spain:** José L. Lopez de S. Roman, Ap.246, Palencia, Spain. **Australia** (all editions): Medjugorje Sentinel, P.O.B. 746, Pennant Hills NSW 2120 - fax 02-9807806.

Echo turns 10

On 21 November Echo turned 10 years old. We thank God for this work that spreads Mary's voice in the more than 700,000 copies, of which 385,000 are in Italian; the rest covers the 13 foreign editions. To God we offer the sacrifices of those who bear the weight of the various editions and who write to tell us how they too are hindered in their work.

The Friends of Medj. who produce **Echo in Catalan**, which quality-wise is the best among those not published by us, write: "We pray that Echo may continue for it is nourishment that keeps alive the life which began in Medj. We work in difficult conditions. We only have one person for the translating, one (with health problems) for the mailing who is helped by a 90 year-old man and some others who can help only occasionally. So far the Lord has assured us the minimum needed for this to continue, and I'm sure He always will."

It is a similar situation for the **Polish edition**. All the weight is borne by Martha who is seriously ill. It truly is a case of: *my power is at its best in weakness* (2 Co 12:9).

Fr. Pedro A. Bach is the head of the Servos da Rainha group which produces the **Brazilian Echo** (150,000 copies). He writes: "Since there was no one to help Reinaldo (the translator), he decided to resign from his job last year (where he had been in charge of a department in the central Bank for the last 16 years) to dedicate himself totally to Our Lady's cause. The Echo has been a fundamental element in the communication of the Medj. graces to this population, and requests continue to come in. We have distributors in every state - and hundreds of groups for non-stop Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, plus others who recite the Rosary, etc."

From **Budapest**, Elisabeth Varga continues to edit the beautiful, complete edition in Hungarian, though her health is precarious, which also creates problems with her job as a teacher.

The **German** edition is done in Bolzano (N. Italy), and God knows how difficult it is for our friend Hermann to get the translations done. He loses hours of his sleep, so precious for his busy life as a travelling salesman. We ask God to **find us a person whose mother tongue is German**, who is spiritually mature and who is also familiar with computers, to give Hermann a hand. At the moment Sr. M. Grazia from the Oasis of Peace community is helping out, but most of her time is divided between community life and university studies.

Of course we cannot forget the many **distributors** all over the world. They work with such zeal and dedication, all for the cause of Mary. They will be abundantly rewarded.

New year, new heading: The Echo of Mary Queen of Peace. We think this will better suit Mary's mission for today's world, which echoes that of Jesus: *I give you my peace ... a peace which is greater than all intelligence.* Besides, Medjugorje has spread out to cover the ends of the earth and this grace is not limited to places of apparitions, but wherever the fire of love and peace is lit up, wherever children "open their hearts to Her message" which is: *Peace be to you!*

It is an honour for us all to serve Mary, to help Her fulfil Her plans through letting Her message reach so many people who anxiously await it as their indispensable bread.

With Mary and all the Saints, we bless you.