

Our Lady's message of 25 Feb. 1995:

Dear children, Today I invite you to become missionaries of the messages that I give you here - through this place which is dear to me.

God has permitted me to remain with you for so long; so, my dear children, I invite you to live the message I give you, [to live them] with love and transmit them to the whole world so that a river of love may flow among the people who are filled with hate, who have no peace. I invite you, dear children, to become peace where there is no peace, to become light where there is darkness, so that each heart may accept the light and the way of salvation.

Thank you for responding to my call.

**Be peace and light
to become missionaries
of what we have heard and seen**

In the 13 years of her apparitions in Medj. the Queen of Peace has always made us understand that we should not limit ourselves to one place, but create and nourish a flame that radiates over the entire Church and all men. She has not before, though, mentioned the word **missionary** which is a strictly evangelical term: *go out to the whole world, proclaim the good news to all creation* (Mk 16:15). At the same time the present Pope has begun talking about a new evangelization.

A true missionary is also a witness, that is, totally involved in what he proclaims. He himself lives what he transmits, which is Jesus, His Gospel and God's Kingdom. Thousands of people can by now say they arrived in Medjugorje with hearts that were hard, wicked, desolate or wounded, to have found resurrection and life which healed and renewed them thanks to Mary's intercession. From that moment on they were reborn and became children of God and Mary. In the depths of their hearts was a *spring of water, welling up to eternal life* (Jn 4:14), they changed and were able to *draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts* (Lk 6:45) and they became missionaries, bearers of light, hope, love and peace for all.

It is not a question of distributing handbills as some sects do, but one of keeping the gift we received, and making it grow to bear fruit, so that we may become the **light of the world, to be peace where there is none**, to live God's love.

The rain falls; it wets the earth and makes it fertile without being forceful. The sun rays break through the darkness and give light, without contaminating. The immaculate and sacrificial lamb lights up all of new Jerusalem. From the cross Jesus draws everyone to him. A person who offers himself, who is totally open to the divine light, attracts benefits for all mankind. *Fr. Remo*

Why does Our Lady say: **the messages**

that I give you here, through this place which is dear to me? The reason is that the messages are not just words, but also the life that has developed in Medjugorje. Mary's messages are vocal and written so they may be spread to the world, but they spread through those who have converted and been sanctified through Her maternal work of education which we see blossom in people and works. The messages are everything that the word Medjugorje evokes. Those who contest Medjugorje know this well since the sound of it evokes thoughts of conversion, prayer and holiness: it is this that they do not want to hear.

Our Lady admits, certainly with joy, that it is **God who permits her to remain so long with us**. This means that she asked for and received this grace for our own good. If the sowing has lasted so long and the land has become so fertile, then Mary now desires that *the Word/Life be spread so as to bear fruit all over the world: so I am inviting you to live my messages with love and to transmit them to the whole world*. The messages are transmitted to the world when they lovingly become part of our lives.

It is the only way: transmit the messages with our lives. We must learn peace to the point of becoming children of the peace, and peace itself - and *children of the light* Jesus says: *May your light shine before men so they see your good works*.

Rather than words, people accept others who live peace to the point of becoming witnesses of the light. People desire not those who talk about light, but the light itself. There are enough people transmitting the messages; the world needs true witnesses.

If certain things that Our Lady asked of the visionaries, the organizers, the parishioners and the pilgrims had been accepted, the Medjugorje testimony would have spread far wider and been much more effective. It would have been **a river of love and peace flowing among the people who are full of hate and who have no peace** (cf. Is 48:18), even among the peoples close to Medj. who suffer the effects of hate and war. How many "blind" people would have seen the eyes of their **hearts light up on the way of salvation** if those who should have been their guides had been *children of the light and not blind leading the blind!*

Everything is still possible for Mary, though, and we *can* become light and peace for the whole world. * *

I have my Mission - "God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. **I have my mission** - I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.

I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good. I shall do his work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place *while not intending it* - if I do but keep his commandments.

Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers, he may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me - still he knows what he is about. Therefore, I will trust him." *Cardinal John Newman*

Why does our Mother cry tears of blood?

A small statue of Our Lady from Medj. cried tears of blood for five days (2-6 Feb.). The statue (see photo) belongs to a couple from Rome. It had been brought back from Medj. by their parish priest last August who went there on pilgrimage. Jessica, the couple's 5 year-old daughter, first noticed the tears: "Daddy, hurry, Our Lady's crying." They began praying. But then the crowds started arriving - some out of faith, others out of curiosity - and things became chaotic.

The **Bishop's reaction**: "Cases of presumed lachrymations are frequent, but it is rare for them to be supernatural events as in Syracuse." The **parish priest** made no comment, however, in his Sunday sermon he invited the faithful to contemplate the event to see if a message could be derived from it. **Two local doctors** carried out the first tests: the liquid is physiological! For the peace of the Gregori family the statue was removed from their garden and placed under lock and key. In the meantime the tears were examined by Professors Fiori and Ronchi from two different universities in Rome who confirmed that the **liquid is human blood**. (*Avvenire* 23-02-95) cont. page 2 »»

Women, Consecrated people, Unity of Church are Pope's concerns

Woman, rediscover your mission Take as models the great women who have preceded you

With Woman, Instrument of Peace, the Pope inaugurated the year of the woman. In the Angelus reflections he has been presenting prominent female figures who distinguished themselves in promoting peace. His desire is that every woman may discover the power placed by God in her heart and develop it for the sake of mankind. So far he has presented the figures of St Bridget of Sweden, St Catherine of Siena, St Frances Xavier Cabrini and Blessed Edith Stein.

Catherine managed to do the impossible

12 February 1995: "The secret of Catherine's exceptional personality was the inner fire that devoured her: a passion for Christ and for the Church. Her passionate words spread in all directions. They were motherly words, characterized by intrepid firmness, and persuasively sweet. Around her something happened which seemed humanly impossible. The hardness of hearts

»» from page 1

Msgr. Grillo was interviewed again by the national TV: "I was very sceptical at first, but the way things have evolved have made me think again. That Our Lady should cry tears of blood just outside Rome is a sad message. It certainly can't be for nothing."

Tears for the Church then, like Jesus' tears for Jerusalem because it had not recognized its opportunity when God offered it (Lk 19:41-44)? Or could it be for new sanhedrins plotting against Christ or His Vicar? Could it be, instead, for the consecrated souls on the day dedicated to them (2 Feb.) because they have failed to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Or is it for the persistent and ruinous refusal of His loving invitations?

M. Riccio commented: "Each apparition - or similar event - never brings anything new, but serves as a warning light, like that of a machine to say something is not working correctly. Warning lights from heaven are being sent to us; and happy are those who know how to read them! The "little" people to whom the Father reveals Himself hope that Our Lady's weeping - so near to the Dome of St Peter - will not disappear into the clouds and into the domes of the "goddess of reason."

Caution and investigations are necessary. But let's look at the context of these tears; they lead directly to the **eyes and the heart of the Mother!** With the proliferation of cases of lachrymation (17 so far are considered sure) one should look for the reason behind them; and the reason is right before our eyes: humanity is in grave danger, Satan wants its end. While his evil project continues, the tears of the Virgin will continue, and they will multiply. Precisely because Our Lady will not renounce being Mother, she will do all she can to touch and save her children who risk falling into perdition.

May we, Her children, accept these tears; they are the beating of her Heart, so graceful and scented. And may we accept them today, not tomorrow, for tomorrow is too late."

Fr.A.

melted away and everyone began once more to experience the joy of families or of entire communities where peace had been restored.

The cry with which Catherine turned to Pope Gregory XI to encourage him to be a herald of peace among Christians is well known: 'Peace, peace, peace... and no more war!' She wrote similar words to sovereigns and princes and did not hesitate to undertake difficult journeys to instil in opponents sentiments of reconciliation.

Of course, we must recognize that she was also a daughter of her time, when, justly eager to defend the holy places, she adopted the then prevailing mentality that this task could be accomplished even by recourse to fighting."

Dialogue, not excommunication or violence - "Today we ought to be grateful to the Spirit of God, who has enabled us to understand that the appropriate way to deal with problems ... is that of patient, firm and respectful dialogue. Nevertheless, Catherine's zeal remains an example of brave, strong love and an encouragement to devote our efforts to all possible strategies of constructive dialogue in order to build an increasingly stable and far-reaching peace."

The Pope is not afraid to recognize the wrong caused by positions taken by the Church in the past, such as the hearings of the Inquisition and the crusades in an effort to reconquer the Holy Land. In his Letter on the Third Millennium he said: "The sons and daughters of the Church were in good faith when at times they thought that authentic witness to the truth involved the suffocation of others' opinions," as he invited all Christians to "repent for the errors, unfaithfulness, inconsistency and delays of the past."

Consecrated life in Church is sign and witness of Christ's kingdom for all believers. At the General Audience of 8 Feb. the Holy Father continued his catechesis on this series. "The radical commitment of religious to follow Christ encourages all Christians to have a keener awareness of their own calling and to appreciate better its beauty... It is a sign which strengthens all in their service to the kingdom. The religious state manifests in a special way the transcendence of the kingdom of God and its requirements over all earthly things and the highest kind of bonds within it, bringing home to all men the immeasurable greatness of Christ's power.

Consecrated life is a sign and a witness of the world's true destiny, which goes well beyond all immediate and visible perspectives however legitimate or proper for believers called to a secular commitment.

The religious state of life bestows greater freedom from the cares of earthly existence on those who follow it and reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age... precluding our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

The evangelical counsels have an eschatological meaning: consecrated celibacy proclaims the life to come and union with Christ the Bridegroom; poverty brings treasure in heaven; the commitment to obedience opens the way to possessing the perfect freedom of God's children.

Thus, consecrated persons are symbols

and witnesses that anticipate heavenly life here on earth. They are called to witness to and spread the 'message heard from the beginning to love one another,' thus becoming pioneers of the desired civilization of love."

The Holy Father has also shown his concern for **Christian unity**. In the General Audience of 25 February he gave a reflection on this topic: 'If the vine branches are all nourished by the same sap, they are also linked to one another by reciprocal communion.' From this communion comes the need of a love without limits, that goes as far as *giving one's life for one's friends*.

On this occasion the Holy Father joyfully announced: 'The signing of a Christological Declaration with the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East... which has resolved a controversy with that Church which had lasted for over 1,500 years... A confirmation of the fact that through dialogue it is possible to clarify misunderstandings and prejudices.'

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The voice of the persecuted Church in China Pope appeals for reconciliation

"We must dry the tears and clean the wounds. With a new spirit we must bear witness and offer the fire of God's love. Let us run joyfully to the battle field of evangelization... Where there are Catholic churches or missions we must adore the Lord in the conditions as we find them. Where there are no structures, we must take as model the Holy Family and organize meetings in the families. If not even this is possible, our hearts will become temples of God..."

With these words a group of **clandestine bishops** wished to be heard by the Catholics in China ... and by those present in Manila, where some bishops from the official Church in China concelebrated with the Pope. Besides exhorting the Catholics to remain faithful to the Pope and the Church even though they suffer and are persecuted, the clandestine bishops make a question of the division in the Chinese Catholic community. They say that those who belong to the official Church (the one recognized by the government) do not belong to the Catholic Church. It is understandable that they should talk like this when they are jailed and persecuted while the others are protected by the government.

The Pope's concern is that these divided members be united. In his message of 14 January **to all the Chinese Catholics** he declares: "I am well aware of the difficulties amid which you are called to bear witness to your faith in Christ... Like a pilgrim in a foreign land, the Church presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, proclaiming the Cross and Death of the Lord until he comes... By the power of the risen Lord she is given strength to overcome patiently and lovingly the afflictions and hardships which assail her from within and without... Keep your gaze fixed on Christ, the light of the nations. Do not be afraid: he has overcome the world, he is with you always.

Your witness will be all the more eloquent if it is expressed in words and deeds of love. Jesus said: *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*. Love among yourselves, first of all,

but love also for all your Chinese brothers and sisters: a love which consists of understanding, respect, forbearance, **forgiveness and reconciliation within the Christian community**...

Genuine love, however, cannot be separated from truth... Unity is not the result of human policies or hidden and mysterious intentions, but from conversion of the heart and sincere acceptance of the unchanging principles laid down by Christ for his Church, particularly the **communion of all the parts of the Church with her visible foundation: Peter**... and with his Successor. How many testimonies of faith and messages of fidelity I have received from communities throughout China!... I earnestly invite you all to seek paths which draw their light and inspiration from the Truth himself: Jesus Christ."

Communion with the Church of Rome has been confirmed also by many bishops and priests of the official Church. These have professed their fidelity to the Pope, and many of them have already been legitimized by the Holy See. (*Avvenire*, 15/01 - 8/02)

Sights of a village in China - A number of helpers belonging to the "Help to the Church in Need" association recently travelled from Beijing to Shanghai on a visit to various Catholic groups. They tell: "...The village we are in has no running water and no electricity. The single-roomed houses are made of mud or brick. A farmer earns about 5 yuan per day (less than \$1). Before dawn there were already more than 500 faithful of all ages in the church - in their worn-out clothes; and how they stayed on their knees in prayer, mindless of time! Hundreds of faithful go to Mass every day, whatever the hour, to nourish their faith.

The situation of the Catholics in China varies from place to place. The division is deeper in the cities. It is not so obvious elsewhere. There are cases of bishops and priests from the official Church who lovingly offer help to the priests in the "unofficial" Church living in extreme poverty. The number of Catholics in China is estimated at 12 million (some say 5-6) and their number grows by 50-60,000 per year. The majority of the 123 bishops and the priests have spent at least ten years in prison. There are 1,400 priests; 550 of these were ordained after 1980, 70 were ordained last year. The Rector of a "non-official" seminary told us: 'Before we accept a candidate to priesthood we ask him if he is prepared to go to jail. In the seminary - officially it's a hospital - there are more than 1,000 young men preparing themselves for priesthood. Other seminarists live (as clandestines) in nearby warehouses or factories.'

(From *Eco dell'Amore*, Dec. 1994)

"A large basilica in China has been dedicated to Mary Queen of Peace. It is in Tonglu close to Baoding on the site of a shrine that had been destroyed during the war with the Japanese. It was built thanks to 6,000 Chinese Catholics who worked without pay. It was inaugurated in 1992 but not completed till 1994. As a sign of communion it also received the Pope's blessing. May this be a sign of hope towards reconciliation for the martyred Church of China."

(Fr. Inforcina, S.J.)

LETTER FOR LENT 1995

Renew your Baptism with your Offering How Children teach to offer selves till death

Peace to you sister, peace to you brother!

It is during Lent that catechumens prepare themselves for baptism. They die to themselves to rise again in Christ. The drama of death and resurrection is relived in them. You know this. You have consciously decided to take this way - not only so you will rise again but so the face of the earth may be renewed and every man is saved. Let us walk along this way together!

This time, for our reflection, we will follow the **example of John Paul II** in his recent **Letter to Children**. The Pope has placed his hope in them and he invites the adults to become like them so they may better understand and live the Gospel. Yes, the child in you is still there, that child of God born at the time of your baptism, with all the grace he received for eternal life. There you will also find your call to offer yourself. To help you discover that child, I shall present to you some children who offered themselves to God. The citations are from Daniel Ange's book on such children.

Pray unceasingly in your offer to God!

- Pray with inner certainty till you defeat the evil and dissipate the darkness in and around you. **Hermann** is our example. His father was without work. When Hermann was seven he offered his life to God. He served at Mass every morning at 5.30 and prayed: "Lord, I offer myself completely to you. Bless my father and mother and help them find work..." He began with novenas. Once his father protested: "Oh Hermann, what good is all this prayer? The more we pray, the less the Lord listens to us." Hermann was not perturbed, but replied quietly and surely: "Prayer acquires worth in perseverance." He persevered till he had prayed 25 novenas. His father found a job. Like St Monica who persevered in her prayer so her son Augustine would convert, Hermann persevered in his offering to his last breath. He died at the age of 11. What a great task lies ahead of you!

Offer yourselves through Mary! - Also little **Anne** offered herself to God and her earthly offering ended at the age of 11. She did not take a degree in theology, nor did anyone explain to her about the mystic and contemplative life, yet she fully understood Mary's role in this. Anne said: "I wish to donate all my sacrifices to Mary because in heaven she donates them to Jesus. Before doing anything one must invoke the Virgin and pray to her. When Jesus comes into our hearts we must ask her to keep him." Her desire was: "to cry with Jesus at the foot of the cross... because He is not loved enough!" When she heard of sinners her love became active: "My God, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. Make them become good!" You have many occasions where your offering can become *live, holy and pleasing to God!* (cf. Rom 12:1-2)

Surrender yourselves to God! - Amidst the greatest difficulties He will show himself and make known His plans to you. Do not be worried. The answers are not found in human reasoning and counselling, but in the

depth [of your heart] where only God creates impulses and gives the answers. If you remain receptive and obedient to His voice you will be free of all types of slavery that are choking your life. This time, **Christine** will explain how. Christine's earthly offering ended at the age of twelve. Her whole body was badly burnt. In hospital the doctor didn't know how to tell her that he'd have to amputate both her legs in an effort to save her. It was Christine who told the doctor: "You know I slept a little and dreamt that I was running with child Jesus. He asked me: 'Will you give me one of your legs?' I told him: 'Not one but both.' They have to operate on me again, don't they?"

The doctor looked at her with admiration as she said: "Don't worry, our Lord suffered much more than this." When asked if she preferred to remain with her family or go to heaven, she replied: "I am with Him here and I shall be with Him in heaven; for me it's the same. All I want is to do His will."

How free was her soul in accepting God and his will. How easy it is to be free when you are totally surrendered to God!

Be light that drives away obscurity of unhappiness!

- The earth is full of the darkness of unhappiness. It shows on people's faces, in their speech and their efforts to escape from life which end up in acts of violence. Some try to explain the reason for suffering and evil, to give it a sense, but they cannot! **Esther** united her suffering to the Divine Love. Both the cause and the purpose of her suffering was evident. Once she said: "Mummy, when I suffer I become a little girl again and call out to you and Daddy. I don't call Jesus because he would take away the pain. He gave it to me so that's the way it should be. At times the pain is too much to bear so I call on Him, but then I ask Him to forgive me and tell Him not to pay me any heed. I am happy to suffer because in doing so I take away some of the thorns in His crown."

She told her father: "The first time I had an X-ray you knew it would come to this, didn't you? That's why you cried. But now you should be happy for there is much more serenity in our family; we are closer together. We have to thank God because this is a special grace. He chose our family for this suffering - it is a sign that He loves us..." Esther died at 15. In your life, are trials and problems a tragedy, or have you discovered God's Love?

The answer to the questions concerning suffering and evil is this: **in suffering and sorrow manifest God's live love and unite it to the Eternal Love**. Make it so God's Love in you is alive and omnipotent... *light to illumine the people and the glory of his people, Israel*.

Free all the prisoners! - You suffer for the injustice and the offences received by you and those around you, and you can't forgive. You don't know how to free yourself of the negative feelings... Free all the people you have imprisoned with your negative feelings *by reacting*. Free them in yourself and send them with love to the Eternal Love. Be generous when you offer yourself so that the prisoners of evil may be freed for the sake of good. That way you will free the world from the power of hell; you will heal and save souls. **Roland** will explain this to you. He was 17 on the 27th October 1978 when

his step-father killed him, his mother and a younger brother. Once, before this happened, Roland asked his spiritual director to tell him about Jesus' descent down to the dead. Roland later explained why this episode interested him: "I too, would like to descend down to the dead with Jesus to free the prisoners and open the door of heaven and let them all in. Walking on the moon or making atomic bombs is nothing compared to the greatness of Jesus who goes to such lengths to search for a brother." His friends laughed at this, but Roland replied: "I laughed at first too, but now I understand." Try to make this liberating force yours!

Bear fruit! - Hermann (we spoke about him already) concluded his offering in triumph over death. On his death-bed he repeated Jesus' words over and over again: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you... and you shall be full of joy.* Life can triumph like this in you too, and carry away sicknesses, suffering and even death. In a person totally surrendered to God the fruit of the Spirit is manifested and that person testifies that life triumphs over death. As Jesus said: *It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and then you will be my disciples.* Bear much fruit!

Live in continuous conversation! - **Jacqueline** entrusted her secrets to a priest. She offered herself to Jesus when she was ten. From her writings: "I have given myself to my Beloved in good and in ill. I have come to realize that despite the battles and the sacrifices, I shall be His at 20 as I am now at 10..." On another occasion she explained to the priest how she is enclosed within the "cage" of Jesus' heart and how leaving it would be like dying. She prayed to her Beloved to keep her in his Heart...

Though you are an adult you must return to the "cage" of Jesus' Heart. Learn from Him how we can be in the Father's Heart at every trial, even when on the cross. We live when we take refuge in Him. Outside is death, suffering, worldly decadence! Take refuge in Jesus' heart and generate life to the world!

Renew your Baptism! - The foundation of your call to this offering is found in your baptism. One who offers himself tends to fully realize his baptism. **Clare** offered herself to God in her sickness and concluded her earthly offering at 21. When she was five she prepared herself for her first confession, carefully searching her conscience as she read the list of sins in her little prayer booklet. She said: "I do not understand so I do not know if I have committed these sins. Explain them to me so I never will. I would not like to hurt Jesus." How enlightened she was!

Allow this same light to shine in you so the world can see. The renewal of your baptism should express the sacrament's triple image: "baptism with water," "baptism of desire" and "baptism of blood." You were baptized with water; renew your baptism of desire; and let this be as a non-stop prayer, as St Paul says: *kill everything in you that belongs to earthly life... you who are God's chosen race, his saints, be clothed in sincere compassion... say and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father!* (cf. Col 3:5-17).

The more your desire burns like a flame, the more you will sacrifice your ego and offer yourself to God. Spiritual martyrdom is necessary for you to burn yourself out and

free that pure love that raises you to God.

Offering the sin in you is not enough. You have to offer all that impedes the light from shining in all its purity. St Peter suggests: *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light* (cf. 1Pt 2:9). Manifests God's life to the world!

Learn from the children! - The above are not tragic stories. The children are the living image of God-Man, chosen for their innocence. What we have before us are people who fully realized their vocations. Our young "heroes" are not an idealized form of man, but a sound affirmation of maturity. Some may think they are rare cases of "heroism," that only few reach such heights, but in truth, they are examples of every-day life. Every day you come across sickness, injustice, affliction, sadness, death... and you cannot escape from this reality. But what sense do you give it all? Which road leads to life? I see that a life offered to God through Mary Immaculate becomes a new life. This is my testimony. A brother who lives this offering wrote to say: "Father, you say this is an invitation for few, and I insist that it is for all Christians. It is for few only because not many respond." And he is right! So here are some indications for your next step:

- **May your prayer** be your strongest activity. Connect all your thoughts, desires, words and works to your Creator. Sacrifice all the idols of the adult man: ideas, desires, plans - all that is fruit of a selfish heart. Prayer opens the way for you to manifest God's pure love. It should not be burdened by many vocal prayers, but made live, light, fluent. In a single thrust you find yourself contemplating the pure Essence of God. This prayer, united to Jesus' Love, reaches the depths of evil, it remains pure and ardent, and continues to love the Father in every creature. In this way, one prayer reaches the depths, the heights and the breadths of the universe. It is unceasing, alive, simple...

- No one can explain **this call** to you. This treasure is within you - you received it through your baptism. Immerse yourself in the divine life in you with the simplicity of a child; protect it, promote it and sacrifice all else so it may become your only true life.

- Now you understand that **prayer in a community** can be no other way. In a brotherly encounter you should participate with your experience of divine life like these children. It must be clear that yours is a call to tend towards, through which you verify your conduct. Then love will multiply, the problems which emerge from community life will burn out and wounds will be healed. When everyone is united in a single flame of Love, the earth is purified of evil...

So, I wish you a happy journey till the celebration of the Resurrection. My desire for you is that you shall renew your baptism in Spirit and Truth. I also desire seeing you all at the general Meeting where we shall offer ourselves all together for PEACE!

HAPPY EASTER!

Together with St Francis I bless you:
*May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.*

May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you always. Fr. Tomislav

Pope says: "Authorize all that regards Medjugorje"

For Fr. Slavko's recent trip to South America the organizers followed the normal procedure of asking the Bishops' permission for him to hold the meetings in the various dioceses and talk about the Medj. message.

The Archbishop of Asuncion in Paraguay felt uncertain, so he requested letters of reference from the Bishop of Mostar and the Father Superior of Herzegovina. In October 1994, however, Msgr. Felipe Benitez was in Rome for the Paraguayan bishops' *ad limina* visit so he decided to mention it himself to the Pope during his private talk. He received this reply: '**Authorize everything that concerns Medjugorje.**' The Archbishop had no further need for other opinions. When the news broke out, bishops from eight other nations welcomed Fr. Slavko into their churches and Cathedrals.

Fr. Slavko was told this by the Archbishop himself and gave witness of the fact at the baptism of baby Arianna Colo.

Nigerian Bishop says: Confessions convinced me!

I would like all my priests to come here

The Archbishop Gabriel Consum **Ganaka** has been to Medj. three times. He recently said in an interview: "I came here to see this radiation of prayer that has reached so many of my faithful. Our Lady's messages are simple and practical. They change people's lives and have spread to all corners of the earth. Even in convents things have changed because of the messages. Groups are being formed all over and people are praying for peace. Here the Rosary is recited every day. I have preached in 12 dioceses and how could I not talk about Medjugorje?..."

He was asked: Does the fact that the apparitions have lasted so long make you feel uneasy? "Our Lady's heart is a mother's heart. A good mother does not tire of calling, inviting, insisting. We need to understand that if we do not convert terrible things will happen. In Kibeho the visionaries saw rivers of blood - and then the war came. Our Lady is praying for us and with us..."

Here too; if we had paid heed to Her calls to peace there would not have been war. Many accepted Her invitation, so who knows what would have happened if even these had not listened! Mary respects our freedom. She has created a place of peace where people can pray."

To the question regarding the intervention of the Bishop of Mostar at the Synod, he replied: "His word at the Synod did not have much weight. As far as I am concerned, I believe in Medjugorje, because I have seen the fruits: both spiritual and physical healings.

They told me not to come but I replied that I would because in Medjugorje people pray. I have spent my time here confessing in English, French and Italian, and I have to admit that **the confessions convinced me of the truth on Medjugorje.**"

Asked if he would tell his priests to come here, he replied: "I would be happy if they

all came for a direct experience, but the voyage is too costly. I do not allow for prejudice, neither for myself or others. It would mean judging before seeing."

Would you like to give a message as a Bishop? "To those who have not been here I would like to tell them to come and see for themselves. Don't let others persuade you to become prejudiced about it. Come and see for yourselves. I am so grateful to have been here. I will testify in favour of Medjugorje."
(From *Glas Mira*, Nov. 1994)

How pleasant to find such simplicity of heart, without Pharisaical prejudice! It takes a heart like this to recognize the truth! A Bishop had to come from Africa to tell us the truth, while those who have been called to discern, who should be able to recognize the fruits of a good tree, are keeping God's people away.

Argentinian Bishop notes spirit of conversion

On his recent trip to Medjugorje, **Bishop Rubeirom of Monteo** said: "When I read Our Lady's messages I had the impression that this must have been her typical way of speaking. I felt the urge to come here after seeing the conversion of two of my cousins - one was a Communist, the other a Fascist. I wanted to see what was happening here with my own eyes. In my opinion, Our Lady's messages in Medj. are a continuation of those in Rue du Bac, Lourdes and Fatima.

Mary wants the conversion of hearts. Here in this place I find there is a profound spirit of conversion and prayer. By living these messages one finds the Lord's peace, and the change in hearts mitigates the divine justice. The world is chaotic, but here, people find hope in the supernatural, because human solutions are not sufficient."

News from the Blessed Land

* **Fr. Petar Ljubicic**, after 10 years in Medj., has been transferred to the Croatian mission in Zurich. Besides his work for the parish he lovingly dedicated himself to helping the pilgrims without means, especially those from central Europe who lived under the Communist regime. Our thanks goes to him. May God bless him and may the Queen of Peace always intercede for him.

* **The 170 brothers** who suffered martyrdom in 1945 were remembered by the Franciscans of Medjugorje of Herzegovina in their celebrations from 7-14 Feb.

* **Spiritual exercises** have been organized for moments of prayer, fasting and silence during the **Lenten period** in the *Domus Pacis* house in Medj. Four different meetings will be conducted by Fr. Slavko: 12-18 March, 19-25 March, 26 March-1 April, 9-15 April 1995.

* **Tragic situation** in Banja Luka where Croatian Catholics have been sent away from their homes for "ethnic cleansing" operations. 370 Croatians have been killed, 140,000 have escaped, 1 priest is dead, 1 is missing and 1 died after release from a Serbian concentration camp. Given the disastrous situation, Bishop Franjo Komarica has transformed the diocesan house into a relief centre. Food is scarce, there is very little gas or electricity available and medicinals are extremely difficult to find. The factories are

closed. People turn to the Bishop for help, he makes request for aid through the Zagreb depot.

* **Ivan's prayer group** meets twice a week. At times Our Lady gives a message for the group through Ivan. The message of the 25th of the month is given by the Virgin to Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti.

* The intention of the **film entitled GOSPA**, directed by Sedlar Jakov, is to show that the coming of the Queen of Peace initiates the final battle of the Woman dressed in the sun (Rev.) against evil. The film tells of the beginning of the apparitions and the inner drama of Fr. Zovko, the visionaries and the population. It will be shown in the Radio Music Hall of New York on the 10th April and then in 450 cinemas around the States. Proceeds will go to the needy of Croatia.

* The **Polish TV** was also in Medj. from 9-16 January for the filming of a documentary.

* Troops of **UN soldiers** continue making their way to Medjugorje on pilgrimage. The last one was on 19 Jan. when 50 Argentinian soldiers participated in Mass and climbed Podbrdo.

* **Work on the parish church** began at the end of January. The electric plant and the lighting system need re-doing and work on the façade and the bell tower will be completed. Apologies for any disturbance caused.

* **Seminar of Spirituality** from 2-6 April in **Tucepi**, near Makarska, on Adriatic coast. Themes: *theology of apparitions, participants' roles in Medj. events, Medjugorje today. Simultaneous translations available in main languages. Hotel to be paid when there, in convertible currency. Upon request we will provide transfer from and to airport of Split. Reservations open till 20 March. Phone/fax: 385-21-361354 (Fr. Leonard, Split)*

* **Records Office** of the Shrine of the Queen of Peace and Information Centre - please send all publications that speak of Medj. to the following address: Information Centre, Fr. Miljenko Stojic, 88266 Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Via Croatia; or by hand via the pilgrims.

(From the Press Bulletin of Medj., ph/fax 387-88-642709) * *

In **Sr. Emmanuel's** report of her trip to various European countries in January she says to have been struck by the amount of interest shown by the thousands of people who attended the meetings. People are more open to Our Lady's messages than what others think. For example, in one parish many returned to confession after having attended a meeting, which astonished the priest. Three days after Our Lady said: *Dear children, I invite you to go to confession.*

* **Fr. Jozo** is no longer the guardian of the Siroki Brijeg monastery. He has been substituted by Fr. Svetozar. Fr. Jozo will thus be freer to travel and testify. After a tour in Italy he will go to France and Slovakia.

* **Fr. Slavko** has returned from his great tour of Central and South America. People turned up by the thousands to listen to him. Fr. Slavko received the Pope's blessings last October for this voyage. He plans to go to Africa in the near future, possibly with Vicka.

(Sr. Emmanuel's news is available on an answering machine. US readers interested call 219-287.5683. Updated twice monthly.) * *

* **Torturer forgiven** - Two Croatian soldiers were taking a coffee in a bar in Medj. when a stranger entered. One of the soldiers recognized him as being his torturer in the Serbian concentration camp of Manjaca, yet he went up to him and greeted him cordially.

In the conversation that followed the Serbian opened his heart and told how he managed to escape from that hell... then he asked to be forgiven - and he was.

When the other soldier learnt who the stranger was he burst out: "But why didn't you kill him?" to which his friend replied: "I intend following the way of Christ's Gospel, not that of Satan!" (Fr. Jerko Penava)

* **The baptism of Arianna Maria**, daughter of Jakov and Annalisa, was celebrated by Fr. Slavko in the cathedral of Asola (Mantua) Sunday 12 February. On the day before there was a prayer meeting (it was the day of Our Lady of Lourdes) which was attended by many. It began early afternoon, and at 5.00 pm the Medj. evening programme began which concluded at 8.00 pm.

Two Vocations in Medjugorje

Two young north Americans recently revisited Medjugorje and told their stories.

"**My name is Rick.** I came here in 1989, urged by an inner call that wasn't even very precise. I was 23 at the time and had no idea what would happen, but in that week I received the exceptional gift of discovering the unconditional love that Jesus and Mary have for each of us.

Each time the Eucharist was celebrated the faithful crowded into the church, and the queues for the confessionals were much longer than I could ever have imagined. I witnessed tears of joy and I understood the power of prayer; in fact all my prayers were answered. Back home I felt the need to pray more and I was aware that the Lord was calling me to the order of St Francis.

I have been studying theology for 5 years now and in a few more years I shall be a priest. Prayer has remained the most important part of my day. God guides me with his love so tender and infinite..."

"**I'm John.** I was a Protestant. When I was studying Church history in the Episcopalian Church I discovered the truth is in the Catholic Church. I came to Medjugorje in 1991 on an aid delivery voyage. There were another two members of this Church with me who have since become Catholics too. I felt at home in Medjugorje and I prayed to God to help me understand what He wanted of me. I told Him I was ready for anything, even become a priest. Peace filled my heart.

I thought of becoming a priest in the Episcopalian Church, though, and forming a family, but two priests from my Church helped me to discover the Catholic tradition. They were Marian priests and one of them had been to Medjugorje. They also entered the Catholic Church later on.

After one year's study I took the big step and became a Catholic. I have decided to enter the missionary community of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity.

Medjugorje helped me discover my vocation."

(From the Press Bulletin)

Retreat for victim souls and their priests

If it is true that *we have believed and known the love that God has for us*, and that Jesus' love touched us in our sins and our suffering inflicted by others, then let us surrender ourselves to this crucified love and to His power of salvation. Mary is looking for souls willing to offer themselves entirely to Jesus for the sake of mankind. Just as *He gave his life for us, we too must give our lives for our brothers*. Even though no great love is without sorrow, joy and peace will accompany us in the certainty that not one moment of our existence and our suffering will be lost, and thus we will serve the cause of Love.

Mary called us to this in Medjugorje. Many souls, whether they were aware of it or not, began working for Her. In particular, in 1987, a few souls united to form the **community** known as "Kraljice Mira" (Queen of Peace, we are all yours) which is now well under way and growing after a tough novitiate. There are now about 50 fraternities of victim souls in various parts of Italy and abroad.

Those in charge of these fraternities met in **Loreto** for a spiritual retreat at the end of January. Fr. Antonio Carapellese guided the participants in the encounter with God and on the meditation of the biblical foundations of a total offering to God so as to become living eucharists.

A meeting was also organized for the priests that follow these fraternities from 13-17 February. This was guided by Fr. Tomislav Vlastic who with extreme simplicity highlighted the ministry of priesthood in its continuation of Jesus' offering to the Father for the sake of mankind.

Fervent prayers were offered by the members of the community so the success of this retreat would be complete. * * *

*"Christianity is a mystery
of simplicity"* (St Justine)

Why I entered a community in Medjugorje

I came to know of the Kraljice Mira Community two years ago and after much reflection I decided to join it.

Why did I choose this Community? Why did I leave the comfort and security of my family, a promising career and economical well-being? Many ask themselves these questions when placed before the choice of a life of contemplation and evangelical poverty.

Many think that people choose a life of contemplation to escape from reality. This is not true. Choosing God in an unconditioned way means being stripped of everything that makes up your ego. It means leaving aside one's human logic to enter into God's simplicity.

For me **God's simplicity is the only way**, it is the way that leads to heaven. Simplicity is the mother of all virtues. Life is simple when we accept God's love which is present in every person and every thing and when we respond only with love.

Community life is made up of simple gestures and words that lead each of us to be just what we are and to become what God would like us to become. In this atmosphere

my soul now breathes and life runs along freely, despite the small and great sacrifices which always make up a human existence.

Far from the world I now feel more useful to the world, like the water that runs deep in the earth's crust; it is fresh and cool, ready to quench the thirst of men - while the water that runs on the surface is often polluted. I now know that living in the heart of God means I can meet a multitude of people in the invisible temple of prayer. In God's Heart I can intercede for many sisters and brothers whom I do not know, but whom I love just as Jesus loves. Not even the smallest crumb of love is lost when we are united to God, because He uses each of us to save His children.

Living in the Community then, means following the poor, being poor, like Christ - but this doesn't mean just not possessing things. Above all, it is simplicity of heart, being empty of self and desiring only to joyfully give thanks and praise. It is the constant search of pure love so as to become Pure Love. In our poverty we offer ourselves in an uncalculating manner to become the bread of life that nourishes the entire world.

The area contained within a monastery is thus able to grow infinitely and reach out to all corners of the earth. There is no where on the earth that God cannot touch with His Love - to heal us, warm us and help us grow, so we can bear fruit and make water gush in barren lands.

I bless God day and night for having called me here. In Mary's Heart I offer myself totally as a humble instrument of peace, love and truth. God knows where my road leads to and I trust Him. We do not walk alone, for in the community we support each other with our prayers and love and fraternal assistance.

To those then who ask themselves the above questions, I can reply that I chose this new life out of Love - love of Jesus, so deep and total, which has accompanied me all the days of my life and made me desire being similar to Him, the Bridegroom of my soul. It is true that whoever loves, desires being similar to the loved one, sharing life with Him in the intimacy of His dwelling place.

The words of the Psalmist come to mind: *Goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come* (Ps 23).

Stefania

Anglican Priest says: Come, see and try!

Anglican priest, **Fr. Robert Llewelyn**, visited Medjugorje for the fourth time last summer. He was asked by a journalist: "What does Medjugorje represent for Catholics and Anglicans?" He replied: "Medj. is a place where God is found. The Holy Spirit pours out His gifts here into the hearts of men through the intercession of Mary. I would like to tell everyone: Come, see and try for yourselves. Many things belonging to your past that sadden you will cease. This is the condition needed for true peace."

Fr. Robert says he especially likes the evening programme in Medjugorje. He likes saying the Rosary and he even wrote a booklet about this prayer. He has informed his Bishop of it all and gave him blessed Rosary beads which the Bishop gracefully

accepted.

"How did you discover Medjugorje?" he was asked. "Through the Rosary," Fr. Robert replied. "I was there on vacation and I was fascinated by a family who always recited the Rosary." He himself began praying it and still does. "The Rosary is like a piano which produces wonderful sounds... It is significant that Mary revealed herself in Medjugorje on the day dedicated to John the Baptist. Like him, Mary says: *Do as He tells you.*"

(from *Nasa Ognista*)

Italy enthusiastic about Fr. Jojo

Fr. Jojo continues to take the message of the Queen of Peace to the people. Gennaro from Noli (near Naples) tells of Fr. Jojo's meeting in that city. "...it was a triumph - his and Mary's. He bravely testified, even before the doubting clergy, that he 'heard a voice; and one who hears and sees cannot remain silent.' His discourse revolved around the mandate he received from heaven: *Protect my children* (the visionaries). He did protect them and for that he was imprisoned!

On the 29th January he preached in the cathedral of Noli. I have never seen so many people! Both priests and faithful were struck by his enlightened way of speaking. He managed to "keep them nailed to the pews" for nearly 6 hours, and the more than 3,000 people did not tire.

Of the Rosary he said it was the motion in a man's heart that gets straight to God's heart. He stressed how so much evil and confusion makes its way into our homes through the television stars and gurus that we invite into our homes each time we turn the TV on.

His final invitation to "come to Medjugorje" was truly moving. We have accepted his invitation and are planning a pilgrimage to the Shrine for the 14th anniversary."

A Belgian priest tells: Medj. transformed me - I don't know how to thank you for your Echo which does so much good to me and around me. In 1992 we had a painting of the Queen of Peace done on one of the large windows in my church. The charisma that I received on Podbrdo is to live the messages rather than to talk about them. My ministry continues to grow, and your Echo is a precious support for us all...

Once a month we have a day of Adoration which is concluded with a special two-hour service. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed all day long and I make myself available for confession. Pilgrims know that here they can nourish the flame placed in their hearts by the divine grace.." (Abbé B. Cerato)

By road to Medj. - The road along the Adriatic coast is safe. The bus from Trieste (bus station is adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening at 6 pm and arrives in Medj. at 8 am. Return fare Lit.128,500. For reservations ring Italy: 040-425001

By sea to Medj. - From Ancona, Italy to Split. Departures from Ancona: Mondays and Wednesdays 9 pm, Fridays 8 pm. Arrival in Split 7 am. Departure from Split: Sundays 9.30 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9 pm. For reservations ring Italy 071-202033

Great danger for Christians: Limiting oneself to moralism and not being witness to living God, and not living for eternal life

Jesus teaches us to be self-restrained and to live good and religious lives here in this world while waiting in hope for the blessing and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Tt 2:12-14). Without this eschatological dimension the Gospel is void. Sadly, many Christians have succumbed to the influence of modern-day thought, so pragmatic and efficient, and this is why they no longer openly talk about and live in the expectancy of eternal life.

Moralism is religion reduced to moral practice, in an effort to improve oneself and one's social condition since the person who practises it no longer asks the essential "why?" of our existence. But Jesus came to tell us that we are destined for eternal life, and this changes life's finality and thus the way we live.

Card. Ratzinger spoke about this in his usual clear tones during a recent ecumenical meeting.

"The main problem of our times comes from the **absence** of God and thus the absence of the **primeduty of every Christian to bear witness to the living God**. It is my opinion that before we carry out any moral practices and duties, we must bear witness to the core of our faith, clearly and boldly. We must make the living God be present in our faith, in our hope and in our love.

If our times are marked by a problem regarding morality - by a moral recomposition in society - then it is the result of the lack of God in our thoughts and in our lives. To be more precise, it is the result of the **lack of faith in eternal life**, which is life with God. I am convinced that deism today (i.e. the idea that God may exist but does not take part in our lives) is present not only in the so-called secular world, but also - and in a dangerous measure - within the Church and in our lives as Christians.

We have no longer dared to talk about eternal life and about judgement. For us God has become a distant God, an abstract God. We no longer have the courage to believe that this creature - man - is so important to God, that God cares and worries about us and with us. We think that all the things we do are our things and that God, if he exists, couldn't care much about it all. Therefore, **we have decided to build life on our own** and rebuild the world and we don't really count too much on the existence of God or on the reality of judgement and eternal life.

Everything changes when we live without taking eternal life into consideration, because the human being loses its great honour and dignity. Everything then becomes so easy to manipulate. This creature made in the likeness of God loses its dignity, thus moral decomposition is inevitable. Man spends his time searching for his self in this brief existence and so it becomes necessary to invent the best way possible to build one's own life, and life in general, in the world.

So, if we Christians wish to contribute to the human life and to the humanization of life in this world, our fundamental duty

is to **make present** - as tangible as possible - **the reality of the living God**, of a God who knows us and loves us, who watches over us constantly, of a God who recognizes our responsibilities and who waits for our reply, i.e. our responsive love which is realized and made tangible through our every-day living.

It seems to me that the greatest danger of the Church - of Christians - is that of taking refuge in a certain moralism so as to be accepted and better understood by the secular world, but which makes us depart from the essential. This moralism can often have truly valid and good intentions, but if it becomes pure moralism not animated by the faith in the living God, then in the end it is powerless and cannot really change the human life.

I think, therefore, that this **priority for bearing witness to the living God** is the most urgent of the imperatives for Christians and I think it is also the imperative that unites us, because all Christians are united in the faith of this God who revealed Himself, who became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

Making this testimony essential for today's world (both Christian and non) does unite us even though we may not immediately understand the ecclesiastic and ecumenical part, but do understand our need to bear witness to God. And I think the rest follows naturally. If we live under God's caring eyes and if God is the number one priority in our lives and in our thoughts and our witness, then the rest just follows. That is, man's work for peace, his fellow men, the protection of the weak, for justice and love, follows naturally." * *

MEDJUGORJE IS A SIGN because powers handed down by Jesus are exercised there

We will truly enter into the mystery and the work of Jesus' disciples when we understand that He has given also to us, i.e. the Church, the power to drive away the demons and to heal the sick. This is the basic power that Jesus gave to the apostles right from when he sent them to preach the good news. Read Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:15 and Luke 9:1.

Why have so many people, from all over the world, gone to Medjugorje, and continue going there, despite the war? Why do people talk about the many conversions, healings and liberations from the devil? I believe that Medjugorje is a sign, and a legitimate sign, of the ecclesial authority since it has received recognition as a place of worship where the pilgrims have the right to find that religious assistance they desire (preaching, Confession, Mass...) and which must be given in their own language.

The Pope insists on the necessity of the "new evangelization" (and for Italy he proposed that special prayer which lasted nine months). Among the many causes of the frightening fall in faith and morality that we are going through, I would add also the gap that has formed between priests and the faithful. I live in Rome where priests can be numbered by the thousands, yet if a person has doubts about his faith or has special problems, he has difficulty in finding someone ready to listen to him.

Another cause: **the services are stale;**

they are not animated, there is lack of participation. Yet we have before us as models ecclesial groups which people flock to even though the Masses last two hours or more, and in many cases prayers of healing and liberation are pronounced after the Mass as well.

We have forgotten what the Gospel stresses often: that the people flocked to Jesus to listen to his word and to be healed of their ailments. We have forgotten **the powers** that Jesus gave to the Apostles, then to the disciples and in the end to all those who believe in Him.

Medjugorje is a sign because apart from the apostolate of preaching, the ministries of comfort, healing and liberation are also practised there. I would like it to be like this in all parishes - then the people would come, and all the sorcerers and similar swindlers that the world swarms with would be out of work.

First thing is to listen - Msgr. Gemma, the bishop of Isernia, said in a pastoral note (29 June 1992) that he had instituted a group of liberation for a series of healing prayers, if possible, to be led by a priest. When the group repeats a series of prayers and certain symptoms emerge, it can decide to turn to an exorcist. He adds: "I believe it is part of a priest's ministry to listen to all with enormous patience. Everything must be subjected to the sound discernment of the pastors (let us remember that the bishop's letter regards the **prayer of liberation from the devil**), however, never, never, should a person who suffers - and perhaps without knowing it, is oppressed by the devil - be treated with superficiality, minimizing his/her problems or, worse, refusing to pay attention. Jesus did not do that!"

Preaching, comfort, healing, liberation: this is found in Medj. It is not just the constant flow of pilgrims to Medj. that tells us it is a sign, but the large number of groups that have sprung up all over the world in the wake of its example.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth

Mary only repeats the word of God

Our Lady does not want to tell us anything new. She repeats the word of the Son, making it suited to our times, to the needs of today's world. Our Lady knows [how to read] the signs of the times! Thus, her messages have meaning for they receive it from the word of God, independent of the fact that one may or may not believe in Medj.

I've been to Medj. quite a few times and I've observed things with an expert eye. I believe that God's hand is present there. I don't give the same importance, though, to the first messages in Medjugorje as what I give to those that follow. As with Fatima, I give a different value to the first six apparitions in 1917 to what I give to the others that Sr. Lucia received and which she probably still receives every now and again.

The full value of the messages, however, is in the fact that they repeat the words of Christ, the words of the Bible. When Our Lady says: *I am with you*, it is in relation to Jesus' words: *Woman, here is your son! Here is your Mother!*

From that moment we took Her into our home! Our Lady is always with us! But here there is something extra: ... *also today I rejoice because the Most High has granted me to be with you here...* Fr. G. Amorth

Warning to visionaries... Ensure charisma is used correctly

In reference to our article on the subject in Echo no. 117, we add: *Above all, we are to help the visionaries through our prayer, and through a more correct behaviour towards them, we are to help them not to become proud for all the favouritism they receive. Precisely because they are so much in the public eye it is their duty to give example of proper Christian conduct if they desire the messages to be accepted and not become the object of reproof* (cf. Tit 2:5-8).

A **priest** who at the moment is spiritual director of more than one visionary says: It is important not to let yourself be conditioned by the visionary. They are to be listened to, kept under constant control and protected through silence and obedience. What they say must be listened to with discernment because the important thing is not being chosen, but remaining faithful to the call received. (Fr. M.R.)

Perhaps those words heard by Fr. Jozo: Protect the children, should be read in this sense, and perhaps they are valid for as long as the apparitions last! * *

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* All of the various language editions of **Echo of Mary Queen of Peace** can be found in the souvenir shop next to St James church in Medj., also in the MIR Information Centre (close to the bridge).

* *"Dear Children... Words from the Mother of God at Medj."* - a pocket-size booklet; contains messages June 81-Nov. 94, some interior locations, and more. 50p per copy. Discount rates for large quantities. Contact: The Marian Spring Centre, Lambs Business Pk, Unit J, Tilburstow Hill Rd., Sth Godstone, Surrey, RH9 8JZ, England

* **"Hail Mary"** - collection of 59 hymns and chants suited to both guitar and keyboard. Write to: Br. Thomas Eslam, 5/15 Mary St., Highgate WA 6003, Australia.

Fr. Werenfried's lesson: Fear God's Justice

Fr. Werenfried, the apostle of the *Church in Need*, aged 82, recently suffered a heart attack as he was preparing his Christmas sermon in the Orthodox cathedral of Omsk in Siberia. Though he underwent three operations in two days he still managed to dictate his monthly letter. "... I have never felt such pain before," he tells. "At night the violent stabs would wake me. I was nearly desperate and even furious. Psalm 22 came to mind, frightening me: *I have no one to help me! A herd of bulls surrounds me... their jaws are agape for me.*

Amid dreams and hallucinations I thought I was suffering the pains of purgatory. Once, the thought of ending up in Purgatory did not worry me, but now I have firmly decided to correct my errors so as to escape God's justice. I have understood how dangerous it is to forget His justice which also is infinite. We tend to think of God as an old man who is no longer able to see what is happening in the world. How wrong we are!

Yes, God is patient, but there's no fooling around with Him! It wasn't for nothing that Mary showed hell to the Fatima children and foretold of frightening catastrophes if we do not convert. Isaiah's admission: *We were all like men unclean, all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing* (Is 64:6), goes for God's people of today too. We have been called to transmit the Gospel and the sacraments to those who come after us, but how can we do this if we do not convert?"

We add: "happy is the man who cares for the poor and the weak: if disaster strikes, the Lord will come to his help... and be his comfort on his bed of sickness" (Ps 41). In fact, Fr. Werenfried is already making plans for the future: "I will travel less, but I shall continue writing and I shall pray more. I will not leave God, nor my pen, in peace." * *

When God permits pain and sorrow - The Lord created everything beautiful, good and sound. He wants us to be happy. St Theresa says that if He permits pain or sorrow he does it with so much regret that we should try and hide the fact that we suffer. As if to say: "Lord, you gave me this cross, but it's not that big after all." She goes as far as hiding her crosses from the Lord, because though He permits them for our own good, He is sorry to have to do it. (Fr. G. Amorth)

Jeremiah also tells us: *God takes no pleasure in abasing and afflicting the human race* (Lm 3:33). * *

ECHO IS FREE - It lives on readers' donations. Echo has no other source of income. It is your donations that make possible its publication and distribution also to those people not in a position to donate any sum of money.

Forgive us if we remind you to consider the burdensome postal expenses when making a donation.

Thank you for all you can do.

ECHO FROM 'THE ECHOES'

* **French Echo** (42,000 copies) - Audio cassettes are produced to help those with none or little sight. Here are two moving testimonies:

- "Thank you, I am so happy with the audio cassettes. They give me renewed hope and love for a world that is so superficial and unloving..."

- "I lend my cassettes to a religious institute. Thank you ever so much. Already, many who didn't believe in God have returned to Him; and two unbelievers have decided to go to Medj. next month..."

* Copies of **English Echo** for distribution in Australasia will now be printed in **Australia**. We thank the *Medjugorje Sentinel* of Sydney for accepting to bear the weight of the printing and postal charges. Readers who receive their copies from the Sentinel may send their donations directly to them. They have been authorized by us to detract their expenses.

Some of the mail: A couple from the Episcopal Church who recently suffered a terrible financial loss were forced to sell a part of their garden. "It was found to contain a Celtic Christian burial ground and the remains of a Celtic Church dedicated to Our Lady!" This couple are now trusting God for their future.

"The change in the title is surely Providential and inspirational." (Sr. Maureen) "Please do not change the format or number of articles - it is just right..." (M. Dalingwater) "It is so good to read something that is loyal and supportive of our Pope..." (Nita Young)

* **We thank Dr. Pierantonio Gottardi** of Bolzano. Thanks to him it is now possible for us to transmit **via modem to Australia and Canada** where the Echo will be printed and mailed out much more rapidly; also allowing us to reduce the postal costs. We also thank distributors in Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria and Germany for organizing the collection of donations.

* **An Italian** distributor writes: "We have always accepted the appeals in Echo as though they were Mary's appeals, and this is why we particularly like the change in name to *Echo of Mary*." (Gennaro)

* **We ask readers** not to send donations for other causes to us anymore (such as sponsorship of children, Bosnia, Rwanda, etc.). This will make things simpler for us. We thank you.

* **A reminder** that no one is authorized to ask for donations or even worse, set a fixed price for the Echo. At the most, those who do distribute may ask for donations to help towards the mailing expenses. We are positive that Heaven blesses those who give freely: *You received without charge, give without charge* (Mt 10:8).

Let us all be united to the Holy Father in Lent by offering sacrifices and prayers "to defeat the consumerism and the unjust world economic system, and that there may be increased zeal for evangelization in the communities of the youthful African Churches..."

In Christ's Passion and Mary's Sorrows, we bless you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.