



# ECHO OF MARY

## Queen of peace

### 133

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## Our Lady's message of 25 March 1997

**Dear Children, Today I invite you in a special way to take the cross in your hands and contemplate Jesus' wounds. Ask Jesus to heal the wounds which you, my children, received during your life because of your sins or because of your parents' sins. Only this way will you understand, my children, that healing of faith in God the Creator is necessary for the world. Through Jesus' passion and death on the cross you will understand that it is only through prayer that you too can become true apostles of the faith, when you live your faith - which is a gift - with simplicity and with prayer. Thank you for responding to my call.**

### **"In Jesus' wounds ours can be healed."**

We are often tempted to feel discouraged and despaired by the evil in ourselves and in the world. In this paschal message, Mary wants to teach us that it is possible to be healed. As a mother, She offers us concrete advice: put your faith into practice to create a vital contact with Jesus who heals.

Once again Mary invites us to look at the Cross, or rather, to take it in our hands and contemplate - not just look at - Jesus' wounds which are wounds of love. Also the Risen Christ invited the Apostles in the Upper Room: see my hands and my feet; touch me and see (Lk 24:39). His wounds healed Thomas' disbelief. Ask Jesus to heal your wounds which you received during the course of your life. There are spiritual wounds and there are sins. In His wounds we will find forgiveness and the strength to give up our vices, for He came to take away the sins of the world.

Some wounds are caused unconsciously by our parents before we are born, because their illnesses, bad tendencies, vices and traumas, including those of our forefathers, are reflected onto the new child while still in the womb and are engraved into the formation of his/her person. As the child grows, he or she may become aware of not having been accepted or loved, or of being a victim of harshness, violence, injustice, indecency, humiliation or abandonment.

How much suffering when fear of God and the true love which He donates is not transmitted! For all these wounds there is only one remedy: forgiveness. From the cross Jesus gives us this lesson and the strength to carry it out.

Above all, there are the wounds which we bring on ourselves with our own faults and bad habits and which at times damage even our state of health (such as stress and the abuse of alcohol and drugs). Jesus, though, bore our sins in His body on the tree... By his wounds we have been healed (cf. 1Pt 2:24). This is the novelty of Easter.

Yet, the wounds remain, we might say. Yes, even those of Jesus remained. He opened His hands and showed them to the Apostles: they were glorious wounds. Also our wounds can be transformed if we give them up to Jesus: they will become beatitudes, or glorious wounds: blessed are those who weep... blessed are those who are persecuted...

How great is Jesus' love for sinners in His desire to remove the evil in them! Before this love a person feels the need to donate his wounds to Crucified Jesus, and in doing so become essence of love. Each wound, even the deepest, once healed, becomes a well full of love and gifts.

"Only this way will you understand that healing of faith in God the Creator is necessary for the world." Why "only this way"? When we look at the way He suffered for us, instead of rebelling or complaining or blaming Him, we come to understand that healing comes from Him.

Why is "faith in God the Creator in the world in need of healing"? Just the way God created all things from nothing and gave fullness of life back to Jesus' dead body (and will to our perishable bodies), with the same power He will heal the enormous wounds in the world and in us, turning them into founts of healing.

"This way you will understand": through a trusting surrender of self to Him. If we think we can heal ourselves and bring about justice on our own, we only increase the evil in us. The world needs healing which comes from faith in God, "not from our own strength," as Mary said in the January message.

Why through the "Passion and Death of Jesus will we understand"? Jesus' Passion and Death is the fount of every grace. Just like the Hebrews in the desert when bitten by poisonous snakes had to look up at the bronze snake on the rod to be healed (it represented Jesus on the Cross), we also need to look up at Jesus to be freed of our passions, or the things we suffer because of our sins and the sins of others. Neither psychologists, nor clairvoyants, nor anyone else can heal us: There is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, except that of Jesus (cfr. Acts 4:12).

We will understand that with prayer we too can become true apostles of the faith. With prayer we will experience for ourselves that God heals, and so become apostles of the faith, bearing witness to the others, and be able to say a truthful word to those who are weary (cfr. Is 50:4) and contribute to the healing of the world which can only come from God. One is an apostle when he can say what he has already experienced. Words convince no one.

All this will happen if we live our faith - a gift from God - in a simple and prayerful manner: without showing it off or imposing it on others, but by living it ourselves according to the teachings of the Gospel, which Mary has been telling us to do for nearly 16 years.

Fr. Angelo

## **Our Lady's message of 25 April 1997:**

**Dear Children, Today I invite you to unite your life to God the Creator, for this way only does your life have meaning, and you can comprehend that God is Love. God sends me to you out of love, to help you understand that without Him there is neither future, nor joy and that above all, there is no eternal salvation. My Children, I invite you to give up sin and accept prayer at all times, so that in prayer you may comprehend the sense of your life. God gives Himself to whoever seeks Him. Thank you for responding to my call.**

## United like the branches to the vine

What does unite your life to God the Creator mean? It means accepting your life from God who is the giver of life, and it means leaving your heart open to accept His will, so we can become one with the divine plan. Only this way does your life have meaning because when you forget the Creator and the reason why we were created, what other scope could there be in life? Build your life on the rock, not on the sand, God tells us. Life without God is one without hope, it is a race towards nothingness.

We will then comprehend that God is love, that is, that all that He does is order and perfect harmony and that it all has a scope, like the chords of a harp which emit harmonious sounds when plucked by the hands of the musician.

As we wait for the eternal kingdom which God has prepared for us, Our Lady reveals to us that God has sent Her to us out of love, so we do not fall into the terrible trick of thinking we are happy without God. Those who believe in themselves and in material wealth, like the foolish rich man who thought only about getting richer, at the expense of others, will only find diffidence and fear, not joy or love or a happy future. In the end, "we will not be able to put up with ourselves" (St. Catherine). When you don't know the law of the cross, you can only clash with everything that gets in your way: without Him there is neither future nor joy.

Neither is there eternal salvation, because only He can give us the certainty that we will be forgiven and accepted into His kingdom of happiness. What will come of the man who has ignored God, when he finds himself face to face with God? What good is there to own the whole world if you lose your life? For those who refuse salvation there is the eternal fire where the worms (of remorse) do not die and the fire is not quenched (Mk 9:49).

Leave behind sin: today it is accepted so easily, yet from sin comes death because through it we are removed from God. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (Eph 5:5-6). Let us also keep away from the occasions which could cause our fall: death, but not sin!

How does one remain united to God? Precisely because men go their own ways, and thus away from God, He is united to us like the vine to the branches: so we can receive life in Him. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (Jn 15).

The first thing then is to listen attentively and meditate His Word. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. Second, live a sacramental life: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him... he who eats me will live because of me (Jn 6). Third, pray at all times, because with our hearts open to God, we learn to know the meaning of life and receive what is necessary to carry out His will.

In fact, God gives Himself to all who seek Him, even if the search is difficult, or after much perseverance we still do not feel anything, but when we do persevere, God arrives. At times He remains hidden to see if we seek Him with all our heart and then He lets Himself be found (Jer 29:13). Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near (Is 55:6). Fr.A.

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## Pope's plea in Sarajevo: Peace and Forgiveness!

Forgiveness! Peace! Thus pleaded John Paul II. It is what the Pope has been calling for since the start of the Balkan tragedy. It is the plea which rang out with insistence amid the crowd in Sarajevo shivering from the cold and emotion as the Pope repeated his message of reconciliation and love. It is an icon which cannot be cancelled; impressed into people's consciences more than on the televisions of half the world.

There were 50,000 people in Kosevo Stadium. Most were Catholic, but there were also Muslims and Orthodox and a small group of Jews and others who professed no religion but who were fascinated by the old man who had come here to talk of peace. The local television transmitted the Mass in direct, and the city (94% Muslim) closely followed the great event.

Faithful from all over Bosnia Hercegovina were waiting at the gates of the stadium at dawn, cold and tired from the voyage, which often would have been an adventure across a country where armed bands and paramilitary groups working for criminal bosses attack and further ignite the ethnic tension, allowing them better control on the drug, weapon and cigarette trafficking. Perhaps it was with the intent to further destabilize the situation that some had set up 23 mines (about 150 kg of explosive material) along the road which the Pope was to take, and another 6 mines on the outskirts of Sarajevo along a road which pilgrims were to use.

Also the political situation of the Bosnian Federation, after the Dayton agreement, is highly confused, especially in Mostar: a city which is contended by both Croats and Muslims. It is said that there are at least 500 mujaheddins in Bosnia, while Islamic centres prosper in Sarajevo thanks to the aid received from Arabian countries.

Prior to the Mass, Cardinal Puljic said how in Bosnia Hercegovina there were 530,000 Catholics before the war and that now there are only 125,000. It is impossible to calculate the number of victims; perhaps 200,000 died, while 2.5 million took refuge. He told of the destruction of 90 churches and the killing of 8 priests and 2 nuns, adding that: "unfortunately, there were numerous victims also from among the other peoples and religious communities. The night of hatred has poisoned this land. Your Holiness, give us the courage to go on."

It was precisely to instil courage that the Pope came. His words contained a genuine reply, without rhetoric. To the widows, to the mothers who lost their sons at war, to the orphans and to the disabled, to the thousands of wounded families, to the politicians and to the military, the Holy Father reminded each of them that peace comes from forgiveness: "Let us forgive and ask forgiveness. We cannot fail to undertake the difficult but necessary pilgrimage of forgiveness, which leads to a profound reconciliation. Offer forgiveness and receive peace."

Even the Pope says it is difficult, and he is right. But it is necessary. It is so difficult and so necessary that he spoke of forgiveness in 7 of his 9 speeches made in Sarajevo on Saturday and Sunday. At the stadium he used the noun "forgiveness" 20 times and the verb "forgive" 6 times. It couldn't have been clearer. Forgiveness is part of the radical logic of the Gospel of which the Pope is first-hand witness, because he is Peter's successor and because he himself has forgiven and has asked forgiveness.

True peace, which no one can negotiate, which no agreement can impose, which the Queen of Peace has been wanting to bring to us for years, which the Pope implored in Sarajevo, the Jerusalem of Europe: true peace is that which is found in the shrine of the conscience of every man who is able to find the courage to forgive. The Pope said: "God is merciful; precisely because God is merciful and desires mercy, it is the duty of each of us to follow the logic of love and thereby attain true reciprocal forgiveness. Of course, he added, forgiveness, far from precluding the search for truth, actually requires it, because an

essential requisite for forgiveness and reconciliation is justice."

Justice must also mean the right of the refugee to return to his home, and forgiveness must include those small daily gestures such as pursuing dialogue with the orthodox and other Christian brothers. It must mean searching for the reasons behind incompre-hension and an encounter with the followers of Islam, in the pursuit of a pacific coexistence where the rights of individuals and peoples are respected.

It was with this spirit that the Pope twice embraced the Serb metropolitan Nikolaj who headed the Orthodox delegation and through him the Pope extended his brotherly greeting to Patriarch Pavle. With similar friendship the Pope met the representatives of the small Jewish community and the Rais-el Ulema Mustafa Ceric from the Islamic community who said at the end of the meeting: "you have a great Pope. I will tell my brothers of Islam, because this is the moment for dialogue."

We will see if anything concrete comes of this encounter. The seed of peace has been sown by the Holy Father, but can it grow in this soil where the political heads are still cold and diffident? The Pope has entrusted the Bishops with the task of mending the souls tested by pain and even degraded by feelings of hate and revenge, however, the political situation is still complex and as Cardinal Puljic realistically pointed out: "changes are in the hands of those in power," nonetheless, "something has already changed, like the general atmosphere in the city, and the type of relationships between the varying components of society after the Pope met the top religious authorities."

Political power, obtuse as it is, cannot remain indifferent to the mentality of the people, of those who stood there under the snow and were touched by the Pope's words. A young mother said that the war changed everything and that now: "it is more difficult to meet and to comprehend one another. The Pope says to try, and we will."

For her and all the others we unite our prayer to that of the Pope who concluded his homily with an invocation to Our Lady: "Implore for all believers the gift of a new heart! Let forgiveness, a key word of the Gospel, become a reality here."

Mirko

## **Close to the Queen of Peace...**

From the Medjugorje area 180 buses departed to meet the Pope in Sarajevo. On both the Saturday in the Cathedral and on the Sunday at Kosevo Stadium the Holy Father concluded his discourses with an extemporaneous invocation which revealed his inmost feelings: Kraljice mira, moli za nas (Queen of Peace, pray for us): a glance at Our Lady who must have seemed so close!

Significant words by Pope - At the general audience of 16 April, the Pope spoke of his visit to Sarajevo. It is significant to note that he said: During the war there were continuous pilgrimages by the faithful to Marian shrines in Bosnia-Hercegovina to ask the Mother of nations and the Queen of peace to intercede so that peace would be restored to that tormented region. ... At the meeting with the clergy, I could not refrain from mentioning the particular merits of the Franciscan Order in the evangelization of that country... and I urged all diocesan clergy and religious to work together in solidarity under the guidance of their own Bishops...

He spoke of Sarajevo as the "symbolic city": it was here that World War I broke out in 1914, and towards the end of the century, Sarajevo once again has become the symbol of the tragic and senseless war that divided the Southern Slavs, causing huge numbers of human victims. ... Problems cannot be solved by

armed conflict, he said.

He concluded with a series of petitions: Holy God, holy and powerful, holy and immortal, have mercy on us. From pestilence, hunger and war, deliver us, Lord. From sudden death, deliver us Lord. Sinners, we implore you, hear us, Lord. Jesus, forgive us. Mother, beseech. Mother, implore. Mother, intercede for us.

## **A cry from Bosnia: "Don't you abandon us too!"**

"We also were in Sarajevo for the Pope's visit, and with us there were 19 vans full of indispensable goods which were not unloaded at a warehouse, but were taken directly to 324 families in Mostar, Konjic, Sarajevo and to two psychiatric hospitals in Fojnica.

We saw a tired Pope, but with immense will power and determination. It was freezing cold, but he did not reduce the programme. Everyone was cold, but the hearts of all were flowing over with joy, and when the Pope entered and circled the stadium that joy simply exploded. Of course it was not a cry of triumph, for the Catholics are not even desired here and are even threatened.

During the homily, rather than applause, there were serious, even tear-streaked faces, even among the priests. In fact, it is not easy to hear someone talk about forgiveness when you've experienced first hand the most horrible atrocities of an absurd and ignoble war. Yet, the Pope pleaded: let us forgive and ask for forgiveness.

We, Mary's unworthy yet dear children, little volunteers of charity, who since 1991 have taken aid to these peoples - without distinction of any type - felt encouraged to do even more for the thousands of families who have nothing, for the widows and orphans abandoned in the refugee centres of north Bosnia where they receive little or no aid. We know that besides food and other indispensable goods, we must take the love of God and Mary and give them the hope and courage to continue to keep on facing life and to face especially forgiveness. Thank you dear Holy Father, you're great!"

Pope spoke of urgency to continue giving aid - "The Holy Father gave us new hope and reason to continue during the Regina Caeli prayer of 20th April in St. Peter's Square: During my visit I had the opportunity to appreciate the activity of the ecclesial institutions, organizations and all who have worked to alleviate that people's suffering and hardship. It is now necessary to proceed without delay in coming to the aid of those who have been sorely stricken during the tragic conflict, and to help the victims who are still suffering the consequences... Let us continue to be close to the people of that beloved region with our effective solidarity.

We will continue to depart every two or three weeks despite the discouraging difficulties with customs, so that the most needy may feel that we have not forgotten them and that God and Our Lady love them. We cannot stop as long as there are people who cling to us and say: 'don't you abandon us too; you are our only hope.' "

Alberto Bonifacio (for all the aid carriers)

## Mother Teresa to her Albania

### "When you see Jesus in your neighbour, there is no need of weapons"

My dearest people of Albania, the news of the disorder which has come to our wonderful country has caused me great sorrow. You know how much I love Albania, and I have visited often and I have sent my Sisters to bring tender love and care to the poor. Now it is with great pain in my heart that I hear that lives have been lost and people injured in the violence.

I understand the suffering of those who have lost their money, but I beg you not to bring even greater suffering upon each other. Remember that God has created each of us for greater things: to love and be loved. This is the meaning of life which no amount of suffering can remove. That man, that woman, that child is my brother, my sister, and I must love each as God has loved me.

To be able to love one another, we must pray much, for from prayer comes a pure heart, and a pure heart enables us to see God in our neighbour. If now we have no peace it is because we have forgotten to see God in each other. If each person could see God in his neighbour, do you think we would need guns and bombs?

I am praying very much for all my dear people of Albania, that each may learn to love until it hurts and so bring peace to the country and to each heart. Let us pray. God bless you. Mother Teresa - 17 March 1997

\* A Rosary and Fasting crusade is being initiated for each day of May for the special intentions of the Pope, and the solemn Papal Definition of the Maternal Mediation of our Mother, Mary, as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate.

(Promoted by Mother Teresa, Cardinal Gagnon and Dr. Miravelle of Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici)

### UT UNUM SINT!

Great expectation in Graz - In Graz, Austria, the 2nd assembly of the Christian Churches of Europe will be held from 23-29 June. The theme, on Reconciliation, is "Gift of God and fount of new life." Taking part will be 700 delegates from the Churches, 300 from associations and movements involved in ecumenical dialogue, and 10,000 Christians from all over the Continent. "It will not be possible to leave Graz until we can show that we have overcome the phase of dialogue and are ready to enter the phase of concrete results, i.e. of reconciliation," said Pastor Ricca from the Waldensian Church. "For reconciliation to be authentic," pointed out Bishop Chiaretti, president of the Secretariat for Ecumenism (Italian Bishops Conference), "there must be conversion to Christ on a personal level, on a community level and on a Church level, otherwise, everything will be reduced to a mere diplomatic passage, having only face value."

### Peter's Primacy not just primacy of honour

Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, who has the primacy of honour among the Orthodox Churches, will be in Italy from 16 - 20 May to honour the first three evangelizers of the Trent region: the martyrs from Cappadocia, namely Sysinius, Martyrius and Alexander who were sent by Ambrose to bishop and friend Vigil 1600 years ago. Bartholomew will participate in many meetings and celebrations in Trent and Milan.

Ecumenism is a subject which the Patriarch has often spoken about, but it must be said that the unity of the Churches cannot consist in reducing Peter's Primacy to a simple primacy of honour, which he would like, for a governing authority is required otherwise unity breaks up - see the Protestant Churches and the Churches in Russia, and in the conflict among patriarchs in the former Soviet empire. Jesus founded His Church on the rock of Peter and Jesus prayed for him so that his faith would not fail (Lk 22:32). Instead it could be looked at in a different light where regal vestments are laid down in favour of those of a servant (like Jesus in the Upper Room).

On ecumenism and the problem of Peter's primacy, see the Pope's encyclicle *Ut unum sint* of July 1995 (Echo 123, page 2).

On the "strained relationship with Moscow," in reference to Estonia, the Patriarch said that it was solved with the agreement of 16 May 1997 whereby the Orthodox of that country received authorization to freely choose whichever ecclesial jurisdiction they preferred" (Estonian; see Echo 127, page 2).

### **"Man-centred civilization" for new Europe**

The Patriarch was asked what place the Orthodox Church occupies in today's Europe.

A. Europe is not just the West, born from Rome and the Reformation; there is another Europe, just as necessary to the harmony of the continent, which was born from Christian Hellenism (the east) and made fertile by orthodoxy and then deformed first by Communism than paranoic nationalism [eg. the Russian and Serbian Church]. It is a culture which history has always crushed, but its embers kept their heat and were able to light up again at the breath of the Spirit.

The building up of Europe's unity cannot be based solely on economic and military features. Basic choices of cultural and spiritual order are necessary to solve serious problems such as unemployment and ecology. A new model of civilization is required to halt the frenzy of consumerism. [Europe] needs a civilization which revolves around people and communion. The man of today's modern technological world needs to rediscover the divine and cosmic depth of the being.

### **Adalbert, a saint for Europe**

Together with Boniface, Cyril and Methodius, Adalbert was one of the apostles who gave a Christian look to central Europe by uniting under the same faith the Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians. The Pope called precisely on these Christian values which made Europe during his voyage to Prague (25-28 April) to celebrate the millennium of St. Adalbert's martyrdom.

Friendly and gentle, of a noble aspect and a man of great culture, Adalbert was elected Bishop of Prague, but faced with the resistance offered by his own fellow-countrymen, he had to abandon his episcopal see and go to Rome where he took up the monastic life.

Out of obedience to the Pope and to the Emperor who greatly admired Adalbert, he returned to Prague, but the opposition of his people again forced him to leave his home-land. He spent the rest of his life as a missionary. His pastoral life seemed without great success, but if it is man who does the sowing, it is God who does the reaping.

In Prague he founded the abbey of Brevnov which became the cultural centre of Christianity for the Slavonic population. From it came bishops, abbots and monks who served in Poland, Hungary and Russia up till the dawn of the Communist regime.

As a missionary he dedicated himself to the evangelization of Hungary where he baptized St. Stephen (king and patron of Hungary), then Poland and the Baltic nations where he founded monasteries. In the end, with his monks and amid great difficulty, he turned his attention to the barbarian population of

Prussia. It was here that he was martyred on the 23 April 997 at the age of 60. Two years later he was proclaimed a saint. He is patron saint of Bohemia and Poland.

**Unity of the Armenians** - Maria Gostanian, in an article in *la Croix* (22 Jan. 1997), clarified the position of the Armenian Church (see *Echo* 131 page 3): "this frontier Church which has resisted centuries of persecution professes the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed (the Creed recited at Mass). It did not separate from Rome following the Council of Calcedonia (451 ad). Since its beginnings in the year 301, it is an independent, self-governing patriarchate in communion with all the other Churches; it is not subject to the Patriarchate of Constantinople nor to that of the West (Rome). It is not monophysite, nor anti-calcedonian, but simply the Armenian Apostolic Church. Relationships with the Catholics in France and elsewhere are excellent... Clarity will help dialogue lead to communion."

Mary: "Our Lady of all Peoples"

**Bishop Paul M. Hnilica** has invited Marian groups to go to Amsterdam (Holland) for the 31 May next where the first international day of prayer will be held in honour of Mary "Our Lady of all Peoples." Our Lady appeared under this title to Ida Peerdeman in Amsterdam from 1945 to 1959 and foretold of the great crisis in the Church and the loss of faith. The Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, Mons. Bomers, has permitted public veneration of Our Lady under this title which has already been acknowledged in 60 dioceses all over the world.

The title of Woman or Lady was used by Jesus Himself at Cana and on the Cross. Mary is concerned for man's salvation, including those who have not yet known God's love, because She is Co-redeemer together with Her and Our Lord. It is not without meaning that She said: henceforth all ages will call me blessed. In other words, all peoples, including those which are not yet Christian, will call Her blessed. However, in Fatima and in Medjugorje, Mary also calls upon our collaboration and sacrifices. For further information contact: Pro Deo et Fratibus, Via Montesanto 14, Rome, Italy. Fax Italy 06-37351549

**Pilgrim statue of Mary beyond French borders** - The first 108 pilgrim statues of Mary last year brought down showers of graces all over France prior to the Pope's visit. A further 250 statues and icons have just left for various countries after having received the Pope's blessing on 8th December in Rome and the warm words of encouragement from Bartholomew I in Constantinople. The new pilgrimage began in 15 different countries, while another 40 are on the list. Our Lady, who has welcomed 20 million pilgrims in Medjugorje, will thus take the message of salvation to millions of others who have not been able to go there.

Each country is called to participate in the Marian prayer over the three years of preparation for the great jubilee with those statues or icons best suited to their churches and in harmony with their bishops.

The Notre Dame de France confraternity which is organizing the Tour seeks "people who dearly love Jesus and Mary and are willing to help with the pilgrimage."

Other news and witnesses by numerous cardinals, bishops and superior fathers from all over the world is available from: Olivier Bonnassies, 71 rue du Village, F-91530 Le Val St-Germain, France - fax 331-64590188.

## **The new martyrs**

On 24th March the Juvenile Missionary Movement celebrated the 5th day of prayer and fasting in favour of the missionary martyrs. In the last 50 years, as many as 728 Catholic missionaries in the world sacrificed their lives for the Gospel. These were priests, religious and consecrated lay workers. A further

221 lost their lives in Rwanda in '94.

To pray and fast is a concrete way of participating in their sacrifice and of supporting all those who work for the Gospel. St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Francis Xavier, both patrons of the missions, bore witness to the reality of the Church which is one body with many members. In this body there are those who pray and »» those who practise penance, those who suffer, those who do works of charity, those who work for peace and those who spill their blood, to bring reciprocal good upon the Church according to the action of the one Spirit.

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## News from the blessed land

### Two of Mirjana's apparitions

**"In those far from God see Jesus Who loves them"** - Mirjana now sees Our Lady on the 2nd of each month. At times these are inner locutions, at times they are apparitions and they can last from a few to about sixty minutes. During these encounters Our Lady and Mirjana pray "for those who have not known God's love." A few months ago also the faithful were invited to pray on this day for this same purpose. Such was the one on 2nd March at 11 am, at the blue cross. Many parishioners and pilgrims participated. Our Lady gave the following message: Dear Children, pray for your brothers and sisters who have not known the Father's love and for those who give more importance to their earthly life. Open your hearts up to them and see in them my Son Who loves them. You must be my light: lighten up all the souls in whom darkness reigns. Thank you for responding to my call. The visionary said that during the apparition the Blessed Virgin wept.

**"Peace only for those who love my Son in their neighbours"** - In the last daily apparition of 25th December 1982 Our Lady promised Mirjana that She would appear to her at least once a year, on 18th March which is Mirjana's birthday. Last year and also this year, Mirjana received the apparition under a huge tent behind the shrine so that more people could participate. On 18th March '97 the appointment with Our Lady was set for 2 pm, while the prayer in the tent began at 1 pm. By then the tent was packed with parishioners and pilgrims and many had to remain outside. Fr. Slavko led the Holy Rosary and Agostino led the singing. At 1.30 pm Mirjana arrived with her husband Marko Soldo and other family members. Mirjana seemed a little tense, as she often is prior to an apparition, and for this reason she did not lead one of the decades, but one was led by her daughter and one by her husband.

At about 1.50 pm Mirjana went down on her knees before the statue of Our Lady. After having recited several Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's, Our Lady appeared and Mirjana's eyes lit up wonder-fully. In the beginning she seemed happier, while towards the end of the apparition she became more serious till we could see her lift up her glance to follow Our Lady who goes up and away at the end of an apparition. After the ecstasy, Mirjana remained a little while in quiet contemplation, wiping away a tear or two, then got up and went out with her family and with Fr. Slavko.

In the meantime, the prayer under the tent continued till Fr. Slavko returned to read the message: Dear Children, as a mother I beseech you: do not continue on the way you have taken, for this is a way where there is neither love for neighbour nor for my Son. On this way you will find only harshness and emptiness of heart, and not the peace which you all yearn for. Only he who sees and loves my Son in his neighbour will have genuine peace. He who lets my Son reign in his heart knows what peace and security

is. Thank you for responding to my call.

Fr. Slavko referred that during the six minutes of the apparition Our Lady appeared normal, becoming sad only when She gave the message. She blessed all those present and the objects they had with them and She prayed for the non believers. Our Lady did not say anything about the secrets.

A. Bonifacio

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## **Croatian President confirms Pope's desire to visit Medjugorje**

On Saturday 15th March the President of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, was in Medjugorje. He was greeted by the bishop of Mostar, Mons. Ratko Peric, and by thousands of people present at the Shrine. He was received in the presbytery by the parish priest, Fra Ivan Landeka, the Provincial Father, Fra Tomislav Pervan, and many others, including the former parish priest Fra Leonard.

The latter referred that President Tudjman, in the presence of everyone, said among other things: "I am happy to have come here with the Bishop and the Franciscan Provincial Father. Go all of you and greet the Holy Father in Sarajevo. In our last meeting, John Paul II told me for the second time that he would like to visit Medjugorje."

Mr Tudjman said that he came here to pray and said he was moved by his visit to the Shrine and by the warm welcome he received by the thousands of people.

## **Declaration following the international meeting in Neum**

The 4th international prayer meeting in Neum was held from 24 - 28 Feb. Participants were 130 - from 21 different countries - and represented the leaders of pilgrimages, prayer groups and peace centres. This year the theme was on the spirituality of the family.

During the lectures, sharing, prayer and the Eucharist, we understood that the family:

- a) is deeply rooted in the divine plan;
- b) is the incarnation of the trinity;
- c) is consecrated through the sacrament of matrimony.

The family of today is in crisis, but we are hopeful for the future, and we are to witness this hope to all men of good will.

All those who honour the Queen of Peace are commended to live Her messages by:

- a) praying in the family;
- b) reading the Holy Scripture;
- c) participating in Holy Mass.

If God is given the place He deserves in the family, then the family, the Church and the world will be renewed and we will participate with joy in a new incarnation.

All those who spread the Blessed Virgin's message are commended to serve the truth and not spread ideas in the name of Medjugorje which clash with the messages.

Thus, they should keep in touch with each other and with the MIR Centre of Medjugorje.

**Native American Indians' spiritual retreat** - 103 Indians from Canada and the USA (14 chiefs and their families) were in Medjugorje at the beginning of March to participate in a four-day spiritual retreat led by Fr. Jozo Zovko, proclaimed by some tribes as spiritual guide following his visit to America. For the chief of the Maniotoke tribe, Ken Wood, this was his seventh visit. He had been an alcoholic and an atheist. He stopped drinking and learnt to pray, to love and to forgive, and he appeared on a local television station to talk about Medjugorje so that other Indians may hear about the messages. [Fr. Jozo, however, impeded a television team from filming the retreat because of its spiritual and not folkloric character.] They climbed Podbrdo and Krizevac, and visited Sr. Elvira's Upper Room Community and some of the visionaries.

After the Holy Mass in the parish they danced around the statue of Our Lady to celebrate their "new friends." They said that they experienced profound peace during the retreat and that: "Medjugorje will be the pilgrimage site of the century."

**Easter in Medjugorje** - Ten thousand pilgrims celebrated Easter in Medjugorje. The liturgies of Holy Thursday and Friday and the Saturday Vigil were celebrated in 9 different languages. Besides the Croatians, the most numerous were from Austria, Germany, Italy, America, France, Argentina, Poland, Czech Rep., Spain and Slovakia. Thirty priests were available for confession.

**Seminars of Prayer** - During Lent three courses of prayer and fasting were held in the Domus Pacis retreat house. About 150 people from various parts of the world participated. There was also a retreat for the abandoned children from Split now being cared for by the "Help" organization. Ten seminars held by the Franciscan nuns for girls during the school year were also held in the retreat house.

**Art lessons with Carmelo Puzzolo** - The Italian sculptor and artist, Carmelo Puzzolo, author of the best artistic works in Medjugorje visited the "Friends of Talents" association, presided by Fr. Slavko, which helps young artists with talent but lacking finance receive a university formation. This year about 20 youth were able to benefit from the lessons of the Italian artist. Sr. Milena Tomas, who now lives in Medjugorje, also participated.

**Swiss priest dies** - Fr. Emil Ritz from Switzerland, who guided pilgrims to La Salette for 50 years, died suddenly of a heart attack in the sacresty after the German Mass. He had come many times to Medjugorje and was here this last time with 250 youths from Ulm.

**Fr. Janko Bubalo**, a tireless confessor in Medjugorje for many years, and known in particular for his book on Vicka, "A Thousand Encounters with Our Lady," returned to the Father on 21st February after 5 years of sickness. He was born in 1913 and was the first priest to join the "Association of Lettered Croats." He had been severely tortured during the Communist regime.

From the Press Bulletin

(Mir Inform. Centre, Fax 387-88651444)

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## **For Our Lady no situation is desperate**

In the chapel of the Oasis of Peace on the 12th April about 100 Italians were present for the apparition to

Marija Pavlovic Lunetti. After the apparition Marija spoke with those present and said: "...Many say that Our Lady talks too much, but for us Mary is Mother and if we accept Her as such, She will continue to urge us on just the way all mothers do with their children. As a mother I never tire of kissing my children; you see, Our Lady has a thousand ways and words to tell us how She loves us...

Her presence in Medjugorje is proof of Her love. I always tell myself that we go to many shrines and encounter many beautiful things, in Lourdes and in Fatima for example, but after having been to Medjugorje we feel the need to change the world. Our Lady tells us to start with ourselves and live the messages and become an example for the others, for at times we are like saints within the Church, and pagans outside. However, we are all given the possibility to change."

**Woman becomes bearer of life after 8 abortions** - Marija continued: "A woman who had had 8 abortions came to me and said that she didn't have the courage to confess, that she was afraid the priest would only scold her and throw her out of the confessional and that she came to me so I could pray to Our Lady for her. That same evening I prayed to Our Lady for that mother, pointing out that her husband didn't want children and that she had no means to live by, that her nervous system was under shock, that she had become terribly depressed, was unable to sleep and that by now she could not have children. Our Lady's response surprised me: From now on, she will become a bearer of life for the others. Such is the love and hope that Mary has for her children, even when things seem humanly impossible.

In brief, the woman confessed and her heart changed totally. Now she goes to the hospitals, the same ones where she had her abortions, and does all she can to convince the mothers to keep their children. She says that first she prays then she tells her story and of the anxiety in her heart even though she knows her children are little angels in heaven. "My life is so short that I feel I have to run now to recuperate not only my children, but also the children of others." Her witness has given courage to many mothers. This is an example of how our wounds of death, to refer to the message of 25 March, can become founts of life. But there are so many examples of people who have confessed here and have begun a new life and have been healed..."

**Child with cancer goes blind and dies at age of 5** - Marija explained: "Her mother had turned to Padre Pio and to Padre Leopoldo, and she came to Medjugorje to ask for the grace of a healing, but she did not obtain it. However, this little girl brought holiness to the entire family (her mother in particular has begun a wonderful faith walk). The little girl climbed Podbrdo too, not only to ask to be healed, but also to ask for the grace of being able to receive Jesus. She was 4 but she received Jesus and died in a state of holiness.

Many who encounter Our Lady become holy, and many who are physically or spiritually sick are healed! People in wheel chairs have started walking again and have come back with complete documentation to show that they have been healed.

We should always listen to Our Lady and bear witness to what She can do..."

**Pope speaks like Our Lady** - Marija continued: "When Our Lady gives the message on the 25th, I often realize that the day after the Pope says the same thing. So I think: "There is another visionary here; either the Holy Father is intensely guided by the Holy Spirit or he too has apparitions!"

Marija also spoke of the Pope's voyage to Sarajevo: "Everyone was saying that it was too cold and too dangerous, but he came to say that he isn't afraid to die. He was so serene, despite his shaking hand. He has aged, but his spirit has not; he doesn't give the impression of feebleness, but of great strength... There are theologians and books which speak out against the Pope, but of him Our Lady said: The Holy Father is my beloved son, he is the Pope chosen by me for these times... "

\* **Youth Festival of Prayer:** 23-26 June 1997 at Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Scotland (under the auspices of Youth 2000). Visionary Jelena and Fr. Harry Brock, C.F.R. from New York attending. Information, bookings: ph. 1838-200216, fax 1838-200-622

God seeks our weaknesses to live in and donate Himself to us

A meeting for the formation of "total-offering souls," guided by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic was recently held in Numana, Ancona. The theme was: "Live Eucharist."

The 700 participants in the latest of these bi-monthly meetings experienced three days of intense prayer, sharing and reflection and were accompanied by the Kraljice Mira Community. Many were participating for the first time.

### **Following is a summary of Fr. Tomislav's reflections.**

Be Word of God, not "words." In the Word of God we receive everything: the call, protection for our faith journey, the contents and the fruits. In the Word of God, when it is accepted with free love, one finds God Himself. This way we are able to realize the same programme of life as the Virgin Mary's. If we want the Word of God to live in us, we must withdraw our thoughts, our logic and our personal reasoning, because the power of God can be manifested only in those who are weak. Men, on the other hand, have built many defences around their weaknesses. Instead, you have to trust the divine omnipotence.

When others bind us up, nail us down, you have to let the Word of God offer itself in us. It is not we who have to offer ourselves, but the Word of God in us. This way the Word of God and His Power is made manifest. The problem arises when we remain firm on the level of human words instead of going into ourselves in search of God. To do this, it is necessary that we sacrifice every idol in ourselves, for behind every form of defence there is an idol. When we are not ready to give place for the Word it means there is an idol in us. It could be a person, a thing, or a feeling, etc.

**Be a gift for the Living God: the offering** - When we leave space for the Word of God in us then Jesus offers Himself to us; in us He loves the Father, and in us He offers Himself to the Father. We only need to let Him do it! This way, offering our lives to God means opening ourselves up so as to become a new creature and thus God's adoptive children in Jesus and participate in the fullness of gifts in Christ.

**Do we want to be the gift of the Living God for humanity?** - Just as the Father sent me, I also send you... If we can manage to be a total and pure gift for God, then He will be able to offer us, His children, as gifts of "pure love" to mankind. When Jesus sent the apostles into the world, He told them to be pure love, or in other words, lambs who defeat the wolf. However, when the lamb does not live in us, winning becomes impossible!

In the Holy Scriptures there is a point which I dare to call "scandalous" and it is when the Son of God escapes from a creature: Herod. Furthermore, we see how God the Father allowed His creatures to crucify His only Son. Why did He do this?

This is a key point for those who make the total offering: God is weak! He is strong only in His Love! Here on the earth, God does not try to enforce His power. In fact, spirituality based on arrogance is wrong because God is omnipotent in pure love.

This is the way to the Live Eucharist. God the Father desires donating each of us as one of His gifts to the world. To do this, however, He needs us to become "lambs," not in a pathological way, but in a joyful way, with the same responsibility and the same dignity with which Jesus bore the Cross. God is looking for souls who want to accept this love: souls willing to be sent. This way the mission can depart. It is a

mission which calls us to be the Love of God and His gift for mankind. The world needs to see the Live Eucharist in Christians; the world needs to see God.

Nicola

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## AGAINST THE CURRENT

### **Give no credit to prophets of misfortune**

I am faced with a series of recurring questions, and I think that also our readers will have asked the same things. It's as though there were a contrast between the many "visionaries" and "messages" which announce catastrophes, and the prudence used by men of the Church who warn against believing in these modern-day prophets of misfortune. It also seems, when looking at the world of today, that there is nothing good in it, making us think that the many apocalyptic messages being spread agree with the harsh warnings of the prophets, bringing to mind those in the Old Testament.

What should we think? Whom should we believe?

To begin with I would like to point out that we are no longer in the Old Testament times, that is, when the people were waiting for the Messiah. Jesus has come and He left us His gifts: He assured us of His presence (I will always be with you), thus He lives and continues to intercede for us, and He gave us the Eucharist, the Church, blessed Mary and above all the permanent gift of the Holy Spirit...

Thus, the Second Vatican Council tells us that there can be no new revelation before Christ's second coming. This does not mean, however, that the revelation and what it says either expressly or implicitly cannot be seen in greater depth, and this is the work of Biblicists and theologians under the sure guidance of church authorities.

That man continually needs to be called to conversion is something we read of in the Gospel (just think of Luke 13:5 "If you do not convert you will all perish"). This brings us to think that there is nothing odd in the fact that the messages tied to Marian apparitions mostly ask for conversion. It is a pressing and urgent call of which there is always need. On the other hand, all those pseudo-visionaries who say they receive messages from Our Lord or Lady which announce catastrophes deserve no credit. It is true that history is full of natural catastrophes (earthquakes, floods...) and even more of collective damage caused by man (wars, genocides, selling of slaves, etc.). Where there is human blame there is need for conversion, dialogue and comprehension. Where there are natural causes there is need for solidarity, for reciprocal help.

In Fatima Our Lady had foretold that if men did not listen to Her calls (it was 1917, at the end of WWI) then another, worse war would begin under the pontificate of Pius XI. Note well, however, that Our Lady did not prophesize a war; She was teaching us how to avoid one. The chastisement was conditioned to conversion and was indicated as a stimulus to conversion. It was not an ineluctable prophecy: one with no other ending.

Some may ask: how should we place God's promise of never again destroying humanity with a flood (Gn 9:11) against the apocalyptic prophecies of the Gospel which talk of the world coming to an end? It is clear that here we are talking about two very different things. The universal flood was caused by the sins of mankind and its scope was to punish. The end of the world is an event which belongs to God's plans: it will not be caused by a will to chastise, but by the will to mark a complete triumph of Christ and the chosen ones. Even if it will be preceded by catastrophes, these will have the scope of preparing mankind

to the great event and of being the last call to repentance.

The Heavenly Father is a God of love and peace. He does not want us to have nightmares about punishment; He wants us to be serene and trusting in His merciful love. Those who spread catastrophic messages are surely false prophets and all they deserve from us is our compassion. It would be a grave error, however, to believe them.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth

### **When are prophecies real?**

The Messaggero reported Fr. Amorth as saying: a visionary knew of the lachrymation of Our Lady in Civitavecchia 6 months before it happened. Can you confirm this?

Fr. Amorth responds: In part; yes it happened some months before the actual event (I can't recall whether it was 6; I think maybe 4 or 5 months). What do I do in these cases? I remain silent and follow the rules of the Bible: if a prophecy comes true then it was inspired by God, if it does not come true then both the prophecy and he who announced it are unveiled. So I did not say anything to the Bishop! After the lachrymation had taken place I told him!

We are so full of false prophets, false charismatics, of people giving messages, supposedly in direct contact with Our Lady, with the Holy Spirit, with Saint Anthony of Padua... We must be very careful! I recommend you all do the same. Is there someone you know, whom you think to be saintly, who foretells you something? My advice is to remain quiet. Say: Lord Thy will be done! If the prophecy comes true then say: Well, the Lord must have inspired him/her in that moment. But once in a thousand, once in a thousand, does this happen!

\* Five thousand attended a meeting in Milan on 6th April where various problems were discussed, such as the hospital in Medjugorje, aid to Bosnia, the Pope's voyage to Sarajevo and the construction of a Catholic church in Macedonia. The visionary, Jakov, also attended. With his youthful enthusiasm he transmitting nostalgia of Medjugorje to all.

\* All the various language editions of Echo of Mary Queen of Peace are available in the souvenir shop next to St. James church in Medj. and the MIR Info centre close to the bridge.

## **Listen to His voice today (Ps 95) do not wait for tomorrow**

Card. Tonini, archbishop emeritus of Ravenna, replies to a question on Medjugorje

Q: In places where apparitions, real or presumed, take place one notes an extraordinary fermenting of devotion, with conversions and a return to prayer, where people rediscover the faith. Those who have been to Medjugorje talk of breathing in faith; the supernatural seems more tangible. Do you not think that in our cold and indifferent society this is already a miracle?

A: "Yes, I know that all this is happening. Thousands of pilgrims make their way to Medjugorje, where they pray and discover the faith. This is an immense gift and we are thankful to the Lord for it. The Church continues to wait, however, prior to making an official pronouncement. The amount of caution she uses is a just one. Each and every doubt must be examined and every uncertainty must be resolved. I personally think that the perplexity held by the local episcopacy, with all its varying degrees, must

make us reflect. Nonetheless, it is indispensable that we wait for an official pronouncement by the Vatican. I trust in Christ's promise which He made to His apostles and their successors for eternity: the judgement of the Church pronounced in the name of Christ will be the one which will convince me of the credibility of an apparition or supernatural event."

We take this opportunity to make a distinction: between the many important supernatural fruits, which also Cardinal Tonini acknowledges, and the supernatural state of the events, on which the Vatican will make an official pronouncement (we add: not while the apparitions are taking place; nor will it come easily afterwards).

However, the continued emphasis given to these "perplexities" and "reservations" which reflect the harshness of the local opposition - due to bad relations and closure of hearts - only ends up discouraging (not to say scandalize) the many little ones who do not know how to distinguish. On the other hand, it also gives new breath to those who see nought and wish to change nought. Should we just sit back and watch while waiting for official recognition? Should we let this heaven-sent opportunity pass us by? What would the "official pronouncement" add to that which those who have placed their trust in the events have not already received? Seek the Lord while he may be found, Isaiah tells us (Is 55:6).

Fr. Amorth says that he agrees with the way the Church handled these situations in the past: "When there were Marian apparitions or miraculous events there was no need for official recognition because it was the devotion of the people which gave value to the events, and the Church endorsed them with her presence in the celebration of the Sacraments. This happened with Monte Berico (Vicenza), with Caravaggio (Bergamo) and with the Divine Love and Tre Fontane in Rome and for many other shrines where it was said Our Lady appeared." (See also Echo 120, page 7)

This is also happening in Medjugorje where for nearly 16 years the Church accepts the pilgrims and distributes streams of graces in the wake of the calls, of which no one has doubted the conformity with the truth of the faith. What more could one want?

No one can see why this extraordinary grace being offered to all in these times of adversity should not be recognized and encouraged, just as the Holy Father does at every occasion, and as many Bishops do by going there and witnessing the fruits. But perhaps the devil, on seeing how much is at stake, has armed himself to the teeth...

What are the convincing signs of Mary's presence? - Many people continue to write to tell us of their special experience with Medjugorje (graces received, healings, etc.) which have marked their lives and conversions for ever.

To all these we say: It is not surprising, and there are many more such cases than what we can imagine. Who does not return from Medjugorje without a "sign" of some sort? In out-of-the-ordinary cases one needs to be duly discreet and curb the desire to make them objects of public attention. They are signs of love and encouragement from a Motherly Heart to individuals. The real sign which everyone should see as proof of Mary's presence, though, is the conversion of hearts. We should not need to use these extraordinary signs to prove Her presence, but the others should be able to see the effect of Her presence on us: in our change of life-style, in the peace in our hearts, in our willingness to help others, etc., and be convinced by this.

### **New apparitions and lachrymations?**

**Many readers from various parts of the world have written to signal these.**

We need not be surprised by these super-natural events. Of course, we refer to those cases which we presume are serious ones, given the conversions and other positive signs which accompany them. If Our

Lady or Lord wish to make themselves be heard so often then they must have good reason to do so. For us these reasons are clear enough: a decline in the faith, the cooling of charity (which was set alight by Jesus in the world through His sacrifice and His Holy Spirit) and the spreading of iniquity (cfr. Mt 24:11), and the consequences which all can see. Fr. A.

### **Difficult missionary work in land of sects**

An SOS was launched by the youthful Missionary Community of Villaregia in Rovigo which counts 360 members (priests, religious and families). Called to evangelize the immense land of Latin America which suffers for lack of Pastors, they set up a new mission in the diocese of Campo Limpo (outskirts of San Paulo) where there are 2.5 million faithful and only 25 priests and 75 lay workers. Here Mass is celebrated in some villages only every 5 or 6 months and some have never seen a priest.

Like the rest of Latin America, this diocese is easy ground for sects financed by American groups. The missionaries say they are thankful for the presence of the Charismatic Movement which offers a remedy to the sects because of its same fervour in the Spirit and fidelity to the Gospel. These Missionaries also work in Côte d'Ivoire where the Christians are extremely poor but ever more numerous and fervent. They appeal to our prayers.

### **25 June 1981: also Obici part of Medjugorje history**

The hamlet of Obici (in Modena, Italy) is all that is left of the large estate with its relative village and mansion bought by the wealthy Obizzi family at the end of the 15th century.

In the 1970's, when a group of children felt the need to open up the chapel close to the mansion which had become a stable, they met with repeated refusal by the owners till when, after years of prayer to the Queen of Peace, they obtained permission and were given the keys on the 24th June 1981. The day after, 25 June, they began work on the chapel. A few weeks later they and the parish priest were very surprised to find, a metre and a half under the ground, immersed in the mud, a box containing a picture of Mary with Child receiving flowers from an angel; it was in perfect condition.

Stefano, the "leader" of the group of young prayerful workers, asked to be received by the Pope. John Paul II received the group in Rome on 26th May 1982 and blessed the holy picture saying: "Take this picture to your Church and Our Lady will pour out many graces." And many are the graces which have been received in this church: conversions, healings, vocations... and prayer.

After the conflict broke out in the former Yugoslavia in June 1991, prayer was said by the Church of Obici for peace, and people began bringing in supplies, in great amounts, for the refugees and others in need.

At first these were taken to the refugee camps in Croatia, then to Bosnia, naturally with stop-overs in Medjugorje. It was here that they heard of the story of the apparitions and realized that there were many facts that strangely coincided with their own "story": in Medjugorje a group of children were seeing the Queen of Peace while on the same day other children were beginning work in Obici to restore a church where Our Lady was invoked as the Queen of Peace.

Since then a direct line has tied the two places and each time a truck-load of aid was taken to the former Yugoslavia, the first stop was always Medjugorje. Marija Pavlovic, Fr. Slavko and Fr. Leonard Orec have repeatedly visited Obici, forming a deep bond between the two places.

On the 1st January 1995 the Church of Obici was elevated to the state of Marian Shrine and entrusted to the youthful family of the Brothers of St. John from France.

Nicola

**Marta Mirkiewicz from Cracow**, untiring sister who for years edited the Polish edition of Echo, returned to the Father on 5th March. May Our Lady give her a place in heaven equal to the dedication she put into serving Mary's cause. The Polish edition will now be taken care of by Ewa Jurasz and friends.

\* **International retreat for priests** with prayer, conference, dialogue, liturgy, in Medj.: 1-5 July '97, organized by Frs. Slavko and Cosimo. Priests with special charismas for inner healing, other experts, attending. Bookings: fax 387-88-651444.

Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him (Sir 15:17).

## THE MAIL

From **Albania**: May Mary bring peace to our poor, tormented country. One thing is certain: in those areas where Mary's message has been heard not one bullet has been shot... The Orthodox in the south are also happy to receive Echo. (Roberto Prendushi)

From **Egypt**: I receive Echo and I read it with great interest. I use it for my meditation. In your prayers please remember the Christians of Egypt who are unable to speak up and who are persecuted and killed by the followers of Islam. How much suffering and humiliation it costs to be faithful to Christ! (Sr. C. Magnan)

From **Hong Kong**: Rosa Kong wrote to thank for the copies of Echo and to ask for prayers, that someone may be inspired to translate it into Chinese for the benefit of the mainland Chinese. In Hong Kong there is already Anthony Tsoi who translates articles from the Echo into Chinese (Queen of Peace group, 770 King's Road, C-610, HK).

From **Switzerland**: After the words of admiration for the evangelical simplicity of the Echo, "which must not change," Fr. Gerolamo writes: "In the hearts of many, including priests, there is a sense of loss caused by the absence of Jesus' Spirit Whom people no longer seek, thinking that they can manage on their own. Thus, we must lift our eyes all the more to Jesus and Mary who live in heaven and Who are our help." (Abbey of Einsiedeln)

From **Norway**: Helge Gudheim writes: "We read the Echo with great interest... but for us Lutherans of Norway the many things which concern Marian apparitions are new and rather strange... Has the Virgin Mary ever revealed herself in non-Catholic areas, where her apparitions, one would think, would be more necessary? ... Another problem for Lutherans is not being able to receive Communion in Medjugorje..." Concerning Marian apparitions, in these later years there have been some in non-Catholic areas, such as Grushevo in Ukraine and Smolensk in Russia (Orthodox), and in Cairo (Coptics). The Italian magazine, Jesus, published an article on this in its latest issue; Helge, we will send you a more detailed reply by mail.

From **South Africa**: Genevieve Henning says that in no. 132 we contradict ourselves: "On one hand you disagree with anything catastrophic, on the other you talk of 'Mary's last call.' ... Everyone knows that the earth is heading towards ecological disaster..."

Yes, if there is to be a disaster it will come because of the disorder created by men; it will be self-inflicted. Our Lady's calls are the last ones, not in an absolute sense, but in the order of time and they are given so that we will convert. The loss of faith is the greatest of all catastrophes. Yes, there is a lot of evil in the world; who can't see it? On the other hand, it is also balanced out by a great amount of good and holiness, by prayer and sacrifice. This is what God expects from us: it allows Him to use His mercy. This is all He wants!

**On periodic continence and Marija Dugandzic's** witness ("for me contraception is also avoiding intercourse on the fertile days" - Echo 132, page 7) - the Magisterium says:

"The methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods are in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them and favour the education of an authentic freedom." (CCC 2370) Nonetheless, article no. 2368 invites spouses: "to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood." (P. Gottardi MD)

"What joy when we die as Jesus takes us by the hand, gently and softly leading us on high; calmly forgiving us our sins, soothing all our sorrows and anxieties, releasing us from the living for a time; uniting us to our departed loved ones for all eternity to share in the light and love of the Father. What joy when we die!" (Written by **Colin Macnaught** 26 Feb.'82) Colin joyfully died in the Father on 11th December 1996.

We are thankful to him and his family for the work he did at the Sentinel (Sydney) for the distribution of the Echo in Australasia.

May the Heart of Jesus, alive in the Eucharist, and the Heart of Mary open our hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit, that we may bear much fruit. [I bless you](#) all in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[Fr. Angelo](#)

Villanova,  
27 April 1997

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\* Travelling to Medj. By ROAD from Italy: bus from Trieste (bus station next to train station) leaves regularly every evening at 6pm and arrives in Medj. at 8am. Reservations ring Italy 040-425001. By SEA - From Ancona Italy to Split. Departures from Ancona: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays: 9pm, Saturdays 10pm. Departure from Split: Sundays Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays. Reservations fax Italy 071-202618, or 071-202296. By AIR via Zagreb to Split - at Split take bus to Medj.

Promise that you will not offend Jesus and that you will not insult Him nor the Cross.