



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

139

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Our Lady's message of 25 March:

Dear Children, Also today I invite you to fasting and renunciation. My Children, renounce that which impedes you from being closer to Jesus. In particular I invite you to pray because it is only with prayer that you can dominate your will and discover God's will, even in the least of things.

Through your day-to-day living, my Children, you become an example and you testify that you either live for Jesus or are against Him and against His will.

My Children, I desire that you become apostles of Love. From your love, my Children, it is seen that you are mine. Thank you for responding to my call.

Pray and Fast to accept God's Will

On the day of the Annunciation Mary invites us to renounce all those things which impede us from being closer to Jesus. In a continuation of the previous message, Mary, a true teacher, goes straight to the heart of the matter. Knowing that Jesus is our life, She teaches us to remain close to Him and to renounce everything that removes us from Him.

St. John of the Cross said: "You don't need a rope to tie down a bird to stop it from flying; all you need is a thread." Threads are the things which our human nature loves in a disorderly way, and though they may not appear sinful, they tie us down and occupy space in our hearts, keeping us detached from Jesus. Thus, we must give priority, not to the things we like, but to the things God likes, and to what is dutiful and useful for our fellow men. God will give us the light to see the things which please Him, and help us discover new horizons.

The things we renounce for love's sake will help us to dominate our rebellious will and to discover and love God's will. How can this be done? It is clear that the way is prayer! "It is only with prayer that you can overcome your will and discover God's will even in the least of things."

It is not enough to know God's will in a general sense; we need to discover God's will even in the little things, and substitute our will with His. This is possible only with prayer, however the result will be incredibly great, it will be communion with Jesus in our day-to-day lives.

Our entire day must be lived in His Name - this is what our prayer should lead us to. We need to give as much space as possible to God so He can fill it with His Holy Spirit, to allow Jesus to live in us - in all our actions, and decisions, and our ways of relating with others - so that bit by bit we become His and only His. Then we will be able to say with sincerity: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20). This indwelling of Christ in us is made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit; however, we

must also do our part. Hence Mary's constant invitation to prayer and fasting. These two things must be very important if She keeps on reminding us to do them!

Fasting is sobriety at meals; it is reducing things to the essential, and the essential is bread and water. The fasting asked of us, though, is more than this; it has to do with our way of being at all times, such as: remaining silent when words might hurt, being humble before the orgy of pride, submission rather than dominion, donation rather than possession. It takes prayer, much prayer, before we are able to live this fast which is renouncement of everything which impedes Jesus from growing in us.

Mary makes it clear that there are only two possibilities: to either live for Jesus or be against Him and against His will. He who is not with me is against me (Lk 11:23). Our every action, our every gesture is either for, or is against Jesus. No act, no matter how insignificant, is neutral; our attitude, our thoughts, reflect either the acceptance of or the refusal of God. St. Paul went as far as saying: Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom 14:23).

Prayer, and nothing else, gives us the strength to overcome our will, to give it direction and to subordinate it to God's will. Thanks to prayer we will discover God even in the smallest of things. Hence, every gesture of love; every sacrifice, no matter how little, bears with it an infinite capacity for redemption and resurrection, for us and for others, because Jesus multiplies its effects, as with the five loaves and two fish (Mk 6:38-44) with which Jesus fed more than 5,000 people. As yeast is hidden in the flour, so are we to be in the world; without imposing ourselves upon anyone, we are to be the yeast of Love in the world, to ensure the Bread of Life for mankind.

Our Lady wants Her children to radiate light to everyone so others are won over by love; that the flame of Her Heart may descend upon all men. Her wish is that we become apostles of Love. Jesus said: They will know you are mine if you love one another, as I have loved you; and Our Lady repeats: From your love it is seen that you are mine.

Message of 25 April 1998:

Dear Children, I invite you today to open yourselves up to God through prayer; like a flower which opens up to the rays of the morning sun.

My little Children, do not fear! I am with you and I intercede for each of you before God, that your hearts may accept the gift of conversion. It is the only way, my Children, for you to comprehend the importance of Grace in these times; and God will be closer to you. Thank you for responding to my call.

Open self through Prayer to attain Conversion

Without tiring, Our Lady again invites us to pray, for everything depends on it, and without it nothing can be moved. If we open ourselves up to God, like a flower which opens to the rays of the morning sun, then life in us is revived, we are given to understand what God wants from us, and we enter into a new relationship of love with Him and our fellow men. Prayer which does not take us to conversion is not true prayer; it is not an encounter with God before which evil cannot stand.

Why would Mary tell us immediately after not to fear? We have so many fears for the future, and worries for our health and family, etc. which impede us from being open to God; they make our prayer anxious and fruitless. The prayer which Mary speaks of brings us conversion; it takes us from fear to trust in God. Fear is worry about oneself; it is restlessness and disappointment. Conversion is an open heart; a heart

lifted up to God which trusts in an almighty Father, which feels safe in His arms.

Being near to God will cause in us feelings of disgust for sin. Life with God will be so beautiful that sin will frighten us. To know how great is His love, which we offended or ignored, will make us cry out of repentance, but also out of joy.

Conversion is to abandon our pharisaical ways of thinking, our ideas, our material and spiritual wealth. Our Lady has asked us many times to be surrendered completely to God; to place all our trust in Him, but we are afraid to do so. Perhaps we still have too much trust in ourselves, and the idea of total abandonment in Him frightens us.

Conversion is the target of Our Lady's messages, so far, and prayer is the means by which to reach it. Prayer which opens us up to the Lord, is prayer which requires time; during which one may offer petitions, or let God guide us and penetrate us. A quick, superficial prayer said out of habit does not open our hearts, just as a flower cannot open in unsuitable conditions where the earth is poor and air and water lack.

Conversion is a gift from God; it created the saints. Mary assures us that She will help us receive it. I am with you and I intercede for each of you. Knowing that She loves and knows us just the way a mother loves and knows each of her children, and that She intercedes for each of us, is reason for immense joy and hope, and should get rid of our fear of failing.

Mary is doing all She can so we receive the great grace of conversion. Then you will comprehend the grace of my presence here, as if to say: Can't you see that for the sake of your conversion I have been amongst you for 17 years? I am here to bring you closer to God, that you may live in Him and He in you. God is infinite; thus our flower will continue to open up without ever being able to contain all the sun and life of God. That is why our prayer which opens us up to Him, must never cease, and our Christian commitment must never stop. Fr. Angelo

The Pope on Christ's coming - At the general audience of 22 April the Pope spoke of Christ's second coming at the end of time. "This eschatological perspective is a continuous call to hope and to involvement in the Church and in the world. The final event is to be understood not only as a future goal, but as a reality which began with Christ's historical coming." This two-fold dimension, of present and future, "is apparent in Jesus' words. Hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven (Mt 26,64) - this is the historical process which has already begun and is moving towards its fullness," and is its present sense. "They will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory (Mk 13:26) - these words indicate that the second coming of the Son of Man will not take place in the weakness of flesh, but in divine power."

"The apocalyptic images of the eschatological discourse about the end of all things express the precariousness of the world and the sovereign power of Christ, in whose hands has been placed the destiny of humanity. History advances towards its goal, but Christ has not specified any chronological date. Attempts to predict the end of the world are therefore deceptive and misleading. Christ has assured us only that the end will not come before the Gospel of the kingdom is preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations (cf. Mt 24:14). The evangelization of the world involves the profound transformation of the human person under the influence of Christ's grace...

At Youth Festival Pope speaks of Cross

On the 22nd April a gust of fresh air blew over St. John's Piazza in Rome, which usually holds left-wing meetings. The square was alive with the joy of the youth, and oddly enough, the theme of the day was:

"Take up your Cross." Fifty thousand Roman youth turned up for the preparatory meeting in view of the XIII World Youth Day to be held in Rome in the Jubilee year of 2000. John Paul II used no half terms; he spoke the truth, which liberates people from their illusions and keeps them safe from disappointment. The cross is not a stranger to the life of man. It is rather the first letter of God's alphabet. It is written in the life of man, and to desire to exclude it from one's existence is to want to ignore the reality of the human condition.

Everyone experiences the cross: We were made for life, yet we cannot eliminate suffering and trials from our personal history. Even the youth experience this in their daily lives: when the family lacks harmony, when study is difficult, when one's feelings are not reciprocal, when it becomes impossible to find a job, when for economical reasons one is forced to mortify the project of forming a family, when one has to fight sickness or solitude, and the risk of becoming a victim of the dangerous void where values don't exist. Before all this, says the Pope, you must watch out for the widespread cult of the ephemeral which assigns values to that which appears beautiful and pleasing; it wants to make you believe that the cross should be removed.

In the face of the illusory myths of the world (success, rapid career and achievement at all costs, sexuality without responsibility, living without projects and respect for others), the Pope warns, open your eyes up wide, my dear young people, for this is not the way that leads to joy and life, but is the path which sinks into sin and death. Jesus makes no illusions; with the truth of His words, which sound hard but fill the heart with peace, He shows us the secret of authentic living.

He is God-with-us, Who came to share our existence. He does not abandon us on the cross. If the cross is accepted it generates salvation and serenity; the many testimonies among the young believers are proof. In St. Peter's a few days later - on Palm Sunday - another stage in the preparation of the World Youth Day was held when the young French youth, guided by Cardinal Lustiger from Paris, handed over the big wooden cross, the symbol of the WYD, to the Roman youth, guided by Cardinal Ruini from Rome. The last World Youth Day was held in Paris; the next one will be in Rome. The young people pass on the 'baton' (which in Italian is called 'testimony') in an ideal relay among the various countries. Over the next two years it will go around all the dioceses of Italy. The significance of the celebration was summarized by the Pope himself during the homily: Your choice, young Christians, is clear: discover in the cross of Christ the sense of your existence and the fount of your missionary enthusiasm. Mirco

Pope in Nigeria, voice of the poor and oppressed

After Cuba, the Pope visited Nigeria where he voiced the dramatic situation and the hope of all Africa. Nigeria is in the grip of a military regime - the president elected with a liberal vote has been in prison for 4 years - and social development is undermined by corruption and internal warfare. To this suffering nation the Pope took the announcement of resurrection.

A mighty voice rose to demand justice; a man who walks with difficulty, and exhausted by the heat, he did not hush before the nation's leaders: All Nigerians must work to rid society of everything that offends the dignity of the human person or violates human rights. This means reconciling differences, overcoming ethnic rivalries, and injecting honesty, efficiency and competence into the art of governing. It requires men and women who profoundly love their own people and wish to serve rather than be served.

For the Mass of 22 March in the Catholic city of Onitsha (42° in the shade), the two million people present for the beatification of Fr. Tansi arrived hours ahead of the Pope, and danced and sung during the

wait. The Mass continued till 2 pm. With the exposition of the relics and the unveiling of the blessed's picture, a wave of exultation and rejoicing broke out over the crowd. The Pope said of Bl. Tansi: a man of God and a man of the people, he spread the joy of reconciliation and restored communion with God. The Pope invited Nigerians to defend the family; and while praising the African culture and tradition for the way in which it holds family in the highest regard, he also denounced the racket of prostitution and child abduction. "We must all work for a world in which no child will be deprived of peace and security, of a stable family life, of the right to grow up without fear and anxiety."

The Pope met a group of Muslim leaders (16 years ago when the Pope first visited Nigeria, they refused to meet him). May Christians and Muslims collaborate in the defence of life and in the promotion of human rights for all; that there be no more violence in the name of religion.

The Pope proposes neither a political nor a social project, but the project of God in the world; that is his strength and the hope for all men of good will.

Changes in Cuba; not only due to greater religious freedom, but to a change in US politics. Italian press reported on 24.3.98 that the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright - who met the Pope twice during her visit to Italy - said that the recent humanitarian aperture towards Cuba came about after the Pope's visit to Havana.

The Pope's Cross. He is a man whose daily activities are enormous, who is weighed down by his years, various operations, and by moral and physical suffering which accompany him daily, but he has a super abundance of will power, and for love of the Church and fellow men he subjects himself to gruelling voyages to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. When he departed from Rome the temperature was 15°; in Nigeria the temperature was 50°. To see him damp with perspiration, under the weight of his vestments, to celebrate a lengthy Mass, read discourses and pronounce words without giving in to tiredness and fatigue, was to see the Face of the suffering Christ on his way up Calvary, with the only aim of carrying out God's Will till the very end..

Thus, the Pope advances amid suffering; ever ready, always prepared, for his many appointments: with the crowds, liturgical assemblies, and individuals. If we compare his cross with the little pains that we are unable to bear we will comprehend what it means to give oneself totally to the Gospel's cause. But the Lord keeps him: his mind is incredibly clear, and present, and his moral strength is such that he lacks nothing to enable him to face his huge job every day.

* The Holy Father will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his election as Pope on the 16th October 1998. May our prayer for him never cease! On that day we could offer him the gift of a Holy Mass, for his intentions.

The Holy Spirit: the great stranger

When St. Paul asked the disciples of Ephesus if they had received the Holy Spirit they said: 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:2). There must be a reason why even in our times the Holy Spirit has been called "the great stranger.' In truth He is the true conductor of our spiritual life. Hence, in this year of the Holy Spirit, we will try to know Him and His work with this brief, but rich lesson by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa.

1. Does the old testament mention the Holy Spirit? The opening words of the Bible are: In the beginning

God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters (Gn 1:1). The world had been created but it was without form. There was chaos and darkness in the world; it was an abyss. That is, until the Lord's Spirit began to move over the waters; then, creation began to emerge. And there was the cosmos.

We have before us a piece of beautiful symbolism. St. Ambrose interpreted it thus: The Holy Spirit is He Who makes the world pass from chaos to cosmos, that is, from confusion and darkness to harmony. In the Old Testament the features of the Holy Spirit are not yet clearly defined, but we do learn of the way He acts, and it is manifested mostly in two ways, as if He uses two different wave lengths.

Charismatic Action. God's Spirit comes; rather, it bursts onto some people, giving them extraordinary powers, though temporarily, so they can fulfil certain tasks for Israel, God's people. It comes onto the artists who have to plan and realize the objects of worship; it enters the kings of Israel so they can suitably govern God's people: Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward (1 Sam 16:13). The same Spirit comes onto God's prophets so His will is revealed to the people; it is the Spirit of prophecy which animated the prophets of the Old Testament up to the time of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord; and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin (Mic 3:8).

This is the charismatic action of God's Spirit; action destined mostly for the good of the community, through those people who receive it.

There is another manner in which God's Spirit is manifested; it is His sanctifying action meant to transform people from within; to give them a new heart and new feelings. The receiver of the Lord's Spirit in this case is no longer the community, but the individual. We see this second type of action towards the end of the Old Testament, in the book of Ezekiel, where God says: A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ez 36:26-27). It can also be seen in the famous psalm no. 51, the "Miserere," where the psalmist implores: Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me.

We begin to see the Spirit of the Lord as an inner transforming power, which changes man, raising him above his natural wickedness.

A mysterious power. In the Old Testament, however, the features of the Holy Spirit are still not well defined. St. Gregory Nazianzen said of the way the Holy Spirit was revealed: "In the Old Testament we clearly get to know the Father (God, the Creator) and we learn a little of the Son (in fact, some messianic texts speak of Him, though in a veiled manner). In the New Testament we come to know very well the Son because He became flesh and came among us, but we also get to know a little of the Holy Spirit: Jesus announces to the disciples that after Him will come the Paraclete. At long last," continues St. Gregory, "in our times, of the Church after the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit is among us and we can know Him. God's way of teaching is very gradual; almost light after light, in a slow rhythm, He takes us to the full light of the Trinity."

The Old Testament is entirely pervaded by the breath of the Holy Spirit. But, of course, we cannot forget that the books of the OT are His greatest sign, because according to Christian doctrine, they were inspired by Him.

His first action was to give us the Bible, which speaks of Him and of His work in the hearts of men. When we open the Bible with faith, and not just as scholars or out of curiosity, we meet the mysterious breath of the Spirit. It is not an abstract or fleeting experience; many Christians when they read the Bible

are aware of the Spirit's fragrance and are deeply convinced of the living action of the Word: "That word was for me; it is light for my life."

Is western rationalism a Christian value? - "The limit of western culture is rationalism, which is wanting to reduce historical or human events to something tangible. Thus, God of the western world is no longer mysterious, for he has undergone 'theological therapy.'

The western world thought it could make others fit God into schemes and human parameters, so that fear of God appears totally overcome. One of my fellow brothers said: "They made him so small, it's as though they needed to put Him in their pocket." But God is the Supreme Being, the true Lord of the universe. This western way of thinking inevitably creates tension in the relations with our cultures and traditions, given that Africa on the whole is still far from this.

(Msgr. Milingo)

Rationalist theologians - I was convinced that all theologians were God-fearing men, appointed to give explanations and to make others 'grow' in the faith. What a surprise when (at least in some cases) I discovered that their opinions were contrary to Church teachings, and moreover, widely amplified by the mass media. Rather than serene and constructive criticism, theirs was dissent. It is all fruit of rationalism, so domineering that even the 'irrational' has to respond to the criteria of our 'rationality' and physical 'laws'.

(From "Alla ricerca del Paradiso perduto")

David's Five Stones

From Bologna Cardinal Biffi said in response to the observation that too much time is spent on organization and management of the Church's various structures: "We have all heard of the fight between David and the giant Goliath. In the beginning Saul made David wear his armour, but it was so heavy that David took it off and went to look for five stones in the river.

Well, I believe that present-day Christianity is in a similar situation. It has been clothed with heavy armour: an incredible amount of assemblies, meetings, councils and congresses. Commissions are formed, these are linked to others on a regional level, then on national and inter-national levels. The armour gets heavier while David gets smaller.

I calculated that in one year I spent 58 days at meetings; two months, not for pastoral activity and to announce Christ, but to discuss how to organize pastoral activity. Too much! We also, need to rid ourselves of the armour and go looking for the five stones in the river; that is, for the profound meaning of Jesus Christ, sole Saviour of the world, and for the deep meaning of man's identity. In other words, the profound truths of Christianity, and make them become the start to our life and to our pastoral activity." ("Avvenire", 12 April 1998)

In Medjugorje, the Queen of Peace said that our "five stones" must be: prayer, fasts, the Eucharist, the Word of God, and confession; nothing else.

News from the blessed land

"Medjugorje: gift and grace" says Brazilian Bishop

Archbishop Murillo Krieger from Brazil was in Medjugorje in February for a 3 day retreat with about thirty priests from his diocese. Not his first time here, at the Mass on the 27th he mentioned his other visits (the first time in 1985, immediately after he was consecrated bishop), saying that Medjugorje is ever present in his heart. "For me Medjugorje is a gift and a responsibility; and a grace. The Blessed Virgin gives to all those who come here the chance to find the same tender love that She manifested during the wedding feast at Cana. The Virgin says to us too: "Do what he asks of you."

If our hearts were ready to follow Christ then everything that the Lord wanted to fulfil through Medjugorje could certainly be fulfilled. Is it so difficult to give our heart to Jesus Christ? Medjugorje is a great responsibility; I understood that the first time I came here. By observing and listening to the visionaries I came to the conclusion that they need our prayer to remain faithful to their mission. From that moment I decided to dedicate to them my first Rosary each day. This is my little gift; it is how I offer them my support and help."

Australian Bishop: "Medjugorje is peace"

In February 1998 the auxiliary bishop of Canberra, Australia, Msgr. Patrick Power, visited Medjugorje. This is what he said:

"I have been a priest for 33 years and a bishop for 12. My mother was a wonderful woman and very devoted to the Blessed Virgin. My father particularly venerated Our Lady of Lourdes; and I was born on the day dedicated to Her, the 11th February. In January 1993 I took part in a prayer meeting in Canberra with Fra Slavko Barbaric and the visionary, Ivan. I was profoundly touched by what I saw and heard. The message which Ivan referred, and the way in which he said it, really struck me. He spoke of peace and fasts and of deep faith. I had heard this type of message before, many times; I myself had spoken on them, but the simplicity with which it was all said was for me exceptionally important. I remember how my mother lived it all; for her it was a unique event.

In May 1993 I visited Bishop Dubrovnik in Puljic, so I decided to visit Medjugorje. I was already a bishop, but I came in incognito. It was during the war and there weren't many pilgrims. I celebrated Mass, and I was moved a great deal by many things. This is my second visit here; I came with a group from Australia, with my sister and her three children. I have not come with any particular expectations, and though I am here for my family, I must admit that the Virgin has granted me many graces.

I have found a profound peace, in particular after having listened to Vicka's testimony. It is the same peace which I felt in 1993, when I first heard of the messages. It all helps me to consolidate my priestly mission and work as a bishop. Medjugorje is PEACE. I told all the members in my group of the inner peace which I have experienced here, and when I see what is happening in my group - people returning to the faith, prayer, confession - I just have to tell others to come here.

I was especially struck by the confessions, by the evening prayer programme and the meetings with the visionaries. Not only I, but also Msgr. Kennedy who has been here several times, tells his faithful to come here.

I wish to say: thank you! Thank you to the faithful and the priests who work here. Your testimony of faith, love and prayer, and the way you welcome everyone is very important for us pilgrims!"

Bishop from New Zealand, John Dew, came before Easter. He said: "I came here after seeing how my parishioners returned with the good fruits of prayer, fasts and a renewed sacramental life; they became

active members of the community and formed prayer groups. The experience of fasts and prayer was very useful to me. I will find the time to pray prior to Mass and to pass on to my diocese what I have received."

Bishop from USA, Donald Montrose, came after being invited by a group of pilgrims. He said: "I feel a special presence of the Blessed Virgin here. What is happening here is wonderful. I am aware of the responsibility and of the suffering of the Franciscans." (Press Bulletin)

Apparition to Mirjana: become my light!

Mirjana's extraordinary appointment with Our Lady on the 18th March was at 2 pm at the basketball field of Sr. Elvira's Upper Room Community.

At 1 pm, when Fr. Slavko began to guide the prayer, the field was already filled with pilgrims; I would say that there were a few thousand pilgrims. Mirjana then arrived with her husband Marko and other relatives and friends. She kneeled before the platform put there for the occasion where there was a cross, a statue of Our Lady and plants. Youth from the Community accompanied the prayer with guitars and songs. Mirjana and Marko also took turns to lead the Rosary prayer.

At about 3.30 Mirjana, who had been praying with the others, went into ecstasy. In the beginning she was truly radiant, then she became more serious, to the point of appearing sad. More than once she squinted her eyes as if to see or concentrate better. There were also moments of serenity.

At the end of the apparition, which lasted 4-5 minutes, Mirjana cried for the emotion at the moment of separation. She left shortly after, and the assembly broke up. That evening, Fr. Slavko read the message in the principal languages, adding that Mirjana said that Our Lady spoke to her about the messages. Of course she did not say what was said. The message is: "Dear Children, I invite you to become my light; to give light to all those who live in darkness and to fill their hearts with peace, and with my Son. Thank you for responding to my call."

Testimony by Alberto Bonifacio

15 year old: "The Lord is telling me to walk" and he walks for the first time

It was the evening of 18 March and some members of my group, on their way back from central Bosnia where they had taken aid, had arrived at the church just as the Mass was ending.

The evening before, during Mass, they had noticed a young boy in a wheel chair who, because he was yelling out something incomprehensible, was taken out. Then we saw him again at the Upper Room Community, during Mirjana's apparition. Some of us exchanged a word with him and learnt that his name was Andrea and that he was 15 years old. He was there with his parents and a group of friends. There was no coordination in his movements; his hands were contracted and his face disfigured.

Therefore, the words he pronounced were incomprehensible. He was, on the other hand, very social. It was hard not to notice him, for there was no one else in a wheel chair at that time.

So, at 6 pm on Wednesday the 18th March, when Mass had just begun, Andrea started to call out

something. His father took him out of the wheel chair and sat him on the pew. All the time calling out, he started walking towards the altar in very uncertain steps. As he was disturbing, Fra Svetozar asked that he be taken out. In the meantime, Andrea's father, amazed and worried, followed Andrea very closely in case he should fall.

Andrea turned around and went all the way down the central aisle on his own. We learnt later that he was saying as he was walking: "The Lord is telling me to walk!"

Just before 7 pm, other friends from our group noticed Andrea outside the church. He was in his wheel chair and those around him looked rather excited. One of them asked him to get up and walk. He repeated the same phrase, but this time it could be clearly understood. His face and hands had become normal, relaxed. With someone following him closely all the time, in his uncertain steps, he walked passed the front of the church and down to the confessionals.

His father was sobbing; his mother was also in tears. Nori from our group asked his mother if Andrea had walked before. "No," she said, "he started just a while ago in church. He was disturbing the others; we couldn't understand what he wanted, so we brought him out..." Everyone was crying by then. Andrea was also crying and was very excited. Perhaps he was beginning to understand that his life had changed for ever because he had been touched by the immense Love of God in this extraordinary, marvellous event. Our group looked on as Andrea's group made its way back to the hostel; moved by profound admiration, its members sang to God: "Praise and glory to You Lord Jesus! Infinite thanks to You Mother, mediatrix of all graces!" (Alberto Bonifacio)

Easter celebrations drew huge crowds to Medjugorje; about 10,000 people. The liturgy of holy Thursday and good Friday was celebrated in 9 different languages. A big bronze statue of the Risen Christ, made by sculptor Andrej Ajdic, was placed in the area behind the church.

Notice for pilgrims - In the summer period the evening programme will be: 6 pm: first two mysteries of the Rosary; 7 pm: Holy Mass, followed by the blessings and the third mystery of the Rosary. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10-11 pm, and after the evening Mass on Thursdays. Adoration of the Cross immediately after Mass on Fridays. Every Sunday at 3pm: Rosary for peace on the hill of apparitions. Every Friday at 3pm: Way of the Cross on Krizevac. Masses for the various language groups are held during the morning; times can be agreed upon. Enquiries: Information Office. ph. (387) 88651988, every day 8am - 8pm.

"Bulwark of love" is the name of the movement of Croatian mothers and brides for peace. They organize a novena of prayers for nine last Saturdays of the month. They were in Medjugorje on the 28th February, together with relatives and friends; they confessed and participated in the celebration of the Eucharist, and they prayed for those who died at war. Many foreign pilgrims joined them, for in the war years they experienced our suffering as if it were theirs, and they made our country and our plight known to the world, and they brought aid to the suffering peoples of our land.
(From the Press Bulletin)

After a long absence, **Ivan** returned to Medjugorje with his family from the USA. With his arrival, the two weekly appoint-ments on the mountain have also resumed.

Marija was not present with the other visionaries at Easter; three small children don't always allow plans to be fulfilled.

Vicka will not see Our Lady for 45 days. She herself announced it to a group of French pilgrims on the 21st April. The Gospa had told her the day before. Thus, the apparitions to Vicka will resume on 6 June.

This is the fourth time that Our Lady has asked this sacrifice of Vicka. The first time, in 1984, Vicka was very sick, and the interruption lasted 50 days. Vicka said: "The Blessed Virgin asked and I accepted." The other five visionaries have never experienced this type of interruption.

God's Heart has reply for everyone. A husband and wife from France were contemplating separation so one of their sons offered a novena to Our Lady; love once again reigned in their home. The spouses say that their home is now a joyful one, that they are not frightened by the word 'sacrifice' anymore, and that now they have peace and they love one another. They recite the Rosary every day with their children and go to Medjugorje when possible to thank Our Lady for the grace received. "We discovered that God's heart has an answer for every problem."

(Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

For those who generally fly via Split or Dubrovnik: the civilian airport of Mostar will be re-opened mid May. Mostar is only a 45 minute drive from Medjugorje.

Medjugorje movement sifted at Neum

From 9 - 13 March the 5th international seminar was held in Neum on the Adriatic coast. The theme, "The Spiritual Movement of Medjugorje" was presented to more than 150 people from 17 different countries. The first of the three talks was on new spiritual movements by Dr. Marianne Tigges; the second by Fr. Dirk Grotheus on the Medjugorje movement within the Church; and the third on new evangelization by Fra Dugandzic who also spoke on the division within the Church of Herzegovina, saying that only sacrifice and love can heal it.

The meeting with the Franciscans from Medjugorje was very fruitful. In reply to an English-speaking priest who criticized the translation of the messages into English, Fr. Slavko said that the messages are not that easy to comprehend in Croatian either because Our Lady uses an archaic style. For this reason, he invited everyone not to make corrections to their translations. [We think that Fr. Slavko did not refer to the slight linguistical corrections made to the translations. Editor's note.]

Fr. Rupcic's talk was both profound and enlightening; and Fr. Slavko's homily on the last day was splendid. Out of the visionaries, only Ivanka came to greet us, accompanied by her family.

To get to the bottom line, the question is: "What is Medjugorje?" and the answer is given by Fra Ivan Dugandzic who said: "The spirituality of Medjugorje is not a spiritual movement within the Church, but it is the Church in movement. And in Medjugorje there is room for everyone - for the little and the big, for the faithful and theologians, and for priests and bishops."

It was suggested that all those who try to live according to the spirituality of Medjugorje, should recite an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be for the parish, that the Church may acknowledge the apparitions of the Queen of Peace. At the beginning of the apparitions, the Blessed Virgin said that She chose the parish of Medjugorje to be a fount from which the river of Her works would flow.

Document by Italian group - The Italian group drew up a document to stress the singularity of the spiritual movement of Medjugorje, for the spiritual renewal in the Church and the immense charitable work that came of it for those in need, without distinction of religion, both during and after the war. "It is not by chance," it goes on to say, "that God chose to send His Mother to this place marked by division, to transform it into a prophetic place of unity and ecumenism. We see in the sufferings of the Franciscans of Herzegovina and in their desire to obey the Bishop a concrete reply to the evangelical call to unity and love.

It is important that the faithful not be left on their own to discern such a big event. We feel the need for a pronouncement, even temporary, by a Commission nominated by the Holy Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to be proposed by the many theologians and Bishops who care about what Mary, the Mother of the Church, is telling us. In reference to the message of 25 August 1991, we want to believe and hope that Medjugorje will be for the entire Church the fulfilment of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

DECLARATION which concluded the seminar, (12 March 1998):

1. We are grateful to God that He has given to the Church of our times new impulse through the Holy Spirit, creating at times real spiritual movements, and we are happy that Medjugorje is one of these.
2. Through our spirituality, we desire to protect the authenticity of the spiritual movement in Medjugorje, and to testify to authentic Christian living based on the Virgin's messages, which are the essence of the Gospel, and to contribute to the renewal of the Church.
3. To give more meaning to the spiritual movement which has gushed forth from the Virgin's messages, it is necessary that the world, and the local Church to which Medjugorje belongs, be prepared to work in favour of peace.

(Alberto Bonifacio)



Jelena said: "Seek the Lord's face"

Jelena Vasilj said to the Italian pilgrims on 2 January 1998.

... My experience is different to that of the other visionaries. I do not have visions in the way they have, although what I experience is a type of vision. More specifically, it is the gift of an intense presence of Mary when I am in prayer. We say that it is an experience of the heart, because it is not just an idea, or a thought which comes to mind, but a true presence of a true person.

It takes the heart to really meet another person, otherwise the encounter is superficial; and it is the same with God in this prayer experience. The heart really is involved and thus we speak of locution of the heart.

The experience began one and a half years after the beginning of the ap-paritions, first with the presence of my Angel and then of Mary. When I think back I see how the Angel had prepared me for what would come. The first thing he asked of me was con-fession, thus, a purified heart so I could see.

I think this must be the first step in a serious Christian life; that is, to ask forgiveness. Our Lady then teaches us to pray the same way, so that when we are before God we ask pardon and mercy. This is the first step towards conversion. After two weeks I began to hear Mary and at times Jesus.

Another girl joined the prayer and in March 1983 she began to experience the same thing, though in the beginning she said she only heard Mary. Her name is Marjana. In October that same year she also began to receive messages. I think that this is our task, to receive illuminations and inspirations and pass them on, especially to prayer group which Our Lady asked us to form in the parish. There were about 60 of us and together we tried to give deeper meaning to the messages which Our Lady gave through the visionaries.

Above all Our Lady was teaching us how to pray. Our Lady always puts prayer before all else, because our Christian lives get strength from the encounter with God. Thus, without this encounter, it is very hard to talk about spiritual life, because it is not something we have to do. I think that in our Christian life we

soon realize that we can do very little and that it is instead, grace which leads us.

Hence, Our Lady's repeated calls to prayer! Prayer has to become for us a fount of grace for our journey. Hence, Her call to a sacramental life: confession and the Eucharist in particular, which is the heart of our Christian life. You see, it is only through grace that we can be made perfect.

Our Lady has spoken about different forms of prayer, especially the Rosary. This prayer is being repropounded after many years, and I think the reason is that the prayer is very beneficial to our spirituality. If we are called to imitate Christ, to become like Him, to do it through the Rosary is the best way; it is a mini catechesis. All the mysteries of the faith are contemplated in it. To pray the Rosary, I think, makes us similar to Mary, who "kept all these things in her heart," said Luke (Lk 2:12, 2:51). I think that we too are called to keep these mysteries in our heart, through the Rosary.

Mary said we should seek two things. The first thing is the Lord's face. The risk is that we often look at ourselves, we want good things, right things, but we do not realize we have someone next to us. Thus, Our Lady asks us to look up, to see Christ in our prayer. Our prayer must be Christ centred. The second step is to seek the Lord's will, because after the encounter with God, it becomes natural to ask oneself: what do You want of me?

Besides the Rosary, Our Lady insisted on silence; to listen to others, not to remain inactive. This makes of us a gift for others. I think that it is rather difficult to do for our human existence, because we tend to be protagonists, however, also the prayer of listening teaches us to adore, and to understand who the true Author of life is.

Penance must be the travelling companion of prayer; it becomes the prayer of the body. The word penance is barely present in our vocabulary today; we think that we suffer enough already and that there is no need for other forms of suffering. However, it seems that penance, especially in a moment of laziness or spiritual sleep, is what gives us a shake to permit us to get up and move on.

Thus, Our Lady insists a lot on fasting, especially on bread and water. I think that this, too, is deeply meaningful. To live with this material bread in a certain sense becomes the expectation of that real bread which we receive in the Eucharist. So, I think that a eucharistic interpretation of this type of fast is right.

Questions and Answers

Jelena was asked if she goes to a particular group in Rome (where she studies theology). She replied that she doesn't know the groups much in Rome, and that her study does not permit her to go about much. "I get together with a group of friends to say the Rosary," she added.

When someone remarked that Our Lady had led her in a journey of holiness for many years, Jelena replied: "But that wasn't a movement, and that's the beauty of Medjugorje. It isn't a movement, so that everyone can participate. I really like the universal dimension of the Church and that is why I can't see myself belonging to any particular movement. I belong to Medjugorje, and perhaps that is my spirituality: a Marian spirituality.

Asked to speak more on silence, Jelena admitted that it is in silence and prayer that she feels the physical presence of Mary; though it is not programmed. Little children ask their mothers for everything, but when they mature, they have to know how to stay in the Lord's presence and accept what He gives. Silence and continuous prayer is necessary so as not to lose this presence which accompanies us in the heart.

Q. What should we do to keep this presence in the heart?

A. You have to nourish this type of experience, this continuous prayer, with fixed moments of prayer, because even if there is a presence which accompanies us, it will disappear if it is not nourished. So, we have to pray in fixed moments.

Q. Our Lady used you as an instrument for the prayer group for many years; do you have any suggestions for our prayer groups?

A. Well, really, I have never drawn up a scheme. What I can say is that the prayer group is practically an inevitable experience for one's spiritual growth. It is not possible to imagine a faith walk on one's own. God calls us to communion with others; thus we are called to be in a prayer group. This could be the family, but the family should be the prayer group where we first receive our spirituality. Then there is the parish because it is our most immediate Church; within the parish there are various groups. I'm only saying how it is necessary, the type of group depends on your individual spirituality.

The Rosary is always very useful, as is spontaneous prayer, but the reading of the Bible is important because our prayer must not be arbitrary. Its contents must be precise, it must be the revealed word, not like in oriental religions where the mind wanders. We have to stick to the Gospel. We also need a moment in which we can exchange experiences, to encourage each other. This is communion with God, but also with each other.

Q. How can you tell that it is Mary and Jesus who speak to you, and not a rebel angel?

A. It is not difficult to tell the difference. The presence of God brings much peace and tranquillity, and a sense of freedom and fullness. The presence of the devil brings much anxiety and darkness.

Q. Do you still have these visions of the heart?

A. They are not as frequent, but yes I still have them.

Asked about her decision to study theology (first in Vienna, then in Rome), Jelena replied: "I liked the idea of transferring my spiritual experience to an intellectual level, because the intellect, too, is a part of our person.

I would like to say that you should try to become interested in what the Church says through its Magisterium, because we need guides; we are not self-sufficient and Christ did not want us to be. It is clear that God wanted a Church, a hierarchy, a Holy Father.

It is wonderful to be able to introduce this experience into the experience of the Church, because all these gifts are necessary for the growth of the Church. Furthermore, being in Rome is special to me, because the heart of the Church is in Rome.

Q. Have you ever thought about getting married?

A. At times.

On the difficulty of being able to dialogue within a group, Jelena said that also in Medjugorje the large group of 60 had to break up into smaller groups, then the experiences of the little groups were shared.

Q. Should I leave them to walk on their own?, the accompanying priest asked.

A. No; you are a priest. Guides are too precious; people need guides, even if the world yells out, 'freedom and independence'. When guides are lacking, people are attracted by a lot of wrong things. We need someone to push us onwards; the youth in particular need a guide. It is something precious to have someone who gives you light. Our Lady has always said that groups should have a spiritual guide.

(Alberto Bonifacio)

Fr. Tomislav responds...

Life donated to God with simplicity and naturalness

At Colle Don Bosco in Turin on the 27th September 1997, the editor of Medjugorje Torino interviewed Fr. Tomislav Vlastic.

Q. Fr. Tomislav, you were in Medjugorje when the apparitions began; what can you tell us of your experience?

A. Basically that no matter what heavenly sign we may be faced with, we are called to seek God - not a vague God, but God Who has revealed Himself, God our Father Who manifests Himself in the Holy Spirit through the Son. Communion with God is communion with all creatures, with the universal Church, that is, with the saints and Angels and souls in Purgatory and the pilgrim Church here on the earth. Com-munion with God is to have available all those things that He puts at our disposition as instruments of Grace. In these times God gives us His Mother in a special way. Being open to God makes everything clearer, and it is not possible to remain in the dark because God reveals Himself.

Q. Why do you refer to a "vague" God?

A. I use it as a key term, or at least that is how I see it. Many people seek God but at the same time they do not want to rid themselves of their selfishness, their egoism. What they seek is a vague God who satisfies their wills and whims. They do not want to see God the way He truly is; the Eternal God that He is. The search for a vague God opens the way to many heresies and urges one to seek God in movements outside the Church, in methods, techniques and ways of meditation. This search always ends up with the finding of an idol. We are all called to seek the revealed God and to allow Him to be revealed in us and through us.

Q. It was this experience that gave birth to the Community for sisters and brothers in convents and also to the fraternities for lay people. You guide them and teach them..

A. With regards to the teaching part, my initial intention was to live the mystery of God, to widen the space and time in my life so I could deepen my experience with God. Teaching others came as a need to share my experience, nothing more. It was from here that the Communities and Fraternities for lay people developed.

Q. Some say that young people who enter Communities or religious groups are frustrated people who seek refuge in religion.

A. A frustrated person cannot be taken lightly. A frustrated person in search of God must be helped to experience God on a personal level, through communion with others, otherwise he will close himself up within his frustrations and seek God as an antidote to his immaturity. Those who take in a frustrated person are obliged to take that person to God, to the great interlocutor, where he has the possibility to blossom into the fullness of life, the eternal life. Jesus loves infinitely, but He doesn't pet anyone. He leads to the Father, to fullness, and He doesn't allow a sick part remain in a person who desires this fullness. This is the responsibility of those who take in young people with a vocation.

Q. You chose a radical life for your community; a contemplative life.

A. Rather than "radical and contempla-tive" I would say we have chosen a gradual walk towards fullness. We try to touch the bottom and the top of this fullness; pain and death, to find life (eternal life begins with pain and death), to make this life rise and take it to the peak. The Church herself, after the Council, defined the Eucharist as a source and peak. There is nothing rigid with us, but simply a way of development which respects each other's pace so that their various stages of sin can be burnt, enabling them to blossom into the divine life.

Q. Some find your expressions too committing, eg. "offered life" and "sacrificed love" and are unable to freely respond to the call to offer themselves totally.

A. It is also true that the Word of God is at times difficult to comprehend. One simply needs to wait for God's reply and walk according to the Lord's indications. A life offered is pure love, which contrary to egoistic love, offers itself to others. Pure love is ecstatic and for this reason it is expressed at its most in situations of sorrow, injustice, cross, and death, as shown by Jesus in the Beatitudes. To give your life up

into the hands of God, totally and with love, is to enter into communion of life. Ecstatic love, that of God Who gives Himself in a perfect way, and that of the creature who gives himself freely, is offered love, it is divine life, it is the eternal life. It can't be any other way.

Q. What can you tell us about your method of formation?

A. That takes us back to the beginning of our talk. The main characteristic is simplicity. (I teach) to live the Gospel with simplicity, to familiarize with the Blessed Virgin, with the Saints and the Angels and with the entire Church, with all creatures; to familiarize with the Love of God which is perfect, even when in a sinner. One has to find it, though, and see it, then adore it and love it ... because that Love is not loved. This way of acting and thinking in souls opens up the way for God to act in us, and take us beyond the boundaries of our way of understanding and wanting. That is why God leads us to the trials.

Q. How do you see the future of the Church and of humanity, particularly in the celebration of the Jubilee, and what do you think of the various catastrophic predictions?

A. I see a beautiful future! We are called to contemplate God, His greatness, the eternal life.. which can be seen from here on earth. God isn't a person Who doesn't know how to solve the problems of a factory, office or school, etc. God is the good Father Who holds His hand on each of His creatures. Even if He sends us trials, we know that they are for our purification, for the great work which God wants to fulfil. All the prophecies speak of God's triumph at the end of time, of the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart. All we need to do is open ourselves to the contemplation of God, then we will be able to see our future with trust, hope, joy and love.

Q. We're in Colle Don Bosco. Do you see a connection between our time and John Bosco's dream of the two pillars in the Church; the Eucharist and Mary?

A. Of course! Mary, with Jesus' conception, is the Lord's bride in an exceptional way. At the feet of the cross, Mary is the exceptional bride of the profound sharing in the love of God Who suffers for mankind. In this paschal, Eucharistic Love - on the Cross - Mary is the participant par excellence. All the documents published by the Pope during his pontificate are in preparation, through the Virgin Mary, of the triennial of the Jubilee. The heart of the Jubilee is made up of: the Eucharistic Congress, ecumenism and the celebration of the Holy Trinity.

Q. To conclude...

A. To conclude let us pray! God Father, You created each of us and you know us perfectly; may it be that we seek You as You really are! Draw us to You with Your Love! Oh God, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds and bodies; descend upon us as You descended upon the Virgin Mary. Through You She conceived the Son; may it be that our souls conceive Jesus Christ, that they follow Him and that through Jesus, and in You, we may offer our souls to the Father, even during all our trials. May it be that our souls reach the Virgin Mary in the Upper Room and that they remain open so as to receive all Your gifts, Oh Holy Spirit.

Oh Holy Spirit, unite us to all creatures; to Mary Most Holy, to the Angels, to the Saints, to the souls who suffer in Purgatory, to the creatures who suffer on the earth, that all of us may be in God's Love. Oh Holy Spirit, descend upon all the readers of this paper, that they may experience the manifestation of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Go down on your knees and confess!

One evening - between 27 - 30 October 1886 - Charles de Foucauld, an elegantly dressed officer on his way back from Africa, went to see Father Huvelin in Paris.

"Father," he said, "I do not have faith, I have come to ask you to instruct me." Fr. Huvelin looked at him and said: "Go down on your knees and confess your sins to God; and believe." "But I didn't come for that," said de Foucauld. The Father insisted: "Confess your sins."

Charles de Foucauld went down on his knees and confessed. [St. John Vianney did the same with people who went to him to talk about their problems.] When the newly absolved penitent got back up onto his feet, the abbot asked him: "Are you on an empty stomach?" and he replied, "Yes," so the abbot told him to take communion. For Charles de Foucauld that was his second 'first communion.'

God had seized him. From that moment on the life of the former officer burnt entirely for the Lord. He later discovered that his vocation would be in the desert.

He built a hermitage in central Algeria and there he spent his life doing penance and praying for the conversion of the muslim world. He was killed during a revolt in Tamanrassat.

For twenty seven years he never slept in a bed, but on a mat on the ground, or on the pavement of a church, or on a chest. One morning an officer (his friend) found him asleep beside an unfinished wall. "Don't you sleep in the chapel anymore?" "No," de Foucauld replied. His friend said: "But you told me that it was comfortable there," and the reply was: "That is precisely why I don't sleep there anymore." Shortly after that he decided to sleep in the sacristy, which was so little that he couldn't lie down. If anyone pointed it out to him he would reply that Jesus on the cross was not lying down.

One morning it happened that a Father had to go away. "Forgive me if I have to leave you alone," he said. Fr. de Foucauld replied: "Oh! I am never alone."

Certain words, such as the above, truly outline the spiritual greatness of this man and give us an idea of his inner light.

"Live every minute as though you were to die a martyr tonight."

Pope: "A Confessor is not a psychotherapist"

The sacrament of Confession is experiencing bad times, yet everyone speaks of it and people desire to confess.

The Pope has spoken on it at various times, and also on the 21st March he spoke about it during a course promoted by Penitenzieria Apostolica to say that the confessional is not and cannot be an alternative to the study of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy.

"The Fathers called this Sacrament the second plank of salvation after shipwreck (in reference to the falls that happen after baptism). In fact, Confession cancels personal sins committed after Baptism, in particular mortal sins, then venial sins. It is right that in confession, the faithful try to establish the inner process which leads to superior peace, fruit of conformation to God's will, but it is wrong to seek in the Confessor a healer in the technical sense of the word. Should the condition of the penitent seem to require medical care, the confessor should not attempt to face the argument himself, but refer the penitent to competent and honest professionals."

The Pope then said that when he came to know the figure of St. John Marie Vianney of Ars in 1937, he "became convinced that a priest fulfils an essential part of his mission in the confessional, by making himself 'prisoner of the confessional'."

From Montreal - The activity of the group in Canada which prints the Echo (5,000 copies in English + 6,000 in French) for distribution there, has become more intense since the death of Noël, their former animator. "The cross too arrived, with financial difficulties, however we were able to continue the distribution of Echo thanks to unexpected aid, labelled Mary. Our group of 30 young people is praiseworthy; they are preparing for the Youth Festival and have split up into groups to animate the prayer in 3 different areas of the city."

(Michele Cacchione)

Pentecost All-Night Prayer Vigil at Knock 30-31 May (10 pm-5am) for the re-evangelization of Ireland and its con-secration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Pilgrim images of Our Lady - The 300 statues and iconas which left France three years ago have now touched 38 countries all over the world and continue on their pilgrimage, to prepare for the Jubilee year of 2000 and bring the new evangelization to all. Pastors of the churches visited so far, including Cardinals, Bishops and group leaders, testify to the incredible fruits of this mission. The latest countries visited include Ecuador, Vietnam, Pakistan, Denmark, Chile, south Africa, Brazil, Mauritius Islands, Turkey, Sweden, Hungary, Burundi, Germany, Congo.

If the pilgrim image of Our Lady has not yet visited your country, and you would like to open your home to Her, contact: Confrérie Notre-Dame de France, 48 avenue de Paris, F-91410 Dourdan, France. Ph. 164596556, fax 164596522.

International Youth Meeting, Medjugorje

31 July - 6 August. Theme: Come, Creator Spirit. Daily programme: 9-10 morning prayer; 10-11 lessons; 11-11.30 singing practice; 11.30-12 lessons; 12 midday prayer; 4-5 pm testimonies by visionaries and others; 6-8 evening programme with Rosary and Mass; 10.30-11.30 Adoration (non-stop Eucharistic Adoration during festival).

DAILY THEMES: Friday 31/7, 10pm, presentation of group and Adoration. Sat. 1 "Holy Spirit, you are God" (Hans Buob); 4pm Hans Buob, Ivan Dragicevic. Sun. 2: "The Holy Spirit and Mary" (Andrea Gasparino & Mirjana), 9am on Podbrdo, 4pm A. Gasparino. Mon. 3; "Holy Spirit, open our hearts" (Fr. Cosimo), 4pm Jakov & Fr. Cosimo, 8pm Eucharistic procession. Tues. 4 "Divine Spirit and worldly spirit" (Sr. Elvira), 4pm Vicka and youth from Sr. Elvira's community. Wed. 5 "Medjugorje, work of the Holy Spirit" (Fr. Jozo Zovko), 4pm testimonies, songs to Virgin, consecration to Virgin. Thurs. 6 on Krizevak "Be my witnesses in the world", 3am Rosary, 5am Holy Mass.

NOTICE. bring ear-phones and FM radio, umbrella for sun, candle. Anyone who plays a classical instrument should contact Agostino at fax 00387-88-651888, and advise your name and type of instrument. Accommodation will be made available for you at the Domus Pacis home.

Civitavecchia growing

The anniversary of the last time the statue wept whilst in the hands of the Bishop (15 March 1995) was celebrated with a solemn Mass before thousands of pilgrims. For the occasion the Bishop wrote a reflection on the event, entitled: "Should the Bishop have remained silent?", but for lack of space we cannot publish it here.

Faithful from all parts continue to arrive. On feast days there are always at least 70 busloads present, and countless automobiles, without counting those who arrive with other means. Many holy Masses are celebrated, and in the evening a Eucharistic procession is held, with the faithful bearing torchlights. Cardinal Edouard Gagnon remained before the statue for quite some time and quietly prayed. In the visitor's book he wrote: "May Our Lady, with Her infinite love, open our hearts that they may accept the forgiveness of Her Son and become more united to His redeeming mission as each day passes." Soon the present church will be made bigger, and suitable buildings will be made to hold the pilgrims. The idea of a great shrine is already being considered.

Our thanks to Mary who allowed Her little Echo to be pushlished also this month. For this month dedicated to Her, and for the feasts which adorn Her, we ask Mary to give a special blessing on our helpers and readers, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Happy Pentecost!

Villanova,
28 April 1998

Travelling to Medj. - By ROAD: bus from Trieste (adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening 6pm, arrives in Medj. 8am. Reservations ring Italy 040-425001. By SEA: Ancona Italy to Split. Departures Ancona: Mon., Wed., Fri. 9pm, Sat. 10pm. Departures Split: Sun., Tues., Thur., Sat.. Reservations fax Italy, Agenzia Mauro: 071-202618; Agenzia Morandi: 071-202296.

* The main language editions of Echo of Mary are available in Medjugorje at the MIR-Shalom shop opposite St. James church and at the Ain Karim shop, in the arcade under the International Hotel.

Thank you for your response to my call.