

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 September 2006:

"Dear Children, Also today I am with you and call you all to total conversion. Decide for God, my Children, and you will find in God the peace your hearts seek. Imitate the lives of saints; may they be an example for you. And I will encourage you for as long as the Almighty permits me to be with you. Thank you for responding to my call."

Total Conversion

This month's message fits into a temporal frame as it brings to our attention the exceptional quality of Mary's presence in our midst. It begins with: **"Also today I am with you"** and ends with **"for as long as the Almighty permits me to be with you."** Her presence in our midst is a free gift of the Father, a gift that may be repeated just as it may not be repeated. We cannot know if there will be any more messages, however it would not make sense to wait for the next one just to file it away with the others. Mary's messages are not meant to inform us of the latest news, not even if it were to concern heavenly news. Mary does not call us to consume news, but to change life, and to change it in a radical way.

"I invite you all to total conversion," she says. All of us are included in this call: workers of the last hour along with those of the first hour. All of us can, and must work at this total conversion, which is never definitely reached, never reserved for the good, it never excludes sinners, and is never exclusively our own work. We must let ourselves be *converted by God*; we must let ourselves be penetrated and fecundated by His merciful love. However, this doesn't imply a passive attitude of inert or indifferent waiting. Instead, with all our strength we must desire this encounter with God that He has already prepared and awaits. It is an encounter where I am expected, and with Jesus I can say: *You (Father) did not want sacrifices or offerings; instead you have prepared for me a body* (cf. Heb 10:5).

Total conversion is this indwelling of Jesus in us, and total immersion of us in Jesus, which cannot be achieved with techniques of asceticism. Instead it requires authentic prayer and authentic *surrender*, and this cannot be work of our own, as it is the work of the Holy Spirit. We do not have this power; however, we do have the power to refuse the Life of Jesus in us. This refusal - a tremendous thing - is often simpler than what we think as it is not so much an explicit thing, but can be subtly at work in us.

"He who is not with me, is against me,"



"Come, Lord Jesus, visit us with your peace: your presence will fill us with joy"

says Jesus (Mt 12:30). To be with Him means to live of Him and in Him; it means to be living Eucharist. This goal, within our reach, is also difficult to achieve and even take into consideration. Yet Mary insists and continues to encourage us; and she will do so **for as long as the Most High will permit her to remain with us**. This is the scope of her presence in our midst. She comes, not to give us the latest news, but to reach the most far-away souls. She adds nothing to what the teachers of the Law already know, but she helps the little ones, the last ones, all who desire with all their heart, to receive Light and Wisdom directly from the Holy Spirit so they can penetrate the mystery of eternal Love.

Let us respond to her calls and **decide for God**, and we shall **find in God the peace that our hearts seek**. His peace is true peace because it is fruit of the communion between the Father and the Son. This peace is already given us, and is in the Holy Eucharist and in the sacrament of reconciliation. It is not only personal peace, but universal. It is the peace that the entire world awaits from the revelation of the children of God.

Imitate the lives of the saints; may they be an example for you, suggests Mary. The lives of the saints are proof of the great and unthinkable things that God can work in man, and therefore also in each of us. Take courage then! We are **all** called to holiness; for this *God has given us a body!*

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's Message, 25 October 2006:

"Dear Children, Today the Lord has permitted me to tell you again that you live in a time of grace. You are not conscious, my Children, that God is giving you a great opportunity to convert and to live in peace and love. You are so blind and attached to earthly things and think of earthly life. God has sent me to lead you towards eternal life. I, my Children, am not tired, although I see that your hearts are heavy and tired for everything that is a grace and a gift. Thank you for responding to my call."

I Am Not Tired!

This is an unusual message, not so much for its contents, but for its tone. The contents regard, as always, the need to convert, return to God, surrender to Him, and the need to undertake a journey **towards the eternal life** seriously, consciously, and with determination. The tone, on the other hand, is not that of an invitation, but of reproach. Used as we are to being urged and spurred on, this message surprises us because rather than a call it appears more to capture a situation of distance between us and God.

"Dear Children, Today the Lord has permitted me to tell you again that you live in a time of grace." The heavens are still open over mankind and the world, but are we aware of it? **"You are not conscious, my Children, that God is giving you a great opportunity to convert and to live in peace and love."** It is indeed so, and certainly many of us are guilty of this omission, including myself... but do not abandon us Mother! *"Were you not willing to help us, since we are ungrateful children and undeserving of your protection, we would not know whom to turn to,"* we say to you in the supplication to the Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, which we repeat today.

The time in which we live is a time of grace, an opportune time to **convert and live in peace and love**. Let us accept this opportunity and the celestial grace that accompanies it before it is too late. I am reminded of the lamenting of Jesus over Jerusalem and His words: *"If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes! Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you - and all because you did not recognize your opportunity when God offered it!"* (Lk 19:42-44).

The way of peace and love is not yet hidden from our eyes. Though we are so blind and tied to earthly things and concern ourselves with the earthly life, the heavens

are still open, and grace can still awaken us from this slumber, from this torpor that dampens the flame in our soul. However, we must decide now, with resoluteness, for the total conversion Mary asked of us in last month's message. **"God has sent me to lead you towards eternal life,"** says Mary. With her as guide we cannot fail to reach destination if we truly desire it. Mary **is not tired** of assisting and leading us, even though she can see that **our hearts are heavy and tired by all that is grace and gift.** So not our Mother, but we are tired; we are weighed down by useless burdens, crushed by illusory feelings of wellbeing, trampled on by towers of "babel": maybe newly packaged, but the same old trite.

Seduced by the old temptation of managing without God, we have become tired of everything that is grace and gift, we have distanced ourselves from the true, eternal life, from life in God. But let us get up and return to our Father, and tell Him: *"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against You; I no longer deserve to be called your son. Treat me as one of your servants"* (Lk 15:18-19). The Father awaits our return; everything is prepared, all that lacks is our decision. Let us hand ourselves over to Mary with filial surrender, with the trust of small children, and She will know how to turn each of us into a gift for the Father, and fruit of love for our brethren. *N.Q.*

Bring into World Hope of God!

A great event involving the Italian Church was held from 16-20 October in Verona. It was the **4th National Ecclesial Convention**, with the theme: *"Witnesses of the Risen Jesus, Hope of the World."* The meeting was for delegates of 226 Italian dioceses; also present were numerous experts and representatives from other nations. The preparatory work had been underway for many months and had involved the entire Italian Church which was asked to reflect on the first letter of St. Peter, in which the Apostle invites us to especially be "living hope."

After a lot of expectation leading up to the event - it is held every ten years - fruits of new vigour and awareness are being offered to the Italian Church to take up the challenge to become new women and men, to be able to be true witnesses of the Risen One and thus bearers of Christian joy and hope in the world, concretely in that community of men and women in which they live.

His Love suffices!

Many were the contributions, but the Pastor's words were fundamental to give the correct co-ordinations to orient the path on its proper direction, especially to keep the objective in front view so as not to risk "running in vain." In two different moments, with an address and a homily, Pope Benedict offered his flock true pearls; for those who have the possibility I suggest reading them both in their entirety.

"We are called to become new men and women to be able to be true witnesses of the Risen One," he recalled, *"in a world that almost always appears to be of our making,*

in which God no longer appears directly but seems to have become superfluous, even out of place."

It is quite a challenge for a Christian to dialogue with mankind of today which continues to lose its dignity. Today, *"a radical reduction of man has taken place,"* said the Pope. Man is *"considered a simple product of nature and as such not really free, and in himself susceptible to be treated like any other animal."* This happens because we are gradually detaching ourselves from our Christian roots, said the Holy Father. Man - he says - seeks meaning to his life; he questions himself and often feels lost before the harshness of life because: *"the human person bears within himself, written in the most profound depths of his being, the need for love, to be loved and in turn to love."*

What can we do if in our age, notwithstanding all the progress made, evil has not been overcome, but its power seems reinforced? We must proclaim with conviction that *"the Creator of Heaven and earth, the one God who is the source of every being knows how to love man personally, or rather, loves him passionately and wants to be loved in his turn,"* responded the Pope. *"Precisely because He truly loves us, God respects and saves our freedom. He prefers to counter the power of evil and sin with a greater power, which is the limit of his patience and his mercy, that limit which is the suffering of God's Son. In this way our suffering is also transformed from within, appears in the dimension of love and contains a promise of salvation."*

We know well that this choice of faith and of following Christ is never easy. Instead, it is always opposed and controversial. *"But we do not lose heart because of this,"* exhorts the Pontiff. *"God has given us the invincible hope of eternal life... Strengthened by this hope, we are not afraid of trials, which, however painful and heavy, can never impair the profound joy that comes from being loved by God... His love is sufficient for us. Strengthened by this love, firm in faith in the Resurrection of Jesus that builds hope, our Christian witness is born and constantly renewed."*

The Gospel does not change

Thus, the outcome of this Convention is a renewed call for each Christian to be transformed into a witness ready and able to assume the commitment of giving account to everyone of the hope which is in him (cf. I Pt 3:15). Clothed with the interior strength of the Spirit of the Risen One, *"we must return to proclaiming powerfully and joyfully the event of Christ's death and Resurrection: heart of Christianity, principal fulcrum of our faith, powerful lever of our certainty, impetuous wind that sweeps away every fear and indecision, doubt and human calculation. In his Name take the message of conversion and forgiveness for sins to everyone, but be yourselves the first to witness to a converted and forgiven life!"*

A decisive change in the world can only come from God. Only starting from the Resurrection can the true nature of the Church and her witness be understood... In a changing world, the Gospel does not alter: Christ has died and is risen for our salvation!" concluded the Holy Father. Now it is up to us to pay heed. (Ed.)



Children of the Eucharist

Christmas is not far away. Christmas is the wonderful time of the year during which we celebrate the greatest mystery of all. It is the mystery of God, the Creator of the entire universe becoming a child. The All Powerful becomes little, defenceless, innocent and pure. New born babies and little toddlers particularly reflect the beauty of the innocence granted to each creature, which time and circumstances, we know, will change. However, it is significant that to begin His adventure amongst mankind, God chose to become a baby. It tells us that **infancy is a seat of wisdom and special power**, for despite the *littleness* of a child's body, it contains a soul capable of holding the infinite.

Jesus had a great deal of respect and a preference for little children. Mary, too, has preferred to appear to little children, entrusting them with important theological and mystical revelations. It is because of their simplicity and ingenuousness that children do not risk polluting what they have heard and are able to transmit without adding or orchestrating anything. Nonetheless, and apart from this, children have a **particular spiritual capacity** that is often minimized or even ignored by grown ups. Children can pray! **Their prayer is strong** and powerful, and goes directly to God's heart. Unlike the prayer of an adult it does not get lost in the maze of adult reasoning, the whirlpools of wounds accumulated over the years, or the webs of egoistic interests to which adults easily fall prey. Again the Blessed Virgin is our teacher, for at Fatima her call was for children and she "dared" not only to ask them to pray, but to offer sacrifices and their own lives as well. And she received a ready and immediate response, free of all calculation or reserve.

With this spirit, a movement known as **World Apostolate of Fatima** has promoted an initiative that is repeated annually and is called **World Children's Holy Hour** held at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The invitation is addressed to all the children of the world to unite themselves in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, for peace. It started in 2003 and since then it has been held regularly each year. The event is organized as a response to the Message of Our Lady of Fatima. The children were first visited by the Angel of Peace in 1916, who taught the children some Eucharistic Prayers while the Chalice and the Host remained suspended in mid air and the children knelt in adoration. This was the first children's Holy Hour.

For the children of the world this represents an historical opportunity. In 1994 John Paul II wrote the "Letter to all the World's Children" in which he said: "My dear young friends, it is to your prayers that I entrust the problems of your families and of all the families in the world." Also Pope Benedict XV, during WWI, had invited the children to pray: "Stretch out your hands, o beloved and **all powerful children**, to the Vicar of Christ and give him the consolation of the incomparable victory of your precious prayers." Just several months after this the

phenomenon of the Messages of Our Lady of Fatima were to begin.

Mark this date on your calendar: 5 Oct. 2007 (www.ChildrenoftheEucharist.org), and let's tell our children how their prayer is strong and able to move God's heart, and encourage them to respond to the Pope's call to pray for families, and to Our Lady's call to pray for peace.

Stefania Consoli

Prayer at School

A few hours ago I was graced to meet the founder of a school where teachers and students pray together. I was most pleasantly surprised that something like this should still exist today. **Fr. Giovanni Salerno**, (originally from Sicily) had a dream when he was a boy, a type of "vision of an altar boy" where he seemed to be entering a church and could see Our Lady on his right. She appeared to be surrounded by many poor children who were asking for help.

This dream has never left his heart., and since that dream his life has included many important stations, including the sufferings of war. He received a good upbringing from Christian parents, and the good example of priests in the seminary. The writing on the seminary gate: "He who helps the poor serves God" left a deep impression on him. He became a physician and an Augustinian priest, working in North and South America, but his heart remained with the poor people of the **Andes in Peru**. So today, Fr. Giovanni and his congregation, called **The Servants of the Poor of the Third World**, run four houses in Cusco and one in Lima to take care of about one thousand poor children, some of whom live in the houses. The children eat, study, play, receive medical attention, receive catechesis for their spiritual growth, and are taught crafts. (www.sptm.hu)

In particular the missionaries try to impart to the children trust in God's providence: "What you cannot do God will do for you in your life." The Congregation not only provides children with a house and a school where they receive formation and instruction so they can become autonomous workers, but the most noble work of this Mission is the Christian formation of young men. In each of the houses is a chapel and in the chapel the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for daily adoration. A roster is organized so that someone is always before the Lord, and also the children take turns at keeping the Lord company; and when school finishes at 5 pm all the children and the teachers gather in the hall for prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. Here all their concerns, joys, sufferings and worries, plus the intentions of all benefactors, and the needs of the world are deposited on the altar.

What a difference to our atheist schools where children of wealthy peoples are modelled around purely materialistic values, and what enormous responsibility on parents and teachers who believe they can transmit life and joy to their children without God! We thank the Lord for these witnesses of His, who carry Christian joy and hope in the world in a concrete manner through their service to the poor.

Rita Gervais

(co-translator. German edit. Echo)

"Church of Silence" Bishop Dies

It is more than dutiful on our part to dedicate this space to the memory of a dear friend of the Echo of Mary, **Mons. Pavel (Paul) M. Hnilica**, bishop, Jesuit and President of the association called "Pro Deo et Fratribus" (known in the U.S. as the "Family of Mary Coredepratrix"). We recall him with fondness and gratitude for the esteem and affection afforded us. Prompted by our dear departed founder, Fr. Angelo, he was always happy to write for our pages, to tell readers about the events of the "Silent Church" but more particularly about Mary, whom he loved dearly.



Bishop at 30 years of age

He was born in Unatin (Slovakia) in 1921 and was ordained a priest, then a bishop, for the persecuted Church, known as the "Church of Silence." He was 30 years old when he was made a Bishop, and due to the terrible Communist regime which had imprisoned all the church hierarchy of his country, he was forced to flee to the west.

His consecration as bishop was announced by Pope Paul VI on the 13th May 1964, the anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady at Fatima, which was a very significant date in the life of Mons. Hnilica, for he had dedicated his entire life to personally responding and calling others to respond to the Fatima request concerning prayer and consecration.

Apostle of Fatima Prophecy

During the years of the cold war, when it was not even suspected that the empire of the Soviet Union would fall, bishop Hnilica reminded everyone of the importance of the prophecy of Fatima, and in particular the request for consecration (of the world) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for Russia's conversion. This consecration was celebrated by Pope John Paul II on 25th March 1984. On that same day, aided by the prayer of his dear friend Mother Teresa, Mons. Hnilica, on his way back from Calcutta to Rome, was able to briefly stop over in Moscow and in secret, celebrate the same consecration being celebrated by the Pope in Rome, in a spirit of collegial union with all the world's bishops.

Ecumenism of Charity

After the fall of the wall of Berlin, the doors to the former Soviet territories were opened, and the Pro Deo et Fratribus Association began its work in various localities ranging from Siberia to the Ukraine. An Association strongly "priestly" and "Marian", it felt the call to live an authentic life through donation to Jesus, the High Priest, in the manner of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort's *Totus tuus*, or consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Association works through

charity and ecumenism in various Dioceses of the East, where they provide aid for the needy Orthodox brethren supplied by Catholic brethren in the West.

With the "Church of Silence"

The life of Msgr. Hnilica was spent entirely at the service of the Church with special attention for the Church known as the Church of Silence. He particularly helped refugees who were fleeing from their homes and were left with nothing. Amongst the many persons who received his help, priests and religious sought him out as a reference in Rome where Msgr. Hnilica had the grace of residing since his departure from Slovakia.

Two Stars as his Guide

If suffering never left his side, he was strengthened by his deep trust in the Merciful Jesus and in Our Lady, and he accepted and offered everything with serenity. He assiduously practised and spread two devotions: worship of Divine Mercy, tied to St. Faustina Kowalska; and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary tied to the Fatima message. These two devotions guided him throughout his Episcopal ministry which was directed especially to the East, and Russia in particular.

Dark Years of Tribulation

During the hard times of tribulation and persecution of Christians of the East Msgr. Hnilica stood firmly on his faith and by his Church. Also when he was brought to the civil tribunal for a court case against him in more recent years, he faced everything with a spirit of prayer and penance, and Divine Providence rewarded him with a full acquittal.

Encountering the Needy

No one that sought his help, whether moral or spiritual or material, ever went away with empty hands. Fr. Paul - as he liked to be called - provided help for whoever came seeking, and he was always willing to help works of faith, whether big or small, find their place in the Church. He was thus widely known and loved during the course of his life.

Surrendered to Divine Mercy

During his last years his health had weakened considerably, yet he put up with everything with courage and patience. He offered himself to the Lord, and for the sake of others, even till his last breath, dying entirely surrendered to the Merciful Love of God and comforted by his filial devotion to the Blessed Mother.

He was called to the Father's House on the day which recalls the Lord's resurrection: Sunday **8 October 2006**. Precisely six years previously, on the same day (Sunday 8th October 2000), John Paul II had entrusted the new millennium to Our Lady of Fatima. That was a gesture that filled his heart with immense joy, given the importance and extraordinary depth of the message.

(Notes from Pro Deo et Fratribus Assoc.)

Not Ashamed of Medjugorje!

Quite to the contrary, **Mons. Paul Hnilica** was a courageous witness in the Church of the extraordinary grace of that blessed land. In 1997 he addressed a letter to Medjugorje-inspired prayer groups, a part of which we publish here to synthesize the immense value of the event known as Medjugorje.

A Living Reality

“No one can deny, even if some try, that the spiritual Movement of the Queen of Peace is a living part of the Church, born of a spirit of prayer, not of human initiative. This river of light, peace and love for the Mother of God has generated prayer groups everywhere, has inspired conversions, and continues to heal and console the hearts of all those faithful who have found in the simplicity of the messages of the Queen of Peace authentic direction enabling them to rediscover the Gospel and to return to the heart of the Church.

Transformed by Grace

Thousands of priests and hundreds of bishops have celebrated Holy Mass, and dedicate a lot of time listening to the confessions of penitents who’ve been transformed by Mary’s motherly grace. Many of these have returned to their dioceses with the conviction that “at Medjugorje people convert,” and these conversions are being noticed by the Pastors because they are long-lasting conversions. So many are the people who have experienced the presence of Mary at Medjugorje that they cannot be counted, just as the stories of spiritual and even physical healings can no longer be counted. Countless as well, are the vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life born of the grace of Medjugorje. These are just some of the main spiritual fruits which have brought many to the conclusion that the Queen of Peace is truly present in Medjugorje.

The Light of Hope

In each of the continents there are many prayer groups inspired by the messages of the Queen of Peace, from whom they receive hope and consolation. These groups are a living Christian presence in the Church. The motherly presence of Mary helps us remember what happened at Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima and in other places of Marian apparitions. Prior to the apparitions of Mary these places were spiritual deserts, and after Mary’s motherly visits they flourished with life; the people regained hope, they asked forgiveness and this produced the fruit of peace.

Voice in the Desert

The Queen of Peace came to Bosnia-Herzegovina with a message of peace and reconciliation for peoples which some years later were hurled into a hellish war. Her voice had cried out as though in a desert. She came to warn, to admonish and to plead, that her children might understand that without conversion of heart there could be no real peace. The peace in 1981 was apparent only, because ten years later the war broke out. But no one knew that. At the time of

the first apparitions it was not clear why in a land of peaceful cohabitation, Our Lady should speak of the need for urgent return to God as the means to obtain true peace. On 26th June 1981 she was seen crying before a large cross; on the 26th June 1991 the first bombs fell on the airport of Ljubljana in Slovenia.

Persecutions...

The message of Medjugorje – like that of Fatima – speaks of peace and conversion, nonetheless the journey of the Church is not an easy one. She shares the same destiny as that of the prophets: many conversions but also much persecution; much grace, but a great battle. Like the prophets it is only after much suffering and tribulations that men will come to understand its true importance. The event of Medjugorje is taking place in a period of the history of mankind which is particularly threatened by the forces of Evil. Without the encounter with the Mother of Jesus there is no supernatural life, and this life is always threatened; there is always a Herod trying to suppress it.

The Highway

It is our conversion that decides the fate of mankind of the future. It is not the programmes, or meetings, or words that will change the world. The Queen of Peace has shown us the Highway that leads one to the conversion of heart. This way leads to the Cenacle, or Upper Room, and it is here that by means of prayer in communion with Mary, Bride of the Holy Spirit, we are able to acknowledge our sins, make penance and convert. We must not be surprised if Satan tries many ways to destroy the supernatural fruits which have matured within the spiritual Movement of Medjugorje. As our defence we must sincerely love, serve and imitate our Queen and Mother of Peace by living her messages.

Confusion?

To journey towards Mary and together with her to discover her Son: this spiritual journey, considered by many as a great blessing for the Church, **does not** create confusion. Confusion is the work of the Evil One. The Queen of Peace in her messages does not disorient, but rather, orients towards the truth of the Gospel, and Medjugorje itself has become for numerous pilgrims a place of reconciliation with the Church, not of separation from the Church. We know that some speak out against Medjugorje, but this is not the first time that within the Church even bishops have expressed conflicting opinions about a supernatural intervention. Some years ago the Holy Father said: “The world is losing the supernatural, people are finding it at Medjugorje through prayer, fasting and the sacraments.”

Times of Universal “Totus Tuus”

Let us unite our hearts to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Many of us have clearly understood that these are Her times; the times announced at Fatima and confirmed by the message of Medjugorje! These are the times of the universal “Totus tuus”. The Queen of Peace wants us united in prayer as we trustfully await the New Pentecost which will renew the face of the earth. Together with her, let us journey towards the Lord!”

(Paolo M. Hnilica, vescovo)

News of the Blessed Land

Pilgrimage of the Heart

We recently celebrated the Jubilee of Heaven: Our Lady’s presence in our midst for 25 years. Since that distant 25 June 1981, a good part of the world has been to Medjugorje. Some pass through but once, but the greater majority return after the first visit, and continue to return as though to a special appointment that one is anxious for.

Medjugorje is known by now in every corner of the world, even if merely by hear-say. Every time one returns is though to drink fresh water from a well-spring which quenches our thirst for God and His love. This thirst is in the hearts of all, but at times is ignored, wittingly or unwittingly, and we often seek to quench it with “polluted water.” Mary came to awaken in us this thirst and to help us find at Jacob’s well Him who quenches every thirst: her Son Jesus. This then, explains the ongoing desire to make this pilgrimage, to begin the journey on which to encounter the Lord. At Medjugorje, it is difficult not to encounter Him, not to hear the call to conversion, the need to pray, to reconcile with God through confession and begin a new life.

Just going to Medjugorje, though, is not enough to safe-keep the graces which are given us. We are urged to make another type of pilgrimage for this; an inner pilgrimage, the markers of which are indicated in Mary’s messages. This spiritual journey enables us with every passing day and in each of life’s circumstances to seek and understand God’s will; the same journey undertaken by Mary, as pointed out in the Vatican II document: “the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith” (LG 58) keeping everything in her heart, from the Annunciation (“How is this possible...?”) to the birth of Jesus (“and she lay him in a manger for there was no room for them”), to the encounter with old Simeon at the presentation (“and a sword shall pierce your heart”), to the finding of Jesus at the temple (“why were you looking for me?”), to the Calvary, at the foot of the Cross.

Mary made a pilgrimage of the heart and mind to safe-keep her communion with God and to be His *handmaid*, especially when she couldn’t understand. At Medjugorje Mary teaches us to be servants of the Lord and to live in communion with Him especially in difficulties, amid incomprehension, denial, and in the desert, so we can learn to die to ourselves and rise as new creatures, according to the Father’s original blueprint, and so we might collaborate with Him to fulfil His plan for us, and through us, for the whole world.

Mary knows well that to be His servant, we must be docile to the impulses of the Holy Spirit, and strip ourselves of our ego and our plans, to be ready to follow the voice of God, and like Abraham leave everything behind us so we can enter to become part of the adventure of following behind Christ. If we do not know where it shall lead us, we do know that if we live in simplicity and faith, we shall receive life in the full. **Mary also desires that we too make this pilgrimage of the heart**

and mind so that in the light of the Risen One we may see the shadows of darkness in our souls, so that with prayer, the sacraments, and fasting we might undertake a journey of purification to become new creatures, capable of being pliant instruments in the Father's hands, and light for the world. We must be "faultless and simple, immaculate children of God, amidst a perverse and depraved generation, in which you must shine as though stars for the world" (cf. Phil 2:14-15).

Mary knows that today's world is rushing towards a precipice, hence she has been with us for so many years and doesn't tire of calling us, for she desires generating blameless children who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes; children who may be ready to offer themselves for the salvation of their brethren who are in danger ("**witness with your life, and sacrifice your life for the salvation of the world**") msg. 25 Feb. 1998). This is the meaning of Medjugorje - at least it seems to me - and the sign of God's endless mercy which is given as a gift to those who respond to her call, and through them to the world.

Cecilia Appugliese

Argentine Bishop at Medju

Bishop Emilio Ognénovich, from Argentina, said after his visit to Medju. "Sadly, there is still quite a lot of ignorance within the Church about the great supernatural reality that is happening here, at the heart of the modern world. (...) If you ask for my opinion about Medjugorje, I will tell you that it can be compared to a mother, **a pregnant woman in the sixth month of pregnancy**, who impatiently awaits the moment to see her child born, but nobody can hasten it, because the right moment will come, in its own good time."

Our Lady to Mirjana

2 October 2006:

"Dear Children, I come to you in this time of yours with a call to eternity. This is the call of love. I call you to love, for it is only through love that you can come to know the love of God. (There are) many of you (who) think they have faith in God and that they know His laws; they try to live according to them, but they do not have what is most important: they do not love Him.

My Children, pray and fast. This is the way which will help you to open yourselves, and to love. It is only through the love of God that eternity is gained. I am with you; I will lead you with (my) motherly love. Thank you for responding." Our Lady then added: "My Children, priests have hands which are blessed by my Son. Respect them."

2 November 2006:

"Dear Children, my coming to you, my Children, is love of God. God sends me to warn you and to make you see the true way. Do not close your eyes before the truth, my Children. Your time is brief. Do not allow deceptions to reign in you. The way upon which I wish to lead you is the way of peace and love. This is the way that brings you to my Son, your God. Give me your hearts, so that I may place my Son in them, and make

of you my apostles - apostles of peace and love. I thank you."

At the end Our Lady added: "In your prayers do not forget your pastors."

Gospa's tennis player

"Dear Children, each of you are important, so my Children pray and rejoice with me for each heart that converts and becomes an instrument of peace in the world..."

In her message of 25th June 2004, our blessed Mother stressed how each of us, despite the fragility of our human nature, has a fundamental role in God's plan of salvation that she has come to fulfil by appearing at Medjugorje. This role involves giving witness to God's love there where we live and work. There is no environment, social or professional, that is excluded from His action of grace, not even the most hostile to the faith.

The world of sport is one of these. Often the sporting competitions are held on feast days which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to attend the Sacraments regularly. It is an environment where faith in God is traded off with superstition, where vanity is preferred over the virtue of humility, and where attachment to wealth is aggressively competitive.

Mary, however, desires that her children might renew and convert also the world of sport, and recently she has called a young man born under her mantle to spread her voice also in this environment from which God has been ousted. He is a **young tennis player from Medjugorje, Marin Cilic**, who turned 18 on the 18th September 2006. Last year Marin was the junior world champion, and in his first year as a professional he made it to the semi-finals of the ATP tournament in Gstaad, Switzerland, and became a member of the national Croatian tennis team that participated in the Davis Cup.

With the tournament of Gstaad we are offered a small example of the power of witness by a child of Mary in the world of sport. The surprising advancement of Marin in the competition was reason for the official webpage of the tournament to speak of Medjugorje, and in terms that one rarely sees even in the Catholic press: "Since 1981, in the small village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Virgin Mary has been appearing. Today Medjugorje is a blessed place, and since then more than 20 million faithful have visited it, making this little village close to the border with Croatia one of the most frequented pilgrimage sites in the world. Also Marin Cilic comes from Medjugorje ...".

Marin needs our prayer, not so he can win and become a world champion, but **that he might be a witness to Mary's presence in the world of sport**, which is generally very distant from God. The fact that Marin comes from Medjugorje isn't sufficient. To be a real witness one needs to be faithful to Holy Mass, to the sacraments, and to prayer, living in God's love day by day and distancing oneself from a life of sin. Otherwise, how could one become an instrument of peace and bring God's blessing and message of salvation to others?

Guido Villa



Belong to Mary

by *Stefania Consoli*

It is well known that particularly in the last century saints as well as Popes have indicated a sure way of arriving straight at Jesus' Heart, a type of shortcut that never fails. This sure way is through **Consecration to Mary**. We have asked ourselves what it really means to belong to Her. Is it a way of freeing ourselves of our responsibilities? or a shortcut, leaving us inert and passive, in a sort of "She'll take care of it" attitude? Or is it rather a call to conform ourselves to Mary in everything, to imitate her in her earthly life?

To belong to Mary means to accept and receive the entire plan that the Lord wrought in the girl of Nazareth over 2000 years ago. It means letting ourselves be involved in that mysterious plan that totally overturned her life, to the point of our own life becoming a beloved dwelling place for God: "... you are to conceive and bear a son" (Lk 1:31).

To belong to Mary means to let her "yes" echo within your soul, and produce your own "yes." Mary, sustained obviously by her great faith, consented to a proposal that would have left anyone astonished: become the Mother of God... and thus challenge the laws of biology and social order with a power that is inconceivable to reason, which can be defined only by faith: "...the Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35).

To belong to Mary means, in substance, to surrender with trust and without reserve, and leave every initiative to God, so the impossible can become possible: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1:31).

To belong to Mary means to accept not to understand, but to let the Holy Spirit act, and renounce science, logic, rules and whatever programme we may have: "You must name him Jesus.. and so the child will be holy" (Lk 1:31-35).

To belong to Mary means to accept the incomprehension of others, abandon the common thought, and remain faithful to God, as Joseph did: "he did as the angel of the Lord had told him, and took his wife to his home" (Mt 1:24), and he did not repudiate her.

To belong to Mary thus means to have the courage to remain Christian at all costs, in all our choices, in every action, whilst knowing that a large part of the world thinks we are fools, and fatalists... And this way, the Word - which still has much to say - can become flesh in us, and transform us into instruments of salvation for those willing to listen to us.

“Offer Your Lives!”

Here I Am!

The Way of the Call

Editor

In the last edition of Echo we announced a new column dedicated to explaining the nucleus of the call which the Queen of Peace has addressed in various of her messages: **offer one's life for the salvation of the world.** It may seem a call for just a few; in appearance too difficult to put into practice, or we might be prompted to think that only the saints of the past dared to offer up their own lives to God as a victim of love.

However, this is quite untrue! Who knows how many in the secret of their hearts offered themselves to God without reserve, offering Him the liberty to do with them as He willed, even entrust them with heavy crosses so that the crosses of others could be made lighter. This is the greater love, like that of Jesus who offered His own life and died on the cross for our sake.

St. Paul himself attests that this call is addressed to all Christians: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God,”* (cf. Rm 12:1). If the call is addressed to all, then let us search our hearts for the response to want to become as Jesus, a living Eucharist, a sacrament of salvation for all mankind.

Offering self to Jesus through Mary

This way is for all Christians, yet at the same time it is a call addressed to the most generous, to those who desire advancing and opening the way for others. It is to begin a journey in which one offers up one's life through the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary. We shall attempt to indicate the steps that are necessary to advance along this way.

As guide one must invoke the Holy Spirit. Priests have the task of introducing and accompanying the soul, as would parents with their children; these children will then have to mature and be able to comprehend what to do with their life. But what does it mean to offer up one's life? What is surrender?

First step: decide for God

If we look at ourselves and consider our behaviour as that of “good Christians” we might say that we have decided for God, but we need to verify how true this is. Perhaps we go to Church regularly, and maybe even to the prayer group, however, when we are told something we do not like we rebel, perhaps aggressively. This means that inside of us we are not decided for God!

Those who live in the world often experience situations which are pressing and demanding, and the difficulty of “breathing spiritually,” and one is barely aware of the power of the Holy Spirit! This happens when we haven't given God first place, or we haven't found a prayer that opens us up completely to God. It means we haven't decided completely for God, and inside of us we are divided amongst many things.

Inward division is the cause of our

weakness, confusion and tension in our interpersonal relations. When we say to choose God and to decide for Him, we mean: decide with all oneself; love Him with all oneself, and love one's neighbour as oneself.

Second step: surrender to God

Many faithful find it very difficult to surrender themselves completely to God. Only a child is capable of total surrender; a child in its mother's womb. It surrenders because it feels the mother's heart, it feels the mother's life. Unless you advance in prayer and open up to God, you cannot surrender to Him. If you follow your own will, but in prayer cannot feel God, His goodness and His love the way a child feels its mother's love, then you cannot surrender..

In a message to little Jelena Our Lady explained prayer: “Prayer is dialogue with God. In each prayer you ought to sense* the voice of God.” (*In the Italian text the verb used is *sentire* which can mean “hear,” “feel,” or “sense” - translator's note.) Of course, Our Lady was not referring to the gift of extraordinary visions or other charismas, but merely to the capacity of feeling communion with God. “You cannot live without prayer,” continued Our Lady, “prayer is life. Prayer is necessary for you to have light, to attain happiness. Prayer teaches you to cry and to blossom...”

With prayer we can rest, as a child in its mother's bosom. In prayer we are able to find Mary if the heart opens to listen and to recognize that She is the pure and immaculate Mother. In prayer we find tranquillity in knowing that God always gives us good things. In this way of self-offering, surrender is very important. Only after having surrendered oneself can a person offer himself to someone else, just as when a young man and a young lady meet and feel love for each other, and they offer themselves to each other to be then united definitely in marriage.

Ten years ago Our Lady said in a message: *“Dear Children, Today I call you to offer your crosses and sufferings for my intentions. My Children, I am your mother and I wish to help you by interceding before God for graces for you. My Children, offer your sufferings as a gift to God that they might become a beautiful flower of joy. Therefore, my children, pray to comprehend that suffering can become joy and the cross the way to joy”* (25.09.96).

Do we believe this? Then let's advance together to comprehend how to journey along this way.

(to be continued)

HOLY MASS FOR ECHO

Dear readers, and family of the Echo, You are invited to unite yourselves spiritually to the **Holy Mass that will be celebrated on the 25th of each month**, for the support of our work and for readers' intentions. The spiritual participation of each of you will make it all the more richer, and will become a font of abundant fruit, peace and blessing for all.

... at Verona on the occasion of the National Ecclesial Convention. I have come with my two youngest children, Luca and Teresa, with my parish and my diocese. We have come to express our joy at being here, with the Church and Pastor. **Here we are!**

If we are here it is thanks to Our Lady who called us from Medjugorje. She helped us hear the Lord's call to convert and repent, to become part of His flock, a living member of His Church of whom He is the Head.

When we respond to Our Lady she takes us by the hand and leads us out of the darkness into the light, to her Son. Jesus leads us into His Church, He teaches us to love her, to don her virtues, to heed her voice. Obedience is our strength; it makes the yoke light. When we respond to the call and join the Lord's flock, we learn to follow behind Him. In our daily lives we come into contact with evil, directly or indirectly. As Jesus did, we offer it on the altar, entrusting everyone and everything to Him. The Lamb-who-is-Slain makes a perfect offering to the Father. In His love everything is transformed. He knows how to draw good out of evil.

As I reflect on the joy of being a member of the Church, I recall that Our Lady recently reminded us of our responsibility to support our pastors. Through Mirjana, she said to respect priests, and to remember them in our prayers. So let us pray with Mary, Mother of Priests, and in our daily Rosary entrust our pastors to Jesus through Mary's motherly care, and in our daily Mass thank God for our pastors, beginning with the Pope, and for granting us new holy vocations. When the Priest offers the gifts at Mass, let us place ourselves and all our intentions on the paten and in the chalice. **Eccomi! Here I am!**

Elena Ricci

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I shall go, Lord, if You lead me.
I shall hold Your people in my heart.*

Prayer of Journalists

O Mary, your young life was marked by news that was unheard of, and unthinkable. It became the Good News for all mankind.

You were moved and perturbed before the event, just as any other human would have been. You are able to offer hospitality to God in your own home and in ours.

Mary, also we journalists are called to give news that can build up or destroy, that can orient or disorient, make happy or unhappy.

Help us, Mary, to always tell the truth with the wisdom of charity that hearts might dilate and hope.

Mary, your freedom was a ray of light, that bent only before God, for He is the meaning and purpose of freedom.

Woman of good News, help us journalists to never sell our freedom for the sake of interests or power, so we may give clean water to the people who desire building a better world. Amen.

Mons. Angelo Comastri

That Name

(Simple Thoughts)

By *Pietro Squassabia*

Do you know that soon the Child will be born? Yes, and what name will be given Him? The Name told by the angel: **JESUS**

People often say to a child: "what a lovely name you have!" This is a compliment for the child and a praise for the parents who chose the name. When I think of God the Father who through the angel gave the Son the name of Jesus it makes me think how much love God must have put in the choice of that name, and how much beauty and sweetness He must have infused in that Name. Certainly God gave the Son the most beautiful Name; the Name that best expresses the person of the Son. Certainly, the Father must have put Himself in that Name.

This Name is certainly an honour for the Son and brings praise upon the Father. A name for God is important because it identifies the person; and even in paradise, we will most certainly be called by name. If this is true for man, then it is even more so for Jesus: *"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,"* says the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians (2:10).

Paul then tells us what the name of Jesus produces: knees must bow, to praise and thank God, as He desires; to ask of God, as He desires; to acknowledge what we are, as He desires. These are all things that we cannot do without invoking the Name of Jesus.

I think how sweet it must have been (and is) for Mary when she called her Son by name; of the joy she must have felt when she called Him by name the first time. I think of the support this Name would have given her, just by saying it, in the difficult and dark moments of her earthly life. I also think that God must rejoice at saying His Name, at saying Jesus. For us, this Name is a help and a support; it is medicine for our souls. It is a name that gives life; that brings love to the person called (Jesus), to he who says it, and to our neighbour.

So let's make a habit of saying His Name often, with faith, with the heart; it will definitely do us much good. The Name itself seems miraculous, for when we pronounce the Name, also the Person is made present: Jesus comes to us. Let us ask Mary to make us attentive to the Name of her Son, to make us think of it often with love so that it can truly transform our being. I am sure that if we try, it will happen. Perhaps in this way Jesus, who lives in us, will not be confined and humiliated in a dark corner of our heart, but will be honoured for that

which He is: our King. This way we shall be able to take part in the feast for the King, in company of the King, and possess the true joy that Jesus is; and Jesus, who was born in a stable, will find a more welcoming place to receive Him.

Signs of Springtime

I don't know if I'm mistaken but I think not. I think I see signs of springtime in this winter, which I would call the polar winter of mankind, which hasn't even left the Church untouched. I see different ways of doing, of thinking, of living. Around me I see something that is new, and true; as though a prelude to the blossoming of life, something that makes me think of the new heavens and new earth of Holy Scripture.

No, it is not utopia, for the signs are too obvious. It cannot be an illusion for I would say the signs were practically tangible. Let us be full of trust and keep watch so we can receive the life when it blossoms, when it awakens, and that the gift that is being offered us from On High does not escape us. Medjugorje is an example. The life that blossoms here is a reality; the good that is spread from here without measure is true. It is up to us to readily receive this truly amazing grace without delay because time is short. Mary is near to us and holds us by the hand; she consoles us.

I Am With You...

by *Giuseppe Ferraro*

There is an expression that is repeated very frequently in the messages of the Queen of Peace, perhaps so much so that her distracted children miss the importance of it and their hearts are unmoved by it. This expression is: **"I am with you!"**

When asked what he thought the most important message Heaven was offering us through Medjugorje, Padre Slavko would respond: "Mary's special presence in our midst."

Our Lady, in fact, calls us with incredible insistence to recognize and acknowledge that her presence in this time is an exceptional grace: *"This time is my time"* (msg. 25 Jan. 1997); *"Dear Children, it is a grace that I can be with you"* (msg. 25 Nov. 1992). Mary calls us in impassioned motherly tones not to trivialize the gift, and to put to interest this unrepeatable effusion of grace that gushes forth through her special presence in our midst: *"Therefore, my Children, listen to and live what I say to you, because it will be important for you when I shall no longer be with you to recall my words and all that I have said to you"* (msg. 25 Oct. 1992); *"Therefore, my Children, I beseech you to accept and to live the messages seriously, so that your soul won't be sad when I shall no longer be with you"* (msg. 25 Dec. 1989).

Why then, does Mary repeat so assiduously that "She is with us", that we are not alone, that *"her Heart closely follows our steps"* (msg. 25 Dec. 1986), almost as if to make us see in Her presence a gift of grace that is something much more profound and fundamental?

In the book of Exodus, at the beginning of the history of salvation, when Moses

confessed his radical incapacity to fulfil the mission of freeing the people of Israel from the oppressor with which the Most High had entrusted him: "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?", Yahweh simply responds, "I shall be with you" (Ex 3:11-12).

This then is the true seal of victory over all our inner paralysis and radical inadequacy to serve the giddy mission to which Mary calls us in this time. It is the foundation of the absolute certainty that our "yes" to Her call will open the gates for the fulfilment of the salvific plan that the Father entrusts to us through Mary: *"Dear Children, I want you to understand that God has chosen each of you in His plan of salvation for mankind...I am with you so that you may fulfil everything"* (msg. 25 Jan. 1987), *"I want to save all souls and offer them to God"* (msg. 25 Aug. 1991).

So it is important to grasp: "the breadth, the length, the height and the depth" of this unspeakable Love "that surpasses all knowledge" (Eph 3:18), which is behind and at the roots of Mary's special presence "with us." Today, in fact, the Queen of Peace does not descend into the midst of her children alone, but with Her there is the extraordinary presence of the entire Church: the Angels, Archangels and all God's Saints are exceptionally close to our souls which desperately thirst for pure love and are tragically incapable of receiving it and giving it: *"now it is said that God is distant, but in truth He has never been closer"* (msg. 25 Sept. 1999).

Mary is with us now so we can fully participate in that same Love that reigns in the New Jerusalem, love that She wants for all her children and the entire universe. When the enormous current of celestial grace touches the earth, devastated by men

and mortally corrupted by the great sin of a world that refuses filial communion with the Heart of the Father, that current of grace becomes power of sacrificed love. It is the "new song" of the Slain Lamb. Through the special presence of the Mother of God, the Slain Lamb wants to triumph today in the hearts of her children, and through them, lead the entire creation to the new heavens and new earth that radiate from the glorified flesh of the Risen One.

Thus, **Mary's "I am with you" is today a founding grace,** a gift of inexpressible value offered to the Church and the world, whose fertility is derived from Her total offering to God for our sake, so that the children She has called might become fully participant in Her own salvific mission, be made instruments elect and vessels enflamed with Her own immaculate love for the sake of souls and the entire creation.

In perfect communion with her Son's "kenosis" (self-emptying, Phil 2:7), Mary does not hesitate to mystically immerse herself in the abysses of human suffering present in the hearts and flesh of her children: *"I am with you, and your suffering is mine"* (25.04.92), for she wants to obtain for them the grace of offering their lives to God without reserve thereby uniting them intimately to His life, and to produce a powerful effusion of love greatly exceeding their inadequacy and human frailty: *"I have already managed to take upon myself a part of the cross Jesus had destined for you. This cross is heavy and you are little! Thus, my Children, love me so you will not lose me"* (msg. 14.04.85).



Readers Write from the Missions!

Balbina Fernandes, Tanzania: Thank you so much for the regular despatch of the Echo. I receive it from Sr. Brigit, a Benedictine nun from Tanzania. It makes me very happy when it arrives as it helps me to know what is happening at Medjugorje, at Rome, and also other places where young Catholics meet. This little paper is informative and also inspiring. I learnt the Luminous Mysteries from the Echo.

Sergio León, Havana, Cuba: Generous brethren, peace and greetings! Many thanks for the Echo you send us. It is a source of light and information: both Marian and Christian. Our missions are present all over the country here, and the Echo of Mary has always accompanied us. It is read in many communities. In the province of Pinar del Rio there is a city founded by Italians in the XVII century called Mantua, and its Patron is Our Lady of the Snow. We have brought your paper also to this city. Many thanks and blessings.

Sr. Christian M. Reiss, Colombia: Dear friends, glory to God and praise to Mary! Thank you for the paper. I have offered you in every Eucharist, every Rosary and you always will be present in my prayer... May the Father love you and give you health, grace and blessing! May Jesus fill you with peace, grace and joy, be your companion along the journey, day and night, in the darkness and in the light. May the Holy Spirit fill you with His gifts. May Mary Most Holy love you, guide you, protect you and console you. And may the good St. Joseph help you spiritually, morally and materially. I beseech you to pray for my holiness! I have cancer and I am happy to offer up to our good God, and to Mary, all the pain to console them and repair for my sins and the sins of the world. I embrace you affectionately, united in prayer!

Emile Tognizin, Benin (Africa): I send this letter to thank you with all my heart. In our parish we hold night-long adoration. We pray also in the homes. There are refugees from Togo who come to this prayer. Various prayer groups animate the parish life on first Fridays. I pray for you and for the work the Lord has entrusted you with, that the Lord might bless you and make you advance always more.

Sr. Camillina, Philippines: I am a religious and Minister of the Infirm; I have been on mission in the Philippines for 20 years. I regularly receive the Echo of Mary in English, and make it available for whomever desires reading it. I see that it is welcomed and read with interest. I thank you for this generous gift, and I am sorry I cannot help economically, but we too live on donations. I offer you our prayer, that Our Lady might support your efforts to bring the message of peace, love and conversion to many people. I am sure the Echo does good to those who call themselves Christian but in reality are indifferent and superficial.

LET US PRAY TOGETHER!

In the month of November we (with the Church) recall our deceased, and to do this we often say the prayer of the **Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary** also as a means to meditate on the reality of death, from which not even our Lord Jesus Christ was exempt. Following are some brief **reflections** that might help this prayer.

1st Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus offers Himself in the olive grove

Lord Jesus, in that moment the whole world abandoned you. Even those whom you had called to watch with you had given in to sleep; even your Father was present only with His tremendous will: death on a cross. Jesus, how much sorrow filled your heart in that moment, and how much desolation! Yet you did not give in to the temptation to desist. You offered yourself, you surrendered with trust to your destiny of passion; you remained like a lamb and handed yourself over. Thank you!

Help us, Lord, in our nights of sorrow, in the darkness of suffering, not to seek reasons, not to acquire remedies, but to surrender ourselves with your same trust into the hands of Providence.

2nd Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus is scourged and condemned to death

“What is the truth” Pilate asked you when everyone was accusing you and he didn’t understand. Who was right? Everyone thought they were just and they wanted to impose their justice upon you. But you alone were the Just One, yet you did not impose yourself. You remained silent, you forgave, you accepted the disgrace of the unjust. Why Lord? In every person there is the impulse to rebel when we are offended, but you remained silent and you allowed them to destroy your body with the scourge.

Help us, Lord, to dominate our ire and our need to defend ourselves at all costs. Help us to understand that if we silently offer ourselves we can save not only ourselves but also those who scourge us who “do not know what they are doing.”

3rd Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus is crowned with thorns and mocked

They mocked you Lord, and in doing so they thought they were stronger, more important, more powerful. They wanted to throw mud on your regality by giving you a makeshift mantle and a sceptre in your hand, and then spitting on you. But your kingdom is not of this world; the only clothing it needs is humility and meekness. Your head was pierced by long, sharp thorns, and your heart even more so because you could see how sin had made your brethren so horrible.

Help us, Lord, not to seek honour and gain to the detriment of others. Help us to be authentic children of your Kingdom, that is, to be in the world, but not of the world.

4th Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus carries the Cross up Calvary

As you advanced upwards towards the top of the mount you met all mankind; the

cruel man and the suffering man, the angry man and the surprised man, the enemy and the friend. In reality it was man who had been wounded by sin which, like a snake, continued to bite and harden hearts. You, Lamb of the Father, came to bear the sins of the world, so you took them on your shoulders together with the heavy wood to consume them with your offering.

Help us, Lord, to look with mercy at the errors of others; make us capable of dying for these so that like the good thief they might repent and be worthy of paradise.

5th Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus dies on the Cross

Lord, one cannot contemplate this event without being left dumb; emptied of thoughts and words. Every comment is vain before this mystery that supersedes all human logic or reasoning. God who became flesh so He could be with man let his same flesh be killed for love of man. What does all this mean?

Lord, help us to understand each time we look at the crucifix that your end was not on that wood; it was just a part of the way... because you are alive and your crucifixion is merely the prelude to your resurrection. Make us see with our own eyes the cross that we too are called to die upon, day by day.

S.C.

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*God bless you and keep you.
May His Holy Face shine over you
and may He give you His infinite mercy.
May God's gaze be upon you,
and may He give you peace!*

don Alberto

9 September 2006