

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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191



Our Lady's message, 25 November 2006:

“Dear Children, Also today I call you to pray, pray, pray. My Children, when you pray you are close to God and He grants you the desire for eternity. This is the time when you can speak more about God and do more for God.

So my Children, do not resist, but permit Him to lead you, to change you and to enter into your life. Do not forget that you are pilgrims on the way to eternity. Therefore, my Children, permit God to lead you as a shepherd leads his flock. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Pilgrims on Way to Eternity

The main problem in systems of remote communication is to protect the message from being damaged by interference or disturbance that arises during transmission. Today, science and technology are able to assure satisfactory protection and even ensure reconstruction of the original message if the disturbance has not been too excessive.

On the other hand, there is no technical or scientific support for communication between man and God. This is immediate, and passes through the privileged channel of prayer, a channel that is nonetheless not without disturbance. Protection in this case cannot be assured by mathematical codes or refined instruments, but is to be sought out within the depths of the soul where no disturbance can penetrate because it is the place reserved for God. If our prayer gushes forth from the depth of our soul then God is with us. **“My Children, when you pray you are close to God and He grants you the desire for eternity.”** When our prayer is rather a self-praise, for example, like the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14, it cannot lift us up to God. On the other hand, the prayer of the sinner (tax collector) was well received by God.

Mary teaches us surrender, abstinence from worldly noises, and fasting on whatever fills the stomach and empties the soul, so that our prayer might flow without disturbance and is able to reach God and draw from Him Peace and Love. And since also our own heartbeats can disturb us, let us rest our heads on the Heart of Jesus so that we can hear not ours but His heartbeats, and so our thoughts, desires and reasoning can be lost in His, and make us able to repeat after St.



Shepherds, you who go up through the sheepfolds to the hill, if by chance you see him I love most, tell him I am sick, I suffer, and I die.

John of the Cross

Paul, *“It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me”* (Gal 2:20). Is not this continually growing desire, the desire for eternity that Mary speaks of? Is it not the gift of God and the fruit of prayer which is pleasing to Him? After all, eternity is life in God, and this means to be assimilated into Jesus, and this must begin in this life of ours on this earth.

“This is the time in which you can speak more of God and do more for God,” says Our Lady. This is the time in which the Church calls us to await Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus, the coming of God amongst man. This is the time in which the liturgy calls us to meditate on the frailty of everything that surrounds us to help us place all our expectations and hopes in the Event which alone can open the way to eternity for us. It is the time for us to abandon all idols, and **speak about God**, witness that He alone is the Lord, and then we'll be able **to do more for Him**. We'll know how to receive Him in the marginalized, recognize Him in the man abandoned by the lords in their palaces, serve Him in the woman ignored by writers of history. However, we will not be able to do this alone, but we must let God work in us, and to do this we must surrender to His grace. **“Thus, my Children, do not resist, but permit Him to lead you, change you and enter into your lives”** and it will be Christmas!

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 December 2006:

“Dear Children, Also today I bring to you the newborn Jesus; He is the King of Heaven and earth, and your peace. My Children, no one can give you peace as He who is the King of Peace can. So adore Him in your hearts, choose Him, and in Him you will have joy. He will bless you with His blessing of peace. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Jesus Our Peace

Now, as then, Mary offers us Jesus. It is from her that God took His human body; in her virginal womb He became man. The grace that comes of this is not only reconciliation, but infinitely more. It is the miracle of the new creation. Man can now call God Father; he is no longer a simple creature of God, but is made in His *image* (Gen 1:27) and is raised to the dignity of child (Jn 1:12). **“Dear Children, also today I bring to you the newborn Jesus,”** says Mary, and this **“also today”** is not limited to each Christmas when Mary shows herself to the visionaries with the Holy Child in her arms, but is a *today* that is more than 2000 years old. It is since the birth of Jesus that Mary puts us in touch with her Son.

She offered Him to us then, and she offers Him to us now. And now, as then, we can accept Him or refuse Him, adore Him or curse Him; and since *nothing exists without Him* (cf. Jn 1:3), all our actions, activities, and thoughts are either the acceptance or the refusal of Jesus Christ, for there is no possibility of abstaining from choosing. *He who is not with Him is against Him* (Mt 12, 30). **“He is the King of Heaven and earth, He is your peace,”** continues Mary. And so it is: Jesus is our peace, but not a supplier of peace. If we are *in* Him we can have total peace, but we cannot if we are not *in* Him.

Life in Christ, or Christian living, is not a market place for the exchange of goods. It is communion with God and with one's brethren; it is gratuitous donation of self, and unreserved surrender to Love. *Jesus is our peace* (Eph. 2:14); this doesn't mean a tranquil life without suffering, or pain, or problems, or humiliation. We cannot expect a comfortable life as the Life of Jesus wasn't comfortable.

Peace I leave with you, my own peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (Jn 14:27). His peace is fruit of the communion between the Father and the Son, and is true peace, the only peace that doesn't depend on life's ups and downs. Man cannot find peace if he departs from his divine origins. Only in God can man find rest and peace. **“My Children, no one can give you peace as He, the King of Peace, can.”** So let us stop expecting peace from

those who cannot give it, or to seek it where it cannot be found. *Return, my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. He has delivered my soul from death (true death of one who casts God out of his life), has delivered my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling* (Ps 116).

“So adore Him in your hearts, choose Him, and in Him you will have joy”: adore Him, not with our lips but with the movement of our hearts, and heartbeat after heartbeat His Heart will replace our own heart in the silence of our inner sanctuary, so we can become more like Mary. Let us imitate the simplicity of the Mother, and tread in her footsteps. Let us shake the dust off the old man in us, so our spirits can be free and experience the joy of being. **God will bless us with His blessing of peace**, and we shall be able to make of the bitterness of our life a calvary of glory and resurrection for ourselves and those around us. It is not through defending our ideas that we can build the Kingdom, but by allowing them to be placed on the Cross of Christ. If they come from God they will not remain prey to death, but will enjoy the glory of His resurrection.

N.Q.

BENEDICT XVI

“Is Man Still in Need of a Saviour?”

The liturgy of the Church makes us journey by Jesus’ side as He walks the roads of Palestine during His public life which culminates at the top of Calvary when the Lamb truly takes upon Himself the sins of the world to destroy them on the Cross. However, this path to salvation has a precise beginning: it is when we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord. Christmas can certainly not be confined to a few days at the end of December when the lights and nativity scenes remind us of it, but it must be a point of daily departure in our reflection on the mystery of Christ. Thus, let us consider these masterful reflections by **Benedict XVI** given during the **Christmas period** on the true meaning of the coming of Jesus, little Emmanuel, into the world.

God teaches to love little ones!

“God became little so we could understand Him, receive Him, and love Him. The eternal Word became so little as to fit into a feeding trough. He became a baby so that the Word could be grasped by us. In this way God teaches us to love the little ones, the weak ones; he teaches us respect for children. The babe of Bethlehem directs our gaze to all children who suffer and are abused in the world, the born and the unborn; those children who are placed as soldiers in a violent world; children who have to beg; children who suffer deprivation and hunger; children who are unloved. In all of these it is the Babe of Bethlehem who is crying out to us; it is God Himself who has become small who appeals to us.”

The Greatest Gift

“For us, God has become a gift. He has given himself. He has entered time for us.

He who is the Eternal One, above time, has assumed our time and raised it to himself on high. Christmas has become the Feast of gifts in imitation of God who has given himself to us. Let us allow our heart, our soul and our mind to be touched by this fact! Among the many gifts that we buy and receive, let us not forget the true gift: to give each other something of ourselves, something of our time, and to open our time to God. In this way anxiety disappears, joy is born, and the feast is created.

Man, in order to live, needs bread, the fruit of the earth and of his labour. But he does not live on bread alone. He needs nourishment for his soul: he needs meaning that can fill his life. Thus, for the Fathers, the manger of the animals became the symbol of the altar, on which lies the Bread which is Christ himself: the true food for our hearts. Once again we see how he became small: in the humble appearance of the host, in a small piece of bread, he gives us Himself.”

Is Man Still in Need of a Saviour?

“But does a “Saviour” still have any value and meaning for the men and women of the third millennium? Is a “Saviour” still needed by a humanity which has reached the moon and Mars and is prepared to conquer the universe; for a humanity which knows no limits in its pursuit of nature’s secrets and which has succeeded even in deciphering the marvellous codes of the human genome? Is a Saviour needed by a humanity which has invented interactive communication, which navigates in the virtual ocean of the internet and has now made the Earth a global village? This humanity of the 21st century appears as a sure and self-sufficient master of its own destiny, the avid proponent of uncontested triumphs!”

So it would seem...

“People continue to die of hunger and thirst, disease and poverty in this age of plenty and of unbridled consumerism. Some people remain enslaved, exploited and stripped of their dignity; others are victims of racial and religious hatred. Others see their own bodies and those of their dear ones maimed by weaponry, by terrorism and by all sorts of violence, at a time when everyone invokes and acclaims progress, solidarity and peace for all. And what of those who, bereft of hope, are forced to leave their homes and countries in order to find humane living conditions elsewhere? How can we help those who are misled by facile prophets of happiness, those who struggle with relationships and are incapable of accepting responsibility for their present and future, those who are trapped in the tunnel of loneliness and who often end up enslaved to alcohol or drugs? What are we to think of those who choose death in the belief that they are celebrating life?”

Heart-rending Cry for Help

“How can we not hear, from the very depths of this humanity, at once joyful and anguished, a heart-rending cry for help? Today “our Saviour is born to the world”, for he knows that even today we need him. ... In this post-modern age perhaps man needs a Saviour all the more, since the society in

which he lives has become more complex and the threats to his personal and moral integrity have become more insidious. Who can defend him, if not the One who loves him to the point of sacrificing on the Cross his only-begotten Son as the Saviour of the world? ... Christ does not save us from our humanity, but through it; he does not save us from the world, but came into the world, so that through him the world might be saved.”

We Must be Re-born!

If Jesus was not born on earth, humankind could not be born unto Heaven. Specifically, because Christ is born, we can be “reborn”! Mary, who held the Redeemer in her arms at Bethlehem, also suffers an interior martyrdom herself. She shared his passion and had to take him yet again in her arms when he was taken down from the Cross.

To this Mother, who knew the joy of his birth and the torment of his death, we entrust all those who are persecuted and suffering in various ways for their witness and service to the Gospel. “

Man, Heart of Peace

The Queen of Peace tirelessly speaks to us of peace. She knows that this good is both valuable and fundamental for man’s existence. Yet, it is scarce and fragile and difficult for us to maintain. Peace is a gift that comes from On High. Peace is Jesus Himself, but ours is the responsibility of keeping peace: as a fruit of our own efforts and a firm will to live and transmit it. That night in Bethlehem the angels proclaimed peace to “all men of good will.” Thus, the peace that we all seek and that we continue to lose is intimately connected to the birth of the Saviour. It is the Saviour who grants peace. Why do we continually lose it?

“I am convinced that respect for the person promotes peace,” declared the **Holy Father** in his **Message for the World Day of Peace 2007** in which he launched an “urgent appeal” to every Christian to be “committed to tireless peace-making and strenuous defence of the dignity of the human person and his inalienable rights.”

Hence, the person is not only the receiver of peace, but the very centre of peace, and **to defend man means to defend peace**, says the Pope. “As one created in the image of God, each individual has the dignity of a person; he or she is not just something, but someone, capable of self-knowledge, self-possession, free self-giving and entering into communion with others. The duty to respect the dignity of each human being, in whose nature the image of the Creator is reflected, means that the person cannot be disposed of at will... Those with greater political, technical, or economic power may not use that power to violate the rights of others who are less fortunate. Peace is based on respect for the rights of all.”

What are these **rights** that contain within them the seed of peace? Above all, life itself, which today is continually threatened in all its stages. The **Church promotes and defends respect for the right to life at every stage**. “As far as the right to life is

Aglow with Love for Mary

concerned,” writes **Benedict XVI**, “we must denounce its widespread violation in our society: alongside the victims of armed conflicts, terrorism and the different forms of violence, there are the silent deaths caused by hunger, abortion, experimentation on human embryos and euthanasia. **How can we fail to see in all this an attack on peace?**”

“As far as the free expression of personal faith is concerned, another disturbing symptom of lack of peace in the world is represented by the difficulties that both Christians and the followers of other religions frequently encounter in publicly and freely professing their religious convictions.” Thus, the Church promotes and defends **religious freedom** for everyone: “There are regimes that impose a single religion upon everyone, while secular regimes often lead not so much to violent persecution as to systematic cultural denigration of religious beliefs. In both instances, a fundamental human right is not being respected, with serious repercussions for peaceful coexistence.”

In these pages of the Echo we have reported two important elements which man must protect for peace to be gained. In his message, the Pope mentions many others, including “the many unjust inequalities still tragically present in our world... such as inequality in access to essential goods like food, water, shelter, health; (and) persistent inequalities between men and women in the exercise of basic human rights.”

The list is long, but we are obliged to stop here. However, the Pope’s Message is beautiful, and easy to read, and should be read in its entirety. Mary, Queen of Peace, continually intercedes for us, but in our hands, peace is constantly broken. Our Pontiff underlines an important factor about peace. He points out the two-fold aspect to peace: “an aspect of gift and task.” It is a gift to invoke with prayer, and a task to be fulfilled with unflinching courage. S.C.

They Paid With Their Lives

In 2006, twenty-four priests, religious and lay persons lost their lives in a violent way while at work in the missions, reports *Fides* news agency, which said that the continued deaths of Catholic Church personnel are often the victims of violent crimes in social contexts marked by particular violence, human degradation and poverty, which they try to alleviate through their presence and their work.

Africa is the continent that last year recorded the most victims, followed by America, then Asia and Oceania. The news agency says the list is incomplete in that it lacks the names of many who die for their faith without their names ever being known. The Holy Father said the “entire Church admires the example” of these “men and women in every corner of the planet that suffer and pay with their own lives for their faith in Christ; Catholics who maintain their loyalty to the See of Peter without making compromises, sometimes at the cost of great suffering;” and “is praying that they may have the strength to persevere, knowing that their tribulations are a source of victory even though they may now appear as failures.” S.C.

He managed to inflame whomever came close to him with the same love for God and Mary. His name: **ST. BERNARD of CLAIRVAUX** (1091-1153), one of the first Cistercian monks, third mediaeval father and last father of the Church in chronological order. He was a beacon of spiritual light that illuminated all of western Europe during the XII century.

Marian Doctor

Amongst the Doctors of the Church he is known as the **Marian Doctor**; not that he wrote lengthy pages dedicated to Our Lady, or revealed new theological dogmas on the Virgin of Nazareth, as Bernard’s writings on Mary aren’t even that many. However, all his writings and his own life were impregnated with her. Even when Bernard doesn’t speak of her, Mary is always present. We can see this in his writings in which he exhorts his brothers to silence, humility, purity of heart, and filial obedience: these are all virtues which, according to the saint, not only shine in Mary but are dispensed by her.

He thus merited the title of Marian Doctor because of his great love and filial devotion for the Mother of the Saviour. His writings were so appreciated that the Church inserted them in the Sacred Liturgy. Ending the day with a *Salve Regina* or some other Marian antiphony was his idea. St. Bernard had so much trust in her powerful intercession that he said: “*God has wanted that we obtain nothing if not through the hands of Mary.*” For St. Bernard “*Mary is our mediatrix*”; and we receive the Holy Spirit that “*overflows from her.*”

Indicating the Source

His *Praises of the Virgin Mother* are amongst his better known works, not because they say something new about Mary, but because they inflame the heart (of he who reads) for love of her, bringing her to life, making her present for those who read his homilies. He admires the faith of the Virgin; he enthuses over her humility; he is fascinated by her radiant purity – with the sole scope of bringing hearts to drink from this “*fountain which waters gardens.*”

His style, which is lively, rich, and easy flowing, attracts, delights and recalls the mind of the reader to heavenly things and raises it up into the heart of the Mother. It is so gentle that it nourishes and directs one’s devotion towards her, inducing the soul to follow her. This is because the Mother is the star that leads to Jesus, the aqueduct that communicates the graces that gush forth from the Source. Mary is the one who distributes God’s benefits which restore the Universe. In one of his homilies Bernard said of her: “*In te et per te ed de te benigna manus omnipotentis quidquid creaverat recreavit*” (In you and for you and from you the kindly hand of the Almighty recreates everything that He has created).

Mystery of the “Fiat”

Precisely for this reason Bernard contemplates Mary to learn how to let himself be restored and recreated by God.

Through contemplating what God did in her with the “re-creation” of the Incarnation he is able to say: “*Every soul, even though weighed down with sins, ensnared in vice, caught in the allurements of the passions, held captive in exile, and imprisoned in the body... even, I say, though it be thus damned and in despair, can find within itself not only reasons for yearning for the hope of pardon and the hope of mercy, but also for making bold to aspire to the nuptials of the Word, not hesitating to establish a covenant of union with God, and not being ashamed to carry the sweet yoke of love along with the King of the Angels,*” like Mary.

In his *Praises of the Virgin* it is through Mary that Bernard describes the mystery of God and of man, and the mystery of the *Fiat* which gave beginning to the relationship between man and God, and is able to invade the Christian soul and impregnate it with God. In particular, there are two figures which help us say our own “Fiat” to God; the Virgin as star and as divine lover.

Star of the Sea

Mary is the star of the sea, the guide for every man, and the guide for our history because in her is found the perfect humanity. Since she is the vertex of mankind, in her is summarized human history. Man is no longer alone in his quest for God; he is no longer abandoned to the uncertainty of the sea waters in the dark night, for a firm point has appeared in heaven: it is the Mother. “*Whoever you are that perceive yourself during this mortal existence to be rather drifting in treacherous waters, at the mercy of the winds and the waves, than walking on firm ground, turn not away your eyes from the splendour of this guiding star, unless thou wish to be submerged by the storm. ... Look at the star, call upon Mary. ... With her for guide, you shall not go astray, while invoking her, you shall never lose heart ... if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favour, you shall reach the goal.*”

Dangers of Excessive Activity

St. Bernard tells us that to live and love as Mary did we must pray as Mary did, and hold our gaze continuously on God. And for this, says the Saint, we must beware of the danger of excessive activity, regardless of one’s condition and occupation, including those inherent to the governance of the Church, because “*numerous occupations often lead to hardness of heart; they are suffering for the spirit, loss of intelligence and dispersion of grace.*”

It is a message also for our day, said Pope Benedict on the 20th August 2006 in his Angelus address: “How useful for us also is this call to the primacy of prayer! May St. Bernard, who was able to harmonize the monk’s aspiration for solitude and the tranquillity of the cloister with the urgency of important and complex missions in the service of the Church, help us to concretize it in our lives, in our circumstances and possibilities. We entrust this difficult desire to find a balance between interiority and necessary work to the intercession of the Virgin, whom he loved from his childhood with tender and filial devotion.”

Cristina Palici

STARTING A NEW YEAR

Time as a Gift

by Fr. Gabriele Pedicino

"Let us not grumble or complain about our times, brethren."

With these words Bishop Augustine of Hippo exhorted his listeners not to look at the past as though it were always better than the present. He went on to say: *"What new and unusual thing does mankind of today suffer that our fathers did not suffer? Rather, it is the case to say that perhaps we have not suffered the same things or in the degree that they did. Yet you will find people who complain of their times in the conviction that only past times were good. But you can be sure that if they were to be transported back to the times of our ancestors they would not fail to complain. In fact, if you think the old times were good it is because those times are no longer yours..."*

I think that perhaps we all think like this, and I ask myself whether there ever was a time in which man did not complain of "his day." When we begin to consider the new year the first thing to do is to look back at the one just finished and thank the Lord for the gifts He granted us. Unless we do this we will not know how to live well the days which the Lord, in His goodness, grants us.

We need to learn how to read our times; how to see the days granted to us as a gift by God – otherwise we end up being nostalgic about a time that is no more and that perhaps never was, except in our imagination, and I dare say that in this case we are very poor Christians. For Israel it was important to remember; and it is just as important for all of us.

Where do you see God? Where do you encounter Him if not in the day-to-day events of your life? He is there, in the ordinary things, and it is there that you need to discover the extraordinariness of His work. For this we need the eyes of the faith, and be able to see, as Mary did, that our days are days granted by God, days in which He works.

Courage, then. Let us continue on our journey towards the home port; we can find our daily rest in Him and in His invitation: *come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest* (Mt 11:28). Dear friends, the Lord does this for us, and He is ready to do it every day if we trust in Him, if we return to Him.

Which path have you taken? Into which unknown waters have you trodden? Return to Him! In this year which He has granted you, do not lose the occasion or waste time; but return to Him! Offer Him your life! He is our destination, our home port. He is our everything, and without Him we have nothing. All the best, then, for this journey home!

* **12th Int'l SEMINAR forPRIESTS: Medjugorje** 2-7 July 2007. Led by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa (Papal preacher)

News from the Blessed Land

New Year's Eve at Medju

Festivity, recollection, inner joy, and an atmosphere of grace and prayer - just as one would expect at Medjugorje, the land chosen and moulded by Mary to fulfil her plan of renewal for the Church and mankind – was what made new year's eve extra special; even if each time of the year at Medjugorje is marked by particular graces.

Why New Year's eve at Medjugorje?

I'd like to let the people I met here on this occasion to respond to this question. Their faces alone express so well the uniqueness of the heavenly gift received during these holy days; faces which express gratitude and enthusiasm, hope and expectation.

Feeling at home, a part of the family!

This is the desire that is born in hearts at this holy time of the year. And here at Medjugorje, our Blessed Mother welcomes all into her embrace, and souls experience a special warmth, fruit of Her presence. This is why souls remain attached to this blessed land of Medjugorje by memories and sentiments able to touch the deepest spheres of one's being. For the same reason one leaves this place with the desire to return, especially in moments like these, so that the creativity of God and the generosity of the Blessed Virgin can renew us.

Beneath Mary's mantle there are many young people - present here for the new year - but there are also many families, elderly people and children. Numerous nations are represented. Everyone during the vigil prayer is so recollected that grace alone can explain it. At 10 pm adoration begins, to sanctify the last hours of the year coming to an end. The Community prayers prompt each person to entrust to God all the bad and the good of the past to recapitulate everything in Christ, and then, freed of the burden, to enter the new year spiritually united to the entire heavenly Church, sure of one's personal decision to follow Jesus up the narrow way, in communion with each other, united in God and to God.

Here, at midnight, the "new day" is not announced by an explosion of firecrackers, but by the festive tolling of bells in the two towers, famous almost the world round. Holy Mass begins immediately, with the parish priest, Fr. Ivan, as the main celebrant, and concelebrated by dozens of other priests. Mass is followed by joyous singing in and around the church of the Queen of Peace. In the cold of the winter and the darkness of the night everyone is happy to communicate to as many as possible the peace and warmth that our Lord has placed in their hearts with embraces, handshakes, and words too, but often it is just the brief locking of gazes that communicates God to each other. And the more joy is transmitted, the more it grows... In the darkness of the night an inner light shines ever so brightly, and the cold of winter is pushed aside for a while by the warmth that emanates from all: a foretaste, perhaps, of the joy of heaven.

Francesco Cavagna



Why Have You Come?

Fabio, 24 years old

Here you reacquire the value and dignity of being man - thanks to the communion with God and with others. What you experience here is true union. At the disco everyone is together, but each is alone. Here you experience true joy.

Claudia, 33

I honestly think this is the best place to finish up the year where you have the chance of reflecting on how your year went; where you can find the silence and peace to consider your life so far. Beginning the year with Our Lady is a good guarantee.

Anja, 19

I also came to find peace. This was something new for me, spending new year's eve in church, and sharing one's faith with others.

Isabelle, 54

I came to have the extra help of beginning the year with Our Lady, and to stay with her and Jesus!

Virgilio

I'm here because I see it as a very positive thing to be waiting for the new year with Mary; a positive thing for me and my children. As a parent, I think that no matter how much I tell my children, in the end it is the Lord who speaks to their heart. I am grateful that here it is possible to experience this opening of the heart!

Mario, 28

I wanted to be here to experience peace, just by being with God. I wanted to do this in company of others, but not in the way the world celebrates this... Here I found others with whom to be myself, because they also seek God.

Loris, 36

I had more reason not to come than to come, but I am happy to be here. Mary called me; I am certain of this.

Cristina, 22

I decided to come as I wanted to spend new year differently; not amid the usual din of a confused and superficial company. I wasn't expecting this experience to change my life. I feel that my way of thinking has now changed, and my way of being.

Luca, 29

I came here to know God and Our Lady, and to know how to pray more profoundly.

A Burning Desire to Return

“Why Medjugorje?” you asked me in amazement. “Haven’t you already been there?”

I replied perhaps vaguely, but now I’d like to try explaining why, in my opinion, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world first go, then return to Medju, as if beckoned by a mysterious call.

God grants His children grace to lead them to perfection, and privileged places are a fount of grace; such as places where miracles occurred or where Saints lived and worked. Some of the most famous of these are where Mary appeared, for example Lourdes and Fatima. Others include hermitages or abbeys such as Camaldoli (thousand-year-old Italian hermitage) and La Verna (where St. Francis of Assisi loved to retire to pray).

At Medjugorje a special grace is felt by pilgrims. It is not just in the Church or in the places where Our Lady appeared, but one seems to breathe it as if it were in the air. You are aware of it when you contemplate the sky, the landscape, and every aspect of its nature blessed by the presence of the Queen of Peace.

And in your heart you are left by a burning desire to return, to once again experience the joy of praying more intensely, of being reconciled with God and your brethren, and perhaps to give a turning point to your life. I know, many go to ask for healing, or health, or to overcome a difficulty, but even if the request is not granted, there are in any case unexpected graces, such as learning the true value of things and people, or having our priorities straightened out. At Medjugorje you also learn to surrender yourself into God’s hands and to accept His will, even when it hurts; and in your heart you experience the peace and joy of knowing you are loved by the Father, which is the most beautiful gift that He could give us.

Many have witnessed that once you are back home from a pilgrimage to that blessed land you experience an irresistible need to tell others, to witness, despite the awareness that words are too poor to render the “Medjugorje experience” which is the impression of being constantly under the loving gaze of the Mother as you participate in intense religious celebrations together with thousands of other pilgrims praising and praying in different languages, making you think Heaven has descended to the earth!

Everything at Medjugorje is an invitation to peace, inner silence, and closer attention to the Word, and one doesn’t feel disturbed by the vendors of rosary beads and holy objects who respond to the needs of pilgrims who desire that their dear ones share in this grace by taking home a blessed object to those who couldn’t (or wouldn’t) come.

I hope that one day you too might share in the experience of many and surprise yourself by responding to a proposal of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje with the words: Yes, I shall come!

Nilde Totti

A Naturalist at Medugorje:

A Garden Blooming on Rocks

Recently, together with my wife Laura, I went on pilgrimage to Medugorje. With my interest in geography and nature, I am very observant of the world that surrounds us. This is what caught my attention.

In the three main apparitions of the last 150 years our Blessed Mother chose karstic regions.

A karst is characterized by soluble rock (for instance, limestone) with underground drainage and numerous fissures and caverns. So that in karstic regions, besides the outer world illuminated by the sun, there is also an underground world rich in caves and water.

If man, as if in a karst, opens up to the word of God and lets himself be penetrated by it, the “crust” of his sin will dissolve allowing him to become a new creature.

At Lourdes, in 1858, Mary appeared in a small cave that contained a fount of water, as if to say that the true Fount of grace is her Son and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to bring us to Him. Mary, who is Immaculate, can lead us directly into the depths of the heart of God Incarnate.

At Fatima, in 1917, Mary appeared in a large dolina, like a basin that gathers water and makes it converge to the centre, as if to say that she wants us gathered around her, like a “hen with her chicks”, and she calls us to allow ourselves to be caught in the water that comes from on High, and is able to drag us towards the Centre: her Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At Medugorje, in 1981, Mary appeared in a Karrenfeld, a type of stony desert. Karrenfelds are made up of rocks eroded by water, which are often covered up by a layer of soil, or are exposed if the surface is eroded.

I see it as though Mary is saying: with your sin you are turning the world into a desert, which can no longer give you the sustenance for your survival. Nonetheless, if you come close to me, and through me to my Son, you will have nothing to fear. The desert will become for you a garden, a garden of peace. You will enjoy peace on earth and peace with the Most High. In this garden my Son and I will take you by the hand and lead you to salvation.

At Medugorje, if in your heart you come near to Mary, you become aware how this impervious and arid desert truly does become a garden where you experience joy and peace. For example, at Medugorje, despite my instinct to avoid crowds, I experienced how being amid the crowd of pilgrims, such as in the extremely overcrowded church, did not create discomfort, but rather communion and joy.

Blessed be our Lord, Jesus Christ, and Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, Queen of the Universe, who by the will of the Most High, is also our loving Mother. She continues to draw us near to her Son, our Brother, and second Person of the Triune God!

Ugo Sauro

Prayer Group of the 2nd of the Month

This is a story of how a prayer group began quite simply in the style of the prayer of the 2nd of each month when Our Lady appears to the Medjugorje visionary, Mirjana. In these occasions Our Lady herself had requested prayer for “those who have not known God’s love,” or what we might call non-believers. Mary has asked us numerous times to help her to pray for this intention. Pina (from Salerno, Italy) helps us see how Our Lady’s desires are easily realized.

“I was in Medjugorje on the 2nd of August, and I was graced to be present at the apparition to Mirijana. We got there at 6 a.m., and the pavilion was already full, so we settled ourselves outside, on the stones, and began to pray. In the meantime, the crowd grew larger. A pleasant breeze gently ruffled the leaves of the trees. Everyone was praying, and about one and a half hours had passed when suddenly a gust of wind surprised us... and just as suddenly the wind stopped ... and then SILENCE! We immediately intuited that our blessed Mother was in our midst! I felt intense joy at the thought of Our Lady being there close to me, while my heart responded to Mary’s call to pray. It was as if the “Spirit of prayer” had been impressed into my heart and made me understand the importance of prayer, and above all, the need and urgency to pray for those who still don’t know God’s Love. I experienced within myself deep love for Our Lady, and the desire to collaborate with Her.

To my surprise, when I got back home, my spiritual adviser told me he intended beginning a prayer group of the ‘2nd of the month’. This surprised me because he had not been to Medjugorje, but had only heard about it. The group is now underway, and we’d like to invite everyone to be spiritually united to the prayer of Our Lady and Mirjana on the 2nd of each month for this particular intention of God’s love being known by all.”

Message to Mirjana

2 December 2006: “Dear Children, in this time of joyous expectation of my Son, my wish for you is that *all the days* of your earthly life be lived in joyful expectation of my Son. I call you all to holiness. I call you to be my apostles of holiness, so that through you the good news might enlighten all those who encounter you. Fast and pray and I shall be with you. Thank you.”

Annual Message to Jakov

25 December 2006: “Dear Children, Today is a great day of joy and peace; rejoice with me. I particularly call you, my Children, to holiness in the family. My Children, I desire that your family be holy, and that the divine joy and the peace that God sends you today may reign and abide in your families. My Children, open your hearts today, on this day of grace; decide for God, and give Him first place in your families. I am your Mother; I love you and I give you my motherly blessing.”

What Shall I Be?

by Stefania Consoli

Let's pretend that the creatures of the vegetable kingdom were able to think. After all, in children's fables animation is given to plants, animals and even minerals, making them behave like people, with speech, reason, and sentiments. So let us imagine a seed, a little seed, so little that it is practically insignificant.

It was born somewhere in Palestine over 2000 years ago, who knows from what plant, or tree. It was one of many that when ripe, they fall and are blown by the wind which takes them "where it wants." This little seed fell and was received by a fertile ground. And this was the beginning of a singular story that sees the seed become something unique. It's difficult to say which species it belonged to, as the only fruit that would be born of that tree was particularly unique, and destined to remain in eternity.

The seed grew, and just like all of us, it tried to imagine what it would become. Would it become a big shady tree in a pretty garden for the joy of a family, or perhaps provide shade in the fields for the solace of farmers who work under the sun from dawn to dusk? Then again, perhaps its purpose would simply be to offer refuge to migrating birds during their long flights, or to offer its branches as a home for a nest. Then again, it could become timber and made into a chair.. or a wine barrel.. or a boat ...

The little seed fantasized about what it might become, and in the meantime its appearance changed as it sprouted and became a sapling, then a fine young plant. Several seasons passed and the time was approaching when the tree, by now quite solid and mature, would discover the purpose of its existence. And never could it have imagined what it was to become! But the time had come for it to find out. An axeman came and delivered a powerful blow; the blade cut through the bark and sank into the wood, at the base of the tree. Blow after blow the trunk was severed, making copious drops of resin seep out... these were like tears, red tears. Once it was felled, it was taken elsewhere and stripped of all its glory: it's beautiful and luxurious branches. After so many years of patiently and lovingly pruning and caring for them, all it took was a few moments, a few cruel blows, and all was gone... and our tree found itself naked and defenceless.

For an undetermined amount of time it was deposited in a dark corner of an old shed. Here and there lay other trunks: and silence reigned. They did not communicate to each other, mute as they were out of fear for the uncertainty of their destination.

And it was spring again. The Jewish folk call it the month of Nissan, but in the damp obscurity of the shed our tree had lost all sense of time. One day two strong, calloused hands – quickly and a little nervously - picked it out from amongst the rest, dusted it down and cut off a piece. This piece was tied to the trunk, close to the top, crosswise.

Now that its destiny was to be revealed, it was fearful, bewildered, and a little concerned, in the realization that "its time

had come." Nonetheless, it let itself be led out into a noisy and agitated crowd. On some faces he saw anger, on some anguish, on others astonishment. Only one appeared serene and at peace even though he had thorny twines twisted round his crown. And it was precisely to him that he was given. For a moment their gazes crossed. How meek he was! like a lamb; and his gaze was full of love for what would become his throne.

In an instant the trunk found itself on his scourged back. It wished it was light so it wouldn't hurt his back, so full of open wounds, but it was forced to surrender itself with all its weight onto the back of that man and let itself be carried.

It wasn't met with reluctance. To the contrary, the hands which held onto it most firmly were almost caressing it, tenderly and with gratitude. The trunk shook and felt strange. No one had ever touched it that way. "This man's body is torn to pieces," the trunk thought, "yet a mysterious force emanates from him. He has fallen three times beneath my weight, but there is something invisible in him that lifts me up..."

As they left the town and made their way to a hill known as "skull" the more a sense of death and violence could be perceived in the air. This was what it was destined for! A dark and gloomy spectacle! And much to its regret, it had been called to be one of the protagonists. It is thrown down onto the ground with a thud. The confusion gets thicker, and the din greater around what is left of this man. Now it is his turn: in an instant he is stripped of his raggedy garment and pushed down onto the trunk. A hammer bangs nails through his flesh into that of the trunk. And the two are united: the flesh of the seed that became a tree, with the flesh of a God who became man. The same sharp nails pierced them both and what is left of the trunk's resin is united to what is left of the man's blood, flowing down onto the ground beneath them.

The man suddenly straightens up and arches heavenwards, attracting the gaze of all. Some look at him with a challenge, others out of curiosity, others with immense sorrow. Was it for this that that little seed was born? For this hour on Golgotha, of agony and injustice? Yes. But it was not alone. Also the dying man nailed to its wood had come into the world to die a criminal.

But this wasn't the end; there was, and is, more to this story. However, it was indispensable that a seed, one of many born in Palestine, should grow and offer its life to become the Cross – a nuptial bed, the mantle of a king that lowered himself so much as to become our servant. **

Message to Mirjana, 2 January 2007

"Dear Children, in this holy time full of the grace of God and of His Love, during which He sends me to you, I beseech you not to have a heart of stone. May fasting and prayer be your weapons with which to know and come close to Jesus, my Son. Follow me, (and) my luminous example. I shall help you; I am close to you. Thank you."

Our Lady also underlined the importance of the priestly blessing, and asked for prayer and fasting for all priests.

Resembling Him

Simple thoughts

by Pietro Squassabia



We have seen the Child who was born: what a wonderful sight! He is different to others, for He has the regality of a true King and the meekness of the Lamb. The Mother resembles Him in everything. Even afterwards Mary resembles Jesus: in her way of doing, of thinking, of living, of being.

We too must resemble Jesus. When we rejoice and things go well we are called to resemble Him. When we are being tested and are suffering we are still called to resemble Him. Always He must be our model and example. When we do not resemble Him, or better, since we are incapable of resembling Him, let us ask Mary to make us capable of this. Then, endowed with the same regality of the true King we will know how to possess everything without being enslaved to anyone or anything. Then, endowed with the same meekness of the Lamb, we will be able to offer up to God and to others everything we have, everything we are. In this way, we will experience heaven already on this earth, when life is joyful and when life is sorrowful. If we live in this manner we will never accuse anyone, as the devil does, but our lives will be of help to our brethren because we'll be able to do the deeds of Jesus, our friend and saviour.

When Jesus rose to Heaven, Mary remained with the Apostles. When I think of this I think of the grace of her presence. I think the Apostles must have experienced the same feelings in Mary's presence as they did in Jesus' presence. Mary must have spoken about Jesus to the apostles more with her example than with her word. Certainly, Mary must have helped them understand many things about Jesus that they hadn't understood during the time they spent with Him. Mary's presence was a further gift Jesus made to the apostles (and to us) when He died and rose into Heaven.

It makes me think what a great grace the apostles had with Mary in their midst. How "lucky" for them!, I think. However, as I think this, I seem to hear a voice that says: the same "luck" the apostles had you have also had. And I realize how this is true, for I have experienced Mary's presence, even at Medjugorje. There, she is particularly present; you can almost reach out and touch her. This is a special time of grace that we are living; and I acknowledge that the "luck" of the apostles is also ours.

Thank you, Mary, for being as wonderful as your Child. Thank you because you transmit to us your "wonder" and your "wonderfulness" so that we too can become a little bit wonderful for Him. Thank you because you are so close to us, so much so that we can see you amongst our own brethren.

Offer Your Lives!

In the previous issue of Echo we began a column to help us **understand the value of offering one's life to God**. The offering of self comes from a request made by Mary at Medjugorje, and finds its way in the soul of a person who desires being ever more in communion with Jesus, and desires uniting itself to His offering for the salvation of the world. With the help of reflections by **Fr. TOMISLAV VLASIC** we continue to trace out this way.

"I once heard a priest say: *'It seems that in these times there is nothing left to do but offer up one's life to be able to fulfil all the plans of Mary Queen of Peace...!'*"

In Reality, What is a Life Offered Up?

When we speak of "offered" souls, or victim souls, a sensation of uneasiness rises in the hearts of men; some are frightened, others are overcome by dread and close themselves up in a kind of suffering of emotions. God doesn't want any of this. The Lord desires to conquer once and for all the death and hell that are within us; He wants to make us able to face Satan and destroy all his works. God desires rising in us!

This must be seen as being part of the dynamics of the battle between the Light and the darkness; and when Our Lady calls us to offer ourselves, she means to call us to enter into this Light. So it is not a call to become sick, but rather to adore and glorify God even in our suffering and our sickness, and even when we feel "closed up in a sepulchre."

So the Call is Entirely Positive...

One who offers himself, who gives himself up completely, lives within himself the dynamics of the resurrection, and feels called to live life to the full. We have noticed that after a certain amount of time a soul who has undertaken this journey ceases to fear and worry; and these negative feelings are replaced by serenity and joy, and the simplicity of relating with others.

The Important Thing

"God so loved the world that He sent His only Son..." The love of the Father was so great that He sent His only Son into our human misery to save the world. He desires impressing this same love into each of us so that we too can touch the bottom of human misery to bring it salvation. No difficulty or opposition can put out the love that is alive in us, for it blazes continuously through little trials till it becomes a great love, and spotless, just like the Eucharist. Therefore, "offered" souls are people who open up to the totality of God's Love; they ask for it; they desire it.

What is Asked of One Who Offers?

Such a person is asked to make this love grow continually in him, and to purify it through the events of his daily life, and to adore and pray to God in every situation: to nurture His Love, and to allow it to become

the centre of all his actions.

There are some important instruments which help us safe-keep this capacity to "be love" and enable it to grow. These are: devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: a filter that purifies whatever in us is negative; adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament: pure divine love present on the earth that nourishes our souls; adoration of the Cross, from which gush forth all God's graces. Nonetheless, one must always remember that this love matures and is continually purified through trials and crosses. These are for us occasions to evaluate the centrality of God's love in us. If we work at putting love into practice, we will surely come out as victors in all our trials. Furthermore, by offering to God our victory, it will surely affect the entire earth.

What are the Means?

This is not an easy call! With this we don't mean to discourage or intimidate anyone. Rather, we intend drawing attention to the fact that the call is a serious one, and cuts deep into the soul, and provokes all the levels of falseness that are within us; it provokes Satan, and engages us in a battle against him. The battle, however, is not fought with weapons and clubs, but with the only means able to defeat him: love! Sacrifices do not enable us to enter into the truest dynamics of salvation, but with love it is possible. Why, then, does the Lord allow sacrifices? The reason is that through them we can touch the depths of love. Sacrifices are precious occasions, and crosses are the only combustible material for the dynamics of love.

Concrete Steps to Fulfil the Call

Of utmost importance is the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady desires leading, protecting, and purifying souls who undertake this journey of self offering, so as to prepare the place for Jesus in them. Secondly, these souls must allow God to realize everything that He has predisposed for them, without them interfering with their human logic, ideals, or self-interests. They must allow Him to lead their lives by way of those steps that He knows, but which they often ignore. In each trial these souls must pray that "His will be done", and with a joyful attitude they must pray that in those moments true love, patience, humility and all the virtues present in the soul of the Virgin Mary might be born in them.

Where Does the Way Lead?

The way leads one through trials; these purify and strengthen the virtues present in souls. Through accepting trials with love, and through turning the calls-to-order that are addressed to us into steps that lead to humility, patience, and responsibility, one constantly matures and progresses spiritually. Without these steps it is not possible to offer one's life to be "love sacrificed," because Satan can easily destroy us through little things that create confusion, ire, dissatisfaction and bitterness.

(End Part 2. To Be Continued)

ECHO Present also in Latvia and Russia!

This year, on the 13th of December, dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima, and to St. Lucia, we celebrated the **second anniversary** of the Latvian edition of the Echo of Mary. For this we have only to thank God and His Most Holy Mother; and together with the Blessed Virgin we sing the *Magnificat*.

This adventure with "Mary's little instrument" began in November 2004. A pilgrim group from Latvia wanted to go to Medjugorje on the anniversary of Fr. Slavko Barbaric's death, but due to visa problems the pilgrimage was short lived. However, the pilgrims didn't want to go home, so they spent the days which would have been spent in Medjugorje, in Riga. They prayed in a local church in the way and spirit of Medjugorje. Thus, Medjugorje came to Latvia. Afterwards, people witnessed to having received great graces, as if they had been to Medjugorje. **It was precisely during this "pilgrimage" that the idea was born of producing a local newspaper** for Medjugorje pilgrims. People were thirsty to know more about this place of graces, to read the latest message with a comment, and to know when the next pilgrimage to Medjugorje would be.

One of these *pilgrims* was Br. Janis from the monastery in Viljani. Some of the brothers from this monastery were already receiving the Polish edition of the Echo of Mary, sent by its publisher Ewa. Thus came the idea of producing a translation of this paper, rather than producing something different, whilst articles specifically for Latvian pilgrims would be included. It seemed an excellent idea, but to better understand God's will we went to our Cardinal to ask for his blessing for the newspaper. With his blessing we were sure that the idea was from God. We still had to resolve practical problems, but God also took care of these. We found a printing house just half a kilometre away from the monastery where Br. Janis lived; and Br. Janis was the first translator for Echo in Latvian. Emilija and Silvija, who worked in the printing house, are now responsible for our Latvian edition... but this is already another story. This was how it all began.

At the moment our Latvian Echo is the only permanent edition about Medjugorje in Latvia. For now the situation is stable, and 1500 copies are printed per edition, which is monthly because of readers' demand (not everyone has access to internet to read Our Lady's latest message).

We send the Latvian edition to churches where priests are open to the messages of Our Lady of Medjugorje. Like in other countries there is a division among the priests in Latvia about Medjugorje. Volunteers take it to the needy, and we also send some via post. Financial support comes from donations.

For now the biggest part of the work relies on Emilia, the editor. She takes care of editing and the financial and coordinating problems. Daina and Zinaida translate from English, Russian and Polish, and Silvia does the lay out. Very often these stay up into the night to do this work.

In September 2006 the Latvian Echo acquired a new sister: Echo in Russian. We had the idea about translating Echo into Russian for a long time, but we didn't want to do propaganda. So we waited for the Holy Spirit to give us some impulses to start. There were more and more Russian-speaking people who wanted to read the Echo in Russian; and our translator Zinaida was ready to translate from Latvian into Russian. It was the moment to start. The first 500 copies were printed and sent to readers. At present, Zenta, a teacher of the Russian language, is also helping us to translate. The Russian Echo of Mary is read in Latvia, in Moscow, in Saint Petersburg, and in Siberia. We are thankful to our young apostle Radion who helps to contact people interested about Medjugorje in Russia. Thanks to Piero Gottardi, from the Italian Echo, both editions are placed on the net www.ecodimaria.net

To conclude, we wish to thank the people of good will who helped us to realize the Gospa's plan. First of all our readers, who motivate us to work even more. We especially thank them for their letters in which they share with us joys and problems. Of course we couldn't go into print without financial support, so thanks to everyone who helps us spiritually or materially! Our best wishes and love to people who are spreading our Echo! We give thanks to priests, who allow to spread this newspaper in churches. Thank you, Emilija, Silvija and all the translators for your sacrifices in these two years! Thanks to the workers at the printing house, who work tirelessly and thus help Our Lady. God bless you! We are thankful to our parish priest father Joseph who supports us with good advice and if there is too much work he also helps us to translate. We can't forget to mention Maija, who is the group leader for pilgrimages to Medjugorje (from Latvia). She helped us in many ways and encouraged us a great deal. Our best wishes to Sr. Stefania, to Beverley and to all those people who work to produce the original Echo in Italy! Thank you! At last, thanks also to Ewa Jurasz who helped us to begin our work! God bless you all!

Br. Janis is at present spending a year of discernment with the Kraljice Mira Community in Medjugorje. May the Lord help him during this important stage of his life. We all feel a strong bond with this Community founded by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic, and we desire offering his meditations to our readers to help them better understand the meaning of Mary's messages so they can live them more fully. In fact, we think that the Echo should be more than just a spiritual reading on the Catholic faith. We desire it to offer spiritual guidance for the journey that leads one to life in the Most Holy Trinity.

The Echo Team in Latvia

*** Echo of Mary recorded on cassette for the blind or the aged.** (Also available in French.) For INFO write to: Echo of Mary, P.O. Box 47, I-31037 Loria (TV), Italy.



From the Heart of Australia

Last October I attended the **20th Anniversary in Alice Springs of Pope John Paul II's visit to AUSTRALIA.** Over 600 people assembled from all parts of Australia richly representing our Indigenous Catholic Leaders for the week of celebration. The beauty of prayer, singing and dancing from the various communities gave creative expression to the faith and hope that filled our week together.

It was during the Assembly's concluding Mass with the Papal Legate, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, that God touched me. One man, 'painted up' from the Port Keats Community came forward in procession bearing gifts to be taken back to the new Pope. This moment – in all appearance most solemn – was not accompanied by music, or song or dance. There was just a lone figure walking silently towards us.

Behold the man! These words from John's Gospel, speaking of Jesus in his passion, ran through my mind as I watched. And I began to quietly weep with the realization that Jesus was in our midst... The figure walking towards us was no longer one man; as he now knelt respectfully before the Papal Legate he represented Indigenous Australia bearing its gift to the official Church. In this moment I saw something of the humility of God who, we might say, continually kneels before humanity bearing the gift of his only Son.

I pray that we may know more confidently this love of God who beckons us with great humility.
Fr. David Tremble, MGL

Guadalupe: 6 Million Pilgrims

An enormous crowd of pilgrims, calculated at about six million people, came from every corner of Mexico and abroad, to the Shrine of Guadalupe to commemorate the 457 years since Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego. An endless stream of people prostrated themselves at the feet of the *morenita del Tepeyac*, as John Paul II affectionately called her. On the evening of 11 December the traditional serenata in honour of Our Lady was held, and on the morning of the 12th, at dawn (the anniversary) Mexican songs called "Las mañanitas" were sung. These are songs traditionally sung on birthdays or saint-days. Alone or in groups, many on foot and some on their knees, pilgrims arrived at what is the most-visited Marian Shrine in the world.

(Zenit)

Echo Counts on You Too

Readers testify that Echo is nourishment for the soul, help for the faith and light for the environment in which we live.

We believe the Echo to have been suggested by Mary. It brings the Good to many all over the world. We consider it to be sustained by God, for only from Him can good things come into being. To fulfil His plans, however, God makes use of people. To become man, God used the womb of a Virgin; to give origin to the chosen people He used Abraham, a wise man who lived far from the promised land; and to spread the good news He used apostles. God could do without man, but He chooses to work with man and act as if He needed him.

The Echo of Mary also needs man; it needs his time, his faith, and his resources. **So that the Echo might continue to live it needs you;** it needs your prayers and your willingness to help. Without you it cannot continue, and this obviously conforms to God's plans.

For Echo to keep on living it has become necessary to cut back costs, including postal costs. For this reason, despatch of Echo is now being revised and economized. We also remind readers that **ECHO can now be downloaded from our web pages www.ecodimaria.net**

We count on your generosity as costs have risen a great deal, and these risk compromising the normal production of our little paper. We trust in your prayers, and count on your help, including economical help, as much as you can. God bless you! and Our Lady keep you! *P.S.*

Echo is distributed freely. It fully relies on donations. Thank you for helping us help Mary to call her children round the world.

Mail Donations, correspondence to:

The Secretary, Echo of Mary,
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The Lord bless thee and keep thee! May He show His face to thee and have mercy on thee! May He turn His countenance to thee and give thee peace!

Don Alberto

Italy, 16 January 2007