

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 January 2007

“Dear Children! Put Sacred Scripture in a visible place in your family and read it. In this way, you will come to know prayer with the heart and your thoughts will be in God. Do not forget that you are fleeting as a flower in a field which is visible from afar, but disappears in a moment. My Children, leave a sign of goodness and love wherever you pass and God will bless you with the abundance of His blessing. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Leave a Sign

“Our years are over in a breath... they are over in a trice, and then we are gone,” we are reminded in Psalm 90. And Mary says: **Do not forget that your life is fleeting, as that of a flower in a field which is visible from afar but disappears in a moment.** It is not a secret to anyone that the human person is frail; we all know how much man seeks to delay the decay of life and death. The defence of life (common to all animals) is in itself - and within certain limits - a good thing. But man is not a mere animal, and whenever another tries to theorize or act as though he were, the divine order of Creation is unhinged, harming it seriously. Man is created in the image of God, and is called to fulfil this image so as to become a child of God. This call is a decisive one for the entire creation, which *waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God* (Rm. 8:19), and has been *groaning inwardly till now in the act of giving birth* (cf. Rm 8:22).

With regards to one's life, to the life of others, and to nature, man cannot behave as an animal, but in whatever he does, he must always be the image of the living God. Man must valiantly defend the Life that flows within him; but the true Life, which is Jesus Christ himself, not only or not so much the biological life that clothes his body. *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell* (Mt 10:28). The true medicine for our human frailty, for the precariousness of life, comes when we place our life in God through Jesus Christ; when we safe keep the image of God that is within us and thus become His children.

In Christ every division, separation and seed of death is destroyed. That this might be possible; that the Word of God might live in us, we must open ourselves to the Word. **“Put Sacred Scripture in a visible place in your family and read it. In this way, you will come to know prayer with the heart**



If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me
(Mk 8:34)

and your thoughts will be in God,” Mary says in her message. So let us do this and remind Mary of her words, so that with her help and of the Holy Spirit, the Word might descend in us and live in us; and our passing on the scene of this world, though fleeting as that of a flower, will **leave a sign**. And though the sign might be weak, it will be indelible because it will be the sign of Jesus Himself. Though our own gestures might be little and even insignificant, they can be true signs, and His goodness and love will be able to touch souls. Even if our “signs” are insignificant God will use them to separate those blessed by Him from the others on the day of judgement (Mt 25:31-46).

Let us not worry about doing great things which probably aren't even within our reach. Rather, let us do well the little things in our everyday life. It is these grains of **goodness and love**, when blessed by God, that will change the world. It is Jesus who accomplishes the work at which we are called to cooperate, and our cooperation is not one of managerial or organizational capacity, but must be a *fiat*. So, in the amount that our “yes” is similar to that of Jesus and Mary, *God will do great things in us and we will sanctify His Name*. There is no authentic **sign of goodness and love** without it also being accompanied by our surrender to the goodness and love of the Father, and to our saying: Yes, Father, Thy will be done in me.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 February 2007:

“Dear Children, Open your hearts to God's mercy in this time of Lent. The Heavenly Father desires delivering each of you from the slavery of sin. Therefore, my Children, make good use of this time and through the encounter with God at confession, leave sin and decide for holiness. Do this out of love for Jesus, who redeemed you all with His blood, that you may be happy and in peace. Do not forget, my Children: your freedom is your weakness, therefore follow my messages with seriousness. Thank you for responding to my call.”

For Love of Jesus

“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love”: God thus reveals Himself to Moses to renew His covenant with His people (Ex 34:6); and today, Mary calls us to **open our hearts to God's mercy**. Together with Moses we also are quick to acknowledge the *hardness of heart* of the chosen people exiled in Egypt. However, we live now, 2000 years since Christ's birth, and we call ourselves *Christian*. Do we believe in God's mercy? It is easy to say that God is Love when things go according to our own designs and expectations; but when everything is falling in do we still acknowledge His Love?

This question is fundamental for our faith journey. To not consider the Love that God nourishes for man would mean to start off on the wrong foot, or to tune in to the wrong wavelength and thus heed someone else's voice. Mary offers us precious advice when she says, **“Open your hearts to God's mercy in this time of Lent.”** This doesn't mean to draw up plans, but to simply open the heart so God can pour in His mercy, and thus **deliver each of us from the slavery of sin**. God is Love; His love is for us. We are the only ones who can impede Him from pouring it on us. His Love has already been given us. It is lifted up on the Cross; it has become Bread for us; it joins earth to Heaven, it is Jesus Christ, Man and God.

The time of Lent is a particularly favourable time to encounter God. **“Make good use of this time, and through the encounter with God in confession, abandon sin and decide for holiness,”** says Our Lady. We have before us two ways: *life and good, and death and evil* (Dt 30:15): the way of **holiness** and the way of **sin**. It is up to us to choose. We must decide for one or decide for the other. Mary calls us to decide for holiness, not out of fear, but **out of love of Jesus who redeemed us all, with His Blood**. The love of Jesus saves the world, and

only His Love and all that is fruit of His Love can earn us eternal life. “If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor 13:2-3). There is no need to do great or spectacular things. Our little gestures of every day, done out of love, may seem insignificant to us, but it is these that can move the Lord and become salvation (Mt 25:40).

With **Your blood, Jesus, You redeemed us**; and our greatest sin – blasphemy against the Spirit (Mk 3:29) - is not in having put You on the cross, but in having refused Your Love, in having not believed in it!

“Do not forget, my Children: your freedom is your weakness, therefore follow my messages with seriousness.” Let us take Mary’s petition seriously, and seek forgiveness through confession and continue on the journey of holiness. Our freedom will no longer be weakness, but strength that will enable us to penetrate the Heart of Christ where every suffering finds consolation, every offence finds forgiveness, every cross blossoms on the Tree of Life.

N.Q.

40 Days to Live Folly of God’s Love

With this year’s **Message for Lent**, Benedict XVI urges us to live Lent as a “Eucharistic time” for God’s “mad love” expressed most highly in the Crucified Christ. The theme is: **“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced”** (Jn 19:37). He says: “It is in the mystery of the Cross that the overwhelming power of the heavenly Father’s mercy is revealed in all its fullness. In order to win back the love of His creature, He accepted to pay a very high price: the blood of His only begotten Son.” (...) “On the Cross, God’s eros for us is made manifest,” explains the Pontiff as he picks up the central theme of his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. “Indeed, eros is - as Pseudo-Dionysius expresses it - that force ‘that does not allow the lover to remain in himself but moves him to become one with the beloved’.

“Is there a greater ‘mad eros’ than that which led the Son of God to make Himself one with us even to the point of suffering as His own the consequences of our offences?” asks B.xvi. “Let us look at Christ pierced on the Cross! On the Cross, it is God Himself who begs the love of His creature: He is thirsty for the love of every one of us. (...)”

“In all truth, only the love that unites the free gift of oneself with the impassioned desire for reciprocity instils a joy, which eases the heaviest of burdens.

“The response the Lord ardently desires of us, is that we welcome His love and allow ourselves to be drawn to Him, but accepting His love is not enough. We need to respond to such love and devote ourselves to communicating it to others. Christ ‘draws me to Himself’ in order to unite Himself to me, so that I learn to love the brothers with His own love,” concludes the Pope. *

More Love

The following reflection by Benedict XVI (Angelus, 18 Feb. 2007) is so eloquent that it needs no comment, and so profound that one feels moved to ask himself: **‘But do I really know how to love?’**

“This Sunday’s Gospel contains some of the most typical and forceful words of Jesus’ preaching: **‘LOVE YOUR ENEMIES’** (Lk 6:27). But what do his words mean? Why does Jesus ask us to love precisely our enemies, that is, a love which exceeds human capacities? Actually, Christ’s proposal is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is **too much violence, too much injustice**, and thus that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness. This **“more”** comes from God: it is his mercy which was made flesh in Jesus and which alone can ‘tip the balance’ of the world from evil to good, starting with that small and decisive ‘world’ which is the human heart.

This Gospel passage is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian non-violence. It doesn’t consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of ‘turning the other cheek’ claims, but in **responding to evil with good** (cf. Rom 12: 17-21) and thereby **breaking the chain of injustice**.

One then understands that for Christians, non-violence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person’s way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God’s love and power that he is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone.

Love of one’s enemy constitutes the nucleus of the *Christian revolution*, a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power, but is instead a revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world! Here is the heroism of the ‘lowly’ who believe in God’s love and spread it, even at the cost of their lives.”

Saints Not Without Sin

At a recent General Audience, **Pope Benedict** has pointed out that “Saints are not people who have not erred or sinned.” The Holy Father specified that their saintliness lies in their capacity to mend their ways and repent.

And if it is thought that saints ought to get on together perfectly well, at the same Audience B.xvi said that even saints aren’t perfect, have fall outs and disagreements giving rise even to controversy (he mentioned in particular that of Paul and Barnabas). “This appears very consoling to me, because we see that the saints did not drop as saints from heaven. They were men like us with problems and even with sins.”

So what **guidelines do we have** to become the way God desires us? “Holiness grows with one’s **capacity for conversion**, for repentance, for our willingness to start again, and especially with one’s capacity to reconcile and to forgive,” which is something all of us can do, he said. *

Prophecy by Women

Once again the Pope has dedicated to women words of acknowledgement for their “feminine genius” according to the expression used by JP II in his encyclical *Mulieris dignitatem*. Before a crowded gathering on 14 February, during which Benedict XVI quoted the document, he said: “The Church gives thanks for all the manifestations of the feminine ‘genius’ which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and nations; for all the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the People of God, for all the victories which she owes to their faith, hope and charity: She gives thanks for all the fruits of feminine holiness.”

As he focused his attention “on the many feminine figures who played an effective and precious role in spreading the Gospel ... in no way a secondary presence,” the Holy Father started from the women of the primitive Church. Apart from the unique and irreplaceable presence of Mary, “There are several other women who in different ways gravitated around the figure of Jesus with the functions of responsibility,” he said. “An eloquent example of this are those women who followed Jesus to serve him with their properties... and unlike the Twelve, they did not abandon Jesus in the hour of his passion. (...) Outstanding among these women, in particular, is the Magdalene, who not only was present at the Passion, but also became the first witness and herald of the Risen One (cf. Jn 20:1,11-18). To Mary of Magdala, in fact, St. Thomas Aquinas dedicates the singular description ‘apostle of the apostles’.”

The Church began after the Pentecost, and the Pope reminds us: “We owe St. Paul a more ample documentation on woman’s dignity and ecclesial role. He begins with the fundamental principle, according to which for the baptized ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus,’ that is, all united in the same nature, though each one with specific functions.

“The Apostle admits as something normal that woman can ‘prophecy’ in the Christian community (1 Co 11:5), i.e., pronounce herself openly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, on the condition that it is for the edification of the community and in a dignified manner. Thus, the famous exhortation ‘the women should keep silence in the churches’ must be relativized (1 Co 14:34),” leaving the problem of the contradictory manner to these two statements to the exegetes, he said.

On the **8th March** women are honoured the world round in varying ways, but sadly there are still far too many women that continue to be on the receiving end of abuse, violence and humiliation, and too many parts of the world where she is given no worth at all, and treated as if she did not have a soul.

It would do these people good to hear and ponder these words by Pope Benedict XVI: “The history of Christianity would have developed very differently if the generous contribution of many women had not taken place!” S.C.

Mary's Last Residence

We know her as Mary of Nazareth and we think of her there, within the walls where she pronounced her *fiat*. However, there is another house that witnessed the last years of the Blessed Virgin's earthly life. That house is in **Ephesus** (in present day Turkey).

When Pope Benedict XVI went to Turkey last year, he visited Ephesus and the House of Mary. On that occasion he said: "In Ephesus, in a pleasant place called 'Nightingale Hill' looking over the Aegean Sea, is the Shrine of Mary's House. It is an ancient and small chapel that has arisen around the little house that, according to a very ancient tradition, the Apostle John built for the Virgin Mary, after going with her to Ephesus. (...) **Archaeological investigations have demonstrated that this place has been since time immemorial a place of Marian devotion...**"

From the first centuries, numerous Christian authors have mentioned John's and the Blessed Virgin's home in the city of Ephesus. Local Christians had been venerating the house "since time immemorial" as B.xvi expressed himself, but for the rest of the Church the story and location of this special house was little known; the memory seemed to have got lost. However, this would change with the help of Providence - and the visions of a German nun and mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich (d. 1824). In 1880 a French abbot, inspired by these writings, travelled to Ephesus to find Our Lady's house, which he did, but still there seemed little interest by authorities to look deeper into the matter. A decade later another priest, this time from Smyrna, read Emmerich's Life of Mary and organized an expedition.

The house was discovered almost by "chance": on their search they became thirsty and asked some local women working in the field where they might get some water. The women told them to go to "the monastery" up the mountain, which resulted in little more than a pile of stones, but upon further investigation its construction and layout matched Emmerich's description.

Research among the residents of the area confirmed the existence of a centuries-old devotion which recognized in the ruined chapel the place of the last residence of the Mother, Mary.

Christians Suffer in Pakistan

"They suffer poverty, isolation and discrimination, but are firm in the faith." said the Archbishop of Lahore.

Christians are a small minority, but they are "proud of their faith and want to keep it," he added. "Sadly, because of their poverty, the children are withdrawn from schools and sent to work." The Archbishop said they suffer isolation and discrimination because of social barriers that exclude Christians from enjoying the same dignity. He said that because of political conflicts in the Middle East, Christians are identified with the West, which provokes attacks against our churches and institutions.

He said followers of religious extremism are responsible for the discrimination, of which women are often the targets.

"Standing by the Cross of Jesus was His Mother"

(Jn 19:25)

A woman stands before her dying son, her whole being suffers, shocked by the scene of her Son's Passion... and the reality of man's cruelty. How could one even think to impede her from suffering and crying? Not only is crying a noble sentiment, but it is simply human.

Mary's presence next to the cross, *said John Paul II at one of his general audiences*, shows how she totally participated in the redemptive sacrifice of her Son. Mary desired participating to the very end in Jesus' sufferings because she had not rejected the sword announced to her by Simeon (cf. Lk 2:35), but with Christ she accepted the mysterious designs of the Father. She was the first participant of that sacrifice and would remain as the perfect model for all those who would agree to associate themselves without reserve to that redemptive offering.

The motherly compassion expressed by her presence made the drama of that death on a cross more dense and profound. It is the drama of many families, of mothers and children of our own time. How much suffering in our world! **How many mothers crying for their children, who though they live it is as if they were dead.** Permit me to also say how much misery is experienced by the many **children abandoned, neglected,** and disappointed by their parents when their education is entrusted to chance, or delegated to someone else.

Parents, begin by staying under the cross of your children! ... the cross of growing up, of the impact with society, of the discovery of one's limits. Life is a beautiful gift even for an adolescent or a young person, but it is still a cross, and a parent is called to remain, as Mary did, beneath that cross.

Jesus, seeing his mother next to the cross, most probably goes back with his thoughts to their time spent together at Nazareth, Cana, Jerusalem, perhaps thinking of when he had to leave to begin his public life, and the solitude of those last years, of the solitude that was becoming ever more intense. In turn, Mary most probably thinks of all the things that for years she had been pondering in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19-51). At the foot of the cross she is able to comprehend them more than ever, as sorrow and faith fuse together in her soul.

Then, from the cross, Jesus looks at her and says:

"Woman, behold your son" (Jn 19:26)

It is an act of tenderness and filial compassion. Jesus doesn't want his mother to remain alone. In his place he leaves another. At the conclusion of his redemptive work, Jesus asks Mary to accept definitively his offering of self as a victim of expiation by taking John as her son. Beneath the cross Mary thus receives the gift of a new maternity.

This filial gesture, however, goes way beyond the person of the beloved disciple. Jesus intends giving Mary a much more numerous family. He wants to institute

for Mary a maternity that embraces every disciple of then and of all times.

"Behold your mother!" (Jn 19:27)

Jesus turns to the disciple and asks him to treat Mary as he would his mother. Mary's motherly love demands filial love in return. It is as if Jesus is saying to him: *Love her as I have loved her...* as if Jesus is telling us: *Love her as I have loved her.*

The importance of Marian devotion which the Church has always recommended is understood by Jesus' words at the hour of his death. Jesus wants us to love Mary, that we keep her with us in our homes. Instead of giving hospitality to vanities and foolishness, let us take her into our homes and adopt her as mother. She is a counsellor that doesn't deceive, or waste time, or disappoint...

Let's follow the example of the saints and make space for her in our lives.

Fr. Gabriel Pedicino o.s.a.

In a Rush

by *Stefania Consoli*

If we stop a moment and listen to the rhythm of life that flows within us, perceived especially by the beating of the heart, we will realize that it is slow, calm and harmonious; unless we have forced it to fasten by a lifestyle which makes us rush.

Our paper, the *Echo*, is sent to many parts of the world, and I hope there are still parts of the world where the folk are not "forced" to live the anxiety of the "developed world" who are caught up in a mechanism of production that threatens them not to stop.

So, for those of us who wake up with the mind already crowded with things to do, and go to sleep with the worry of having "done it all", what I suggest is that we start asking ourselves: *"Have I done well the things that matter the most? Did I do them in a way that has enabled me to remain at peace?"*

We run to guarantee our serenity, often constructing it artificially, however, this blinds us, so that we often miss the chance to enjoy life and all it offers. We have the habit of carrying out our duties mechanically, often leaving us unsatisfied as if we have concluded very little. Perhaps, then, we need to learn to stop and reflect to see if and how we need to change.

One way of helping us do this is to **observe Mary**. Of course, her times weren't like ours. Palestine 2000 years ago was not measured by the speedometers of vehicles; maybe the only noise on the roads of then was the sound of hooves making their way along a dirt road. So we don't pretend to confront our lives with hers; we rather want to look at *how* she lived.

Also the Blessed Virgin, says St. Luke, *"went with haste"* to the house of Elisabeth (cf. Lk 1:39). Her concern, however, was of a different nature. It meant this: an inner solicitation to follow the will of God; ready to leave one's own things to visit another; disposed to renounce the joy of solitary contemplation of her pregnancy to share it with her far-away cousin. *Mary went with*

haste to a city of Judah, but once there she most certainly continued to carry out her daily tasks immersed in the God she was bearing, with simple gestures that took on a regal air because they were done with care, attention and dedication; without dispersion of energy.

If we give the best of ourselves and think about what we are doing, even whilst doing banal things such as going up and down stairs, we will see, with marvel, how things are created with perfection and harmony, such as our own body, or even the beauty of human inventions. Take, for example, the roundabouts introduced in recent years in Italy to replace intersections with or without lights. How marvellously they work! Praise God for man's genius, which can turn even the most basic objects into useful things for our purpose and comfort: blankets, for instance, to protect us as we sleep, or running water, even just water! And in us will be born a constant feeling of gratitude that dilates the heart, and quietens our breathing. And this will give us peace.

But if we don't manage to do everything we were supposed to do? There is a trick: entrust everything to God at the beginning of the day; our projects, chores and duties... He will help us to comprehend the essential, and the Holy Spirit will help us see what is urgent and what is useless, giving us the wisdom to face everything and strength to fulfil it all. We will stop being so nervous and in our hearts instead of anxiety there will be joy.

Dust if You Must

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better, to paint a picture or write a letter, Bake a cake or plant a seed, Ponder the difference between want and need?

Dust if you must,
But there's not much time,
With rivers to swim and mountains to climb,
Music to hear and books to read,
Friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must,
But the world's out there, with the sun in your eyes, the wind in your hair,
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain.
This day will not come 'round again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,
Old age will come - it's not always kind.
And when you go; and go you must,
You, yourself, will be more dust.

(Author unknown)

BENEDICT XVI (2nd Sunday of Lent):

"For a Christian, praying is not evading reality or the responsibilities that come of them, but is to accept these fully, while trusting in the Lord's faithful and unflinching love. **Prayer is not an accessory, or an option, but a question of life or death.** In fact, only one who prays (who entrusts himself to God with filial love) can enter eternal life, which is God himself.

I encourage everyone ... to give time to silence and contemplation, to make more space for prayer and meditation of the Word of God."

Silence! Heaven is Speaking!

It is Lent, a time when the Church advises us to live the **experience of the desert**, to be better prepared for Easter, with an appropriate inner disposition: void of the superfluous and more open to perceive the presence of God, who at Easter, after his Passion and Death on the Cross, will become for us full light, resurrection and glory. It is precisely to this that the Lenten journey invites us. The right tools are needed for the journey. Amongst the means suggested the most important one is **fasting**, which is the attitude of renouncing something that is dear to us, or good, but which is not strictly necessary for our survival.

Our Lady at Medjugorje continues to remind us of the value of alimentary fasting, which she said even has the power to "stop wars," but there are many forms of fasting which should not be undervalued.

For our consideration, following are some brief reflections extracted from the writings of monk and theologian **Fr. Divo Barsotti** regarding a form of fasting which is fundamental for one who desires hearing within himself the voice of Heaven. It is the fast of **SILENCE**.

Silence: theological place for encounter with God

"Silence is the door to God. Unless you create silence and enter your inner desert, it is difficult, even impossible, to hear God. In this desert, in this solitude, God allures the soul that desires following Him: *"I will lead you into the wilderness and speak tenderly to you"* (Hos 2:14). When man wants to hear the word of God, he must hide himself under a mantle of silence, and plunge himself into darkness, and leave behind him the world - so light is God's murmur!"

From Outer Silence to Inner Silence

"In this frenetic world of hectic work hours and unbridled activism; with the multiplication of television and internet images that crowd our minds, the need to find space for silence during our day has become essential. We need to do everything with simplicity and calm, and without anxiety, and above all, we must cultivate inner silence. God wrought his greatest works in silence. In the eternal silence the Father created the heavens and the earth. In the night, far from the city, Jesus was born. In the quiet and solitude of the house of Nazareth Jesus prepared for his mission. In the solitude of the night Jesus distanced himself from everyone to pray. In the dark silence of Christ's tomb the joy of Resurrection was budding!"

Silence Unifies

"The crowd is not outside of us, but within us, with a multitude of thoughts, inclinations, feelings, worries, and interests. All this means dispersion for the soul; the soul is impeded from finding God. For as long as the thoughts of man are not of God, man remains scattered. His thoughts are scattered because of the various types of news he listens to, out of the desire to know: via the paper, the radio, the TV... Man has his mind on one thing or another, but there is

no real core to his inner life, and no real goal for his intellectual activities. What is the remedy? Without doubt, prayer; and inner silence which is already obtained through prayer. A person used to contemplation sees everything in the light of God. Many people (including men of the Church) see things only in the light of success and efficiency.

Three types of silence

"Teachers of the spirit speak of three types of silence as a condition for communion with God. These three are: around self, silence of self; silence within self.

Silence around self (means to) silence occupations done with exaggeration, and the superfluous. It is the silence of futile conversations, of mundane visits not done out of charity. Outer silence gives back to the body and the spirit the necessary calm to allow it to recuperate inner silence.

Silence of self, is the silence that is hidden to the eyes of others, and makes us pass unobserved in our everyday life. It is the silence that envelops our sorrows, worries and hopes to the point of desiring that no one's gaze might stop upon us, that no word of praise or compassion or comfort might be said for us.

Silence within self is the silence of the critical spirit, of the susceptibility of the heart, of the needs of the suffering body. We need to hush the inner racket, the chaos of our thoughts, the tangled knot of desires, the restlessness and anxiety of the spirit."

Word and Silence

"Speaking is a grand thing. In general, however, our words, instead of communicating to others what we are, hide it from the others. Instead of engaging us, they place us on a plane of superficiality and inner dissipation! The words that are emitted from our mouths ought to be a true expression of ourselves. With every word we ought to donate ourselves totally. Precisely for this, our words ought to be few to be truly efficacious.

More than this, our words must express not only us, but Christ. We cannot pretend to give God to others by chattering away about our Lord. Unless we are truly engaged we give neither ourselves nor God. The word that gives God must rise from an abyss that is more profound than the word that gives you. God is more intimately close to us than we are to ourselves. Let us ask of the Lord this grace: to learn how to speak! I don't mean to know how to make speeches; there are already enough of these. I mean to **know how to speak the basic and essential language that will allow our word to give God to souls.**"

Silence and Sobriety

"*Silence is a fast, the elimination of the superfluous.* Don't do too many things. Everything must be marked by sobriety, by the simplicity of our gestures and life. In fact, outer silence does not concern only the word, but also the hands and our activities. This fasting of the soul, and of human relations; this plunging the soul into silence, does not impoverish the soul. Rather, it makes it richer because it unites it to God." *

That First Encounter

Simple thoughts, by Pietro Squassabia

On the Cross Jesus feels so abandoned by everyone, including the Father, that He says: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15:34).

I can't imagine that the Father, who is infinite love, would ever abandon His Son, His Most Beloved Son. I imagine that the Father would have always been very close to Jesus during his earthly life, during his Passion and even when He was crucified. This makes me think how also the Father must have experienced the Cross. However, I think the Son could not see the Father during his Passion, since by divine command this beatific vision was denied Him, in order for His Passion to be complete.

So Jesus **felt completely alone, deprived of everything and everyone, including the Father**. It was under these conditions that Jesus lived his Passion; and as he walked up Calvary the burden of our sins grew heavier and heavier. It was from His Love and His desire to save humanity, that Jesus found the strength to fulfil God's will to the end. And as He made His way upwards, He humbled Himself more and more, to become so little as to be one with man, and having assumed the sin of man **He became, like man: worm and maggot** – according to Isaiah's expression: "Do not fear, worm of Jacob, maggot of Israel" (Is 41:14).

Jesus, who became like man, that is a

worm, thus went out to find man and He found him in a place of desolation, a stony and barren place, and He told man that He had come to cancel his sins and forget his wickedness, and to give him a new heart, to put a heart of flesh there where his heart of stone was, so he could receive love and be able to love in turn. Since then, since that first new encounter, Jesus continues to live in this desert of ours so He can stay close to man, and speak to his heart, and establish a relationship of love with man. Jesus knows that in the desert man is deprived of his own resources and is thus able to receive His love.

This condition of **desert** and solitude into which man was forced by Satan after the original sin **has become the ideal condition for man to encounter Jesus** because it is here that He came. The devil, however, given that the condition of sin and desert has been **transformed by Jesus into an occasion of salvation**, deceives man by convincing him that he is worth more, and that he should thus yearn after and occupy places similar to his own. These are easy to recognize because they are marked by pride, self-sufficiency, power, egoism and hatred (though the latter two may not be so evident at first), and by so many earthly things that there is no space

for Jesus.

So let us not be deceived by Satan into occupying such places. Let us rather say: Thank you Jesus because you came to meet us in our own situation of ruin and desert; thank you because you defeated the devil, the old enemy and accuser who sent us to this place of death. Thank you because you have realized a place where we can stay with you and with you rest and rejoice. Thank you because here we can also encounter Mary, the Mother, for we know that wherever you are she is too, so she can love you and all her children.

Let us ask Mary to obtain for us the grace to never distance ourselves from the place where Jesus came to visit us, and for us

to love this place because we know that it is here that we can find Love. May she obtain this for us even if at times we feel tempted to abandon it. May she obtain for us the grace to be able to always recognize Satan's place, and give us the strength to flee from it. And may she obtain for us the wisdom to know how to accept all the situations that divine Providence might offer us. These will surely lead us to the encounter with Jesus, and this second encounter will not be similar to the first one – of desert and passion – but of salvation and joy to be full. *



Mary, Light of Eternity

by Giuseppe Ferraro

In one of Our Lady's latest messages she spoke again of eternity: "My Children, when you pray you are close to God, and He grants you the desire for eternity. Do not forget that you are pilgrims on the way to eternity" (Message 25 Nov. 2006). On other occasions Mary has called us to receive the gift of eternal life being offered us to the full in this time "I desire leading you towards eternal life... Eternal life is my Son: to accept Him is to accept Love" (Message to Mirjana, 18 March 1995). Her words are a perfect echo to the words of Scripture: "We are in Him who is true, in his son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20).

When we pray the Creed we say: "I believe in eternal life." I wonder how many of today's "practising" Christians really believe what they profess. I imagine, instead, that for many it would evoke inaccessible theological thoughts, which they accept "by faith": an expression, however, that often hides a type of spiritual passivity before the mysteries of God.

Our Lady, though, continues to visit the world, in a challenge to the indifference of the majority and the hostile frigidity of many "authorized personnel" to tirelessly call her children to enter, here and now, in that life that never ends which she so ardently desires giving us. "Dear Children, I come to you in this time to address to you the call to eternity" (2 Oct. 2006).

Perhaps the time has come in which

God, through Mary's special presence, wants to lead His Church in an epoch-making exodus, to free her definitely from every form of disastrous theological rationalism and sterile religious formalism - fruit of a web of secular human mediation - to bring her to experience anew the fire of the Spirit upon the first apostolic Community.

This is the way to heaven opened by Jesus when He returned to the Father. "This is eternal life: that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent" (Jn 17:3). Here the living Church is born. Only the living Church is able to defeat the terrifying demons of our time and to fulfil the great baptismal mission entrusted to her by the Risen One which is that of transmitting the Trinitarian Life to the entire universe, to the multitudes of souls that thirst for pure love and which still today they painfully await because of our innumerable compromises with the lies of the world.

The Queen of Peace has come to show us a way which is simple and concrete, which shines with evangelical truth, where we can come to "know" the living God. This way that leads to eternity makes us authentic vehicles of the Father's Love for all creation. "This is the call of love, because only through love can you know the love of God... only through God's love is eternity gained" (Mirjana, 2 Oct. 2006).

The high road to eternity is thus love; not any old form of human love, but that special love that burns in the Heart of the Immolated Lamb, which was "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us" (Rm 5:5), to unite our lives

to Christ's Paschal offering for the salvation of the world. It is that same eternal love that Mary desires for us, so that the flesh and blood of her Son can make us become true living Eucharists, and vehicles of His love for our brethren.

This is the "love" that "will have no end" (Cor13:8) of which St. Paul speaks. And for all of us it represents the profound truth of the call by the Queen of Peace at Medjugorje: "Witness with your lives and sacrifice your lives for the salvation of the world" (Mess. 25.02.1988); "do not forget that your life is not yours, but a gift with which you must bring joy to others, and lead them to eternal life" (Mess. 25.12.1992).

XII International Seminar for PRIESTS

"With Mary in the Cenacle, waiting for the Holy Spirit", Medjugorje 2-7 July 2007 conducted by **Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa**

Registrations: contact Marija Dugandzic
seminar.marija@medjugorje.hr
: fax +387 36 651 999

Priests are invited to organize their own lodgings at Medjugorje, and to inform us of full name and phone number of the family providing lodge. Those priests without contacts or unable to organize should say so when they register so we can organize it for them. Cost of Seminar: cover by 5 Mass intentions. Attending priests must bring: celebret from their superior, alb and stole, Bible, small transistor radio with FM frequency and ear phones (for simultaneous translations).

God Alone Suffices!

Seven Months with Gospa

It was the 20th October 2005. I was with two friends and prayer companions when my Medjugorje voyage began on the day I joined the "Kraljice Mira" community. It all started in 1998, the year our Blessed Mother prepared me for two special encounters with her and her Son. The first was a pilgrimage to Spain, to the tombs of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, and to Garabandal where Our Lady appeared between 1960 and 1964, and only a few weeks later I went on pilgrimage again; this time to Medjugorje where I had not been before.

During the return voyage of the latter pilgrimage my heart swelled with emotion as I contemplated the truth of St. Teresa's words "*Sólo Dios basta*" (God alone suffices). I returned to Medju a second and a third time; and **it was then that I encountered Mary**, the Woman I had prayed to since I was a child. The Queen of Heaven left her throne to be with me, to embrace me, as the most humble and simple of mothers. I discovered that Mary is mother; my Mother! **And I didn't want to leave her tender embrace.**

The day I entered the Community, we stopped in front of St. James' and entered for a brief visit. Eucharistic Adoration was underway, to the sound of "*Nada te turbe... sólo Dios basta*". I considered it further motherly encouragement on Mary's part; so delicate of her as she alone knows how to be. It was as if a fine golden thread was connecting the past with the present, and with trepidation I responded: "Here I am!"

So began my period as a candidate in the community which allowed me to remain in Medjugorje for about seven months. I found that **my experience of being there for a lengthy period** was different to what I had experienced during my brief 4-5 day pilgrimages. There was not the down-pouring of graces that one experiences in a brief pilgrimage, but it was rather **an opening up to daily grace**, administered as though in drops, and of allowing it to penetrate through contemplation and meditation.

I noticed Medjugorje as it changed along with the seasons. Autumn was still full of pilgrims, with a lot of movement, almost like in spring and summer. The winter months, however, were the ones that I found most favourable since little goes on in the parish and the town becomes unusually quiet.

I have **three special memories**. The **first one is evening Mass**. Here, I noticed the presence of pilgrims – never many – but always present. From various parts of the globe, they profess "I believe in ONE... Church", and discover that though they come from lands far apart they belong to the one Body, the body of Christ, and are all gathered under the mantle of Mary, Mother of the Church. I am certain of her presence; one can perceive the universality of her intercession. United to the sacrifice of Jesus, she offers herself to the Father for the world, for her Son's immense flock.

The **second memory is the morning Mass**, at which I noticed the almost total lack of pilgrims. In the winter St. James

belongs to its parishioners, to the women in their dark clothes and black veils, to the local folk whose hearts abound in authentic faith. Also in this case Our Lady prays and petitions together with them, and offers herself for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. She loves all of us, and each of us. Every day and in every country of the world Mary offers herself to God for each nucleus of the great human family.

The **third memory is tied to a Saturday afternoon**. I was standing outside the confessional waiting for the priest. I was all alone. Even the esplanade behind the church was empty. With my mind I tried to imagine the crowds that usually fill these spaces: the young and the not so young... I thought of the songs that accompany Eucharistic Adoration, almost as if to exorcise that feeling of abandonment that was attempting at my heart.

Then, I began to see what it was that Our Lady was wanting me to understand. I began to see how Mary's motherhood is also very much exclusive, here inside the room of the heart, in the solitude of the dark corners of the soul where it is difficult to remain with the Lord face to face. Without experiencing this personal love, without knowing that I am **loved personally**, my prayer would have little effect, and the offering of myself for my family, my country, my Church and the world would resemble a "clanging cymbal". I can thus say without shame, and with immense gratitude that that day Medjugorje was all for me; **the loving gaze of the Queen of Peace was on me alone.**

I pray that this loving gaze of our blessed Mother may be on all those who in various ways have known and have responded to the Gospa's call; on all those who've been to Medju, or who live Medju within the walls of their homes and hearts. Mary speaks to her children through this gaze, as if to say: 'All this is for you: the goodness of God who entrusts to me this mission, my gestures, my messages, the twenty five years of apparitions... just for you; because God wants you to know that all of Heaven loves you. And you, my child; will you respond to my Jesus in a unique and personal way? Will you accept with courage and humility the mission that He is entrusting you with, and give yourself up to Him?'

Whether we spend several months or a few days at Medjugorje, it is not important for the Lord who can touch hearts and souls in an instant with His love. The yearning of the Holy Spirit within us - imploring us to surrender ourselves to God's will - does not go unheeded by Mary, who comes to call us to decide to become a living miracle of His love.

Davide Cavanna

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

The **first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy**. "I want to grant complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My mercy. (Diary 1109) There must also be deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to absolve yourself from it." (Diary 742)

Mladifest 18 18th Int'l Youth Festival Medjugorje, 1-6 August 2007

This year's theme, "*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another*" (Jn 13:34) is in harmony with that of the 22nd World Youth Day, which will take place on April 1 (Palm Sunday) in local Churches.

For the occasion the Holy Father has addressed young people with these words; "Everyone feels the longing to love and to be loved. Yet, how difficult it is to love, and how many mistakes and failures have to be reckoned with in love! There are those who even come to doubt that love is possible.

But if emotional delusions or lack of affection can cause us to think that love is utopian, an impossible dream, should we then become resigned? No! **Love is possible**, and the purpose of my message is to help reawaken in each one of you - you who are the future and hope of humanity - to trust in a love that is true, faithful and strong; a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together and allows them to feel free in respect for one another. Let us now go on a journey together ... as we embark on a discovery of love."



School of Fasting at Medjugorje

Last December at Medjugorje there was a **retreat** for Italians led by Fr. Ljubo Kurtovic centred on fasting, prayer and silence. This young Franciscan has the charisma of making prayer penetrate the heart. He is a gentle person with strong convictions, clearly appreciated by the participants, since it was easy to see how joy radiated from their faces during the days of the retreat; an indication that Fr. Ljubo's prayer had definitely helped them encounter the Lord

These seminars were first begun by Fr. Slavko to help pilgrims live Our Lady's messages. "To live Mary's messages is a means that brings healing and unites us to God", said Fr. Ljubo. The aim of the seminars is to give space to God within us. Fasting opens our hearts to the Lord and to purity of heart. This is for our own sake, so we are purified and can grow in love: "if one doesn't love, one doesn't feel loved."

Fasting is a powerful means to discover our inner enemy, to remove the veil from our thoughts and desires, to reveal our wounds and heal them. Everything is possible when you believe, everything is possible when you open a door to inner peace, because its true meaning is to subject one's will to God's.

During the days of the retreat I

“OFFER YOUR LIVES!”

experienced a deeper sense of knowing myself, and the desire to get rid of the crust of my humanity. I learnt to look at myself, and to seek the hidden treasure, knowing that within me there was the Lord awaiting me with open arms so He could unite my heart to His.

At the retreat, we not only broke the bread together, but we shared with each other also ourselves.

Fasting is a great gift that God gives us; He also gives us the strength to fast. Fasting is a prayer that involves one's whole self which becomes an offering of love to God, and He unites us more intimately to Himself. Fasting demands spiritual preparation, so that we don't end up like the foolish virgins who were left without oil, as we want it to become another occasion for our spiritual growth. It is not difficult if we create silence within ourselves, if we leave our will at the altar, and if we let our soul be the guide. It knows for whom to yearn.

We need to be resolute and to decide to live Our Lady's messages, dare to fly with the eagle. Mary has given us a map for our journey. The way leads to Jesus, to holiness. Our Lady gave us as armour and weapons the “five pebbles” of David to defeat our Goliath. We must, however, abandon our human securities so we can begin this wonderful adventure towards the new life. A witness is credible when he has experience, and is able to proclaim that which he has lived. Hence, fasting must be lived so we can **enter more profoundly into the mystery of the Eucharist.**

Now, in this time of grace, Our Lady is calling us, and for the moment she is still with us. She is calling us to Medjugorje to live her messages, so that at her school we might learn again that God exists; that God is our Creator; that God is our love and our peace, and that nothing else can satisfy our need for love. “Help me; I need you to help me attract as many souls as possible to my Heart and to the Heart of Jesus which was pierced out of love for you!”

Fasting is the offering of self. The retreat helped me become aware of being drawn by Christ Crucified, who looks down at me/you and says: “Help me; won't you at least help me? My love is not understood!”, encouraging you to unite your sacrifice to His. It isn't easy, but the Lord will help, and in your heart you will experience true joy and peace and love.

Anna Fasano

Message to Mirjana, 2 March 2007

“Today I shall talk to you about that which you have forgotten.

Dear Children, my name is love; it is for this that I have been with you for so much of your time, and this is love because it is a great love that sends me. I seek from you the same. I ask for love in your families. I ask that you recognize love in your brother.

It is only this way, through love, that you will see the face of the greater love. May fasting and prayer be your guide. Open your hearts to love, or rather to salvation. Thank you.”

Our journey along the road of offering one's life in union with Christ's sacrifice continues. On every altar throughout the world Christ continues to offer His own life to the Father for the salvation of mankind. We know that on the Cross Jesus offered himself totally; his sacrifice was total.

What is being asked of us? To lose our lives? Not at all! We are invited, rather, to be love that offers itself as a sacrifice; or love that becomes sacred because it is offered to God without reserve. This glorifies God's heart which otherwise suffers for the indifference of His children. The sacrifice of self repairs for the ingratitude of a selfish world that exploits its resources for itself, whilst ignoring and even denying the Donor. The battle against the darkness is very strong in our days. Being “love sacrificed” enables us to defeat evil with the power of goodness that comes from God. Our heart has to be like a grinding stone that pulverizes the evil in the world, a fire that burns the negativity. One is not really aware that through the offering of self, and by blessing (others) and through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament we can free souls from Satan's grip and concretely change the situation of the world. Here are our weapons:

“Love Sacrificed”

by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic

ADORATION

At Adoration Jesus receives our love, and in turn He fills our souls with His love. At Adoration we accept to carry some of the cross that He bears because of our sins; this leaves Him freer to act in souls and can more speedily help them advance in their spiritual journey. Adoration, especially at night, is a form of exorcism in which Satan is forced to flee from souls and the places oppressed by his presence.

LOVE

To love our neighbour means to love also those who've harmed us. It is not possible for our wounds to heal unless we forgive those who have wounded us, unless we become “love sacrificed” also for these people. This is the only way that can allow us to rise and be reconciled with the world. Our love must be able to defeat every evil, but this is possible only if we remain within our inner space that God has reserved for His Kingdom, and if the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us are free to act.

THE BATTLE

When we enter the battle against evil we are purified; this enables us to rise and to communicate strength to others. Nonetheless, it might happen that some people become aware of evil within themselves. This happens because when a soul opens up to God it comes into contact with the world of spirits. In these cases God allows the soul to encounter evil, and He desires that the soul drive out Satan and defeat him. Thus, it is important to defend oneself by retaining the

joy of the Kingdom of God which is present in us, and being serene, happy, peaceful, and humble, and with something as simple as a smile be able to drive out the evil that is provoking us and wanting us to react negatively in situations of our daily lives.

INSTRUMENTS

Holy water, fasting, and the prayers of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus are some of the powerful instruments that can protect us against the evil one. Living constantly in the spirit of love, and abiding in the “house of God” present in our depths, is the best way to face evil and defeat it, without being fearful, because it is God in us who defeats evil.

INNER ORDER

St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: “We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to shun any brother who conducts himself in a disorderly way” (2 Th 3:6). Disorder is created when we daydream about spiritual things but do not live them, a bit like the Pharisees of Jesus' time. Disorder is created when we read books about the saints, or Our Lady's messages, and we don't practise them in our own daily lives. Daydreams, or personal theories or explanations about divine realities make us like Pharisees and impede us from being inspired, because in these cases inspiration becomes the fruit of our daydreams and our superficial and incorrect interpretation. This is why simplicity and inner opening is so important.

THE CROSS

The pierced Heart of Jesus is the demonstration that His Heart contains only love, and through His offering the purity of this love is manifested. It is precisely on the cross that the depth and height of love is expressed, because the cross can hold nothing that is soiled or selfish. On the cross our person in its entirety is purified right down to the roots. On the cross the most inner part of our soul is touched, and each person must examine himself to see whether just pure love or something else will be released from the “open wound” on his side...

PRAYER

When we love we feel the inspiration to pray, with a prayer that is immersed in love. However, this prayer does not need to be spectacular; it is not necessary to have visions, or great ideas on how to pray well, because prayer over-rides the limits of logic. If we pray with love we can reach even the ends of the world: the Holy Spirit will carry our prayer there where it is needed. All we have to do is through our prayer, enter the place within us where the Spirit lives, and receive His inspiration. And here, in our “inner room” adore Jesus, so we can grow in faith and hope. Then we shall begin to become charity-love; the only power able to give salvation.

(End part 3; to be continued)

Mary's Meals Conference Medjugorje 11-15 June 2007

This summer people from around the world will gather at Medjugorje to celebrate the work of Mary's Meals: a campaign to provide the **world's poorest children with a daily meal at school**. In this way the children are attracted into the classroom and so gain the education that is their best hope of escaping from poverty in later life. It began in 2002 in Malawi by feeding around 200 orphaned children. Today that number has grown to around 170,000 - mostly in Malawi but also in Uganda, Liberia, Kenya, India, Philippines, Albania, Ukraine, Romania, Bosnia, Bolivia and Haiti.

Mary's Meals has grown out of the work of overseas aid charity, Scottish International Relief (SIR) led by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow. His family (parents and siblings) were early visitors to Medjugorje back in 1983. Their visits affected their lives profoundly. His parents went on to turn their guest house into a retreat centre, Craig Lodge Family House of Prayer. Magnus and his brother, Fergus, decided in 1992 that they could not turn their backs on the suffering of the refugees in Bosnia. They launched a local appeal in Argyll and drove a Landrover filled with aid to Medjugorje.

This act of charity led to the formation of SIR as the public continued to support the MacFarlane-Barrows in their efforts to reach out to the poor. Mary's Meals has since become the main focus of SIR's work and draws support from people across the globe. It is dedicated to Our Lady and although the charity is non-denominational it seems highly appropriate that this international gathering of, supporters, employees and overseas project representatives, should be held in Medjugorje - the inspiration behind all the work.

The conference promises to be an amazing event. Most of our overseas projects will be represented as will members of fundraising groups from around the world. Speakers who will share their experiences with us include: Ibi Ungur: Romania, Fr Albert Salvans: Kenya, Leisbeth Glas: Liberia, Peter Nkata: Malawi, Mark McGreevy: Ukraine, Virginia Villahermosa: Philippines. If you'd like to participate, please contact: info@sircharity.org

From the Mail

Cicily G. Eopen Luke, India: Special thanks for the Echo which I always receive. I pray especially for you all, that the seed sown by your hands might multiply even more in the world and find fertile earth so that in each heart, instead of hatred and violence there might be love, peace and unity. I like reading and meditating every word of Our Lady, especially before I go to sleep, after the Holy Rosary. A mother could not give her children words more beautiful than these. They are words of tenderness, love and trust.

Sr. M. Gregory Rosa, Zanzibar: I am very grateful that you have been sending me the Echo all these years. I recently went on my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje; it was so touching to see the thousands of faithful

present, and the way they prayed. I pray that everyone may have the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Medju, at least once in their lives. God is so good to have let His Mother visit us all these years! May people all over the world respond to her call to prayer, fasting and reconciliation!

Joachim Alfonso de Oliveira, Brazil: Heartfelt thanks for sending me the Echo so regularly. I pass it on to the Franciscan monks at the Convent I attend. There is so much beautiful news about Our Lady and the events of Medjugorje. The comment by Nuccio Quattrocchi helps us comprehend the messages of the 25th. My wife and I felt the need to write to you after all these years that we have been receiving the Echo.

Mabel Cancino, Jujuy, Argentina: I felt I had to write to thank you for the Echo and for what you do. I am so happy to receive it, but I am very poor and cannot send you a donation... Thank you for your articles; very worthy reading. God bless you.

A. Accardi, Italy: As one of your readers I wanted to express my appreciation for your paper. It is so unique, and truly Marian. Its humble, simple format contains an extraordinary wealth that is truly touching. So many times I've received consolation and light from its pages during moments of darkness in my own life, with incredible timing. Praise be Our Lady who clearly inspires and leads you. I intend to help with more frequent donations to help with the divulgation of Echo.

Lucio Niero, cell no. 75 of an Italian prison: "... Every Saturday I am allowed to go to the library, and with great joy, this week I found a copy of the Echo of Mary. (...) It sounds strange, but it is thanks to my imprisonment that I discovered this great strength that is within me, a fruit of my newly found faith and the prayer of the Rosary which I recite two times a day, supported by a weekly fast. I pray every day in front of a little altar I set up next to my bed, to thank Our Lady for the immense help she is giving me and my family. Through prayer I have learnt to see things differently. All I have is a couple of stamps which I gladly send to help with your apostolate..."

Isaac, Peace Building and Advocacy Coordinator, Jesuit Refugee Service, Uganda /Sth Sudan: "... I find the Echo very nourishing, especially the message our Mother gives to guide us, her children. The world is void of spiritual thirst. People are submerged in world wealth, greed, political power just to mention a few... In the northern part of Uganda where war has ravaged the community for over 20 years, the suffering of the people is so immense that no one seems to have hope. Please keep me on line for this publication. It is a good tool to teach others, especially the refugees among whom I work.

"Eternal Father I offer you the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of your dearly beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

Helping Mary Help Her Children

I like to think of the Echo not just as an instrument but as a child, a child of Mary. Over the years this child has "expanded" a great deal and is reaching out to many parts of the world, which are often poor in various ways. All the children are loved by the Father, and of course by the Mother, Mary. I think it is true that God's Love - and Mary's love, who loves with God's love - is the same for each of us.

We know that the older children are asked to help look after the littler ones. In this sense, we feel the call to stretch out our hands to the littler children of Mary, who desires that they too be touched by God's mercy through her call of peace at Medjugorje. It is not up to us to bring aid in the form of food or money to these needy peoples; there are others who do this.

The Echo, however, is a noble food able to nurture the faith and nourish the soul. God's word - brought by Mary into a world that is hostile to God - is for everyone. The differences in religion and creed is a problem man created himself; there is no difference for God, we are all His *children*. In the soul of each person is God's mark; and every soul thirsts for its Creator.

Our mission is to help Mary bring the Medjugorje call of peace to all God's children; but we cannot do this on our own. Over the years as the Echo has grown, so have the costs, often putting the future of this little instrument at risk. With our trust in God, we shall continue for as long as Providence permits. Please remember to pray for us; we always remember you in our prayers. God bless!
P. Sq.

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Our heartfelt thanks to all those who have continued to show their support with a donation; and have thus been instruments of God's providence. May God recompensate you for your generosity one hundred fold with His Grace and blessings!

Through the intercession of Fr. Angelo (whose 7th anniversary was celebrated 3 March), may God, who abounds in mercy and steadfast love, bless you and all your loved ones!

don Alberto
Italy, 11 March 2007