

# Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

January-February 2008 - Echo of Mary, P.O. Box 47, I-31037 Loria (TV), Italy. Yr 24 # 1  
Ph. +39 0423-470331 - www.ecodimaria.net - A translation of the original Italian: Eco di Maria

197



Our Lady's message, 25 Nov. 2007:

**“Dear Children, Today, when you celebrate Christ the King of all creation, I desire that He be the King of your lives. It is only through giving, my Children, that you can comprehend the gift of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross for each of you. My Children, give time to God so He can transfigure you and fill you with His grace, that you might be grace for others. I am for you, my Children, a gift of grace, of God’s love that comes from Him for this world without peace. Thank you for responding to my call.”**

## King of our Life

**“Today, when you celebrate Christ the King of all creation, I desire that He be King of your lives.”** With just a few words Mary has defined the sense of today’s feast. If we celebrate Christ the King without making Him King of our lives we rob the feast of its deepest meaning. It also becomes another lost occasion that we could and should have used for our benefit and for the benefit of others. The same goes for all Christian feasts, and for all the Sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist. If we do not enter into the mystery and live the sacred celebrations, we end up reducing them to the level of worldliness, and we cannot thus pretend to encounter God. In the same way, we cannot receive holy Communion the way we’d place an aspirin in our mouth to counteract a headache, or make recourse to a confessor as though going to a friend for human consolation. To celebrate Christ the King, without making Him King of our very lives, is to turn the liturgy into a recitation, sacred perhaps, but not salvific.

Let us make Mary’s wish our own. Even if the feast day of Christ the King shall be over by quite some time when you read this, we can all the same make it present within our hearts, because any time is good to acknowledge that Jesus is **King of our life**, and thereby decide to live in a way that is fitting. *I am king* - Jesus says to Pilate - *for this I was born, and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice* (Jn 18:37). Christ the Truth bears witness to the world that there is a regality unknown to the world. It is a regality without worldly power, wealth, or honour. It is rich in love: love without reserve, without gratification. This love is given to us totally, without cost. Christ’s throne is His Cross. It is not easy to comprehend; not easy to accept, because we know that *if they have persecuted Him, they will also persecute us* (cf. Jn 15:20).



*“God generated the world with its foundation; Mary generated the world through reparation.”*

St. Anselm

The mystery of Love, however, is revealed to him who tries to live it: **“It is only through giving, my Children, that you can comprehend the gift of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross for each of you,”** says Mary. To give oneself to God means to trust Him. Then we will come to know the salvific value of the Cross, and thereby accept our own cross (Mk 8:34). It is a serious commitment, and difficult, that takes courage, self-denial and the patience to allow His grace to work in us. **“My Children, give time to God, so He can transfigure you and fill you with His grace, that you might be grace for others.”** What marvellous humility of God who waits for our response of trust so we can be transfigured in Jesus Christ, and in Him become grace for others!

And let us not forget that He continues to grant us the grace of Mary’s presence. As Mother, she continues to generate children in her Son Jesus, mindless of how she is received by the world. May Mary anticipate the time of His return and the triumph of His Kingdom of Love and Peace!

**“I am for you, my Children, a gift of grace, of God’s love that comes from Him for this world without peace.”** May we receive without reserve, and with profound trust and an open heart this **gift of grace, and of God’s love**, called Mary. May we make her desires our own, and try to live them (they are as *oil for our lamps*) so that we do not miss the appointment with the Lord who comes.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady’s Message, 25 December 2007

**“Dear Children, With great joy I bring you the King of Peace, that He may bless you with His blessing. Adore Him, and give time to your Creator for whom your heart yearns. Do not forget that you are pilgrims on this earth, and that things can give you small joys, while through my Son, eternal life is given you. That is why I am with you, to lead you towards that which your heart yearns. Thank you for responding to my call.”**

## Set Aside Time for Your Creator

*Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men whom God loves* (Lk 2:14) sings the celestial choir when the angel announces the birth of the Saviour to the shepherds. The wish of peace is addressed to all men; for God loves all men. However, it is clear that not all men live, or at least welcome, this divine wish. God offers, but He does not impose His gifts upon us, and this is one of the aspects of His Love that most throws man into confusion.

Life on the earth is again marked by division and the destructive power of human pride. Communion with God has become possible with the coming of Christ, but it is not yet universal, and the peace promised to men is still suspended between heaven and earth. Yet, the Lord *is not being slow to fulfil his promises, as anybody else might be called slow; but he is being patient with you all; wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his ways* (2 Pt 3:9). The peace promised by the angels is not late, but awaits to be received and lived.

The promise that He gave, and continues to give, blossoms and bears fruits of holiness; it is a good that is present in the world even if not universally enjoyed. Peace amongst individuals, nations and in creation as a whole – the Messianic peace – is within our reach but cannot be imposed. It is to be received and accepted, and lived. For this to happen man’s will must conform to God’s Will; one needs to be *a man of good will*.

**With great joy I bring you the King of Peace, that He may bless you with His blessing**, says Mary on this Christmas Day, and her words confirm that the promise of peace subsists still. Before our infidelity He remains faithful because He cannot deny himself (cf. 2 Tm 2:13). **The King of Peace** is there, in Mary’s embrace, and awaits to be received by us, in our hearts. **Adore Him and give time to your Creator for Whom your hearts yearn.** To adore Jesus means to assimilate his divinity, and allow oneself to be penetrated by the rays of Love that issue

forth from the Holy Eucharist.

However, giving time to God is rather dedicating all our time to Jesus; to live every instant of our day with Him, and let ourselves become more like Him in all that we do, think, say and desire – it is to be born from above; born through the Spirit (Jn 3:1-8). Everything that is not done in Christ, that does not pass through Him, will quickly pass, and whatever these give it can only be transient and fleeting. **Do not forget that you are pilgrims on this earth, and that things can give you small joys, while through my Son, eternal life is given you.**

Eternal life means to live in Christ and of Christ. He is the bread of life, and to eat this bread is to receive eternal life (Jn 6:48-51). Mary is with us to give us once again, as 2000 years ago, her Son Jesus, and in Him everything to which our hearts yearn. We know, in fact, that it is only in Jesus that we can find Peace, Love and Hope. In Him every yearning is appeased, every fear is dispersed, every division is overcome; and this will surely happen if by His grace our life is an expression of His.

N.Q.

## Heroic Virtues of Six-year-old

**Antonietta Meo** might become the youngest blessed (not martyred) in Church history. **Pope Benedict XVI** has authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to acknowledge the **heroic virtues** of this little girl, making it possible for her to be later declared blessed, then a saint.

Antonietta was born in Rome on 15 December 1930, in a family of solid moral and religious principles, who recited the Rosary daily. She was a lively child and always happy, and loved to sing. One day she fell and hurt her knee, but the pain would not subside. After a series of medical visits she was diagnosed with bone cancer. She was 5 at the time, and had to have her leg amputated. She subsequently wore a heavy prosthesis, but continued to cheerfully play with other children.

She wrote prayers in the form of letters, and deposited one each evening at the foot of the cross. The first were written with the help of her mom, until she was able to write them with her own hand. Besides her diary, she wrote more than 100 letters which she addressed to Jesus, Mary, God the Father and the Holy Spirit. They reveal a life imbued in mysticism and amazing theological thoughts hidden in simple sentences. "Dear Jesus, You suffered so much on the cross. I want to offer you many little sacrifices and I want to stay close to you on the Calvary, and close to your Mummy."

"Dear Jesus," says another one, "I love you very much. I want to surrender myself into your hands [...] into your embrace. Do with me as you wish." And: "Help me with your grace; help me, because without your grace I can do nothing." Letters to Our Lady are full of affection: "Dear Mary, you are so good. Take my heart and give it to Jesus."

During her frequent stays in hospital she asked to be taken every day to the shrine of Mary to recite a prayer to her and deposit the

## Benedict XVI "Set aside time for God"

"In some way, mankind is awaiting God, waiting for him to draw near. But when the moment comes, he does not have room for him," said the Pope at Christmas, the time of year when we relive the extraordinary event of God's coming amongst men. St. John the apostle said: "*He came to his own home, and his own people received him not*" (Jn 1:11). "Man is so preoccupied with himself, he has such urgent need of all the space and all the time for his own things, that nothing remains for others, for his neighbour, for the poor, for God," said the Holy Father.

These grave words could fall on our own deaf ears if we do not open our heart and allow them to act within as a leaven, able to turn our heart of stone into a heart of flesh. "Do we have time for our neighbour who is in need of a word from us? For the sufferer who is in need of help? For the fugitive or the refugee who is seeking asylum? Do we have time and space for God? Can He enter our lives; find a space within us? Or have we occupied all our space with our own

wild flowers gathered by her mother. On the day of the Immaculate in 1936, and as her last Christmas was approaching, Antonietta wrote: "I am happy that today is your feast day," she said to Mary. [...] I want to do little sacrifices for the day we celebrate you and Jesus. Tell Him to make me die before I commit a mortal sin!"

Consumed by the tumour and after much suffering Antonietta died on the 3rd July 1937, when she was 6½ years old. After her death, conversions and graces were received, and the fame of her holiness began to spread. Her body now rests in a small chapel in the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Rome where she was baptised, and close to where she lived her brief earthly life.

## Plenary Indulgence for Faithful at Lourdes

**Benedict XVI** has announced that a plenary indulgence is available to Catholics who travel to Lourdes during the coming year, for the 150th anniversary of the Marian apparitions there. The indulgence is available to those who, under the usual conditions, make a pilgrimage to Lourdes between 8 December 2007 and 8 December 2008. The pilgrimage should include visits to the Massabielle grotto at Lourdes where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, her family home, and the places where she was baptized and received her first Communion. "On each occasion they should pause for an appropriate length of time in prayer and with pious meditations, concluding with the recital of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith, ... and the jubilee prayer or other Marian invocation."

The usual conditions for a plenary indulgence are sacramental Confession and reception of Holy Communion within a week, prayer for the intentions of the Pope, and freedom from attachment to sin.

thoughts and deeds and our own lives?" asked the Holy Father.

"The message of Christmas makes us recognize the darkness of a closed world," illustrating a reality we see daily. "Yet it also tells us that God does not allow himself to be shut out. He finds a space, even if it means entering through the stable... Whether we are shepherds or "wise men" the light and its message call us to set out, to leave the narrow circle of our desires and interests, to go out to meet the Lord and worship him... by opening the world to truth, to good, to Christ. (...)

"**The new throne is the Cross.** The new palace is the community of those who allow themselves to be drawn by Christ's love and so become one body with him, a new humanity. The power that comes from the Cross, the power of self-giving goodness is the true kingship. The stable becomes a palace; and setting out from this starting-point, Jesus builds the great **new community**, whose key-word the angels sing at the hour of his birth: 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those whom he loves' - those who place their will in his, in this way becoming men of God, new men, a new world." (Redaz.)

## *I have come to bring division*

"There is an expression of Jesus that always attracts our attention and needs to be properly understood," said **Pope BENEDICT XVI** (Angelus message 19 Aug. 2007)

"While he is on his way to Jerusalem, where death on a cross awaits him, Christ asked his disciples: '*Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.*' And he adds: '*Henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*' (Lk 12: 51-53).

"Anyone who has even the slightest knowledge of Christ's Gospel knows that it is a message of peace par excellence." If "Jesus himself is our peace (Eph 2: 14) how can his words be explained? (...) Christ's words mean that the peace he came to bring us is not synonymous with the mere absence of conflicts." Instead, "**Jesus' peace is the result of a constant battle against evil.** The fight that Jesus is determined to support is not against human beings or human powers, but against Satan..

"Anyone who desires to resist this enemy by remaining faithful to God and to good, must necessarily confront misunderstandings and sometimes real persecutions. Thus, all who intend to follow Jesus and to commit themselves without compromise to the truth, must know that they will encounter opposition and that in spite of themselves they will become a sign of division between people, even in their own families. In fact, love for one's parents is a holy commandment, but to be lived authentically it can never take precedence over love for God and love for Christ. (...)"

# THE LITANIES

Fr. Ludovico Maria Centra

Meditations on the Loreto Litanies continue in this issue with two titles:

## Singular Vessel of Devotion

In the original Latin it goes like this: “*Vas insigne devozionis*” where “insigne” means singular as in outstanding, distinguished, exceptional. Mary is the all Holy and full of Grace; thus it is right to say she is as a vessel that contains the Treasure of the Word whom she bore in her womb. Jesus also acknowledges this when He says: “*happy is he who keeps the Word in his heart and puts it into practice.*”

With the expression, “singular vessel” our attention is drawn to Mary’s complete disposal to divine will: a virtue in Mary that was most endearing to the Most Holy Trinity. The word “devotion” stresses that Mary devoted herself entirely to the Lord. Her person and her life were entirely a constant praise of God. This invocation points out the necessity to especially prepare and protect our heart, which is the dwelling place chosen by God on the day of our baptism.

Mary was really and totally a “crystalline vase” and as such, worthy to be the precious abode where the Word became incarnate.

Mary knew how to keep her Immaculate Heart beautiful and attentive to all the Holy Spirit’s inspirations.

In an Italian translation, the word “vas” has been translated as “dimora” which means dwelling, and the invocation as “Dwelling consecrated to God.” In this case, the profound meaning of the original expression is not altered, however, stress is placed on the consecration of Mary, or in other words, on the way she gave herself totally to the Lord where her own desires and plans are modelled entirely on Divine Will.

A consecrated dwelling brings to mind the Temple of Jerusalem; the only place for the people of Israel where God had His dwelling and where it was possible to have a mystical encounter with Him. All these virtues are incarnated in Mary, and for us Christians, she is the most beautiful dwelling. She is the dwelling where it is possible also for us to intimately encounter Jesus, and feel at home with Him.

## Mystical Rose

In Christian tradition there aren’t many expressions using words from nature that are associated with Saints or the Virgin. Some are found in the Carmelite tradition where the Blessed Virgin is invoked with expressions such as “Flower of Carmel” and “Blossoming Vine.”

The lily is often associated with Mary

since the lily is symbolic for purity; as is the rose - which has always been considered the queen of flowers – and Mary is considered as the most beautiful of all roses. There is a more profound meaning: with the expression, *Rosa Mystica*, we are invited to consider the symbolic reference to life and to admire the beauty of our earthly existence which, however, does not remain without difficulties, concerns and sorrow.

Mary conceived without sin could have been exempt from suffering, but the love for her Son and for mankind made her want to follow in the steps of Jesus along Calvary to the Cross. She thus became a co-redeemer of mankind.

Another aspect of the rose that we see in Mary is its polyhedral beauty (polyhedral meaning literally many-sided). The human virtues and qualities of the Blessed Virgin are perfectly in character with this flower so sublime and refined. Thus, also the perfume of our Mystical Flower is a sign of her own capacity to spread the “good perfume” of Christ.

Mary as a creature possesses all the virtues and these are founded on God, and for this she acknowledges and sings the Magnificat. The expression, “mystical,” points out that her entire being is immersed in God and that the work of the Most High is made manifest in her with all its splendour.

## SIMPLE THOUGHTS by Pietro Squassabia

### The most beautiful flower

How is it that a gravely ill person is able to say such a thing as: “I am happy because the difficult situations in my life have always taught me something; made me richer.”? I think that such a person would have to be inspired by the Holy Spirit; that such a person would have to be a person of prayer.

I think it can be said without a doubt that suffering has knocked on the door of each of us; that we all know what it means to experience one’s own weaknesses, and what it means to be in difficulty, even deeply so. But perhaps all these situations that life presents can become occasions whereby Providence helps us comprehend God’s love. Perhaps we should consider these times of suffering as occasions of life, rather than of death; of good rather than of bad. It is as though the difficult situations in our life become the fertile ground where the most beautiful flowers grow; those flowers that don’t grow in other types of ground.

This fertile ground is very similar to the ground chosen by Jesus to come in our midst; in that same ground he suffered and died for our sake. That same ground also witnessed his Resurrection. It is thanks to His death and resurrection that this ground has become fertile. Once very arid and sterile, now – thanks to Him – it is transformed.

This is the ground where Mary cultivated (and cultivates) her beautiful flowers;

it is the ground which gave blossom to her most beautiful flower: Jesus. It is here that one finds the enclosed garden; and in her garden wild beasts cannot enter with their devastating action. Thus, we are all called to accept life’s sufferings, because thanks to Jesus they have become the fertile ground of the enclosed garden where the most beautiful flowers can grow. In this garden flowers do not wilt, for they resemble Jesus and bear his same perfume. These flowers are well loved by the Father precisely because they are more like His Son.

So now I understand why the flower of that sick person is so beautiful, for it certainly grew in the enclosed garden. We could call this garden Mary’s garden. But more than this, this garden is Mary herself. Thank you Mary for calling us to grow like flowers in the enclosed garden. Thank you Mary for being the enclosed garden: our defence against the wild animals. With you we have no fears because you are our defence and help.

### The Little Boat

Have you ever seen a little boat in rough sea? The impression is that it must be in great danger: the boat and its occupants. It happens at times that we feel as though we were on a boat in rough water; a small boat, in a dark and ominous sea... when things get frightening. In moments like these it is very helpful to place oneself – and feel



oneself – under the protection of the Most High. This will instil in us sentiments of hope and trust, and peace; and this will allow us to find rest. And perhaps we could even fall asleep whilst in the boat, as Jesus did during the storm at sea.

In difficult situations it would thus become quite evident to us that the Lord does not abandon his children in moments of need, and despite the trial and its intensity we could still experience the joy of realizing how much we are loved and cared for.

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for you are at my side. Your rod and your staff: they sustain me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup brims over. Surely, happiness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”* (cf. Ps 23)

## Jubilee at Lourdes



Behold, another important date with the Virgin Mary. Several months previously the 90 years of Fatima were celebrated, and this year the Church celebrates the 150 years since the first apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes. For the occasion a series of initiatives have

been organized, but in particular, the grace of Lourdes will be showered on the faithful during this jubilee year (8.12.2007 - 8.12.208); the 8th December being the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, called so because it is the title with which Mary introduced herself when she appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

**Cardinal Ivan Dias**, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Evangelization of People, said that **Mary inspires an attitude of "permanent battle for good against the forces of evil"** which began at the beginning of human history, and will continue until the end," he said. "This battle is even bloodier than in Bernadette's time," because "the world finds itself terribly deceived in the spiral of relativism that desires to create a society without God, a relativism that erodes the permanent and unchangeable values of the Gospel; and of religious indifference that remains unconcerned before the higher good of things relating to God and the Church," he said.

Karol Wojtyla said several months prior to being elected Pope: *"Today we find ourselves before the greatest spiritual battle that mankind has ever experienced. I do not think the Christian community has fully understood this. We are, today, before the final battle between the Church and the anti-church, between the Gospel and the anti-gospel."* Cardinal Dias said these were prophetic words. "It is precisely for this reason that a concerned Mother has bent down over her children that live in sin, distant from Christ."

Card. Dias said Mary enters into world history, which marks "the hostilities between her and the devil, as described in Genesis and Revelation." And he pointed out that the **Virgin "is weaving a network of her spiritual sons and daughters in order to launch a strong offensive against the deadly forces"** and to prepare for the final victory of her divine son Jesus Christ." He said that the **weapons to be used for this battle** are conversion of heart, a great devotion to the holy Eucharist, daily recitation of the rosary, constant prayer without hypocrisy, and accepting sufferings for the salvation of the world. The final victory will be God's - he stressed. "Mary will fight on the front line with her army against the enemy forces of Satan, and crush the serpent's head." (Redaz.)

## Medjugorje Journey lit by Mary Immaculate

by Giuseppe Ferraro

*"I am the Immaculate Conception!"*

This was the solemn declaration that Mary entrusted to the simple heart of Bernadette Soubirous on that memorable spring day in 1858 at Lourdes in France. It was not by chance that this was the 25th March, on the solemnity of the Annunciation, the festivity which celebrates Mary's "yes" to the great project of grace closed within the Father's Heart for all Eternity. There is, in fact, a very close relationship between Mary's "yes" and the greeting of the Archangel with which he proclaims her real identity: the "full of grace" or in other words the "Immaculate."

**Mary's apparitions at Lourdes** are at the beginning of an extraordinary plan of salvation which has progressively developed over time through the presence of the Blessed Virgin in various other parts of the earth, which are no doubt all a part of the same project of grace, however, of these Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje represent the most significant manifestations.

**At Lourdes Mary presented herself** to the world as the Immaculate Conception, a name which seems a seal of the final victory proclaimed in the Book of Genesis over the lord of sin and death, over our first enemy. As if to confirm this proclamation of victory, there followed (and follows) a multiplication of miraculous healings, both physical and spiritual, through the sign - the prophetic sign - of the living water that came as a gift from On High, and was not of man's making; a water able to "heal nations" (Rev 22:1), a sign that recalls the eternal Kingdom of the Lamb at the heart of the heavenly Jerusalem.

To the three shepherd children from **Fatima the Mother of God** appears "more resplendent than the sun" (see Sr. Lucia's Diary). This is an image that explicitly evokes the "wonderful sign: a woman clothed in the sun," from chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation that guides the children of the light in the final battle against the dragon and its offspring. At Fatima,

Mary announces the final victory of Her Immaculate Heart, and indicates the way for its realization to these chosen witnesses who significantly count amongst the little of the world. This way is the consecration to Her Immaculate Heart. "Do you want to offer yourselves to God and accept all the sufferings that He will want to send you for the conversion of sinners?" (ibid. 13 May 1917).

**At Medjugorje Mary comes in the hour of fulfilment** of what was announced or prefigured in her previous apparitions. It is here in this place - which is a "fount of grace" (Mess. 8 May 1986) - that the Queen of Peace has for more than 26 years been calling a multitude of children to accept her call to unite their own "yes" to her total offering of self to God so for the salvation of souls according to God's will. "I want to save all souls and offer them to God," said Our Lady at Medjugorje (25 Aug.1991).

**Thus, there exists an essential spiritual thread** that binds together the great Marian apparitions of the last two centuries, and that directly connects the grace of Lourdes to that of Medjugorje. This thread is the spiritual gift of God's grace; it is the spiritual grace that was granted at Lourdes, and is now being granted at Medjugorje to the multitude of children being called to freely give themselves without reserve to God through Mary's Immaculate Heart.

This is the great spiritual key that today Mary grants us to triumph over every sort of death present within us and the world. This gift is able to transform us into vessels to bring to all creation the Love of the Most High.

**The Queen of Peace appears at this time** so that from her Heart there might be born a new people, that is united to her own self-offering to the Lamb, for the salvation of the world, that "all might receive life in Christ" (1Cor 15:22) and all creation, fully transfigured in the light of the new heavens and new earth, will at long last be "delivered to the Father" (1 Cor 15:25), and become true "dwelling of God with men", where He "will dwell with them, and wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:1-4).

"Prayer is realized when Christ dwells in the heart of the Christian and calls him to the coherence of charity towards neighbour.  
Prayer is accepted when it brings comfort to one's neighbour.  
Prayer is heard when it includes forgiveness of offences.  
Prayer is strong when it is full of God's strength." *Benedict XVI*

"Oh Jesus, May this new year of mine be as a blank page offered to the Father. May He fill up the page according to the dispositions of His divine will. Allow me only to write the first line and the last. At the top of the page I say with total trust: "Lord, do with me as You please." And at the bottom of the page I write Amen. Amen to whatever you, Father, may dispose for me. I say yes to all the joys, sorrows, graces and fatigue that You have prepared for me, and that will be disclosed to me day by day. May my amen be the Paschal amen which is always followed by hallelujah; that I may pronounce it with all my heart and with the joy of total donation. Grant me your love and your grace, and I shall be rich enough."

*Sr. Carmela of the Holy Spirit*

## Beginning Anew with Mary

## Reporting from Medjugorje . . .



If we entrust ourselves to Mary's motherly love and care she will pick us up, clean us up, and dress us in garments "all new, most precious and of most fragrant odour"<sup>1</sup>. Enclosed within her immaculate bosom we find the original dignity man was first endowed with. Mary, the littlest and the greatest, the most beautiful and the most hidden of all creatures; in Her the Creator found a crib and a dwelling.

**Start anew with Mary:** abandon yourself to her embrace and motherly guidance. With her we won't feel ashamed of our nothingness and weaknesses. Her love is active and effective, says Montfort, like that of Rebecca for Jacob. "She loves them not only with affection, but with efficacy"<sup>1</sup>. With Mary's help we learn to die to the life of the old Adam, give up our self-love, our own will<sup>1</sup>. She helps us to get below the superfluous to reveal the good root, which under her care, will sprout and blossom.



**If at the beginning** of a new year we feel the need to start again and begin afresh, with the desire to do better, then we must see how entrustment to Mary offers immense opportunities to do so. "She sees clearly all good and evil, all prosperous and adverse fortunes, the blessings and the cursings of God; and then she so disposes things from afar that she may exempt her servants from all sorts of evils, and obtain for them all sorts of blessings"<sup>1</sup>. Mary teaches us the virtue of prudence: to recall the past and anticipate the future so we can act wisely in the present; but also to look at the horizon of the future with the expectation of a small child who eagerly awaits shows of affection and the little or big surprises that her beloved father loves to bestow upon his little daughter.

**We must not fear the paths** we are led along, nor the unknown. Nor should we give in to the temptation to consider past experiences and think "nothing can change," or that everything has already been seen. Let it be the sensationalistic mentality of the media to feed the widespread pessimism that oppresses hearts and confounds minds. And may we, instead, grasp the novelty which Mary possesses and that she will sow where she finds tilled earth, ready to be sown with Good.

Also this year, it is the **Mother of God who opens and clears the way** if we entrust ourselves to Her. If we do not block the way to the grace of God that she brings, we will become as living epiphanies of the Lord. If we remain in her, she will be in us; She will foster and nurture us, conduct and direct us, defend and protect us, and intercede for us<sup>1</sup>, and make us as beacons of light for those who are distant and in rough waters, that they may see the safe and sure way.

<sup>1</sup> True Devotion to Mary (nos. 201-211) by St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort

At the beginning of November Medjugorje was still crowded. Many pilgrims were present for the solemnity of All Saints, and for the apparition of Mary to Mirjana on the second of the month. Once these were over, the "low season" had finally begun.

### Spontaneous Community

The cold of winter and the lack of pilgrims give Medjugorje a new look, inviting one to go out and discover parts never before noticed. There are many positive sides to this little town which has been deeply transformed by the continuous passage of people.

At the evening Mass the church is always "full," but one can always find a place to sit. Even though there are many people present, one breathes a feeling of family, perhaps because it isn't difficult to recognize the faces of those who have chosen to live at Medjugorje for various reasons. These are lay people and consecrated religious of varying nationalities. Some of these work, others dedicate most of their time to the pilgrims. Then there are the devoted parishioners who seriously put into practice Mary's messages, and persevere along the path of grace.

It is a pleasant to look around and see that you recognize most of those present, and exchange a smile or sign of acknowledgement. In many cases there isn't even a common language with which to communicate, but with the grace of Mary a small gesture of greeting is sufficient to create a sense of familiarity. And besides, we are all participating in the same sacrifice every day; and it is this that makes us as though one heart and one soul.

### Restful Mountains

Also Podbrdo and Krizevac are less populated, and it is a real treat to savour the climb up these hills completely alone; and to walk past the many shops with their shutters down; and feel the fresh air filling your lungs and giving strength also to your prayer. It even seems that your prayer is deeper; more from the heart, and you become aware that, like the season, all must be reduced to the essential; that there's no time to get lost in thoughts that do not lead us directly to the Most High. At the top of the hills one is able to savour the silence which helps you look inwards and experience the grace of this blessed land, which seems is enhanced by the absence of the noise of the great crowds. And instead, the murmur of the wind reigns over the winter scene.

In the distance the shimmering Christmas lights awaken in me happy memories of Christmas; and in this total solitude I can savour, as never before, the inner presence that warms the heart: Mary is there with the abundance of her grace.

### Lights of Advent

The lack of pilgrims also means that most of the inhabitants of Medjugorje have

less work. Thus, Advent is an occasion to give more time to God. It is an old tradition here to celebrate a dawn Christmas Mass. One goes to church while it is still dark and towards the conclusion of Mass dawn is breaking. Outside it is still freezing, but the soul glows with the warmth of Jesus, and the hope of facing the day with Him and in Him, and the certainty that He will not fail to compensate our every little sacrifice.

Many children are also present, together with their bigger brothers and sisters, their parents and grandparents. I still remember how I was surprised the first time. As I walked to church, freezing in the cold at 6 am, I thought: "Who else would think of doing something as crazy as this in weather like this?" And as I came into church my jaw dropped and my eyes popped open as I noticed that the pews were already full!

### Truly Holy Christmas

Thus the people's favourite festivity is celebrated in this Marian land. The fertile ground of hearts avidly welcomes the graces which the Lord brings. What a rare joy to be able to live a festivity such as this one where the gifts, well-wishes, sweets and decorations remain mere accompaniments; they do not take on dominant roles, because the centre of attention is the mystery of God who becomes man to grant us salvation and redemption.

*Br. Francesco Cavagna*

## Apparitions to Mirjana

**2 December 2007:** Our Lady was very sad. For the entire duration of the apparition she had tears in her eyes. She said:

*"Dear Children, as I look into your hearts, my heart is filled with sorrow and (it) shudders. My Children, stop for a moment and look into your hearts. Does my son, your God, truly occupy first place? Are His laws truly the rule of your life? I warn you again: without faith there is not God's nearness, there is not God's word, which is the light of salvation and the light of common sense."*

Mirjana added: "With sorrow I prayed to Our Lady not to leave us, not to remove her hands from over us. At this request of mine she smiled sorrowfully and left. This time she did not say 'I thank you'."

**2 January 2008:** *"Dear Children, with all the strength of my heart I love you and I give myself to you. As a mother fights for her children, so do I pray and fight for you. I ask you not to fear to open yourselves, so that you can love with the heart and give yourselves to others. The more you can do this with the heart, the more you will receive, and the better you will understand my Son and His self-offering for your sake. May everyone recognize you through the love of my Son and through me. Thank you."*

Mirjana said **Our Lady also requested prayers and fasting for our pastors.**

## God's Covenant with Us

by Fr. Tomislav Vlasica

In a spiritual journey it is fundamental that there be a purification of our faith, hope and charity. This is because all other virtues depend on our state of purity which is reflected in our hope and our love.

The reading of the figure of Abraham and his adventures described in the Old Testament come to our aid: God said to Abram: *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you"* (Gen 12:1). This same request is addressed also to us. God asks us: *"Go from yourself, leave behind yourself, and all that you own; all the structures and interpretations you have built within you. I, your God, will show you the way to take."* This attitude is the basis of our spiritual journey, and it is thus fundamental for us to consider what this "going out" means.

A **time of "cosmic exodus"** - Jesus, the Good Shepherd, draws us to him so that all can be recapitulated in him. We need to come out of our closed conceptions and personal interpretations, from our "religiosity" and human regulations. When we are being called by God to "go out," we cannot expect to receive help from others unless they too are journeying within the same movement of grace and prayer. To live one's

faith means to live an (experience of) exodus that leads to transformation. A person not on the move ends up stagnating. So that a journey advances it is important to perceive the continuous movement within (the soul), and at the same time allow God to lead you onwards and bring about a transformation within you.

**When God called Abraham** He didn't explain where he would go or who he would meet. Abraham trusted, and departed. We also need this same trust in God. We need to understand when our prayer does not introduce us into greater trust. Prayer cannot be an activity of five minutes, and not even of five hours, but must be a continuous relationship with God. We need to be ready, with an active faith, so that trials do not find us unprepared. When a soul is unable to resolve the problems it encounters, it can be likened to a course of water that comes up against a dam, and is likely to experience negativity, and can become destructive, and clash with others.

**Obstacles can be overcome when we are abandoned to Jesus** and to his faithful love. Jesus is the Way that leads to the Father; there is no other. Trustful abandonment allows the Holy Spirit to descend upon us, as He did on Mary, and with Him in our hearts and lives even the most barren soil can become fertile. So we should not fear to accept the word that comes to release the soul. We cannot remain sad or worried; we cannot continue to feel burdened by situations or problems, but

we must go on knowing that there is God. If we remain faithful and continue to trust in Him and His presence we will learn to see beyond situations, and His action will become manifest.

**This offering** of trust and abandonment is as a **seal**, on our part, to God's covenant of love. Our relationship with the Lord should be creative, and a continual exchange. All the thoughts and worries that fill our days should be presented to Him; this way we can be sure the door of our heart remains open, allowing Him to enter. I cannot be fertile ground if I am continually immersed in sadness, or if I'm continually critical towards myself or others; or if I'm always nervous. These negative feelings impede redemption from being fruitful in me.

**Our soul is touched** by the situations of life in and around us; by the good and the bad. When we analyze people and situations with our human logic we fall into a vicious circle; but if we offer all up to God with trust, the evil is weakened. It is weakened when instead of judging we pray and offer up to God all that we come into contact with during the course of the day. This prayerful offering up to God allows His creative action to work in us and in others.

**So our task** is to give thanks to God when we receive good; and bring the bad we receive to God so that He can separate the good from the bad, and drive the bad into hell. If we lift up to Jesus Christ all that we receive - good and bad - we will effect a great work for the Church and mankind.

## Spiritual Motherhood for Priests

The Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy is encouraging Eucharistic adoration for the holiness of priests and is recruiting "spiritual mothers" to pray for priests and for vocations to the priesthood.

With a letter to the world's bishops and a 40-page illustrated brochure (download here: [www.clerus.org/clerus](http://www.clerus.org/clerus)), the project was launched on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception (8 Dec.) and aims to highlight the link between the Eucharist and the priesthood, together with Mary's special role as the mother of every priest.

Cardinal Hummes, congregation prefect, and Archbishop Mauro Piacenza, congregation secretary, said that as part of a wider effort to address the challenges facing priests today, they wanted to **promote perpetual Eucharistic adoration "for the reparation of faults and sanctification of priests."** But they also hoped to promote "a commitment on the part of consecrated feminine souls," who, following the example of Mary, "might wish to spiritually adopt priests in order to help them through their self-offering, prayer and penance." Card. Hummes said that the vocation to be a spiritual mother for priests is not well known enough and therefore seldom practiced, even though it is fundamental and vitally important.

In comments to L'Osservatore Romano about the initiative to promote perpetual

Eucharistic adoration and spiritual motherhood to support priests, Card. Hummes said priests aren't perfect; that they need help to live their vocation and mission in today's world. The proposal has been made to bishops to promote in their dioceses authentic 'cenacles' in which consecrated and laity - united in a spirit of true communion - pray in the form of continuous Eucharistic adoration so that: "from every corner of the earth, prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, petition and reparation will always be lifted to God; an incessant prayer in order to raise up a sufficient number of holy vocations to the priesthood, and together with this, to accompany them spiritually, with a type of spiritual motherhood."

Cardinal Hummes stressed that **women religious have a special role to play in aiding priests:** They can "spiritually adopt priests, and help them with their surrender, prayer and penance." However, "regardless of age and marital status, all women can become spiritual mothers for a priest."

He said the commitment implies praying for a specific priest and thus accompanying him for life, usually anonymously. Cardinal Hummes pointed out that history tells us that this produces great spiritual fruits for priests who spend their whole life, even with their limits, for God and for their neighbour preaching and cultivating the good, and helping people.

### Praying for Priests

Interesting and helpful reading on ways to pray for a priest can be found at "Opus Sanctorum Angelorum" website ([www.opusangelorum.org/english.html](http://www.opusangelorum.org/english.html)).

Here we read: "The answer to how best go about praying for priests and their sanctification is not a particular prayer or even a particular form of prayer, but rather, **"pray frequently for priests and offer a variety of your good works for their sanctification."**

The OSA offers 12 suggestions to help make our prayers more effective. The first of these is: 'Adopt' or pray for a particular priest or bishop that you find especially troubling, rather than one you like. This requires a greater sacrifice and therefore will school us in the selfless love of Christ and be more meritorious and efficacious."

They have a **Spiritual Adoption Program** where one can sign up and choose to spiritually adopt a priest, bishop, seminarian, or a young man discerning his vocation. Contact: Work of the Holy Angels, 13800 Gratiot Ave., Detroit MI 48205, USA.

### Priest not born of Angel says Fr Jozo Zovko ofm

"A priest is not born of an angel but of a mother. He is chosen from amongst the people, is anointed with the Sacrament of Priesthood and returned back to the people, to the Church - into their care, their prayer and their love. The priest is a sign of the omnipotence of our God. Pray for priests. Love them. Support them. Help them to be holy. We are weak and fragile. If your knees are not bent in prayer for us, we stumble and fall. We need your prayer."

## Blossoming through Confession

**Fr. Slavko** witnessed first hand how the wounded hearts of pilgrims were restored after they had been to the fount of grace at Medjugorje, or in other words: to confession. To help them understand and appreciate the value of confession he wrote the following in a book:

Visionary, Marija Pavlovic, recounts: "As I was praying I saw a flower in a vision for three times. The first time it was beautiful, fresh and very colourful. It made me happy. Then I saw the same flower: closed, wilted, and without a trace of its original beauty. It saddened me. Then, a drop of water fell on the wilted flower and it immediately became fresh and beautiful again. I tried to understand what the vision meant for me, but I could not. So I decided to ask Our Lady during one of her apparitions, to know what the vision meant, and what the flower represented. Our Lady smiled and responded: 'Your heart is like that flower. Each heart is created beautiful by God and its beauty is wonderful. However, when you sin, the flower wilts and its beauty disappears. The drop of water that fell on the flower to revive it, is symbolic for confession. When you have sinned, you are unable to help yourselves; you need help.'"

**Confession**, thanks to the divine power of the Lord Jesus, makes it possible for man to encounter the good Father who, after having waited for so long, now rushes to embrace the son and adorn him with new clothes, and invites everyone to the table of communion to celebrate the grandeur of Divine Mercy.

Thus, **confession** is an encounter between man and the divine, made possible by the human tool of conversation and reciprocal trust (between priest and penitent).

**Confession** is accepting God's Will, and refusing the world which imprisons and despises. It is adhering to the fountain of salvation, light, peace and love, and refusing darkness, hatred and disorder.

**Confession** is the moment when man returns and newly accepts the heavenly Paradise; it is the beginning of the constitution of the new world. It is the moment when God has the right to enter again into our lives and occupy first place. It is also the moment when the old man in us is renewed in Christ's humanity.

God the Father is infinite goodness; He is merciful, and always grants forgiveness to those who ask for it with the heart.

**Pray often to God** with these words: "My God, I know my sins against your love are great and numerous, but I hope that you will forgive me. I am ready to forgive all others, both friends and enemies. Oh Father, I hope in you and I desire living always in the hope of your forgiveness."

(Excerpt: "Give Me Your Wounded Heart! Confession, How? Why?" by Fr. Slavko Barbaric)

## Common Priesthood

In 1990 I went to Medjugorje for the first time. I was curious to see for myself this extraordinary phenomena of Mary's apparitions, and I ardently desired "perceiving" her presence, so that I too could feel accepted and loved by Mary. I have always loved our Lord, even as a child, and trusted in Him. I have also sinned much in my life, however this didn't impede me from turning constantly to God. If He came as the Physician for the sick, why shouldn't I have brought my ailments to Him?

I spent a few years in a seminary, because I felt the desire to become a priest. I had dreams of becoming a priest for the poor, for those who live in misery, be it spiritual or material. I would have liked to reach out to the poorest, the marginalized, the imprisoned, the drug addict, and whoever felt abandoned. Perhaps it was because I knew what it meant to be poor, that I felt for them. There's a lot to learn from the poor; from their humility and gratitude. Scripture teaches us that God chooses his own from amongst the littlest of the world; the type of people that our society would gladly discard.

I had many projects and good intentions; I had the desire to become important for Mary. I wanted to be called by name by our heavenly Mother, for her to take an interest in me. I prayed for the interior strength to carry on with my mission, without fear, and be able to bring a word of hope to others. At Medjugorje Mary was there; she was waiting for me, and wanted my complete happiness. I have understood that God can bring good out of our errors; for instance, He can help us understand others who have fallen into the same sin. The fact that we have sinned in the same way opens our hearts and makes us feel for them, so we can carry these people in our hearts and offer them up to the Lord at Mass and in our prayer, and even offer acts of reparation for them.

So I came to understand more fully the meaning of our priestly role in the common priesthood of the faithful which is "exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace, in a life of faith, hope and charity; a life according to the Spirit" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1547). In my heart it seemed to me that the Lord was saying that it was time to stop hiding from God behind hypocrisy. Often, out of fear of God, we tend to play the same hiding trick as Adam did after the original sin, thinking that He will just want to punish us. But this is a sign that we know very little about God who instead is very loving. Out of His immense love He gave us Mary as Mother, and has allowed her to remain in our midst all these years at Medjugorje, for the good of our souls. Mary is a true Mother who wants to lead us back on the path of righteousness, the path to God. She doesn't care about our imperfections; I'm sure she even justifies us before God.

When we allow Mary to become our Mother, she takes us under her wing and teaches us to love God, helping us to draw into a more intimate relationship with Him. **At Medjugorje** I received the grace to love Mary with the heart, just as one would love

one's own family. I call upon her all the time, in good times and bad. What we often do, instead, is to keep dear ones out of our lives, and open up our hearts to false loves that only end up poisoning us. In her great love as Mother, Mary cleanses, heals, and nourishes us, making us presentable for God who wants to live in our hearts.

Years after my first visit to Medjugorje, Mary has called me to a journey of total self-donation as a lay member in a fraternity. I am happy to be an instrument of God, and I try to respond every day, using, and trying to put into practice Mary's own words: "Thy will be done in me." There are so many people today who live in darkness, with a life of alcohol or drug addiction, or who suffer despair and misery for various other forms of sorrow. I know that God wants everyone with Him in His kingdom. As an instrument, I pray that I can bring His love and joy to others, and be a light for those in darkness, through prayer and reparation.

This is how I try to live my consecration: *Make space for Mary, to be like her a gift for others and become a true son of the Father.* I see that in doing this I receive the most joy and experience the most Love. This call requires that we learn to die to ourselves every day, and live in the certainty that this "death" of ours generates the life of God in us and others. Years after that distant 1990 my heart, with the work at Mary's school, is now ready to accept this call by the spiritual family Kraljice Mira. In this spiritual family one is called to live out meekness, humility and obedience.

At Medjugorje I was seeking love for myself; I wanted Mary's attention. She gave me much more, for I received the desire to follow her messages to have an open heart to receive God's love, and to bring this love also to the least of my brothers. I understood the common priesthood, and the call to offer up my life for the sake of my brethren. I give thanks to Mary for her beautiful gift of Love.

*Angelo Scuderi*

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## Way of Victory

There exists a sure way to defeat the evil in the world. It is by offering oneself, and by wanting to belong entirely to Christ, and to follow His example, and if necessary, even give one's life as a sacrifice of love. How can I do this? I will put it into practice when, struck or faced by the evil and sin of the world, I will not close myself up, will not condemn, will not judge, but I will instead accept the little or big crosses that come my way in the course of my daily life (humiliations, suffering, injustice, slander) for love's sake, and to offer them as reparation for the sake of poor sinners, and to implore peace for the world.

On the Cross, Jesus said yes to the Father and thus healed the disobedience of Adam and Eve. When I accept my little sufferings, and as Jesus did, I accept the Father's will, I allow Jesus to heal also within me the disobedience of my forefathers that have in some way influenced me and my journey in life.

*Sergio Arnaldi*

## Lord, Teach me to Pray

**Teach me to pray** as you prayed on the mount when you spent the night in prayer (Lk 6:12), and in Gethsemane when you beseeched the Father to spare you the passion (Mt 26:39), and on the cross when you lamented being abandoned by the Father (Mt 27:46).

**Teach me to pray** with the same joy you felt when you thanked the Father for having hidden his treasures of wisdom from the big of the world and revealed them to the little (Lk 10:21), and with the same love when in the upper room you entrusted your disciples to the Father and you prayed for them and for all who would believe in you because of their witness (Jn 12:20).

**Teach me to pray** as your Mother prayed in the secret of her house at Nazareth, where the Angel came with the Announcement, and in the house of Elizabeth where she sang her canticle of love and praise to God for bending over his humble maidservant; and to pray as the angels and saints in heaven pray, where they adore, praise and thank you with pure and unfailing love.

**Teach me, Lord, to pray** with trust, simplicity and perseverance. With trust, because you are good and you accept all those who turn to you; with simplicity, because as Father you do not like to punish or lose, but to pardon and save; with perseverance, because your plans, even if not heeded, are always wise and merciful.

**Lord, teach me to pray** with perseverance even when you do not heed me. You know that the prayer your Spirit has placed in my heart is sincere, humble, mournful and trustful. Lord, why do you not listen to me? It is true though that you were not heeded either by your Father to whom you pleaded when you were in the olive grove! Confirm in me the conviction that your dispositions are still fatherly even when hidden from me; fatherly even when mysteriously sorrowful! I know that you heal with the same stroke that also wounds, that you are close when it seems you are far, and good when it seems you are severe. I know you disturb the peace of your children only to grant them a greater, surer peace.

**Teach me to pray** whilst being fully aware of my sin that you alone can forgive, of my terrible misery that you alone can liberate, of my endless need that you alone can satisfy, and my profound desire that you alone can fill. **Teach me to pray** with the heart even when my tongue is silent; that my heart may cry out in the silence and yearn for you, knowing that you alone can hear, answer, satisfy...

**Teach me to pray** in a continuous and joyful conversation with you, my invisible interlocutor. You created me to exult in your presence, to speak with you, listen to you, respond to you, and to respond especially in the moments when you summon me.

**Teach me** to be receptive. Lord, receive my entire being: my mind, my heart, my memory, my fantasy, and my senses. You are the Holy One; I want to be lost entirely in You and find in you the unity and peace that can make my prayer as you want it: spontaneous, filial, attentive and continuous.

*Fr. Agostino Trapè, osa (to continue)*

## Silence is Golden

There are moments in which one desires absolute silence to be able to hear the voice of the heart. It is true that this voice can only be heard by making silence in and around oneself. This voice can be perceived through our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

A child in the womb knows how to listen with the heart. As he grows he learns to communicate with speech and the senses of the soul become weaker. Man learns that life is full of trials. He learns that there are words that remove the shine and delight from good sentiments and proposals. There are words that become opaque, arid and wilted, like the minds that use them to hide the instinctive and innate hopes of love, and then, gazes take on different slants, understanding becomes discord, kisses and caresses become lustful, and atmospheres impenetrable. These words block the door of the heart, crush the soul, and impede it from receiving the living breath of the Spirit. There are words that offend, wound, kill and mortify the natural dignity of every human being, and God Himself.

Yet, God never fails to speak words of comfort, which he pronounces with discretion and without raising his voice. The Father speaks softly, to express his Love which is sincere and total. With gentleness he declares his Love, as is befitting a Love that conquers without upheavals or violence. He speaks silently. Hence the need of silence to hear God's voice hidden in the heart.

If man dedicated less time to cultivating improper use of the word, and if he applied himself instead to listening to the eloquence of certain silences, particularly to God's silence, he would see how great Love is and how sweet is God's Mercy. In silence man can discover the value of certain messages; messages said with the gaze and smile of the language of the heart and soul. In silence, faith strengthens our hearing to hear God who declares to us His Love, and our vision to see His pleased gaze, knowing He is being listened to. Silence allows us to enjoy the intimate experience of God. (Anon.)

### Quoting G.K. Chesterton

"... (A)ll the optimism of the age had been false and disheartening (because) it had always been trying to prove that we fit in to the world. The Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do *not* fit in to the world. I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity. I had been right in feeling all things as odd... The optimist's pleasure was prosaic, for it dwelt on the naturalness of everything; the Christian pleasure was poetic, for it dwelt on the unnaturalness of everything in the light of the supernatural. The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring. (...) I knew now why ... I could feel homesick at home." (Excerpt. *Othodoxy*)

## FROM THE MAIL

**Fr. Joe Buffoni, Malawi, Africa:** "With great pleasure I remembered you all to the Lord in the Holy Mass for the 50th anniversary of my priestly ordination. I bless and greet you most warmly!"

**Mrs. Electa Almeida, UK:** "For priests and Religious Sisters only 400 Rosaries for each of the following countries available for collection and distribution: Swaziland, Namibia, Somalia, Gabon, Egypt, Niger, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Mauritiana, Western Sahara, Botswana. Tel. London 020-89470310

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## Anniversary of Echo

Echo has existed for 23 years. This has been possible thanks also to you for supporting us with your prayers and donations. We shall need to count on your help also in the future. We think that Mary has used this little instrument to help her form a family; members of the big family of God.

Mary is the Little One of God; because of her "littleness" God made her great. He offers her to us as mother and model of holiness. We hope that through the pages of Echo you too might see her littleness and holiness and beauty, and desire to be like her. We hope that Echo inspires you to consecrate yourself to her Immaculate Heart, and to trust in her quiet, yet strong guidance so we all can learn to stand firm in the faith and offer a witness of love to this world so much in need of the peace which only God can give. God has disposed that his little children help and support each other with the help of his grace, according to his plan of love. The Echo thanks you for helping us to help Mary's little children round the world, and to help her fulfil her plan.

**Echo online: [www.ecodimaria.net](http://www.ecodimaria.net)**

*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, 24 January 2008