

Our Lady's message of 25 January 1993:

Dear children, Today I am inviting you to accept and live my messages seriously. These days are days in which you have to decide for God, for peace and for good. May all feelings of hate and jealousy depart from your life and thoughts, so they may be filled only with feelings of love for God and for your fellow men. It is in this way, and only this way, that you will be able to discern the signs of the present time. I am with you and I am guiding you towards a new time, a time that God is giving you as a grace to know Him even better. Thank you for having responded to my call.

**"In these critical days
clean out your heart to fill it with love
and understand the new times that are near"**

Mary comes to Her monthly appointment to invite us once again to **accept and live Her messages seriously**. Her messages mean Gospel. She says *seriously* because She knows how lightly we take heaven's calls, how we renounce the good that God offers us in preference of *the wide road that leads to destruction*. (Mt 7:13)

These days are days in which you must decide for God...

The truth is that always: *now is a very acceptable time, now is the day of salvation ... not to receive the grace of God in vain*. (2 Co 6:1) She comes with this invitation while we live in the reality of our sad times. The **decision for God** is an urgent call to purify our hearts, to rid them of the bad that piles up because of all the evil we receive from men (think of the suffering caused by war) and also from jealousy and envy making us want the good only for us. To all men Our Lady says: **Decide then for God, for peace and for good.**

May all feelings of hate and jealousy depart from your life and thoughts, so they may be filled only with love for God and for your fellow men. Our Lady is inviting us to: *clear out the old yeast, so you may become a fresh batch of dough* (1Co 5:7), *to rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy, and all slander, to return like newborn infants, and long for pure spiritual milk* (the Word) *so through it you may grow into salvation* (1 Pt 2:1). The various forms of opposition and rivalry between people are triggered by sensual feelings, like jealousy and envy. Without the grace that comes from encountering the living God, we are easily carried away by human ways of thinking that impede us from seeing God as a loving Father and our fellow men as brothers and sisters.

The Pope explained this beautifully in his talk from Assisi (see next article). It's almost as if Our Lady had wanted to confirm his prophetic vision of the present evil and the peace that can be found in Jesus alone.

The present times are so dark so as to wake us from our torpor and call us back to **deciding for God**. Everything around us is falling down: in political, social and personal relations. Without God's love everything goes bad and rots. *The cries of the poor have reached the ears of the Lord* (Jm 5:4), revealing how the work is founded on hypocrisy, falseness, exploitation and derision of man's dignity. **So decide for God, for peace and for good.**

Only this way, you will be able to **discern the signs of the present time**, which is time of great grace because God has increased His manifestations. Which signs? The strong calls by God seen in the facts: the fall of the gods that man placed before God; the vanity of calculating human wisdom that God will throw to the wind. *Now he has promised, I will once more shake not only earth but heaven*. (Heb 12:26) There will be the fall of the wicked system founded on inequality among men whereby race, religion, wealth and interests are considered, and not the dignity of children made to the image of God. If instead of being limpid we are filled with ill feelings and jealousy, we will be unable to **understand the new time** that is being born from the rubble of an old world. We will be confused and desperate because of the evil we see around us.

I am with you. Our Blessed Mother always ensures us of Her presence so we will not feel lost, but always trust in Her. **I am guiding you towards a new time that God is giving you as a grace.** Which new time? The time where MARY'S IMMACULATE HEART WILL TRIUMPH, as in the promise and God will defeat the enemy with His humble servants. This time will be given to us, and the more our eyes are pure and contemplate God in His manifestations of justice and goodness, the more we will see this time with clarity. *After just a brief moment he who is to come shall come; he shall not delay. But my just one shall live by faith.* (Heb 10:37) fr.A.

Get rid of the old yeast to become a fresh batch of dough... (1 Co 5:7) and follow Christ by loving as he loved you. (Eph 5:2)

From Assisi, the greatest lesson on peace

The Pope in Assisi prophet of peace

**shows the world the way to Peace -
Mary's way: prayer, fasts and true conversion.**

On the 9th and 10th January the Pope guided the intense moment of prayer, meditation and fasting to ask God to grant the world peace, which we see is constantly being demolished by human efforts. With him there were representatives of the European episcopates, Christian confessions, Hebraism and Islam and many faithful, mostly youth. It was a day of prayer then, nothing else, but it's important for us to see the lesson in it and see how valuable and effective prayer is, which is a means given us by God as an expression of the dignity of being His children.

"This is our strength, our instrument. Before the instruments of death and destruction, before violence and cruelty, there is nothing we can do but turn to God, with our words and our hearts. **We are neither strong, nor powerful, but we know that God always responds to the entreaties of those who turn to Him out of sincere faith**, especially when the future of whole populations is at risk. This is the reason for our vigil."

The theme was amply developed during the EVENING VIGIL of the 9th.

"We are not to search for peace outside of Christ, but neither against him. We have to force ourselves to live Paul's words: *Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus*. (Ph 2:5) This presumes **the presence of one's own conversion**, and is most effectively expressed by the Apostle in his letter to the Philippians: *Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others*. (Ph 2:3-4)

After the first part of the vigil, the Pope blessed the bread and the salt for the fast he asked the participants to do as an act of penance, and offered it to the bishops and the delegations that were present in the church of the Sacred Convent.

The persistent presence of evil, despite the fact that Christ threw down the wall of division, makes us ponder on the meaning of the **continuous and insistent destructive will that moves men**.

Where does war and peace come from

There is no peace without a return to Crucified Christ

"There is nothing we can do but to repeat the humble request of forgiveness at the foot of the Cross where Our Lord is crucified, both for ourselves and everyone else. That is why our prayer vigil is also a vigil of penance and conversion. **There will be no peace unless we return to Crucified Christ through prayer**, but also through the renunciation of one's ambitions, thirst for power, want of overpowering others and not respecting the rights of others. These, are in fact, what cause wars. The Apostle James warned us of this in his letter: *Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members?* (Jm 4:1) Christ is our peace.

When we are far from Him - in our private lives, within the social structure, in relationships with other people and other nations - what else can remain if not hatred, unfriendliness, conflict, cruelty and war? We have to pray so His blood may bring us closer, closer to one another, since all we can do on our own is separate ourselves from each other, (see Eph 2:13) turn our backs on one another; so *we implore you, be reconciled to God.* (2 Co 5:20), so we may be reconciled with one another."

The sin of division is seen in the comparison between "us" and "them" which is what lies behind a great deal of human activity. "How can it be possible to deny a man his right to life and safety because he is not one of us, but one of them? Or deny a woman the right to integrity and dignity because she is not one of us, but one of them? Are we not all children of one God, His beloved children? All this makes us reflect and even tremble a little, for what Christ said: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.* (Jn 14:27)

"Did the Lord Jesus really leave us peace? Why then is there so much violence around us, and in some of the countries that we come from war is even raging? What did we do with the Lord's gift, with His precious heritage? **Perhaps it could be that we have preferred peace as the world gives it?** A peace that consists of the silence of the oppressed, of the powerlessness of the defeated, the humiliation of those - men and peoples - that see their rights being trampled on?

The real peace, left to us by Jesus, rains over justice, blooms with love and reconciliation. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that *the world cannot accept.* (Jn 14:17) Does not the Apostle teach us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... (Gal 5:22)? *No peace for the wicked! says my God,* the prophet Isaiah reminds us (57:21). But *the Consoler, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name - he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.* (Jn 14:26) The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us this evening what the fount of real peace is and where it is to be found."

Perseverance in the search for peace, even in such tragic times as those told by some of the priests and lay persons here from Bosnia and Herzegovina, can only be founded on the fact that Jesus Christ is by our side: "Christ prays together with us. He took His place in the procession of sinners, but not just once on the banks of the river Jordan where He received His baptism of Penance from John - in every century, in every generation He returns to become part of that procession in the various parts of the world. Christ is in fact the Redeemer of the world - *God made him to be in sin so we might become the righteousness of God in him.* (2Co 5:21) From this comes our firm conviction, enlightened by faith, that in the tormented land of the Balkan populations Christ is present. He is and will always be witness and defender of the rights of man."

Incessant supplication of the Church, with Mary, for peace

The search for peace, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is a most urgent task that we must take upon ourselves. The Pope went beyond this statement, and with words directed at the COMMUNITY OF POOR CLARES in Assisi added: "The world needs your *holy hands that lift up towards heaven without anger or argument* (1 Tm 2:8), to implore for peace.

You represent the Church bride, the *Ecclesia orans*, which with persevering and unanimous prayer in the monasteries of the West, is united to the fervent intercession of the monasteries in the East, for peace that descends from above for the unity of all.

In the message for the Day of Peace for 1993 I urge believers to live the **spirit of evangelical poverty as a fount of peace**. Evangelical poverty acts as a fount of peace because through it the person is able to establish a just relationship with God, with others and with all creation."

Prayer like in the heart of Mary, opposes Satan's work

The Pope then brought up a fundamental point, which he repeated frequently: "**There is no peace without prayer.** The Church asks the Lord for this gift daily during the celebration of the Eucharist. When human hope for peace seems to dissolve, when the powers of evil and the influence of the Evil One seem too strong

(devil comes from *dia-bolòs* which means that which separates, which sows the spirit of hate and division in hearts), Christians, in agreement with and united in the name of Christ, persevere by praying to the *Highest One, the Almighty, the good Lord...* and from Him they invoke the Spirit of peace and goodwill which moves hearts and inspires thoughts of peace, not of torment.

That is the reason for our presence here in Assisi, to invoke peace from God. The Pope wants to entrust this task to you, so that the **sacred fire of imploration** for peace, together with the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ, **will not die out. I am asking you to continue supporting my universal ministry with the force of your unceasing prayer.** Yes, with prayer, which reveals a particular Marian aspect of the Church. Who more than Mary fought and still fights against Satan?

Be like Mary in Her continuous and fervent intercession.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that Mary is the perfect prayer, and a personage of the Church. Praying to Her is accepting the Father's plan, Who sends His Son to save all men... We can pray with Her and pray to Her. The prayer of the Church is supported by Mary's prayer, which is united in hope. Yes, on this occasion too, **our prayer and our hope for peace is supported by Mary, Regina pacis, Spes nostra!**" (Queen of peace, Our hope)

A cry from the war torn land: We pray to the Lord, and to the world: help us, don't leave us alone.

During the vigil of 9 January the Archbishop of Sarajevo, **Msgr. Vinko Puljic'**, spoke of the sufferance of his diocesan community.

(...) Nine months ago, before the war started, our archdiocese counted 144 parishes with more than 500,000 faithful. During this extremely sad period, 62 parishes have been totally destroyed, and the people, together with their priests, sent away. Our churches, sanctuaries and monasteries have been destroyed. The factories, businesses, shops and public buildings, like thousands of apartments, have been bombed. Our beautiful land, where Muslims, Serbs and Croats lived together in peace, has now become a devastated land.

We thank the whole world for the humanitarian aid that arrives, but from here we are crying out for justice. The politicians delay the solution of the problem, looking out for new reasons not to find an effective solution. If this sad war continues, at least half of our archdiocese will be totally rooted up. All this urges us to pray to the Lord and the entire world: *help us, don't leave us alone!*

Lord God, we pray to you for our exiled and our refugees. We pray to you for the people closed up in the concentration camps, known of and not. We pray to you for the wounded, the mutilated and for the orphans. We also pray to you for all those people who risk their lives to defend the only country we have. Bless all those who discover the truth in this tragedy, to stop the force of darkness. We thank you Lord, for our benefactors, for all the interventions on behalf of the Holy Father and for the sympathy of the journalists, the scientists and the faithful of every religion.

Oh Lord, Father of justice, waken the consciences of the world, soften the hearts of the powerful. We pray to you Lord, also for the conversion of all those people who use violence in our country. You, Who are our only and common Father, You Who are our final Judge, have pity on us. Strengthen our love, our faith, our hope, so we are able to carry the burden of this war. **Lord, if at all possible, take this cup away from us. Nonetheless, not our will, but Your Will be done. Amen."**

After Msgr. Puljic', **Card. Kuharic'**, Archbishop of Zagreb, **re-echoed the messages of the Queen of Peace:**

"(...) It is from this terrible experience that our prayer gushes forth to Jesus, Prince of peace, that through the intercession of His and Our Mother, the **Queen of Peace, we may be granted the gift of peace...** We, who come from places where there is war and indescribable sufferance by so many people and innocent victims, **know how much peace really costs.** We know the real value of the gift of peace. The peace that God wants to give to those who pray with penitent hearts is Peace founded on freedom and justice for single persons and peoples alike, it is peace founded on truth, peace that can be built up on forgiveness, reconciliation and love. Everyone yearns for this gift. All men of good will aspire to this peace. With our prayers we intend taking the sufferances of all those troubled people, the tears of all those tormented people, the blood of all those who have fallen, to the merciful eyes of our heavenly Father! We join our penance and conversion to this sufferance. **Evil cannot be crushed if not through prayer and fasting."**

The representative of Islam, **ul Ulema Jacob Selimoski** then spoke and told of 200,000 Muslims exterminated, more than 500,000 wounded and a further 100,000 sent to concentration camps, more than 35,000 women raped (including girls of 7 and women as old as 80), 23 imam either killed or missing, more than 650 mosques destroyed or ruined, dozens of cities completely "cleaned out"

(ethnically), and more than 1.5 million people forced to abandon their own homes. "All done with the most inhuman methods of torture that the history of crime has ever seen, and this is just a part of the horrible apocalypse that Bosnia is living through in the present time, at the end of the 20th century, by the Serbian aggressor..."

How can Europe permit a whole nation, a European nation, disappear? How can Europe **wash its hands**, so tranquil and indifferent, by adopting a solution which is completely inefficient? ... We ask God Almighty that the victims of these crimes without precedence be compensated with the gardens of Heaven, and may the leaders be enlightened so the killing of people and the destruction of their goods be stopped as soon as possible."

MEDJUGORJE -YESTERDAY AND TODAY. "This parish has to be a sign."

Medjugorje mid January: It's cold in the church because there is no heating fuel, but it makes one think of the many brothers in Bosnia suffering much worse cold than this. Christmas trees decorate the front of the church. We noticed the wheat growing in pots here and there - like the sign of a new birth. The church pews aren't all full during Mass, even though some of the local people have started coming to evening Mass again since the start of the war. They say it's too dangerous for the women to be out at night because of the many strangers present.

It certainly isn't like the early days when they filled the church for daily Mass. There are always a few pilgrims to fill up the space. We're a long way from the early days when the locals responded to Mary's call, and fervently participated in Mass, and step by step were conducted along the path to Christian living, first under the guidance of Fr. Jozo, then for much longer by Fr. Tomislav. The church was filled every evening by parishioners from the village who were aware of the responsibility before the whole world for the grace received.

Let us not forget that Mary came to this parish to make it a model for all the parishes in the world. In Her first message to the parish (1.3.1984) She said: *Dear children, I have chosen this parish in a special way and I want to guide it. The next Thurs: I want you of the parish to convert to God's ways, so all those who come here will also be converted.* (8 Mar 1984) *I want to call all of you to holiness so you can communicate it to others.* (10 Oct. 1985)

We know that after the first 4 years, when Fr. Tomislav left the parish, with the continuous mutation of the fathers and the growing invasion by pilgrims, the parishioners felt they were no longer getting the necessary assistance, and they gradually abandoned evening Mass: the fount of strength that helped them grow. Then material interests moved in, like the buildings, and the work involved in looking after the pilgrims. *I want to make you an oasis of peace ... but you have taken a miserable path, the way to ruin... You have gone far from me, to follow your own miserable interests,* Mary complained. (25 March 1992)

The parishioners, as a whole, no longer represent that sign they should be, even if many families and prayer groups continue being testimonies of a holy life. Even the big prayer group, without spiritual direction, is not a model anymore for the prayer groups that should have sprung up all over the world, as desired by Mary.

Mary's grace, with the arrival of so many pilgrims, has reached even the furthest corners of the earth, and has touched many hearts. Medjugorje is still working conversions and stimulates many works of faith and real love. We can see how pilgrims from all over the world have understood Mary's message of fraternal love, and put it into practice, through the amount of aid they continually send to ex Yugoslavia. Even the President of Croatia stated how whole populations would have starved without this aid. What they are giving to this land are the fruits of love they learnt at Mary's school.

Just think what a great grace it would have been had the entire population become that sign of peace and reconciliation! War could have been avoided, according to Our Lady's words, but what we have instead is ruin and dispersion, like young men taking it in turns to fight up front, men without work, schools closed down, the threat of danger looming over their heads and widespread feelings of agitation that impedes any sort of construction.

That great task Our Lady is asking of us has not changed. She wants to see this population, and thus the pilgrims, live Her messages - in other words, grow in holiness to become an authentic sign of God, to make His Mercy flow over onto the world. That is why She silently continues teaching us with Her messages, but responding superficially is not enough. Through our response, the

fire of love has to set hearts on fire; which means dedicating ourselves totally, in a total sacrifice, because this is the most important cause of all. For this we need instruments. All those who are aware of the utmost importance of Our Lady's call should pray and fast with fervour, so *the Master* (and the Mistress) *of the harvest may send labourers to his harvest*, and they too may work full time at harvesting for the Lord.

It's time to start believing in the power of the cross

We didn't see the large crowds in Medjugorje, but we found silence for meditating on the mystery of the cross. Medj. and the apparitions have also suffered, like the assailed and humiliated people. What was once a cenacle where it seemed Mary gathered Her children from all over the world in a new dimension of unity, now looks like an empty garden, in which Mary Magdalene anxiously searches for her Lord. **It was indeed like a Good Friday!** We visited Mostar and saw the destruction of the churches, and the fury that devastated every living thing. The parks were turned into cemeteries. We saw the desolation of a people completely overwhelmed. It was like the triumph of the prince of darkness.

There is no sense in accusing anyone, and it's not up to us to try those who impeded the flow of grace and were an indirect cause of so much evil. What we have to do is believe that the mystery of salvation is found in the cross, like in the darkness of Calvary. Jesus on the Calvary did not accuse those who crucified Him and He did not judge His enemies. Grace does not stop flowing when there is someone who believes and pays by kissing the Cross. No, for this is the best proof of God's works. Men make a big noise, God is silent and gets where He wants. I'm not trying to console anyone - this is Gospel. *The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.* (1 Co 1:25)

It is here that Mary talks to an attentive heart. During my lengthy meditation on Krizevac Our Blessed Mother helped me see what it means to *ignore so great a salvation.* (Hb 2:3) Her presence accompanied us as we climbed Krizevac and we understood the call of the disciple to bear one's cross together with Jesus. Such a rare thing these days; people look out for personal advantages, not the price one has to pay, for human glory, not glory for God alone.

During Adoration the word of hope spoke to an attentive heart - the words of Jesus: *do not fear, it is I, and when I shall be lifted up I will attract the entire earth to me.* We priests felt a liberating and serene presence that inspired trust, ignorant of the past evil and completely looking towards the God that God is preparing. It was the presence of Our Mother Who filled Her beloved sons with sweetness and peace, making them feel certain that She is carrying them on Her eagle wings above the stormy world.

Fr. A.

MEDJUGORJE DAY BY DAY daily programme

At 5 p.m. the Joyful and Sorrowful mysteries of the rosaries are said, with a short pause at 5.45 to announce the apparition. The visionaries in the choir loft with others are all praying. At exactly the same time every day, Our Lady appears to them, as they recite the Lord's Prayer. At 6 p.m. evening Mass is said, and all priests present concelebrate. After the Mass, healing prayers are said for the sick, and then the third part of the Rosary is said (Glorious mysteries). On Thursdays there is also Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. On Wednesdays and Saturdays there's public Adoration after dinner between 9 and 10 p.m., and even all night long on certain occasions. After so many years, nothing has changed. Sunday afternoon there is the climb up the Apparition hill whilst reciting the Rosary, and on Fridays up Krizevac along the Way of the Cross. Most of the visionaries are present, a bit overweight says Marija jokingly, because the pilgrims give them less work.

From Sr. Emmanuel's Diary (1 January 1993)

* There was no fighting for the **Christmas period**, but the soldiers used their firearms instead of firecrackers this year to announce the midnight Mass.

On Christmas evening, the visionaries Marija, Ivan, Vicka and Jakov said that Our Lady, dressed in gold, was more beautiful than ever. Marija said: "Jesus was dressed in gold too because He was wrapped in His Mother's dress. They can't bear being separated." Many pilgrims said that in the moment of the apparition they felt an extreme happiness. In a message Our Lady said: *On the night of Christmas I deliver the greatest number of souls from purgatory.*

Tonight, despite the war, joy abounded. Many youth, not all strong in their faith, discovered the presence of God-Love the Creator within them.

In the heart of the bloodied Balkans, Medjugorje is like a torch

alight with joy. Our Lady opens hearts so they may receive the Saviour in a way that the Child Jesus can make them capable of loving all men. Here the joy from heaven makes the sadness of war disappear. Mary, however, is looking for helpers all over the world.

* Like in Bethlehem, the Blessed Virgin is looking for **homes for the little babes born from violence**. Hundreds of women are victims of rape by soldiers in the concentration camps. Made pregnant by violence, they are kept in the camps till they are 6 months pregnant and unable to abort, forcing them to give birth to little Serbs. The brutality forced upon these women is so traumatizing, that many are refusing their children. The Pope has encouraged Christians to help these mothers and to accept their children: fathers and mothers are needed!

In Sarajevo, young mothers are saying: "For how long will I be able to feed my child? After the last drop of milk, he will die in my arms, like the hundreds before him." A friend launched an appeal over the radio: "We don't even have water to clean the sores of the wounded."

* **It is the little ones who are paying** for this hate. How can we not call out to the world with the only two means we have that can stop this infernal machine - prayer and fasts? Will this be the year of peace? Only just over a year has passed since that youth retreat where Marija started during the apparition. Mary had told her: *My beloved children, how easy it would be for me to stop the war if I could find more people who pray like you pray!*

* (15 Jan 1993) As is the custom in January, the priests are visiting the houses in the village to bless them. The Virgin Herself has recommended not only the **blessing of our houses**, but also placing in them blessed religious objects as protection against Satan. We have more need of this now than ever.

* January is the least popular month for pilgrims, and the visionaries take advantage of this to travel. **Jakov** is in Italy, **Ivan** and **frSlavko** left on 17 Jan for a long apostolic mission to Australia (Slavko called from there on the 25th), **Vicka** is in Zagreb, **Jelena** has returned to Steubenville (USA) and **Mirjana** is in Switzerland. Our Lady accompanies the visionaries with Her apparitions wherever they are. This is a very special grace for our times.

The **ethnic cleansing** continues in the heart of a Europe that resembles Pilate washing his hands. The UNHCR envoys are witnesses to the acts of terrorism which empty the villages of their inhabitants, rob, then burn the houses, but have to wait till everything is laid waste before bringing in tinned food supplies to "displaced persons."

* The women who have been raped in the camps and who are refugees in Croatia are terribly distressed. Some would like to abort because of their shame (so far 300 of these little ones have been born and refused - ed. note). It is urgent to organize welfare centres for these women and adoptions for their babies. In the face of this tragedy, there is a total legal void. This is the moment for "the dedicated ones of the Kingdom" to take bold initiatives to reverse the laws which do disservice to children instead of protecting them.

* We know from Ivan that in these days the Gospa calls us to *pray more intensely for Her intentions* which she keeps secret because She needs our prayers.

* The **Commission of Inquiry** is still suspended because of the war, but this does not restrict in any way those who have given their YES to the Queen of Peace Who continues to pursue Her plan. **Jakov** told us two days ago: "I saw the sign with my own eyes. The Gospa showed it to me. I know the exact date that it will appear." We can clearly see by the peace of the visionaries that the Gospa knows what She is doing and that She has the world in Her hands as its Queen and in Her heart as our Mother. We are happy to have Her as Mother!

Marija talks about the apparitions

On the 14th January, after we climbed Podbrdo, we called in on Marija in her home in Bijakovici. She was happy to talk to us and answer our questions.

Q. *Has Our Lady's face remained the same all these years?*

A. For us She has not changed. Despite Her 2,000 years, She is youthful and slim, unlike us who tend to change, put on weight etc. (She confirmed that during the Christmas apparition Our Lady was dressed in gold and carried Child Jesus in Her arms. Unfortunately She did not remain long.) Usually on special feast days She stays less with us. Maybe it's because She's in a hurry to return for the feast in Heaven (she said jokingly).

Q. *You also receive the message at Christmas, and this takes more time.*

A. In fact, when we see Our Lady, it's as if time doesn't exist. At times people say the apparition lasted a long time, while for us it seemed very quick.

Q. *How is the message transmitted every month on the 25th?*

A. She communicates the message to me in my intimate and I write it down straight away. But when I read over it, even if it's correct and Fr. Slavko gave me theological counselling, I realize it's a long way from expressing what Our Lady communicated to me. Often I can't even believe that I wrote down those words and I even feel so ashamed that I wasn't able to express what I could feel in my heart, that I don't feel like talking.

Q. *What does Our Lady say to the priests about Mass?*

A. She says they have to see Holy Mass as being the centre, the summit, the most important moment in their own life, and the same for all Christians. Our lives should be a continual preparation for Mass and development of the Mass. Our lives have to reflect the Gospel, like the Mass does.

Q. *What about the comments to the messages, can you recognize their real sense in these?*

A. They often surprise me. As each day passes, I myself am able to understand new meanings, deeper meanings, and since the words (of the messages) aren't mine it doesn't surprise me. It's like the different colours that are produced by light touching different surfaces. However, they can also give rise to errors. *Fr. Cesear*

The Pope reads The Echo of Medjugorje

We were on our way out when Marija called out to say: "Do you know that the Pope reads the Echo of Medjugorje?" We replied: "Yes, we know he reads the French version." Marija responded: "No, the Polish one - if not both that is. On the 17th September, when Fr. Jozo gave a letter to the nun that works in the Pontifical apartment to hand over to the Pope, she said how she receives the Echo in Polish and how the Pope asks to read it too, so she always lets him read it first. I was present and heard her say it."

Ex Yugoslavia: peace plan unjust legalizes ethnic division and conquests of aggressors meanwhile fighting continues

The situation in Bosnia and in Croatia is becoming more complicated. The Geneva peace plan sounds like a legalization of the violent conquests by the Serbo-Bosnians supported by Belgrade. According to the peace plan the Serbo-Bosnians, who represent 31% of the population, would receive 50% or even as much as 70% of Bosnian territory (which they are at present occupying). The Muslims are the obvious victims in this plan. They represent 44% of the population and would receive 20-30% of the territory - made up of patches here and there, not even neighbouring one another. The Croatians, 17% of the population, would have Herzegovina: now in their hands after having fought off the Serbs.

The great powers have never condemned the aggressor or brought them to a halt, which can only be seen as encouragement for the Serbs. They were not even told to retreat from the areas they are occupying. The worst thing, however, is this: that in the **peace plan** the **ethnic division** of Bosnia has been legalized, so that each of the 10 provinces will be assigned to the largest ethnic group inhabiting it. How will the minority groups in the provinces be treated with all this hate built up after so much violence and barbarity?

Both human and Christian values say that citizens of different ethnic groups living in the same country must enjoy the same rights; otherwise we should have to clean out all the nations all over the world of foreign minority groups: not a principal, but a misdeed, favouring division, injustice, and "differences," instead of promoting unity among the children of Adam and Christ!

More clouds darken the horizon: the Serbs of Krajna (behind the mountains looking over the Adriatic) destroyed the bridge at Maslenica, thus dividing Croatia into two. Those who wanted to go to Zara from Split had to ferry to the isle of Pag. Now the **Croatian soldiers** have regained this area so they could build the bridge, to give them easy access and keep on fighting to free their territory.

The UN, however, have condemned this operation. They (the UN) accept the aggressor's conquests, but do not acknowledge the assailed the right to defend themselves. One and a half years have passed and Europe has done nothing, but now it looks like a military intervention is close (perhaps the USA or France), to disarm the aggressors, hit their armaments and make sure that the humanitarian aid gets through.

Yet another complication: Russia, who had so far supported the UN, are now supporting Serbia, with obvious consequences. Many Russian volunteers are already fighting by their side. But who in this story cares about the people, the poor, the harmless population, about real justice, and not just their own interests?

A lesson by an Anglican minister:

In Medjugorje I found Mary - the renewal of my church began with Her. He begs Catholics .. recite the Rosary: through Mary you can renew the world

Apart from the many Catholics who visit Medjugorje to venerate the Queen of Peace, of late there have also been an increasing number of non-Catholic Christians who visit Medjugorje to pray to Our Lady with trust and to ask for Her motherly intercession before God. A recent visit was paid by Anglican minister, **Robert Llewelyn**. Despite his age, he is spritely, and deeply spiritual. Peace and joy irradiate from his every word.

Q. Would you like to start by telling us something about yourself? I was born a long time ago, in 1909, but thanks to God I'm still fit. When I was young I was very interested in mathematics and I studied at Cambridge, where I was born. I worked for a while in the English schools, and then in India for 25 years. The natural sciences interested me, but at the same time I was very attached to my Christian faith. I studied Anglican theology privately and in 1938 became a minister. I was chaplain for 13 years in the sanctuary of St. Juliana.

When I hear about churches and other places of prayer being destroyed, and about this ethnic cleaning, it brings back to mind those long decades and centuries of fighting between the Anglicans and Catholics. Then too, a great number of Catholic churches and convents were destroyed, and many people were killed in our ethnic cleansing. You can't imagine how the Catholic Church and the priests were hated. The Catholic priests were persecuted harshly, but Our Lady, the Mother of Jesus, was hated and attacked violently. Once, a statue of Her was tied by a rope to a horse and it was dragged around the streets until it broke to bits. So even today in interconfessional meetings and talks, there is still a lot of difficulty when the question concerning Our Lady arises.

Q. How many Anglicans are there, and how many go to church?

There are 40 million of us. Only a small percentage are church goers. Something has to be done if we want the people to return to God - everyone needs Him.

Q. What do you think can be done?

This is the third time I've come to Medjugorje, even though I'm 83 years old. For me, Medj. is simply a place of prayer. For example, I can pray much better here than in London. Experience tells me that we **Anglicans have to bring Mary back to our spiritual area and give Her the place She is worthy of**. She is our Mother, and we are truly poor if we do not permit Her to be with us. I think this is **where the beginning of our spiritual renewal lies**, and with this in mind I started up a prayer community. **We pray the Rosary together**. There certainly aren't many of these groups. Perhaps it's the only one in our Church, it is very close to Catholic heritage and prayer. I talk to my faithful about Mary and I suggest they pray to Her.

What Our Lady says here in Medjugorje is what Jesus says, it's what Jesus says is the will of God. Here, in your land, Mary is inspiration. There is a **real Christian atmosphere in church**, and in many of your families true devotion to Mary shines out and in the visionaries, joy, peace and simplicity.

This **change came about because of my new filial relationship with Mary our Mother**, and it started in Medjugorje. I live in the hope that if this happened to me, it can also happen to others. The renewal is needed by all.

Q. Is there something else you'd like to say about the Rosary?

The Rosary is a prayer of meditation, it brings us closer to Jesus. Since Mary is in the beginning and the end of this prayer, what else could happen to me if not learn to love Mary and be convinced that we Anglicans have to find place in our prayer for Her too? She is our Mother. Without Her we are nothing but poor orphans.

Because of my love of the Rosary, I have been able to urge Catholics at meetings to pray it. I know many of your faithful have forgotten it or recite it superficially.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Let Mary instruct you. The world looks at you, do not tire! **Through Mary you can renew the world and you will be helping us Anglicans to accept Her too**, and we will be brothers! Since I met you I pray for you all, for the monks, the visionaries and the entire parish. **Remain one in spirit, like Mary wants**. That is the only way you will be able to present His luminous face to the world, and show the way to God. You pray for us too so we will know how to jump over the obstacles and see each other as brothers and sisters as soon as possible. May God, through the intercession of Mary, protect you and watch over you in these difficult times. and may He grant you peace through the intercession of the Queen of Peace.

(from *Nasa Ognjista* - Dec. 1992)

On the hill of apparitions adoring the cross for those on the cross

The Pope: war and aggression is unworthy of man

A voice that sounds out in man's defence, against the twisted manoeuvres of those who make money on other's backs: the Pope.

On 16 January when the Pope received the ambassadors from all over the world for New Year's greetings, he spoke out loud and clear about the two evils that hold humanity in a clutch. One is war, the other is poverty.

Among other things he said: *Close to us the ruthless brutality of war is being unfolded. I am thinking of the fratricidal fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of Europe is humiliated (by it) and its institutions have been discredited (because of it). The efforts of men of good will over these years have been practically destroyed and humanitarian rights are not being respected. The most elementary principals that were decreed by the conference of European security are being mocked at by real hordes that sow terror and death. How can we not think of all the children who are marked for life by such horrible spectacles? The international community must demonstrate its political will in accepting neither aggression and territorial conquest by force, nor the aberration of "ethnic cleansing." Showing indifference before similar ways of acting is culpable omission. Those who practise such unjust deeds, or find excuses for them, or justify them, will have to respond not only to the international community, but also and above all to God.*

Prayer for peace

(composed in 1700 by the bishop of Split, the venerable Stephen Cupilli, at the time of the Turkish invasion) Respond to each invocation with:

Grant us oh Lord your peace

Jesus, be our Saviour. We were waiting for peace, and here is war. Jesus, Fount of Grace, with confidence we beseech you: grant peace to your Church.

Jesus, Word of the Father, command that there be peace among your people.

Jesus, Son of Mary, the Man of our peace in whom we trust.

Jesus, Most Glorious King, the glory of heaven be to you, and peace on earth be to us.

Jesus, Author of faith, grant us peace and unmoving faith in you.

Jesus, Hope of the Saints, grant peace to those who hope in you.

Jesus, Fount of Love, use the force of your Spirit to create peace.

Jesus, Most Merciful, preserve thoughts of peace, not of affliction.

Jesus, our Help, make peace flow down upon the earth.

Jesus, Most Faithful, remember the alliance of peace you made with our Fathers.

Jesus, who Perfects the Law, open the hearts of your faithful to your commandments, and create peace.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, see the tears of the mothers, like Rachel they are crying for their children.

Jesus, wise Teacher, leave us your peace, grant us peace.

Jesus, perfect Consoler, manifest your goodness and discourage those who hate peace.

Jesus, Our Rest, let your people experiment the splendour of peace.

Jesus, Sun of justice, let abundance of peace rise in our hearts.

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, spill not the blood of those you redeemed with your precious blood.

Jesus, true Light, enlighten the Heads of state so they may find the way to peace.

Jesus, Food for the strong, make peace in our countries, and fill us with the strength of your grain.

Jesus, Prince of peace, break the violence of aggression and war.

Jesus, valiant Warrior, your fortress we will sing, your mercy we will praise.

Jesus, Winner over death, make those whom you satiate with the bread from heaven be agreeable in love.

Jesus, King of Peace, bless your people with peace.

Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us.

BUILDING A LITTLE FAMILY OF GOD

for those who share the same call

Religious life is fertile when there is brotherly communion

The Holy Father, who never ceases to amaze us with such inspired talks, identifies the focal point of religious life in his talk to directors of Institutes of consecrated and apostolic life. (19 Nov. 1992)

Every Christian community is born from God, so in some way or another it reflects the **Mystery of the Trinitarian communion** (the spring) and the ecclesiastical communion (of which it is a sign). Brotherhood firmly expresses the mystery of divine Charitable Love that the Father communicated to us in the Incarnation of His Son (see Jn 3:16). Members of communities of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life are called to follow Christ more closely, through the action of the Holy Spirit (see canon 573 - 1).

Life with Christ means deeply experiencing Jesus' love. It means firm proposals (that become real inner passion) of **loving God and with Him all those whom He loves**. So brotherhood is a radical reply to St Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus," the same sentiments that the Apostle describes so well in his hymn to Charity. (1 Co 13:1-13)

There is no doubt that Christ's love, when truly accepted and put into practice in communities, builds up communion and becomes support and a sign of brotherhood. It becomes the realization of Christ's missionary aspiration: "May they all be one ... so that the world may believe..." (Jn 17:21) The call to participate in the Lord's love, by living that same charisma in "sequela Christi" is a call and a gift of God, given freely.

The reply to this invitation to build the community together with the Lord, day by day, has to be one that **goes hand in hand with the cross**. It means great self-denial, in an acceptance of others, in sharing the good and bad, accepting what's different, and in putting up with one's own limits. And for the Religious, especially missionaries, it may even mean that supreme sacrifice, not unknown even in our present days, in offering one's life out of love for Christ and His Church. That is why it is **so necessary that they continually draw from God's grace**, let themselves be guided by His Word, be nourished by the Eucharist and make frequent use of the sacrament of reconciliation.

How fertile religious life will be depends on the quality of brotherhood and life in common. But beside this, the present revival in the Church and religious life is characterized by the search of communion and community. So all the more religious life will be able to construct "brotherly communion where one searches for God and He is loved above everything else," (see canon 619) the more it will be significant. But every time this dimension of Christian love is forgotten, it will lose its reason for being, which is that of being a small "family of God" together with those who have received the same call.

In brotherhood, one has to reflect on "the kindness and love of God our Saviour for mankind," (Tt 3:4) as seen in Jesus Christ. But if this public testimony of religious life is postponed for the sake of apostolic action or personal self-realization, religious communities lose their evangelical force and are no longer a place where one learns to love the Lord, and as each day passes, to become God's children, and thus brothers and sisters of each other - like in St Bernard's beautiful expression: "Scholae Amoris."

Reaching this goal isn't easy. To get there, one has to constantly remember that the aim of brotherhood is to form a special family, reunited not for human reasons, but in response to the Lord's particular invitation, so in the Church there will be a **visible sign of that dynamic and diffusive love that passes between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity Who never fails to act when brothers are "united in prayer."** (see Acts 1:14)

Through prayer, God donates the capacity to construct happy, hospitable communities able to serve others and do good works, and thus be support not only to brothers and sisters on the same walk of the New Alliance, but also to other Christian communities. This is an important task of religious communities, which is particularly waited for by Christians wanting to live as real children of God in a world that reflects brotherhood as much as possible. Privileged witnesses to this "school of love" are monasteries, places for prayer, silence and evangelical brotherly life.

To the **Blessed Virgin** I entrust the works of your Plenary Congregation, for in the Family of Nazareth She lived communion in full, and today too She **continues to form spiritual families among those who look to Her as Mother and teacher**. May She support and guide the religious communities in their commitment to make true brotherhood of faith, charity and apostolic zeal among their members, for the expansion of the Kingdom.

What the evangelical virtues mean in life of communion for those consecrated to Mary

In January a large group of people who choose to live a life of strict communion (see Echo 95, page 7) went to Lourdes for 3 days to review their lives in the light of the Immaculate Conception.

Those who consecrate themselves have to understand the need of living by Mary's indications (the aim of which are to take us to Jesus), to the full, half way is not enough. From Medj. Mary gives precise indications to the various groups, to explain what consecration means in one's every day living. Consecrating ourselves to Jesus and Mary's Hearts is the best way today of putting God's Will into action, and His Will is Gospel. There is no other Will of God besides the Gospel.

Obedience for an adult Christian, for a consecrated Christian, is a concrete way of living Christianity, and when communion is real, the way Our Lady means, it becomes the object of our conversion. Without obedience in fact, conversion is abstract, like a fable. Why is it that in a monastery a monk does not join the others in their prayer? All communities are not monasteries, but nonetheless they are all called to live the Gospel radically. The various principals that make up the various communities do not change the fact that the Gospel is the same for all. Being disobedient does not help the person grow, and that person will never live their consecration fully.

It's a waste of time talking about the other two evangelical recommendations if we do not consider the importance of obedience. Real poverty and real chastity (that comes from our hearts) or the way we live our relationship with others, the way we live life of communion, our state of spiritual freedom in all encounters, depends on our obedience. Obedience is real poverty. Obedience is real chastity. Obedience is the real way of the cross and purification. If you do not learn as a consecrated person to also depend on things with your brain, you will certainly not know how to depend on things with your heart. Cerimonies and speeches don't count; they don't help you advance in your conversion. On the other hand, if a consecrated person does not have that desire to change one's ways and way of thinking, then nothing changes. Even the risk before God is minor, for that yes said to Him is not sincere.

Christ is obedient. If we are consecrated, the first virtue we have to learn from Him is obedience. Obedience is important also because of the help it gives us in living, for example, our state of chastity. But what is **chastity**? When a person chooses virginity, then perfect chastity is part of one's vocation, and lived in the continual purification of one's heart. For married people it means living one's relationship with one's spouse according to God's will, to be faithful to that design God has over one's marriage, including personal relationships with others.

Chastity is spiritual freedom, in all relations, obviously including the one between husband and wife. Spiritual freedom means that potential given us by the Spirit to help us live a new way, real and deep way, according to God's image, in the relationship of marriage or other. God's project for Christian marriage is very precise and chastity is obeying to God, in marriage too.

So every consecrated person should search their consciences often to see how they have lived their fundamental vocation of virgin or spouse, to see how much they correspond to God's image in their particular vocation. The image that God has for **every vocation is called communion**, because every vocation is a gift, donated by Him for the good of all, thus for communion. If a person lives one's marriage the "old way" (individualism, egoism) this is not serving God, and it's not being a consecrated person. Communion is meant to be a testimony in daily living, so (if we betray in this) then we also betray Christ's Cross in those other interests that regard His Kingdom.

Consecrated people should be "floating on clouds" as little as possible, but attached to the "things of heaven." This means living what the Pope calls "spiritual values." Gospel in day to day living is possible, and has to be possible for Christians - step by step, if you wish, but with decision, and in that direction. Consecration is called consecration, and the three evangelical recommendations - poverty, chastity and obedience - cannot be substituted by anything else for consecrated people.

Poverty is a Christian way of owning things, people, reason, opinions, because there is a non-poor way of treating things and people. For example, what do my priorities depend on? Does the Gospel come first, or the family, work, commitments or other things that aren't Gospel? Our Lady says that to be poor, our life style should be simple. Living a simple life means not possessing riches, or a surplus, but living on what is only necessary. Why should Christians have a surplus of goods? Where is this written? Who said that consecrated souls have to have more than what they need? On the contrary, Jesus told us to leave behind our riches.

Let us not observe who has more and who has less, not even in a spiritual sense. Communion is false if we are unable to share everything. God gave us riches, material and spiritual gifts, but it's very hard for us to share, even with those closest to us. Leaving Bosnia out of it, we know how hard it is to reach the hearts of others. Consecrated people should know how to share everything.

Let us not observe who has more and who has less, not even in a spiritual sense. Communion is false if we are unable to share everything. God gave us riches, material and spiritual gifts, but it's very hard for us to share, even with those closest to us. Leaving Bosnia out of it, we know how hard it is to reach the hearts of others. Consecrated people should know how to share everything.

In encountering the live God you contemplate, you open up to His grace and see your problems resolved

On the 8th January, Fr. Tomislav spoke to an impromptu crowd of people in the church of a small country parish.

Why have you come here this evening? To hear about the apparitions of Our Lady, of the events in Medj., but also by an inner impulse driven by your search for salvation... and by certain problems in the hope that God will resolve them, and in the search of God's word to help you choose which walk to take in life. Well, this evening I want to talk to you about a real apparition that occurred in Bethlehem. Jesus was born in there, He went on the Cross to save the world - we all believe this, but how many believers really feel they are saved, happy, extremely happy in God? We all believe Jesus saved us from the Cross, but who feels saved?

Today in the world we have apparitions of Our Lady, and many, many special graces are offered to the Church. But who accepts them? Only those who pray, who open their hearts, who meet with the live God. This evening I would like to talk about this walk in life so we can see what Jesus has offered us, and what He is offering us today. We will see what we have to do to reach this salvation and personal happiness, and be able to offer this salvation to the world. Let us consider the arrival of Jesus in Bethlehem. What happened? God contemplated man and He continues to do this. And man contemplates God. God is born in man, man is born in God. Everything could be summarized in one word: contemplation. God is contemplating you and there is nothing in you that He cannot see. He looks at you with the eye of a good Father, and He loves you immensely. There is nothing that can disturb God, neither your sin, nor your personal "tragedy," nor how your neighbour behaves. He contemplates you, He wants to contemplate you and He wants to fill you with His love.

If we want to learn how to pray, the *first step* we must learn is: be relaxed in our souls, hearts, our entire being, be contemplated by God. Then in each one of you God will come. This is the miracle of Christmas: Jesus is not born in a stable, but in you. If He is not born in me, everything is done in vain. The *second step* is: recognize that God come in His Omnipotence. In today's liturgy we listened how Jesus fed a crowd of people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. There were many people. There is no problem for Jesus. He is the same with us. He is Omnipotent. God needs a stable in us, even though it may be smelly and unsuitable, He doesn't care. God is Omnipotent when we open our hearts, but if we remain closed, the same Lord is nothing because He leaves us free to choose. This is where our responsibility plays such an important part.

The *third step* is that we have to learn this: that God surprises always, in a positive way. He always goes beyond our thoughts, beyond our capacity, beyond our knowledge. If we are ready to believe in this surprise, we will not be closed in our problems, but will live in the wait of this new life, of an answer, of something truly beautiful. Almighty God does surprises and we, as His children, have the right to await them.

There is yet another step to take in the walk to prayer: Jesus was born at midnight - in the dark, in the fog. God is born in your problems, it doesn't matter how many they are. You see, we are closed to this truth. We say: problems, problems, problems - impossible, impossible, impossible. This is closure, and God is unable to enter.

There are two ways of drawing close to one's problems. The human way makes them become more problematic: fights, arguments, analyses, bitterness - and we are unable to do anything. It is there where we think things are the darkest and enclosed in thick fog that we have to open ourselves, remain waiting, waiting for God's surprise in us. **If we have this profound attitude of prayer, God starts solving our problems, with ease.** Since people do not have this attitude, little or nothing is resolved and people are disappointed; so Our Lady can appear for 10, 15, even 20 years, and nothing happens.

The Christmas Mystery closes with Epiphany and the wonderful reality of Epiphany is the three Magi. They were probably astrologists, ignorant of real faith, real prayer and real law, yet they, among all men, found the way to Jesus. They were pagans, but their hearts were filled with a great desire to know where and when the Saviour would be born. All they needed was this openness of heart, and God, with His grace, guided them to Bethlehem. God conducts each one of us in the same way. No-one can say they don't know the way. Each one of us knows the first steps. In taking them, the way for the next steps is opened up. Now look at the priests. They knew where and when Jesus would be born. Herod too, who belonged to the Judaic religion, knew everything. He wanted to kill

Jesus, the high priests did kill him, on the cross. Their hearts were closed.

Jesus came for the sinners, for the blind, for the pagans, for those who are distant, for each one of us. It's up to us to walk like the three Kings, or behave like Herod and the high priests, and become used to the laws, listen to the sermons, know what Our Lady says without changing our ways.

If we decide now to walk to Jesus, I'm sure we'd all find something to say, like: I'd love to but I can't; or: I have this to do; I have these problems; this work to finish, etc. These are all excuses. You married couples, who dreamt love, have you found this completeness? Few of you! If God created the world so man could live complete love, why is it that you have not discovered the love that satisfies you completely? Why don't you start running along that path that takes us to that love that makes us totally happy?

All the problems that you are carrying on your backs can be resolved if you decide to start walking along this path to openness. Often we tell ourselves that certain situations are impossible. What would have happened had Mary and Joseph said the same thing when the angel appeared to them?

Remember that **prayer with the heart is much more advanced than the apparitions.** Those who see Our Lady or Jesus have not come to the end of the road. Their prayer has to become deeper to encounter Our Lady of the Calvary. Visions and apparitions are extraordinary graces, but the greatest grace is encountering God in prayer. This is the road that takes us all to Salvation.

I hope that there are some of you who really want to put Our Lady's requests into practice. Look carefully at the messages, for everything is explained in them: how to fall asleep, how to wake, how to begin the day, how to spend the day - everything. Now it is urgent that we and all humanity obey. If it will be so, our life will become easy and fertile. We will be able to walk in the splendour, in the glory of God even amid the darkness of this world. Let us become part of this joy. (Next week: question and answer)

Prayer in the family - is it really impossible?

Our Lady keeps asking for families to pray together, in particular the Rosary. Many pilgrims reply: "That's just not possible in my family," and the reasons they give sound very convincing. Our Lady, however, is right. She knows nothing is impossible for God.

The first time Albert, 50 years old, went to Medjugorje it turned his life upside down. He cried for joy in discovering he had such a wonderful Mother and such a wonderful Saviour. On the last day he heard that the Gospa asks for families to pray together. That really made him sad: "If you only knew what my wife made me go through before I came here - insults, derision, threats! It's just not possible with her."

"But Albert," they tell him, "don't you think the Blessed Virgin knows your situation?" "Well, yes, She'd have to," he replied.

"Did She simply say: pray in your family, or did She say there were some exceptions?" "No, I don't believe so," he replied.

"Do you believe that if She is asking you to do something, it means that She is also capable of making it happen, even if you think it's impossible?" Albert replied: "Capable of converting my wife! She'd give up too after a while! You don't know my wife!"

"Our Lady has seen a lot worse. Are you ready to put your trust in Her?" "OK, I will, but what do I do?" Albert asked.

"Just do exactly what Our Lady says. Go home and start praying. Don't worry about explaining to your wife. She will see on her own that your heart has changed. You say to Our Lady: see, I'm doing what You ask, I'm praying in my family, but... on my own. I'm praying for your intentions, for the non-believers, the youth, the priests, for Your plans to be realized. Now You take care of my intentions; help my wife to see with eyes of faith."

Albert decided to do just that, saying he'd come back again with his wife when finances would permit, for her to experience Medj.

Four months later, in a group of pilgrims: But there's Albert! He pointed to a woman in the group: "There she is, look! She practically forced me to come. I didn't have the money but nothing could stop her. She said the Providence would worry about it. So here we are." "Your wife! Tell me about it."

"At home I prayed constantly, placing my trust in the Gospa and one day, after a few weeks, my wife said to me: "Albert, I haven't come to annoy you, just let me talk to you for a minute." "OK," I said, "sit down." And she wanted to know about all this praying. Day after day she kept returning, and I talked to her about God. She was astounded. She had never imagined God that way before. I talked to her about Medj. and that did it. She prays so intensely now that I have trouble keeping up with her."

Dear Mother, thank you! Like God, You give us what You ask of us. (from *Medj, the War from Day to Day*, by Sr. Emmanuel)

Two Bishops were asked:

Do you believe in Our Lady's apparitions in Medjugorje?

Msgr. Franjo Franic', Bishop Emeritus of Split: "Yes, I believe the apparitions are authentic."

Msgr. Ratko Peric', coadjutor of Mostar, who recently succeeded Msgr. Zanic' (retired due to his age): "I feel immense gratitude towards the Lord, He is always capable of communicating His messages to we men, in particular through His Mother."

Msgr. Franic': "I've seen miracles, for example Mrs Basile from Milan. She came to me to show me, and I believed, I saw her documents."

Msgr. Peric': "I would like to thank the Italians for the way they have helped our population ... for the humanitarian aid for the millions of refugees who have lost everything, even their families ... defenders against aggressors. You did not remain with your arms folded, but organized food, clothes and medicines. Without a doubt, your spiritual help has not lacked, with thoughts, feelings, compassion and prayer. For all this, we thank you."

Q. Which miracle would you ask Our Lady for?

Msgr. Peric': "Like everyone else, I would ask for peace, because this is the greatest gift God can give us. In fact, He did not leave us anything, apart from Himself in the Eucharist. He left us His peace: *I give you my peace, I leave you my peace*. Of course, this peace is compromised by our behaviour, but we would like to have it, especially now that we have so much need of it."

(From the video cassette *Medjugorje oggi, la voce della speranza* - filmed November 1992)

SOLIDARITY

Take care of your brothers who are of the same flesh

The following is needed in ex-Yugoslavia: flour, sugar, oil, rice, jars of jam, preserves, etc (provide can openers etc along with tinned food). There is urgent need for: detergents, soaps and sanitary napkins etc. for children and women; medicinals.

Contact your nearest Medjugorje or Caritas centre for further information on how to help.

If you send your donation through us, please make sure to indicate your intention. Make cheques out to Echo of Medj. and mail to Fr. Angelo Mutti, Casella Postale 49, 46100 Mantova, Italy

Medjugorje Appeal UK - Bernard Ellis reports: "Lord Huntingdon returned from his mission to Bosnia and Croatia on behalf of the Medjugorje Appeal and said how he was concerned at what he saw and has offered to return as soon as possible. The racing industry's response is commendable. A further convoy of 12 horse boxes left in early January loaded with food, heating and cooking equipment, medical supplies and blankets, much of which was donated by the racing industry itself. Offers of help have arrived from other racing stables. Other industries such as the taxi drivers' Union and the fish industry have contacted the Appeal and deliveries of medical and other supplies can hopefully be arranged."

To date the Appeal has raised over £900,000 by way of cash donations. We send approximately twenty 20-tonne lorry loads every month to the central depots in Rijeka, Split, Medjugorje, Zagreb, Dubrovnik or direct into refugee camps in Central Bosnia. Our programme for purchasing vehicles is currently running at £60,000 per month.

On behalf of the refugees and the people of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia, we would like to thank everyone for joining us with our efforts."

For donations, or further details regarding their activity, write to: Medjugorje Appeal, Unit J Lambs Business Park, Tilburstow Hill Rd, Sth Godstone, Surrey RH9 8JZ, England. Ph. 0342 893230

For sponsorship of Croatian and Bosnian children: Fr. Jozo has entrusted the scheme to the following people: Great Britain: Kathy & Clive Goble - Ph. 0812-783068 - USA: Paul Kurmey, Ph. 377-7400 - Australia: Leon Le Grand, Ph. 03-8827675

Your donations for the month of January.

Medjugorje in the East & Russia: Lit. 14,848,000; *Croatia/Bosnia:* Lit. 11,195,000; *Radio Maria Poland:* Lit. 16,875,000 (15 million donated by a private person in Vicenza); *other:* Lit. 385,000 From France (as a joint donation) - for *Echo:* Lit. 9,000,000; for *Croatia/Bosnia:* Lit. 5,700,000. From Switzerland: Lit. 2,000,000 for *Echo*, plus other large donations for Bosnia.

Non-stop adoration to ask for peace for Croatia is being organized by the Ora et Labora group in Turin. They are now covering 24 hours a day for 245 days of the year, with the help of hundreds of faithful and dozens of groups and convents. Holy Masses are being offered continually to Mary's Immaculate Heart.

Off the bookshelf:

"The Drama of Medjugorje" by Richard Foley, SJ. Available from: Medjugorje Centre, P.O.Box 2628, London W14 0UT, England, for £8.15 including postage within the UK.

"Visions of the Children" by Janice T. Connell. The *Medjugorje Appeal* was able to buy a large quantity of this book at cost. Minimum cost £10 + £2 postage & packing (or European equivalent). Any donations above this will help raise funds for refugees in Bosnia and Croatia and you'll help spread the word about Our Lady's message of peace.

Our readers write:

With our 100th edition a few of the many letters we receive, that lack of space will not normally permit us to publish.

* The Servi da Rainha, our translators of the Portuguese edition, send their thanks for the "untiring work" and advise that in Brazil they have reached 50 thousand copies.

* From Zaire: The national leader of the Legion of Mary wrote to propose distributing *Echo*. "We are happy to read news of our Heavenly Mother and of Her works in the world."

* From Salesian Andrea Struss: We hunger for Love; please send us more copies.

* From Scotland, Jim Farrell writes: An increasing number of people avidly wait for their copy of *Echo*. It fills the void left by not being able to go to Medjugorje.

* *Echo* is a letter sent by the Blessed Mother through you. It makes my heart leap with joy when I receive it. (Quinta, Brandesen)

* It is the best gift I've ever received. My thank you is continuous prayer in your favour. (Cecilia, New Delhi)

* I read and meditate upon the articles in *Echo*. You do wonders. The Spirit acts unceasingly so this materialistic world will let itself be Christianized. (A religious from Paris)

* **From a community in Scotland:** I've been in this community in Dalmally (Krivevac Youth Community) for one month and I'm so happy Our Lady called me here. The prayer house is based on the spirituality of Medjugorje, and the youth group is an extension of the activities there. For a year we commit ourselves to prayer, service and evangelization, under the guidance of Our Blessed Mother and Her holy messages. Pray for us and all those who come to Craig Lodge. (Una Oliver)

* **From a monk and spiritual director:** So far you have managed to keep *Echo* faithful to its first scope tied to Medjugorje, and to the meaning that the exceptional event of these apparitions takes on for humanity: a sign that this is the eve of extraordinary and decisive events for the history of man's salvation... (Bologna)

* **Thank you Lord Jesus in eternity,** for our Love: teacher of immigrant Italians in Germany writes: "... our brothers here don't know about God's infinite love, about how we can trust in Him. The only thing I would like my students never to forget is Jesus' presence among us - real, active, effective presence, no different as to when He walked in Palestine. May they always trust in His incomprehensible, yet certain Love for each person, for each sinner. They love it when I tell them about Our Blessed Mother in Medjugorje and about Her life. When I remind them of Her real presence, and that of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they are extremely attentive and avid for more." (Joseph Sedda)

Echo is free, but lives on your donations. If you would like to contribute, please send your cheques to: *Echo* of Medjugorje, Casella Postale 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. Money may also be transferred to our bank account. Make payable to Fr. Angelo Mutti, Banca Agricola Mantovana, Ag.4, Mantova, Italy - Acc. no. 26641-1. If you prefer, you can send your donation to your local distributor who will see to sending it on to us. Thank you and God bless.

IN THE FAMILY

With this 100th edition, we would like to express our gratitude to Mary for having made us helpers of Her motherly love. Our thanks also goes to all those who so generously help us with the editorial work, the printing and the distribution of *Echo*. We ask our Blessed Mother the grace of faithfully communicating only what She wants under the sign of gratuity and poverty which are the means that mark the works of God.

Our wish for our readers is that you may *preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, and we bless you with the Fatherly and Motherly blessing.*