



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

142

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Our Lady's message of 25 Sept. 1998:

Dear Children, I invite you today to become my witnesses by living the faith of your fathers. My Children, you seek signs and messages and do not see that God, with the rising of the sun each morning, calls you to convert and to return to the path of truth and salvation.

You talk much, my Children, but you work little for your conversion. Therefore, convert and begin to live my messages; not with words, but with your lives. Then my Children, you will have the strength to decide for true conversion of the heart.

Thank you for responding to my call.

Be my Witnesses, and work at Conversion of Heart

Our Lady once again speaks of living the faith, and of conversion of heart. Her plea to live the messages is mixed with a reproach for the way we talk too much of and live too little our faith. The message contains an unusual call to become Her witnesses of the faith. The way to do this is to live the faith of our fathers.

Faith is accepting with all one's heart and life those promises of the invisible God Who revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Mary lived in the faith of the fathers, making it Her own. Let us look at Abraham's faith. He had no doubts when he offered in sacrifice his son of the promise, thinking that God is able to raise man even from the dead (cf. Heb 11:17). For a description of the faith of all the fathers see chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews: These all died in faith, though not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar (11:9).

Likewise, Mary lived in the faith during Her obscure life in Nazareth, having no sign from Her Son. Above all during the darkness of the Passion, She looked up at God Who is faithful and Who would have raised Him from the dead. Of Mary it is said: Blessed is she who believed (Lk 1:45); this is the type of faith that Mary wishes for us. So we too must believe when it seems that God is far away or that hostile forces prevail. To believe, in the biblical sense, is much more than theoretically accepting the Word of God, or professing the faith in the revealed truths. It is obeying God Who speaks. To listen and to obey, in the New Testament, is expressed with the same word in Greek ("upakouein"). When God speaks, you are asked to believe, without doubting, or arguing. So just as Mary did, simply obey - Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38). The Word of God is truthful and powerful, even if it seems to go against nature. This is the type of faith we are asked to have.

The faith of the fathers is the faith of the martyrs and of the saints, but also of our ancestors. It is that simple faith of the many families which lived in fear of God and obeyed His precepts. Their faith was engraved into their lives. These days the faith is undermined by the materialistic culture which offers man a vision of earthly existence having no other scope beyond itself. That is, to live as if God did not exist; to live morality in a subjective manner, without ever thinking of eternity; or to believe in whatever suits one best.

But you seek signs and new messages - you itch out of desire to hear and see extraordinary novelties, St. Paul would say (cf. 2 Tm 4:3). And you do not consider the signs and messages which God gives every day with the rising of the sun to its setting (Ps 112). The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork (Ps 18). Yet we do not marvel any more at all this! It is terrible to be blind and not see the great signs which God gives us; instead we look for other signs as the Judaeans did, whom Jesus called an evil and adulterous generation (Mt 12:39-40). St. Basil said, "Also the ox and the donkey recognize their master and it becomes natural for them to love Him, Who nourishes them... Distraction and forgetfulness of God's benefits are the origin of a life of sin."

Each morning we are invited to convert, for just as nature awakens and rises with each dawn, so must we cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light (Rom 13:12). You speak much, but work little for your conversion. Work hard, and see to it that no root of bitterness should begin to grow (Heb 12:15). Mary has also said to observe the farmer who works hard in his field to remove the weeds and plough before he sows so that it produces more.»

To convert is to pick up the practice of following Her messages. That is: prayer with the heart; fasting from the world; confession of sins (to constantly clean one's soul heals it and helps it grow); the Eucharist; and the Word of God which nourishes us. It is also to love God and our neighbours, not with words, but with our lives. And this will give us - Mary says it - the strength to decide for true conversion of the heart. Perseverance is seen in the way we love one another earnestly from the heart (1 Pt 1:22).
Fr. Angelo

Our Lady's message of 25 October 1998

Dear Children, I invite you today to come close to my Immaculate Heart. I invite you to renew in your families the fervour of the first days when I called you to fasting, prayer and conversion. My dear Children, you accepted my messages with open hearts, though you did not know what prayer was. Today I invite you to open yourselves up to me completely so that I may transform you and lead you to the Heart of my son Jesus; that He may fill you with His love. That way, my Children, you will find true peace, peace that only God can give you. Thank you for responding to my call

Be near my Immaculate Heart to renew your early fervour

Our Lady invites us to renew the initial fervour, of when people were shaken by Her messages and began to pray, to fast and to convert; that is, to forgive, make peace, and confess one's sins. It was a true explosion of grace in the parish - "so much so," says Fr. Slavko, "that the Communists thought there was a counter revolution in act, because of the unexplainable force they noticed." It can be compared to the marvel that arose around the first Christian community (cf. Act 2). Also Paul reminded his people of the primitive fervour: Recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle

.. (Heb 10:32).

The reminder is not only directed at the parish of Medjugorje, which Mary had wanted as a model for the rest of the world, but also to all of us who have drawn from the same fount. Then why, after such enlightened beginnings, has the fervour dropped, and become tepid, and for some even died?

Unfortunately for many it was but a passing moment of enthusiasm. Like the seed which falls on the stones and becomes arid, these people gave up at the first obstacle. Others have let themselves be overcome by the cares of the world and the delight in riches (cf. Mk 4:19).

Now this happens when prayer is no longer constant, for prayer ensures »»pg 8 Continued from page 1 God's grace and helps to be detached from worldly things. This is the essential fast, of which fasting on bread and water is a symbol. So, we have played at Satan's game .. we know that he aims in particular at the children of his Enemy (cf. Montfort 54). In fact, how many times has She said, Satan is strong and wants to ruin my plans!?

Precisely for this reason God has prepared a safe haven for us. Come close to my Immaculate Heart; a closed garden, a sealed fount, it is inaccessible to Satan, where one breathes only God. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved (Ps 46). To be close to Mary's Immaculate Heart means to listen to Her, thus to Her messages with which She opens the way for us in a world of confusion. Mary guards us from Satan's traps.

Mary also says: you accepted my messages with open hearts, i.e. with the simplicity of small children who immediately embrace whatever is good, without making calculations. In the beginning people accepted the messages though they did not know what prayer was, and God's grace was easily able to enter the families and the parish. So go back to living the faith as you did then.

Also today I invite you to open your-selves completely up to me - without reserve, and without conditions - so that I can transform you and lead you to the Heart of Jesus, so that you can accept the fullness of love. To be certain that we have opened our hearts up completely to Her, there is a foolproof sign; it is to have true peace in the heart, that peace which only God can give, which resists all storms and is ready to accept sacrifice.

Fr. A.

NB. Why does Mary talk of "her Heart" and of Jesus' Heart? Humanity has become indifferent to God, thus the word 'heart' is what can best explain the divine and human magnanimity of Jesus and Mary. Before the pierced heart of a God and the sorrows of a Mother who was pierced in her soul, our hearts are more easily moved.

Pope in Brescia: Return to Family as God planned it

I have waited, waited for the Lord and He has stooped to me, and heard my cry... Rusty corrugated iron sheets echo Psalm 40 as they rise to the sky to symbolize the mournful and degrading society which yearns for Christ Crucified on the 36 m high cross arched over the imposing altar at the Brescia stadium. Christ looks down mercifully over the 50,000 people gathered around the Pope for the beatification of the great social apostle Giuseppe Tovini. He considered commitment to education a priority, and prominent among his many initiatives was his defence of schools and the freedom of teaching.

The Pope, whose smiling face does not hide his suffering, knows how to communicate to the young people. A patriarch and a teacher, he is a true witness of the faith of the fathers; he bears his suffering with great dignity and tenacity. "Walk courageously on the ways of truth and justice. Always be confident and daring in seeking and building what is good. May Christ, the Redeemer of man, be your

hope!" The Pope pronounces the words slowly and with intensity.

The occasion was also the closure of the centenary celebration for the birth of Pope Paul VI. The Holy Father described him as a "gigantic figure," a "teacher and server of freedom," and "my venerable predecessor, and a true Father." The two were celebrated together because the figure of the new blessed was influential in the formation of the future Pope from Brescia.

"Without faith our children will never be rich; with faith they will never be poor." The Pope cites Tovini to stress the importance of the family, which Tovini called "fundamental and decisive." In the cathedral of Brescia, filled to capacity, the Pope urged believers to "swim against the tide" and to fight for the model family and model school education. With words which penetrate the soul, he continued: "the awareness requires great responsibility, especially if we consider that today, due to the rapid changes in mores and widespread ethical relativism, the family has become the object of destructive pressures which attempt at its very foundation."

"In this situation the Church feels obliged to remind people of the cornerstones of family and marital ethics. She does so, not to impose a discipline of her own, but in the conviction that she is to remind consciences of a truth that everyone can discern within himself."

The Holy Father insists on the urgent need to "regain the sense of marriage as a covenant of love, by which a man and woman publicly and permanently bind themselves to one another." Using Jesus' demanding words, the Pope ardently proposed "the beauty of marriage lived according to God's plans," as a cornerstone for a life lived together in its fullness. Thus his call to holiness - so appreciated by the crowd - which can and must illumine the lay people on the reality of every day life.

One of Tovini's letters to his fiancée was read during the celebration; this, plus the presentation during the offertory of a newly wed couple, is to reaffirm that we are all called to witness, no matter what our particular vocation may be. Peter's Successor continued: "It is thus important to educate the young generations to live love in an authentically human way. In its sexual dimension as well, it then becomes for the believer an element of the spiritual worship to which St. Paul refers (Rom 12:1). We must work so that the value of this institution, which is fundamental and indispensable for human society, is reaffirmed in consciences, in culture and in the law itself."

As always the Pope was affectionate and attentive to everyone. He greeted, embraced, kissed and encouraged, not hesitating to leave his walking stick that he may offer his hands to as many faithful as possible. He blessed and distributed hope, and in particular he stopped to remain with the sick and troubled faithful whom he wanted in the first row before the altar.

He recalled the "urgent need for collaboration between school and family" and asked that "families be given concrete recognition, with appropriate assistance, and that it have the possibility of choosing the educational orientation and type of school most beneficial to the growth of its own children."

With the firm guide of an old biblical prophet speaking to his people, John Paul II concluded his visit by inviting everyone to turn their gazes to the Mother of Divine Grace, to the new blessed and to Pope Paul VI, and instilling new courage to: "the family and school workers. Today your task has become more difficult, but it is still exalting and necessary. You are called to help build healthy, motivated personalities, deeply reflective and capable of making communion."

To the lay faithful the Pope recommends: "Look to this great social apostle, who was able to give hope to those without voice in the society of his time, that his example be incentive and encouragement to all to work generously today and always to defend and to spread the truth..."

Alessandro

Great array of saints before multiplication of wickedness (Mt 24:12)

We are pleasantly surprised at the ever growing number of saints which the Church offers us. The number of blessed and saints proclaimed by John Paul II during his 20 years of Petrine Ministry is about half the total number proclaimed by the Church during the last 4 centuries; without counting the near 2,000 causes under investigation.

We know that this is only a small number of witnesses and models which the Church indicates as aids for our journey. For there is a great multitude which no man could number (Rev 7:9), and they are the brothers and sisters who have left this world and already enjoy the beatitude of God. St. Paul calls saints also the Christians who still live in the world, because they participate in the holiness of Jesus when they are in God's grace.

We feel obliged now to contemplate the latest pearls taken from the Church's coffer.

1. G. Tovini: socially committed Catholic and family man

Giuseppe, born 14 March 1841 in Cividate Camuno near Brescia, Italy, was the eldest of seven in a family of modest means. With the premature death of his father, eighteen year old Giuseppe gave up the idea of joining a mission. In 1865 he finished his law degree and shortly after began work in a law office. In November he took on a second job in a notary's office to help support his younger siblings since by that time both his parents were deceased. Work, for Giuseppe, meant to serve the poor and to practise charity and true justice. Thus, he would refuse to take on well-paying causes if they appeared dubious or unjust, saying: "better lose a handsome profit than one's soul."

In a letter to his fiancée he said: "I have always considered marriage a means for moral and religious perfection. Now I cannot thank the Lord enough for having given you to me as my bride. Oh! Yes, my dear Emilia, with you I will become more virtuous and a better Christian." Giuseppe was a concerned and loving father to their ten children, one of whom became a Jesuit and two women religious.

Advocate, vice rector and professor, town mayor; his ability to organize and act was prodigious. He founded and promoted banks, railways, journals, schools and colleges. Giuseppe Tovini has been defined the most modern and public Italian lay person that the Church has so far included amongst the blessed, and the Pope has proposed him as a present-day model of faith and fidelity to the Church for today's society.

Of him the Pope said: "In a time when some thought that the faith had to be confined behind the walls of sacred buildings, Tovini witnessed that adherence to Christ and obedience to the Church, far from alienating the believer from history, induce him to become yeast of authentic civilization and social progress."

The profound family and lay spirituality of Tovini is the foundation of his prodigious social and educational commitment

His honesty and integrity were rooted in his deep, vital relationship with God, which he constantly nourished with the Eucharist, meditation and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He died at the age of 56 in 1897.

2. Blessed Stepinac did not give in; he forgave

On the beautiful slopes in front of the shrine of Marija Bistrica, 52 km north of Zagreb, on Saturday 3rd October, a crowd of half a million Croatians was present for the beatification of their intrepid archbishop. The Pope said: "He offered his people a compass to serve as orientation, and its cardinal points were:

faith, respect, forgiveness, and unity with the Church. He knew well that no bargains can be made with truth, because truth is not negotiable.

The person of the new blessed sums up the whole tragedy which befell the Croatian people and Europe in the course of this century marked by three great evils of fascism, national socialism and communism."

"In this courageous witness he was not alone: other courageous souls who, in order to preserve the unity of the Church and defend her freedom, agreed to pay with him the heavy price of bloodshed. Let us listen to their urgent call for forgiveness and reconciliation. To forgive and to be reconciled means to purify one's memory of hatred, rancour, the desire for revenge; it means acknowledging as a brother even those who have wronged us."

The Pope, thus, wished to exhort the Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims of Croatia to ward off all forms of racial discrimination and exasperating, authoritative nationalism, and to work for a peaceful coexistence and collaboration.

Stepinac: "I will fulfil my duty to the end without hate or fear for anyone"

Alojzije Stepinac was born into a large Catholic family on 8 May 1898 in Krasic, Croatia. After graduation from high school in 1916 he preferred military service rather than enter the seminary as many did to avoid being called up, despite the lack of vocation. As an officer in the Austrian army on the Italian front, he was imprisoned for 6 months. At the end of the war, he enrolled in an agricultural course, but un-happy with the moral atmosphere of the university, he left to work the fields with his father for 6 years. After a lengthy and difficult period of maturation he decided to become a priest. He found out later that his mother prayed and fasted three days a week for 20 years, that he might become a priest! The archbishop of Zagreb sent him to study in Rome where he became a priest at the age of 32 on the feast day of Christ the King and where he celebrated his first mass at the Marian shrine, S. Maria Maggiore. Back home, archbishop Bauer made him responsible for parishes and charitable activities, then in 1934 he was nominated Coadjutor Archbishop. At the age of 36 he was the youngest bishop in the world. He began organizing annual pilgrimages to Maria Bistrica; these were then prohibited in 1946 by the Communist government. He succeeded Archbishop Bauer upon the latter's death in 1937. As such, he worked untiringly for the formation of lay people and priests, he preached with efficacy and visited parishes without pause and thereby created a new climate in the diocese.

1939 saw the beginning of the war which tragically involved Croatia. It proclaimed independence in 1941, allied by Fascists and Nazis. Stepinac did not accept the easy conversions to Catholicism which many suggested to Hebrews, Orthodox and Muslims, considered enemies of the State. He preferred to appeal constantly to priests and faithful to save human lives. His famous homilies during those troubled days were aimed at vindicating the rights and dignity of every man: "The Catholic Church does not recognize races that rule and races that are enslaved... When these times of madness will have passed, each person will return to his own religion." The false accusations of complicity with the nationalist government were belied by the very Jewish community of Zagreb which declares eternal gratitude to Stepinac for having saved thousands of lives.

By 1945 Yugoslavia was under communist rule. Tito attempted to persuade Archbishop Stepinac to have the Catholic Church in Croatia break from Rome (his intent was to form a national Church controlled by the party - as in China today).

Stepinac firmly refused the idea and his Church backed him up. In September 1946 Stepinac' farcical trial was put into act. At each charge he said he had a clear conscience and was ready to give also his life. He was condemned to 16 years of hard labour. While in prison he turned his prison cell into a cell of prayer, work and penance. In December of 1951 he was released, upon international pressure, and moved

to house arrest in Krasic where he could, nonetheless, perform priestly functions, receive visitors and communicate in writing to the faithful, penning more than 5,000 letters to exhort priests and faithful not to give in to the Communists' attempt to break the Church away from Rome. Of the letters which remain, it is noteworthy that Stepinac never expressed even a single word of resentment for those who had persecuted him.

Before such "an example of apostolic zeal and Christian strength," Pope Pius XII named him a Cardinal in 1953 to "reward his extraordinary merits." Stepinac decided not to go to Rome for fear of not being able to return to his homeland. Likewise, though very sick, he refused to go abroad for medical treatment because he wanted to remain with his flock. In a letter, reflecting on the long history of maltreatment which he received as Archbishop of Zagreb, he wrote: "I know what my duty is. With the grace of God, I will carry it out to the end without hatred towards anyone, and without fear from anyone." He died on 10 February 1960 and is believed to have been poisoned.

The continual pilgrimages by the people to his tomb in the Cathedral of Zagreb was a worthy advance of the official recognition of his holiness.

3. Last pearl: Edith Stein; the great daughter of Israel. A Jewish philosopher, a convert to the Catholic faith, a Carmelite nun (after reading the writings of St. Teresa of Avila) and a martyr at Auschwitz, she was canonized in St. Peter's Square with the name St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. God willing, we will talk about her next issue; and about the colossal Encyclical "Fides et ratio."

Twenty years as Pope He humbly asks himself:

"Have I done everything possible so that Jesus will find faith on earth?"

And those tears....

John Paul II celebrated his 20 years of Petrine Ministry in St. Peter's Square, and asked himself four times if he had done everything possible so that when the Son of man returns, he would find faith on earth (cf. Lk 18:8). We saw an aged and trembling Pope question himself in public with disarming sincerity.

The feast was organized by the diocese of Rome, two days after the one organized for Friday 16th October by the more than 30,000 pilgrims from Poland.. The Pope read a long, impassioned homily, entirely of his own pen. In it he recalls the warmth with which the Romans and Italians accepted him upon his election, and he is surprised, even after 20 years. There were 1,500 concelebrants, including Cardinals, bishops and priests. The square was teeming with 80,000 Romans, including the highest Italian dignitaries.

Particularly moving was the dance by 37 children from St. John Bosco elementary school who offered him baskets of flowers. After the dance, the Pope kissed each child, and the cameras zoomed in to show his tears and those of the children.

In the homily John Paul II recalls that the task of a Pope is to "teach" while remaining "firm" in the faith. From here he began the examination of his pontificate: "The Bishops, and even more so the Pope, must constantly return to the sources of wisdom that lead to salvation. They must love God's word. After 20 years of service in the Chair of Peter, I cannot fail to ask myself a few questions today. Have you observed all this? Are you a diligent and watchful teacher of faith in the Church? Have you sought to

bring the great work of the Second Vatican Council closer to the people of today? Have you tried to satisfy the expectations of believers within the Church, and that hunger for truth which is felt in the world outside the Church?"

"St. Paul's invitation echoes in my thoughts: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead: preach the word! (2 Tm 4:1-2)"

"In a certain sense, everything depends on Moses raising up his hands. The shepherd's prayer supports the flock. And, it is also true that the people's prayer supports whoever has the task of leading them." Moses' arms were held up by Aaron and Hur; the Pope today is asking us to hold up his trembling arms; "so that I can fulfil the mission entrusted to me."

He recalled the attempt on his life, comparing himself to Peter in prison, freed miraculously thanks to the prayers offered by the entire Church, and concluded: "So it has happened countless times down the ages. I myself can attest to this, since I have experienced it personally. The prayer of the Church is very powerful!"

"I thank all who have expressed their solidarity to me. During these days I have felt the Church's heart beating close to me!"

Prophetic Document on true nature and holiness of conjugal life

Thirty years have passed since the Encyclical *Humanae vitae* was released. Few papal documents have stirred up as much adverse reaction as this one. John Paul II himself said in Brescia that "the luminous teachings of Paul VI on the delicate and controversial subject of 'responsible parenthood' has not been accepted by all Catholics, and not even by all Bishops"! But it should be noted that few documents are so clearly marked by Christ's sign of contradiction. And one could not have expected a different reaction from today's secular mentality while though it may say yes to Christ, it says no to the cross.

A clear response by the Church on matrimonial relations had been long awaited, given the new problems and the many deviations present in our society. *Humanae vitae* is a positive presentation of "conjugal morality in its mission of love and fecundity, both in its integral, worldly vision and in its supernatural, eternal vision."

"Paul VI's primary objective was not to "forbid" something, but to extol the sublime mission which makes spouses God's co-workers in giving life to new beings."

What does the Encyclical say about conjugal relations? - A summary follows.

Above all it stresses the inseparable link wanted by God, and which man cannot break of his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act; and that is, its unitive meaning and its procreative meaning (no. 12). To use the divine gift (of conjugal love) and destroy, even partially, its meaning and its scope is to contradict the nature of man and of woman and their intimate relationship, and it therefore contradicts God's plan and His will. (no. 13)

The Encyclical lists the illicit means of birth regulation: wilful abortion; direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary; and all other means used by the couple to explicitly impede procreation. (no. 14). If for serious reasons - deriving from the physical or psychological conditions of the spouses, or exterior circumstances - there is need to distance childbirths, then the Church teaches that it is lawful to take into account the natural rhythms of the infertile periods and thereby regulate childbirths without offending

moral principles. (no. 16) Thus, all forms of contraception are condemned when these aren't used for therapeutic reasons. (cf. no. 15)

The document concludes with a list of pastoral directives regarding the teaching of self-control, and the behaviour of confessors who need to be particularly comprehensive.

A difficult decision - How did this document begin? A Commission set up by Pope John XXIII and amplified by Paul VI had been considering the problem with great depth for four years. At the conclusion the majority of the 60 members expressed a different opinion to the Pope's conclusions. The Pope confided at the first audience after the publication of the document (31 July 1968) to have suffered greatly in the spirit, and that never before had he felt the weight of his responsibility and his inadequacy before the outstanding apostolic obligation of having to pronounce himself.

He followed the Commission's heated debate, and listened to "the tumultuous voices of the public opinion, and the feeble and sharp voices of many family persons worried by the problem. How much trepidation before the dilemma of stooping to meet prevailing opinions, rather than emit rulings badly accepted by the present-day society, or which might be too burdensome for conjugal life!" However, after having studied, listened, reflected and prayed over the matter carefully: "we placed our conscience fully within the voice of the Truth, as we tried to interpret the divine law on authentic human love" ... "And we have no doubt about our duty to pronounce the ruling in the terms expressed in the Encyclical." Truth cannot depend on majority vote - says Card. Ratzinger. "With questions concerning the truth, the principle of democracy does not enter... In the Church there is no room for a majority vote against the saints or against the great witnesses of the faith who make up our history. They are forever part of the present and their voices cannot be given a minority role... Paul VI cared to defend man's dignity and human and conjugal love. The Pope deems the human person capable of great things - such as fidelity and renunciation - and for this reason he does not want the problem of responsible parenthood to be regulated in a mechanical way, but in a human way. That is, in the spirit of love and of man's own freedom."

Peter's faith prevails over judgement based on human wisdom

The importance of this Encyclical is even more evident today before the violent, deceitful attacks which the more influential groups of western thought wage in particular against the institution of the family and the absolute value of human life. Just think of the manipulation of embryos, the hypothesis of human clones and the positions taken by the powerful representatives of the west at the world conferences in Cairo and Beijing.

In truth, Paul VI's decision turned out to be a fundamental turning point after the phase of uncertainty immediately following the council, during which the shining doctrinal conclusions, given under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, were often distorted. Besides encouraging defence of man's dignity, the Encyclical was powerful in reasserting the prophetic service which the Church must offer the world. While strongly refusing all forms of subordination to dominant opinions and culture, it proclaimed loud and strong, in full liberty, the Truth of man in the light of redemption wrought by Jesus Christ Who is the same yesterday, today and always.

It was an immense act of faith in Christ's Lordship over the Church and history, beyond all suggestion stirred up by the false wisdom of the world which is foolishness in the eyes of God, and thus it remains even when clothed with the commendable yet illusory intent called pastoral solicitude or gratifying aperture to the immense currents of lay thought; without considering "Splendor Veritatis" which emanates from the authentic Spirit of the Gospel.

Moreover, these topics are adorned with the nature and meaning of the Church in the world, and affirm without the shadow of a doubt the transcendent spiritual dimension of Christian marriage. Hence, through Grace, the spouses' mutual donation, when fully opened to life, is opened up to the gift of Trinitarian life, and is capable of endless spiritual fertility and of continually creating new heavens and new earth within the Church and the world. Could the transcendent sense of the Church been renounced, in favour of a purely social conception of marriage where only the human development of the spouses is promoted in accordance with the general needs of a society which change with time?

Well, this picture of the Church's future undermined by grave risks and snares, is invaded by the action of the Holy Spirit, Who in a most surprising manner, throws full light onto the value of Christ's and Peter's promise, and it, through grace, is the foundation and the guarantee of the visible Church. Thus, Paul VI, amid the perplexity and incredulity of many, decided; his decision was not dictated by flesh and blood, but was suggested by the Father's Spirit. In this manner he opened the way for the line of approach developed by his Successor, who - with the fall of many ideologies and illusions - is revealed as the sole cornerstone of all moral references for believers and non believers. He is a true instrument in Mary's hands for the realization of the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart.

Beppe Ferraro (reduced)

News from the blessed land

In Split Pope "calls people to faith of the Fathers"!

The Pope celebrated the 1,700th anni-versary of the foundation of the city which is considered the cradle of Christianity in these lands. There were 3,000 people from Medjugorje; half of whom were pilgrims from around the world. The Eucharistic celebration was held on the esplanade on the Dalmation coast before 500,000 people. In his homily he repeatedly called the people to return to the faith of the fathers; a faith which must be lived. His words seemed to echo Our Lady's message which She gave in September. From the altar he was able to admire the hundreds of boats on the sea which greeted him with a concert of horns. In the afternoon he visited the shrine of Our Lady of the Island in Solin where a meeting was held with catechists and members of various ecclesial movements. During his visit to Croatia, from Zagreb to Split, the Pope was able to meet one million people (Croatia's population is 4.5 million).

Jakov: tenth secret and last daily apparition

From Miami, in the US, Jakov sent the following message to Fr. Slavko:

"Friday 11 Sept. During the daily apparition Our Lady told me to prepare myself particularly through prayer for the next day's apparition, for She would have given me the tenth secret. Sat. 12 Sept. Our Lady came at 11.15 am (local time). Upon Her arrival She greeted me in the usual way: 'Praised be Jesus Christ.' As She gave me the tenth secret She was sad. Then, with a sweet smile She said to me:

Dear Son, I am your Mother and I love you unconditionally. From today I will not appear to you every day, but only on Christmas day, the day of my Son's birth. Don't be sad, for I will always be with you as a Mother, and as all true mothers I will never abandon you. On your part, continue to follow the way of my Son; way of peace and love, and try to persevere in the mission I have entrusted you with.

Be an example of a man who has known God, and God's love. May the others always see in you an example of how God works in men and how He works through them. I bless you with my motherly blessing and I thank you for having responded to my call.

The apparition ended at 11.45."

In a brief telephone conversation with Fr. Slavko, Jakov said he cried lengthily and that he was very sad. (The following is a liberal extract from Sr. Emmanuel's writings.) All this happened in a private home in Miami, Florida, where Jakov was visiting upon invitation. He cried like a baby. Fortunately, Mirjana was present to console him (she also suffered when in '82 she received her last apparition). Many were surprised, as they thought the apparitions would have continued.

Now, those visionaries who have not yet received the tenth secret and continue to have daily apparitions are three: Vicka, Ivan and Marija. No one knows the contents of the secrets. Our Lady has spoken of a "great sign" (third secret) which will appear on the hill of Podbrdo and will be visible for all to see. The sign will be indestructible and permanent. We know that we must convert before the great sign; that afterwards will be too late. Jakov has revealed that in the beginning the first secrets will be revealed and these will act as proof that the apparitions are true. He said: "Our Lady has shown the great sign to me and to Vicka; it is really beautiful!"

Some people, not from Medjugorje, have linked the tenth secret to catastrophic events expected to happen around the year 2000. None of this is true. If Our Lady promised Jakov She would appear to him on Christmas days, then we can expect to see more Christmases. Also the Pope, in his prayer for the Great Jubilee, asks God, "to guide the Church, that it may cross the threshold of the new millennium with courage and bring to future generations the Light of the world." Our Lady has always told us how prayer and fasts can change events, and:

Those families who choose God as Father, the Church as home, and me as Mother, have nothing to fear for the secrets; nothing to fear for the future. The heart of a Father guides the world; it is God's heart.

Fr. Slavko in England - This was his eighth visit to England, organized by Bernard Ellis and the Medjugorje Network, Held in Aylesford in the past, this year's prayer meeting had various venues. Jelena Vasilj also took part and witnessed about her personal experience. Fr. Slavko reports:

"On the 30th August a meeting with 3,000 youth was held in the Benedictine Abbey of Worth, and the day after with about 2,000 faithful in Wintershire. On the 1st September we met 800 faithful in the St. Joseph Seminary in Manchester, and on the 2nd about 20 priests in Sunderland near Newcastle. Three Anglican pastors also participated in the presentation of the Medjugorje messages and in the discussion which followed. In the same parish, the evening prayer programme followed with a packed church. On the 3rd we prayed with the Cistercian community.

On the 4th we flew to Amsterdam and met with the Croatian prisoners. It was moving; we celebrated Holy Mass together. On the 5th a one-day prayer meeting was held at the Marian Shrine of Beauraing in Belgium; about 2,500 took part. Enriched by the prayer experiences, we are grateful to God that we again saw how Our Lady has turned and moved so many to prayer.

(Press Bulletin)

Medjugorje: forge of vocations - Fr. Bernardo from America tells: "My bishop would often tell me not to take an interest in Medjugorje, but one day, when he found out that I had intended to go, he asked me to pray for vocations. I knew that I was onto a sure thing, for every time a priest from the diocese went, at least one vocation came from it. I stayed in Medjugorje for 4 "sabbatical" months and remained at the service of the pilgrims. On my return, at the end of 1997, the first words of my bishop were: "I'll have to send you straight back!" In fact, during the time I was there 10 candidates presented themselves to our

diocese for priesthood!" Fr. Bernardo recalled that after his first pilgrimage to Medjugorje he had told his bishop: "In Medjugorje for the first time I felt proud to be a priest." Our Lady has said: It is difficult today for priests to remain faithful. They have no need of your judgements, but of your prayers and your love. Help them!

"If you were united to Jesus there would not be need for Medjugorje"

Thus said the visionary Marija some days ago to Italian pilgrims. "The most important thing for Our Lady - Her only aim - is to place us on the way of holiness and to lead us to a profound intimacy with Her Son Jesus. This communion of the heart with Jesus must be given first place in our daily lives. When you will have achieved this, you will have no further need of Medjugorje, or to seek the visionaries." Like the other visionaries, Marija considers fanaticism harmful. If there's one person in Medjugorje who isn't fanatic, that's Our Lady. Our Lady's desire is to take people to Jesus, and if Medjugorje is an excellent channel of grace, that channel should not be confused with what it carries.

Too many have blocked their spiritual growth because they are attached more to the place of apparitions or to certain devotional practices rather than to the person of Jesus or His Mother. When the Lord will come He will not ask us how many pilgrimages we have done, or if such and such a person blessed us, or how many photos of visionaries or blessed picture cards we have collected (though the latter may be of help). What will we have to offer Him that is truly valid? The only thing that will count is to be rich in love; the type of love that is obtained through living the Gospel and the messages.

Positive results for tests on visionaries - Jakov, who was unable to attend the tests in April, visited Como at the end of August and was tested by the same team of specialists. The results of the tests done in April have not yet been made known, however, some specialists do not hide the fact that they are excellent.

(From Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

Feast of St. Francis - A lovely surprise enlivened the Church of Medjugorje the evening of 3 October: about ten young people from the parish were accepted into the Youth Community, and another twenty from the Community made their first vows.

Groups of **Australian Aboriginals** and Canadian Indians were in Medjugorje early October. The latter, dressed in traditional costume, performed songs and dances to the joy of the children who were able to see them in real life for once.

Pilgrims from **Kazakhstan** who had visited Medjugorje built a cross identical to the one on Krizevac in their home town of Ozernoj. It was blessed by Card. Glemp and Bishop Lenge from Kazakhstan.

In **Panama** a church identical to the one in Medjugorje has been built near the airport. It attracts many tourists. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is held regularly, as is the Medjugorje evening prayer programme. Blessed in May 1997, it has been dedicated to the Mother of God.

Seminar of inner healing, held in the Domus Pacis retreat house, was led by Fr. John Cheriaveliyil and Sr. Margaritha Valappila. Directed particularly at problems in family life, the effect on the 70 participants was noteworthy.

NOTICES - Seminar of fasting and prayer, guided by Fr. Slavko, will be held in the Domus Pacis retreat house, in preparation for Christmas. The dates: 29 Nov to 4 Dec.; 5-10 Dec.; 14-20 Dec. If you book, but are unable to attend, please give notice at least one week ahead. Bookings: Croatia 88651988; fax

88651444

A seminar for guides of pilgrimages was held from 17 to 20 August 1998. All those who complete such courses may enrol in the Guide Association and work at the shrine upon receiving the proper information. The subjects include Holy Scripture, the Christian message, the Virgin's message, and the pilgrimage with special regards to the Medjugorje environment. The Information Office suggests that groups going to Medjugorje contact one of these guides to be sure they receive proper information and explanations.

The evening prayer programme, with the Rosary and the Holy Mass, can be followed via radio and via internet. For the moment the latter is audio off-line, however, we plan to make that on-line access (audio and video) through appropriate video equipment. For this, we have established the Assoc. of Medjugorje Supporters for MIR Information. For further info contact:

e-mail: medjugorje-mir@medjugorje.hr or fax: Croatia 88651444, specifying "for the Information Office." (Press Bulletin)

Our best wishes to the Info. Office for its 100th edition of the Press Bulletin.

Daring aid carriers reach Kosovo refugees

Alberto Bonifacio sent us the following report on their first adventure in Montenegro to bring aid to the refugees from Kosovo. "Endless problems held up our 10 vans which went via sea to the port of Bar in Montenegro. After much bother, the Consulate was contacted, also Caritas, and even the bishop; and in the end we paid dearly to free our loads from customs. On the 1st October we reached Ulcinj where there were 20,000 refugees - many more than the population of the seaside town.

Assisted by the Commissioner in charge of refugees, the people crowded around us in no time for the distribution which was done in a fairly orderly manner. The extreme poverty of the refugees could not go unnoticed. With the remaining vans we went to Tuzi on the Albanian border. Tuzi is the largest parish of Montenegro with 4,500 Catholics. The five Franciscan monks readily helped with the distribution of the aid to the refugees in the area.

The passion Our Lady has placed in the aid carriers' hearts became evident when a bad accident happened to one of the vans on the way home, at the Slovenian border. One driver, badly hurt, was concerned that he could not return with more aid, and the other, with a fractured breast bone, was more concerned about there being one vehicle less, than for himself. Both were released from the Rijeka hospital the day after.

Info: Alberto Bonifacio, Via S. Alessandro 26, I-23855 Pescate (LC), Italy.

"I must stay at your house.."

Those who anxiously await the annual meeting with Fr. Tomislav Vlastic in Colledonbosco - spiritual centre and cradle of the Salesian community - are never disappointed. The meeting, organized by the Regina Pacis Committee of Turin, attracts all those who desire to deepen their spirituality at Mary's school. It was held on the 10th October, and nearly 2,000 people attended.

Fr. Tomislav chose as the theme the phrase said by Jesus to Zacchaeus (Lk 19): "I must stay at your

house...". "When we are aware of Christ's presence on the threshold of our hearts, two different types of feelings become manifest in us.

These are: joy, because God is great; He is infinite and full of gifts; at the same time we feel fear, because Jesus is pure Light, and as such He shows up our shaded and dusty areas. This creates immediate resistance on our part, because deep in our hearts we feel that as sinners we would prefer to hide, rather than be uncovered by the Light.

Usually, it happens that we seek God to satisfy our interests, but in this way, the door of the heart remains closed and Jesus cannot enter. The divine light upsets our way of thinking... So, just as God visited Abraham, St. Paul and the Virgin Mary, also today God wants to visit and transform man and the cosmos. When God visits a soul, He invites it to leave itself and its sinful condition. Abraham had to "come out" from his state of "possessing" despite the fact that it was legitimate and profoundly rooted in his fatherly soul. The moment he "came out" he became the father of many peoples.

When we pray and feel God penetrate our lives, we must immediately "come out" from ourselves so that we can become transformed by Christ's presence in us. The greatest danger for a soul is its self-centredness, because it has the power to block God's action in us. In fact, God's entering into us is conditioned by our readiness to be transformed. When Jesus enters Peter's house to heal his mother-in-law, He ended up healing also others who were present simply because these were open to His presence. On another occasion, Jesus changed Zacchaeus' soul who said he was willing to follow Him. Also when Jesus visited Matthew He invited him to leave everything to become His disciple. God visits us because He desires to take us to the Father. Here we are then at the heart of our reflection. It is not enough to pray, adore, and practise devotion, for in all of this there must be a firm decision to continually change, and a total readiness to be transformed; to "come out" from our own world so that we can enter God's world.

Hence, the desire that Jesus visit us must be equalled by our readiness to be changed. There are two basic elements which help us come out from ourselves. These are: humility and serenity of spirit. They help us to break down our pride and human logic, and to have an unconditioned trust in God. At the moment of the Annunciation, Mary was humble and serene, and precisely for this God desired to enter the Virgin's heart and body.

If we work to cherish our inner serenity we will favour the growth of our unconditioned trust in God. Whoever develops this trust, opens his being and acknowledges that God is Love, and he will blossom like a flower in Spring. Man's tragedy is his inability to open up to God's Love and Goodness, because Satan will do all he can to block this aperture.

Once open to God our souls will begin to generate. For this to happen, we need to do two things. St. Paul writes that God's Love and Peace go beyond all human thought. Thus the need to turn off all thoughts and allow God's Love to act. Secondly, we must firmly believe that God forgives us even when our hearts accuse us because of feelings of remorse, scruples, guilt or through wounds, etc.

We cannot come out from ourselves and be healed unless we open up to a trust that goes beyond all this, to the certainty that God is good and will do everything to save us. The soul must find the door of salvation open; it is the door through which one is transformed.

But who can help us do all this? The Blessed Virgin can. We must become Her friends! We must not limit our devotion to the act of reciting, but open our souls and hearts to feel our Mother's presence. We must become friends of the Angels and Archangels; they will communicate the life of their spirit to us. These pure beings continually contemplate God and they transmit to us their constant aperture. Hence, our souls will become more tender, our closures will disappear and we will be regenerated.

God gave many signs of His presence in the course of history, but this counts little when our inner attention and our desire to look, seek and comprehend the Lord is lacking. God wishes to touch the most

delicate levels of our souls. Thus, in prayer, we shall endeavour not to pronounce only words, but we shall let God touch us in depth; we shall ask Him to transform us, to give us Light, to introduce us into the full truth. And when we shall be able to feel in us the pulse of the Holy Spirit, we shall allow God to act freely in the most dynamic of ways; that is with the power of His Resurrection. Then we will defeat our inner death, our inability to transform God's power, and our inability to live in harmony with the others. We must allow God to involve us, transform us, promote us... and then we will experience how the life of a Christian is a life of quality. It is still the time of special graces which God grants to men to bring them to the resurrection, to the blossoming of souls. Hence, let us open them up to Jesus, for He wishes to visit us, that we may become new creatures."

Sr. Stefania

Jelena: "how Our Lady taught us to pray"

Thus said Jelena Vasilj to Italian and French pilgrims on the 12th August 1998:

"The most precious journey Our Lady has taken us on is that of the prayer group. It was Mary who invited the young people of the parish, and She offered Herself as guide. In the beginning, She spoke of four years, then we were unable to break away from it, so we continued for a further four years. I think that whoever prays can experience that which Jesus wanted to tell John when He entrusted His Mother to him. In fact, through this journey Our Lady has truly given us life and She became our Mother in prayer. For this reason, we always ask Her to accompany us everywhere.

What did She tell us about prayer? Simple things, because we did not have other spiritual references. I had never read St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa of Avila, but through prayer Our Lady helped us discover the dynamics of the interior life. The first step is being open to God, in particular through conversion. You must free your heart of every impediment to be able to encounter God. This is the role of prayer; to continue to convert and become like Christ.

The first time it was an angel who spoke to me, telling me to leave sin behind and then, through prayer of surrender, to seek peace of heart. Peace of heart is, above all, freeing oneself of all that impedes the encounter with God. Our Lady said that it is only with this peace and freedom of heart that we can begin to pray. This prayer of contemplation is typical of monastic spirituality. The important thing, though, is to understand that the objective is not only a state of peace, but an encounter with God.

However, it must be remembered that there are no phases when speaking of prayer. I cannot say that peace, or that the encounter with God, will arrive at such and such a time. I am, though, encouraging you to seek this peace. When we free ourselves, something has to fill us, and in fact, God does not want us to remain orphans in prayer, but He wants to fill us with His Holy Spirit, with His life. That is why we read the Holy Scripture, and why we pray with the Rosary.

Many think that the Rosary contradicts the idea of fertile prayer, but Our Lady taught us to see how contemplative this prayer actually is. After all, what is prayer if not this continuous immersion into God's life? The Rosary permits us to enter into the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection. Repetition is useful; our human nature needs it for virtue to rise in our hearts. Do not fear repetition, even if it can cause prayer to become exterior. St. Augustine teaches us that the more we repeat, the more we pray, and the more our hearts grow. Thus, when you insist with your prayer, you are being faithful and you do nothing else but invite God's grace into your life. It all depends on our freedom

and on our 'yes.'

Our Lady has also taught us not to forget that prayer is a form of thanksgiving, and this is the true interior attitude of gratitude for all the wonderful things God has made. Giving thanks is also a sign of the depth of our faith.

Our Lady has also invited us to bless always. Of course, I don't mean the priestly blessing, but the call to place oneself before God in whatever circumstance life presents. If we think of St. Elizabeth who recognized God's presence in Mary, this helps us to understand the meaning of 'to bless'. I think this is the greatest fruit of prayer, because all things are full of God and the more we pray, the more our eyes are healed and are able to see. In short, that is how our prayer experience was structured."

Q. I heard that Our Lady's voice resembles a mandolin.

A. That's unfair for the other instruments. In any case, I cannot comment, for I do not hear an exterior voice.

Q. Is dejection something human, or can it come from Satan?

A. It can be a great temptation tied to our pride, when we don't trust the divine providence and the project God has for us. We often lose our patience with God, and therefore, our hope too. St. Paul says: patience generates hope, thus, look upon your life as a true journey.

You need to be patient with yourself, but also with the others. At times there might be need for a special healing or more specific help. I think, though, that in spiritual life, one has to understand the paradox of feeling true sadness for one's sins, but this must not become occasion to despair. If we despair over our sins or over the sins of others, it is a sign that we have not entrusted ourselves to God. Satan knows that this is our weak point and thus tempts us there.

Need of group and spiritual guide

Q. What can you tell us about following the same way?

A. Before considering a day of prayer, consider joining a prayer group. This is especially true for the young people. It is important that our spirituality has not only a vertical sense, but also a horizontal sense. This leads to a personal daily fidelity. Then, for everyone, Our Lady has recommended countless times prayer in the family. At times, when we pray She asks us to pray for families, because She sees the solution of many problems in family prayer. The family is the first prayer group, and that is why Mary has recommended that we begin our day by praying in the family, because true union amongst family members can only come from Christ.

Our Lady also recommends daily Mass; and if out of necessity you miss out on prayer, you should at least go to Mass, because it is the greatest prayer and it gives meaning to all other prayers. All God's graces come from the Eucharist, and when we pray alone, we are nourished by grace received at Mass. Besides the Mass, Our Lady recommends to pray many times during the day, and to take even 10-15 minutes to enter into the spirit of prayer. It would be lovely if you managed also to remain a little in silence; a little in adoration. Our Lady said to pray three hours a day - these three hours include the reading of spiritual literature which is very important because it calls up the spiritual life of the entire Church.

Q. Before the inner locutions, how was your prayer?

A. I prayed like many of you who come here. I lived an honest life, I went to Mass on Sundays, I prayed before meals, and on special feasts I prayed more, but I certainly did not have such a close relationship with God. Afterwards came the strong call to be united to God through prayer.

God does not invite us to pray just to put us right; He calls us to have a life in common with Him.

Q. How could you tell that the locutions were not coming from the evil one?

A. With the help of Fr. Tomislav Vlastic, whom you surely know. It is essential that there be discernment of the gifts.

Q. How was your spiritual transformation with the locutions?

A. It's a bit difficult for me to talk about that because I was only 10 when it began, and besides, God transforms every day. Man is the only non finite creature. If we offer our freedom to God, we become complete, and this journey lasts all life long. Thus, I am on a journey too.

Q. Were you afraid in the beginning?

A. No, not afraid, but perhaps a little confused and uncertain.

Q. When we make spiritual choices, how can we recognize true discernment?

A. I think that we often seek God only when we need to make a decision or when we want to know what we should do with our lives, and we expect an immediate reply, almost a miraculous reply. To resolve our problems we must become men and women of prayer. We have to get used to listening to God's voice, and this will allow us to recognize Him. God, you see, isn't a juke box into which you drop a coin and listen to what you want. In any case, if it regards an important decision, I would advise the help of a priest, of a constant spiritual guide. (Continued next issue.)

The 4 volumes of meditations by Frs. Tomislav and Slavko - Open your Hearts to Mary; Be totally surrendered to Me; Pray with the Heart; I Beseech you: Heed my messages and live them - are a wonderful display of the Medjugorje spirit. Published in the main languages, they are free and can be obtained from: Amici di Medjugorje, Via Nirone 9, I-20123 Milano, Italy.

Queen of Peace Shrine in Cameroon - The project and the work permit are ready. Following our announcement, the first donation came from France. If you wish to make a donation contact: Comunità Oasi della Pace, I-02036 Passo Corese (RI), Italy

Spiritual exercises with Fr. Jozo for 1999 will be held in Bijakovici. In Czech/Slovak: 10-13 Jan., In Italian 24-27 Jan., In French: 31 Jan. - 3 Feb., In Spanish: 7-10 Feb., In Croatian: 14-17 Feb., In German: 21-24 Feb., In English: 28 Feb. - 3 March.

Bookings at fax no. 00387-88705450

"Medjugorje, Light for the World" by Pietro Jacopini (new edition in English), available at: Edizioni Martini, Via Don Minzoni 23, I-12011 Borgo S. Dalmazzo (Cuneo), Italy. (Includes booklet of messages)

What Satan fears

In the past, Fr. Amorth has told us about the dramatic situation of Joan (Giovanna is her proper Italian name) who suffers possession, and asked us to pray for her. Some readers have asked for further news. "Giovanna," says Father Ernesto (her missionary brother), "has not yet been freed, and she suffers more all the time. The darts of God's enemy are hurled at her continuously. Won't you help this crucified sister who pays with her suffering especially for priests? ('She has snatched so many from me,' Satan has confessed.) The best way to help is with Mass and the Rosary (all 15 decades said in group if possible)." "Once, during an exorcism conducted by renowned Fr. Candido from Rome, it happened that: "We were praying the Rosary, when Giovanna, taken by Satan, broke my beads to bits and hissed: 'You and your old ladies' devotion!' Fr. Candido then placed some large beads around her neck, but she couldn't stand it

and began to twist her neck and head in all directions, while furiously gasping for breath. 'Why are you now afraid of an old ladies' devotion?', Fr. Candido challenged. Satan yelled out: 'It defeats me.' The Father pressed: 'Since you dared to offend Mary's Rosary, now weave its praises! In the name of God, reply: Is the Rosary powerful? A: Yes, in the measure with which one recites it well. Q. What is to recite it well? A. You have to know how to contemplate. Q. What is to contemplate? A. To contemplate is to adore. Q. But Mary can't be adored! A. Yes, that's true, but she's adorable (?!).' And indicating a bead, he added: 'Each bead is a light and you have to say it so well that not even one is lost.' What an odd preacher: against his will and against himself, he had to admit the power of the Rosary!"

* We are consoled by the many letters from readers who express their gratitude and joy at receiving our little pages. One for all from Otto Mueller, who leaves the management of the near 5,000 (!) addresses in the German canton of Switzerland to Rita Gervais, "I, with many readers, wish to let you know how much we appreciate the Echo. It is so well done!"

Together, let us thank our Blessed Mom.

"Padre Pio" hospital in Medjugorje

The first part of the plan has been presented to the Building Dept. in Citluk. A day of prayer was offered for the hospital on 24 May in Milan, the day before Padre Pio's birthday, and a life-size statue of the Father was blessed. In August, Frs. Slavko and Barnaba from Rome solemnly placed it at the Regina Pacis Medical Centre of Vionica, Medjugorje, which is the first section of the "Padre Pio Hospital." The medical centre will be fully functional by the end of next year, and will include a fully equipped first-aid station, laboratories for analysis and diagnostics, a general outpatients' section, and a rehabilitation centre, with links to the Padre Pio centres in S. Giovanni Rotondo. We are also thinking of setting up a small laboratory of artificial limbs for mutilated children.

And the costs? We trust in Providence. Donations can be made directly to "Solidarnost i Pomoc - Medjunazodno Kuci Mira," located near the post office.

Fr. Mannes M. Ghizzardi, OP

* We apologize, for due to an abundance of articles, we have had to leave some out; including some we had already announced.

* The Czechs, who today are the most numerous pilgrims in Medjugorje, insist on an edition of the Echo in their own language. We launch the proposal, that Mary should inspire someone

* Main language editions of Echo of Mary available in Medjugorje at the MIR-Shalom shop opposite the church, and at the Ain Karim shop in arcade beneath the International Hotel.

Travelling to Medj. - by ROAD: bus from Trieste (adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening 6pm, arrives Medj. 8am. Res. ring Italy 040-425001. By SEA: Ancona to Split. Departures Ancona: Mon., Wed., Fri. 9pm, Sat. 10pm. Departures Split: Sun., Tues., Thur., Sat.. Reservations fax Italy, Agenzia Mauro: 071-202618; Agenzia Morandi: 071-202296.

IN THE FAMILY

On 21 November 1998 Echo will begin its 15th year. It has been close to dying so many times, due to endless problems and the lack of workers, yet, we have always managed to get it out - thanks only to the

incredible interventions of Our Lady who desired this instrument. Together with the Saints, we give thanks to God.

Together with the other sick helpers, we entrust to Mary's Immaculate Heart friend Matteo who lays out the editions produced in Mantova. Absent at the moment for treatment, he has been providentially replaced by Alessandro.

Annual report to conclude the 14th year: about half a million copies of Echo in the 5 main languages (Italian, French, English, German, Spanish) depart from Mantova each issue. The other 11 editions produce 300,000 copies, making a total of just over 800,000. We are now also mailing out 2,000 copies of the Albanian edition.

Our heartfelt thanks to all those generous people who donate also for the many who can't. Thanks to them, Echo is free and available for all. In particular, we must thank our readers from France, and the German and Italian cantons of Switzerland who regularly send generous donations. Postal expenses are terribly burdensome, and right now we are in dire need.

We wish upon you all the strength to return to that primitive fervour for the joy of all, and we invoke upon you the blessing of God and the motherly blessing of Mary for the time which will prepare us for the feast of Mary Immaculate, and Christmas.

Villanova M. 28.10.98

Therefore, I ask that your every day becomes prayer and complete surrender to God.