



Our Lady's message, 25 September 2008:

**“Dear children! May your life, anew, be a decision for peace. Be joyful carriers of peace and do not forget that you live in a time of grace, in which God gives you great graces through my presence. Do not close yourselves, little children, but make good use of this time and seek the gift of peace and love for your life so that you may become witnesses to others. I bless you with my motherly blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call.”**

## The gift of peace and love

Peace and love are words that are used very much by everyone but their meaning is not the same for everyone. Perhaps also for this reason, after 27 years of messages, exhortations, teachings, and after such a lengthy presence in Medjugorje, Mary **still invites us to seek out the gift of peace and love**. Perhaps also those who have spread her messages throughout the world should humbly ask themselves if they are invited to still seek the gift of peace and love. Perhaps, certainly in good faith, we have spoken too much about peace and love in our own language, according to our own mental schemes, according to our own logic and we have thus blocked out the intrinsic light contained in it. We do not know, but we are certainly all invited to speak less, to limit the flow of our words and to give more space, perhaps all space, to the testimony of life: **may your life be once again a decision for peace; and again: do not close yourselves little children, but take advantage of this time and seek the gift of peace and love for your lives so that you might become witnesses for others.**

Let us try not to close up into our certainties, into the small temple of our *I*; let us try not to retreat into our positions and let us expose ourselves to the rain of grace that still descends abundantly over the world: **you are living in a time of grace during which God gives you great graces through my presence**. If we remain closed into our egoism, into our arrogance, we cannot grasp the peace and love that come from God. How can we speak of love when our words have the taste of scorn and not of charity? We all know and we say that we appreciate the hymn to charity of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 13), but we all need to experience it in order to bear witness to it in truth.

We must not however, let ourselves be tormented or discouraged by our limits; actually, in a certain sense, it is the awareness of these limits that must give us courage because it induces us not to seek in ourselves what we can only obtain in God. *For when I am weak, then I am strong* (2 Cor 12, 10). And Mary encourages us: **Be joyful bearers of peace and never forget that you are living in a**



**“Love, only love is credible.**

*For this reason Jesus Christ is the centre of all history, even contemporary history, because he represents God's profound love”.*

Benedict XVI

**time of grace...**We truly have everything, actually more than everything. If we do not allow ourselves to *get lost in the thoughts of our heart* (ref Luke 1, 51) we no longer have to look but just grasp **the gift of peace and love** that God the Father mercifully gives to us in Mary and through Her, the Queen of peace and love. This gift was already given to us over two thousand years ago: it is Jesus! Now, as we did then, we can receive him from Mary, we can experience him in ourselves if we welcome Him as She welcomed Him. He is not seeking knowledgeable hearts, nor noble nor illustrious hearts nor conventional hearts. He will not refuse the sinner; he doesn't only seek pure hearts but hearts that want to be such. He *who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God* (Phil 2, 6). He the uncreated needs to be generated. He the innocent one takes on all of our sins. For this reason, Jesus, I can come to You and, in Your Name, present myself to the Father. Thank you Jesus, my life and my hope. Thank you Mary, for Your humble and continuous presence. Thank you for Your patient and merciful work. *Mary, Mother of Jesus, give us your most beautiful heart that is so pure and so full of Love and humility, so that we might love Jesus like you loved him. Keep us close to Him, like you were close to Him on the Cross and help us to serve him in the similarities of the poorest of the poor. Immaculate Heart of Mary, source of our joy, pray for us* (Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta).

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 October 2008:

**“Dear children! In a special way I call you all to pray for my intentions so that, through your prayers, you may stop Satan's plan over this world, which is further from God every day, and which puts itself in the place of God and is destroying everything that is beautiful and good in the souls of each of you. Therefore, little children, arm yourselves with prayer and fasting so that you may be conscious of how much God loves you, and carry out God's will. Thank you for having responded to my call.”**

## Let's put a stop to Satan's plan!

Dear children, I invite you all in a special way to pray for my intentions so that through your prayers Satan's plan on this earth might be stopped. The reason that Mary came and the reason for her lengthy presence in Medjugorje is to stop Satan's plan and to stop it through us. She, the first human creature to welcome God into herself, is with us to teach us to welcome him and she shall remain with us until the last of the calls has answered the appeal. Even though this earth **grows further and further away from God every day**, even if the powerful seem to be stronger and the weak ever more miserable, marginalized, excluded, even if the laws of the economy seem to hold up the fate of the world, and injustice prevails over justice, and war over peace, there is already a world that is unknown to the wise, or to the great media, a world that is varied and composite, that blooms in silence and opens up to grace and Love.

It is a world that **does not put itself in God's place**, but that seeks and finds life in Him. A world that promotes **everything that is beautiful and good in man's soul**, a world into which Satan cannot penetrate because its atmosphere is stifling for him. It is a world that rises up day after day, that is not edified with opulence nor does it impose itself with violence, that does not devour, but creates space, that does not subtract itself but that gives the gift of freedom, that does not subjugate but glorifies: it is the Kingdom of God. Satan is still working against this Kingdom and for this reason Mary urges us to **pray for Her intentions, so that through our prayers Satan's plan on this earth might be stopped.**

This invitation is so consoling! She is at the helm; we do not have to implement who knows what strategy; we must only pray for Her intentions. But we must be careful not to underestimate our prayer: it is not a question of expressing a simple delegation. Prayer is supplication, invocation, and a scream from the soul, an ardent desire. Prayer means moving God to compassion, attracting him to ourselves, waiting for the crumbs that fall from His table to be nourished by them (ref Mt 15, 27), taking refuge in Him, being in His presence, absorbing his word (Luke 10, 39). Praying means seeking in Him the words that we say, the behaviour that

we adopt, the decisions that we make, the feelings that we have, the desires that we hope for. Fasting means an austere lifestyle, a refusal of the superfluous, chastity in terms of gluttony, thoughts and words.

**Arm yourselves with prayer and fasting so that you might become aware of how much God loves you and that you might do God's will.** Prayer and fasting are weapons that allow us to conquer the awareness of God's Love and so to be *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might so as to be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil* (ref Eph 6 10-11). It is from the awareness of His Love that we draw the force to renew our life in Him. It is not an easy battle and often the enemy is not outside of us or extraneous to us, but within us, at the root of our thoughts, at the base of our judgements, and he brings division into us and outside of us, and he speaks, and sometimes preaches, in our place and this will be the way things are until *the great dragon, the ancient snake, Satan, the accuser of our brothers, shall have fallen* (ref Ap 12, 9-10). While we are waiting, let us place our trust in Mary, let us abandon ourselves to God with full and absolute trust; let us leave all the space in ourselves to Him. He shall fulfil in us what he established from eternity and Jesus shall live in us and with us, in Him and with Him, we shall continue His Work (John 14, 12-14). *N.Q.*

## Let's listen to what the Synod has to say

The **Word has a face**, that of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate who steeped the whole of Scripture in this carnality which makes it alive, real, constantly up-to-date. A face that asks to be met through the reading of that book, which, as Mary says in Medjugorje, should be *positioned in a visible place in our homes*, but what's more, it must be welcomed every day as essential daily nourishment for our "inner man".

This is the essence of the conclusive message that crowned the immense work of the 253 synodal Fathers who met in Rome from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of October last, the theme of which was: **"The Word of God in the life and in the mission of the Church"** – chosen for the 12<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – it expressed the Pope's desire to relaunch one of the strongholds of the Council, the establishment of *Dei Verbum*. "It was a school of listening. It consisted of reciprocal listening" said the Pope at the end of the meeting and "it is in listening to one and other that we have learnt to better listen to the Word of God. By listening to others we also listen to the Lord himself better".

**But what is a Synod?** In general it may be defined as an assembly of bishops who represent the Catholic episcopacy and whose duty it is to help the Pope to govern the universal Church by giving their advice. On this occasion also the contribution given was fertile, through various interventions of the representatives from five continents: such different lands and cultures in which a single Word must find the right terrain in which to take root and translate into life. "It is not easy to understand this Word. There is always the temptation for everyone to take it in their own way, even within the Church", commented a prelate.

In an era where communication avails mostly of images, those appointed to summarise the shared thoughts in a document, chose four aspects: The **Voice**, the **Face**, the **Home** and the

**Road** of the Word. "The divine voice resounds at the origins of Creation, giving origin to the wonders of the universe. It is a Voice that then penetrates into history, wounded by human sin and upset by pain and death", explains Monsignor Ravasi, who presided over the commission, "but also the strength of the Word that was made flesh, that enters into space and time and takes on a human face, Jesus Christ. For this reason then, the berthing place of the Bible comes about in the **meeting** with a Person who gives life a new horizon. It is important therefore to re-emphasise the commitment to avoid falling into exegetic fundamentalism which denies the incarnation of the divine Word in history".

These words echo those of a Belgian bishop: "Christians must not become "professionals" but "lovers" of Sacred Scripture, or better still "amateurs", in the sense of those who take delight in something.... Sacred Scripture reveals what God wants as regards men. And God does not express this in concepts, in philosophies, in thoughts but in facts. God's revelation lies in these facts".

It is for this reason that – as the Holy Father underlines – the approach of the Word of God must be warm and not only exegetic or theological. In short, the Pope wanted to recall the Church so that the reading of the Bible might be rooted in human history with a supernatural perspective; the Bible must be read with the eyes of faith: "Like a man in love reads a letter from his loved one, this is how you must read Sacred Scripture", wrote the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard.

The third fundamental point of the conclusive message is the **House** of the Divine Word, that is, the Church, where the Word must be proclaimed and broken up for everyone so that with the Eucharist, it might constitute nourishment and teaching. Lastly, the last image of the spiritual map of this virtual journey that must bring the Word from the eternity of the infinity of God to our homes is the **Road**, that is, the mission through which God's Word sets out. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.... What you hear in your ear you shall preach on all terraces". (Mt 28, 19-20).

When faced with the Word of God, the Synod was like a parable that Jesus told to make difficult teachings simple. A lengthy and binding reflection that was also supported by a simple yet very significant initiative without precedent: **"The Bible day and night"**, a sort of marathon in which the sacred text was read before the television cameras without interruption, for seven consecutive days and nights, by 1200 people from 50 different countries who alternated, including Pope Benedict and other important religious representatives of different faiths.

The work of the Synod may definitely have an ample wake in the life of the local Churches and in the groups that are committed to giving substance to the impulses that the Holy Spirit inspired in the bishops: **"Create silence** so as to be able to effectively listen to the Word of the Lord", the Shepherds exhort at the end, "and keep silence after you listen, so that it might continue to dwell, live and speak to you. Let it resound at the beginning of your day so that God might have the first word and let it echo in you in the evening so that God might have the last word. "We commend you to God and to the word of his grace (Acts 20, 32).

*Editorial staff*

## "Today you will be with me...."

Addressing the man crucified at his side, before dying, Jesus exclaimed: "Today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23, 43). The Lord had in fact accepted the repentance of the wrongdoer and his profound desire for redemption, and so he reassured him on his final destination. And this is clear to everyone. But we ask ourselves: what did Jesus mean when he said *today*? We know in fact that before returning to the Father, Christ descended into hell. It could not have therefore been *that* day, as we understand it. God's *today*, then, refers to something different with respect to our human conception of time. Let's try to understand it.

In our era we are seeing a quick succession of events on a worldwide scale that shake man to his inner soul. There is progress underway that leads to evident dehumanisation and there is a fundamental thought that does not allow the individual to ask himself questions that would help him to really listen to himself and to reach a deeper understanding of reality.

If man loses contact with himself and if he fails to respect his own need for infinity, he gets lost. It is only by starting from an intimate nearness to our hearts that man can understand time and reality. Our heart, in fact, rebels against any imposition that encloses it within a "finished" perspective: it infallibly wants the infinite!

There is no true awareness of ourselves without the discovery of owing our existence to an Eternal Being who is at the origin of reality and who created us so that we might relate to Him. If man fails to answer the question "who am I?", he cannot understand or participate in the saving capacity that God fulfilled in a well-determined time, that is, when Jesus became incarnate "in the fullness of time" – to start out towards the *fullness* that will distinguish all subsequent time. When Jesus came onto the earth, he interrogated the men of the time about whether or not they had recognised that time, if they had perceived that something eternal had entered into "finished" time. Among them, very few of them recognised the Event, the Mystery that was being revealed.

What does it mean then that God sent his Son in the "fullness of time" and that when we were still sinners Christ died for us? We can only understand this through an interior awakening of the soul that allows itself to be touched by the grace foreseen in a given historical moment. God's *today*, is not external to man, but it comes about in the man who is touched by grace, and in the measure in which he allows himself to be penetrated on the inside by it, man enters eternity.

In the light of all of this, we can therefore understand that when Jesus said to the repentant thief: "Today you will be with me in paradise" he simply wanted to let him know: "at this moment your soul is meeting the grace that forgives and that places you in God's time: eternity".

*Daniele Benatelli*

## Uprooted Christians

It was the risky undertaking of the apostles, along with those who walked in their footsteps, that brought the seeds of the new life that Jesus had given to his Church to the East. This courage is rewarded with good and durable fruits, which have grown thanks to the sacrifice of many, known and unknown, who experienced martyrdom in those lands so as to ensure that Christianity would be rooted there.

Although they were only minorities among the other dominant religions, over the years Christians handed down the light of the Revelation and the annunciation of the eternal Easter from generation to generation. Now however something very serious risks making the offering of the martyrs and the commitment of the apostles futile: **Christians are hunted** from their homes and often cruelly crushed in their dignity or actually killed.

### In the land of Abraham

This is what has been happening for many months in India and Iraq, not to mention the other countries in which a conspiracy of collective silence risks concealing a shameful reality. The situation of serious legal limitations to religious freedom in fact includes 14 countries: Bhutan, China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Laos, The Maldives, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Yemen.

In giving a voice to the emergency regarding the persecution in Iraq, the Director of the Press Office of the Vatican, Father Lombardi says: "Threatening messages of this kind are often launched: "you must leave your home and get out of the area in 24 hours, otherwise you will be punished and castigated justly and you will be killed like our Islamic religion has ordered us to do with those like you who worship the cross!"

The Christians of **Mosul**, the second largest city in **Iraq**, have been reduced to just 500 after the wave of persecutions that has struck one of the world's oldest communities; during the last month almost 10,000 Christians have abandoned the city and nobody wants to return to their own homes. There were also 15 people killed and an intimidation campaign was implemented to force people to choose between conversion to Islam and being killed.

### The figures speak for themselves

The same dramatic situation is being experienced in **India**. 60 Christians have already been assassinated since the wave of violence commenced, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August last, after a Hinduist leader and four of his associates were killed. Although Maoists claimed responsibility for the attack, violence soon escalated against Christians. Apart from the dead there are also more than 18,000 injured, 178 churches destroyed, over 4,600 homes burnt and 13 schools and social centres damaged. More than 50,000 Christians also fled from their villages and took refuge in fields or forests... Even one of the homes of the Missionaries of Mother Teresa of Calcutta was set fire to by Hindu fundamentalists, but the most alarming thing is **the total indifference of the local and national authorities**, despite the continuous urging of the Church.

"Why are people more worried about the fate of polar bears than men and women who are only guilty of having chosen the

Christian faith" Cardinal Caffarra, archbishop of Bologna asked a public assembly, thus speaking out against the deafening silence of the media. And yet to ensure that his warning would not be limited to speaking out, he invited those present to join him in "**fasting and prayer**" to share the same passion of those who were persecuted in the name of the Lord".

### The first Indian saint

At the very moment when Christians are suffering a difficult and unjust persecution, the sainthood of Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception is proclaimed, she was a nun of the Clarisse of the Third Order of Saint Francis, a physically fragile woman but tenacious in her "obstinate" donation to the Lord, to which she remained faithful, considering her whole life to be a holocaust to God, and offering up all suffering for the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This example of saintliness in India proves right the sacrifice of the "persecuted brothers and sisters who are giving us the greatest teaching about man, his dignity, his highest vocation" – in conclusion we can say, once again drawing inspiration from the words of Monsignor Caffarra – for this "let nothing trouble us any longer, but adoring only Christ in our hearts, let us always be ready to answer whomever asks about the reason for the hope that lies in us".

*Editorial staff*

*Mary bare  
The silent babe  
While in him were hidden  
All tongues!*

*The High One became as a little child,  
and in Him was hidden  
a treasure of wisdom  
sufficing for all!*

*Though Most High,  
yet He sucked the milk of Mary,  
and of His goodness  
all creatures suck!*

*When He sucked  
the milk of Mary,  
He was suckling  
all with Life..*

*While He was lying on  
His Mother's bosom,  
in His bosom  
were all creatures lying.*

(Ephriam the Syrian 300 A.D.)



## Time for Bread

We hear nothing else in the West apart from talk of economic crises, the collapse of the stock markets and financial disasters. People are complaining about the cost of living and the rise in unemployment. The population of poor people is growing more and more, as well as those who find it difficult to come by what they need for their own existence, this upsets the sleep of those whose pockets are full of money and who live in the terror of losing it. In short, an air of suffocating apprehension is pressing down on the souls of many and this is a signal of the anxiety that people are feeling about what tomorrow will bring. All of this is happening on a planet that is breaking up day after day because it is altered in terms of its natural and climatic laws, by utilitarian usage by man.

This is a inauspicious picture, but by now we have become almost accustomed to looking at it because the Media are doing nothing other than dishing it up to us in all kinds of sauces. For this reason many people find themselves asking the question: "But where is God in all of this?" We should answer this question with another question: "But you, mankind, where have you put God?"

The core of the matter lies here. If man doesn't sincerely answer this question, he will never be able to uproot the muddle of his worries about the upcoming destiny of the world. We seek solutions on a solely human level, we hypothesise wonder-working interventions relying on techniques, calculations, and plans, but we leave out He who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance..." (Is 40, 12-13). In fact, we totally ignore the action of the Author of life himself and, at most, we consider him as an outlet point for our sorrows and distress.

"Idiots!", Jesus would say. And perhaps he is already saying this, but we are unable to listen to his voice. And so in his patient and provident goodness, God continues to make himself the bread, the good food that feeds our deepest and truest needs: the atavistic need for love, friendship, respect, justice, truth. But it does not stop at this alone, because *the daily bread* arrives on our table if we also truly pray to the Father, if we place our trust in Him. All we must do is simply believe.

We need to know how to stop eating other foods however, foods that we stuffed ourselves with and that poison the spirit, like the rush to own, to possess, to consume, to the point of nausea: an excessive impetus born of the desolation of an inner emptiness and the sensation of a miserable nonsense.

"All things are in your power, Lord, and nobody can resist your will. You made all things, the heavens and the earth and all the marvels enclosed within them; you are the Lord of the whole universe" (Entrance antiphon to the 27<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time). It is therefore worth giving up that which clogs up our hearts in order to make space for Jesus, for the only Lord who will be born for us once again in Bethlehem, the *Home of bread*, as its Hebrew meaning suggests. During the time of Advent, Mary will prepare this good Bread, that is silent and attentive and that nobody should be without. Yet we need to leave some space within ourselves, because the Lord never imposes, he simply knocks.

*Stefania Consoli*

**Benedict XVI in Lourdes:**

## *“Mary’s smile is for everyone”*

“The wealthiest of the people shall seek out your smile “ (Psalm 44,13). Seeking Mary’s smile is not a question of devout or antiquated sentimentalism; but rather, it is the correct expression of a living and profoundly human relationship that links us to She whom Christ has given to us as a Mother. Scripture itself unveils this smile to us on Mary’s lips when she sings the Magnificat: “My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour” (Luke 1, 46-47). When the Virgin Mary gives thanks to the Lord, she takes us as her witnesses: every proclamation of the Magnificat makes us witnesses of her smile.

Here in Lourdes, during the course of the apparition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1858, Bernadette contemplated Mary’s smile in an entirely special manner. This was the first answer that the Beautiful Lady gave the young visionary who wanted to know her identity. Before introducing herself a few days later as “the Immaculate Conception”, Mary first of all showed her smile, almost as though this were the most appropriate access gate to the revelation of her mystery.

In the smile of the most eminent of all creatures, addressed to us, there is a reflection of our dignity as the children of God. That smile, the true reflection of God’s tenderness, is a source of invincible hope.

There are battles that man cannot sustain alone, without the help of divine grace. When words can no longer find adequate expressions and the need for a loving presence is affirmed: turn to Mary! The Virgin’s smile mysteriously hides the strength to go onward in the battle...

Seeking the smile of the Virgin Mary is not a form of pious infantilism; it is the inspiration, says Psalm 44, of those who are “the wealthiest of the people” (v. 13). “The wealthiest” is intended in terms of faith, those who have the highest degree of spiritual maturity and therefore know how to recognise their weakness and their poverty before God.

In that very simple manifestation of tenderness that is the smile, we perceive that our only wealth is the love that God has for us and that passes through the heart of she who has become our Mother. Seeking out this smile means first of all welcoming the gratuity of love, it also means being able to stir up this smile with our commitment to live according to the word of her chosen Son, like the child tries to provoke a smile in his mother by doing what she likes. And we know what Mary likes thanks to the words that she herself said to the servants at Cana: “Do whatever he tells you” (Ref John 2,5).

Mary’s smile is a source of living water. “Whoever believes in me, Jesus said, streams of living water shall flow from within him” (John 7,38). Mary is she who believed and from her breast, streams of living water flowed forth that come to irrigate the history of men. In actual fact, a free love that encourages a filial answer flows forth from Mary’s heart and it is incessantly called to be refined. Like every mother, or better than every mother, Mary is the educator of love. □

SIMPLE THOUGHTS by *Pietro Squassabia*

## **In the fullness of time**

In the fullness of time, God the Father let men know his merciful love, by sending his Son. In the fullness of time God also showed his Beauty through the human creature who let himself be completely involved by the gift of the Spirit. It is true: creation shows us God’s beauty, but Mary alone shows us it fully in all of its splendour. It would almost appear that God, wishing to show himself to men, gave himself to Mary, thinking of Her as the most appropriate tool with which to welcome Her beauty and show it to us. Perhaps for this reason God made Mary so marvellous: so that She might become His manifestation to men, as a Son. In this way, we cannot contemplate Mary without contemplating God.

I ask myself: why did God make Mary so beautiful to the extent that she became His worthy dwelling place? Certainly because he wanted to give humanity a great gift, which Mary is part of. Certainly because the Father wanted to openly show men, not only through his Son, but also through his Mother, how great his love is for man and for creation. Certainly because the Most High was pleased to offer us powerful help though a humble and “fragile” creature in the same way as us. For this reason Mary is an endless source of grace. Everyone can access her because she is a Mother and a Mother does not refuse any of her children.

One day Jesus said: whoever sees Me, sees the Father. And about Mary we could say: whoever sees Her, sees the splendour of God, and sees God. In Medjugorje also Mary certainly came to show us the face of God because this is her mission: to show us God in all of his beauty. Mary however definitely came also to help us to become the reflection of God ourselves so that many people might be able to savour the wonder of his presence. And so let us ask the Mother, who brings us the Child this Christmas, to make us bearers of this Beauty, for our good and for the good of many others.

## **Then love**

Do you really want to know the people and the things that are around you? Then love. Do you want to understand others and make yourself understood, speak to people’s hearts and know how to listen to them? Then love. If you do not love you cannot understand others because you don’t “see” them. A lack of love is a little like the fog that prevents you from seeing people and things clearly. And the more love is lacking, the more the fog becomes thick, to the extent that it completely prevents the view of what is around you. And so, without love, man cannot have positive relationships with his neighbour, even if he wants to, because he is incapable of “seeing” him: he cannot see him for what he is, he cannot see his true face, his true features, the good that he possesses nor the suffering that he carries around within himself. In short, when love is missing, we cannot see others or we see them differently: for this reason they escape our comprehension.

On the other hand, with love, the light that illuminates the whole of reality is given to us, in order to truly understand it. And so let us look at others in the right light, for what they truly are: a gift from God, without any distinction between people. And so we will certainly avoid misunderstandings, breakdowns, useless and unreal relations and we will be given the ability to fulfil what is good for us and for others. Our work will be fruitful, our commitment and our being with others will be rich in grace, and our language will never be offensive.

It is true: love alone lets us see everything with the eyes of God so as to grasp in other people what the Lord put there and what he didn’t put there. God certainly knows everything about us, he also knows our deepest reality, because he loves us deeply. This is also the case for us: the more we love, the more we know and understand others and also ourselves. Let us ask Jesus then, who was born in a manger, to always keep in us, the Love to understand others better. Perhaps in this way we will have the illumination to know how to see and love him in every person, without distinctions. □

## **A humanity of saints and immaculates**

“God the Father chose us in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world, to be holy and immaculate in his presence in love”. We are all called therefore to be holy and immaculate; it is our truest fate, it is God’s plan for us. A little further on, in the same letter to the Ephesians, Paul contemplates God’s plan, relating it no longer to men taken individually, each in his own right, but as the universal Church as the bride of Christ: “Christ loved the Church, he gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5, 25-27).

**A humanity of saints and immaculates:**

this is God’s great plan in creating the Church. A humanity that might finally appear before him, that must no longer flee from his sight, with its face full of shame, like Adam and Eve after sin. A humanity above all, that he might love and grasp in communion with him, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit.

In Mary, the entire future splendour of the Church already shines brightly, as though in a drop of dew, on a peaceful morning, the entire blue face of the sky is reflected. We were not born immaculate like she was through God’s unique privilege, evil is actually nestling in us in all fibres and forms. We are full of “wrinkles” to be smoothed away and of “stains” to be washed. It is in this work of purification and recovery of the image of God that Mary stands before us like a powerful reference”.

(From homily of Father Raniero Cantalamessa  
8<sup>th</sup> December 2006)

## Transform yourself, do not become deformed

by Stefania Consoli

There are moments in our life when we are almost forced to change the way we look in order to be more suitable for what history puts in our way. After all, it's natural, from the moment of our conception up to the time of our death an unstoppable process changes our body: in the beginning we were embryos and then babies, children, adults and elderly people. Spiritual laws also follow this principle. Jesus often recalls this in the gospel when he speaks to us about rotting grain, about shoots to be pruned, seeds transformed into trees. And so, in the measure of our spiritual growth, the form that in some way expresses it, is in a certain way *forced* to conform.

But you know, man in general becomes attached to *old* things, making them a habit that he finds it difficult to separate himself from: due to laziness, comfort or fear before the unknown novelty. And so he ends up *identifying* himself in a certain form, barring himself from the benefits of a normal and profitable evolution.

"You cannot put new wine into old wineskins", Jesus warns us (Mt 9,17); the fermentation process of new wine would actually risk splitting the wineskin that is already worn out by time and therefore causing the precious drink to be wasted. In other words: if we do not accept that we must replace the container, then sooner or later we are going to lose its contents.

This is why, when the moment comes for a beneficial renewal, the Lord assists our weakness with a tool that gives us the strength to abandon the "old skin" to which we are often attached.

It is the cross. The cross alone is capable of putting a whole series of balances into crisis, balances to which we grasp on to in order to obtain support, but that are suddenly revealed to be inadequate or surpassed. Like a *double edged sword*, the cross breaks what still binds us, so as to make us free in God, or better said, to allow God to act freely without anything in us being able to influence or limit him.

The Lord knows, for man every detachment represents a little death, a separation from what is dear to him. Affection however, or *feeling* good in a certain circumstance, does not necessarily mean that that is *the* good. For this reason, God proposes that we should abandon our expectations, our future prospects, to Him, in the certainty that death experienced in God is the prelude to a better life. Only in this way will we succeed in facing the "jump into the darkness", the unknown abyss of what is *not yet*.

In its different aspects, the cross is offered to us to elevate ourselves to a higher order of ideas, of feelings, of actions. If we welcome it willingly, it will give us a better form, because the cross *transforms* us and does not *deform* us. In fact, the process of transformation ennoble the substance, it fulfils it, respecting its identity. Deformation on the other hand is a typically human work: it deforms nature, it causes it to decay, it depreciates it, and it alters it to the point that it no longer looks like itself.

This is what men thought they were doing with the Crucifix: "Let's eliminate it, let's get it out of the way because it is not operating as it should...". And they furiously lashed out at him, until such time as "His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men" as Isaiah had already announced

(52,14). But he whom they were attempting to *deform* in the attempt to deny the truth that He was, was on the other hand *transformed* by the invincible force of the resurrection that changed death into eternal life.

The difference lies here. The cross always carries our true essence on the surface, it promotes us by transforming us for the better: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself", the Master used to say to his disciples (John 12,32). Vice-versa, judgement moved by purely human interests always attempts to impose the yoke of *conformism*, with the risk of irreparably deforming the only image of God within us. □

### But Jesus kept silent (Mt 26, 63)

#### Silence is Meekness.

When you do not defend yourself against offences;  
When you do not claim your rights;  
When you let God defend you;  
Silence is Meekness.

#### Silence is Mercy.

When you do not reveal the faults of your brothers to others;  
When you readily forgive without inquiring into the past;  
When you do not judge, but pray in your heart;  
Silence is Mercy.

#### Silence is Patience.

When you accept suffering not with grumbling but joyfully;  
When you do not look for human consolations;  
When you do not become too anxious, but wait in patience for the seed to germinate;  
Silence is Patience.

#### Silence is Humility.

When there is no competition;  
When you consider the other person to be better than yourself;  
When you let your brothers emerge, grow and mature;  
When you joyfully abandon all to the Lord;  
When your actions may be misinterpreted;  
When you leave to others the glory of the enterprise;  
Silence is Humility.

#### Silence is Faith.

When you keep quiet because you know that the Lord will act;  
When you renounce the voice of the world to remain in the presence of the Lord;  
When you do not labour yourself to be understood; because it is enough for you to know that the Lord understands you;  
Silence is Faith.

#### Silence is Adoration.

When you embrace the cross without asking "Why?";  
Silence is Adoration.

### FROM SILENCE TO SILENCE

The action of the Virgin consists of remaining in silence and listening. It is her condition, her voice, and her life. Hers is a life of silence that adores the eternal Word. On seeing before her eyes, in her breast, in her arms, this very Word, the substantial Word of the Father...

She remains silent, reduced to silence during the childhood of the Infant Jesus, Mary immerses herself in a new silence and she transforms herself into silence, following the example of the Word made flesh, which is her Son, her God, her only love.

And her life goes from silence to silence, from the silence of the Adoration to that of the Transformation.

Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629)

## LEARNING PRAYER

It is often the case that in the desire to pray "without ever growing tired" as Jesus asks us in his Gospel (Luke 18,7) we do not know how to decide on the best form that is suitable for prayer prolonged over time and that articulates our day without weighing down on it with an infinite quantity of orations that we occasionally repeat mechanically without ever entering into true prayer.

As a form of help, we have proposed an itinerary that will help us to understand the characteristics of complete prayer, capable of involving all the levels of our being without oppressing it or leaving it without the necessary spiritual nourishment. This is an itinerary outlined by **Lorenzo Netto** to show us that it is indeed possible to pray **TIRELESSLY**.

### Prayer, an imposition or a gift?

According to the Gospel of Jesus, praying means **seeking God obstinately**, tiring ourselves in our effort to establish a vital contact with the Most High, to show him that he is considered wholly worthy of all most intelligent attention and care. Praying corresponds to **following God**. Passionately wanting to meet Him is the principle and end of every created reality.

Jesus loved and practised prayer so much. He left us some fundamental directions, models of reference, inspirational elements for the Christian prayer of the Church, which may be summarised as: glorifying the name of God; asking for daily "bread"; interceding; immersing ourselves and exploring the truths that have been revealed; loving silence and solitude as preliminary conditions to come into harmony with the wave of the Trinity.

These points are similar to the musical notes of a sublime essence that is shared and through which the person engaging in prayer recognises, sings, meditates, praises the primate, the glory, and the love of God. These are forms of prayer that the disciple of Christ is called to practice, to develop, to perfect along the pathway of his growth and Christian maturity, cultivating in his heart the ambition to reach integrated prayer.

**What is integrated prayer?** It is the ability to pass from one note to the other with the surprising self-confidence of the musician who plays on the keyboard or with the cords of an instrument. With his eyes closed, his soul immersed in the harmony that expert hands, guided by an admirable musical genius, are calling to life.

All Christians can (should?!) legitimately aspire to this. We arrive at integrated prayer after lengthy training, making ourselves available to the Holy Spirit, to whom the Master of Nazareth has entrusted the direction and conduction of the school of prayer.

How do we succeed? Here too, like in all other undertakings of the Christian experience, the evangelical law reported by Luke is to be considered valid (16, 10): "he who is faithful in what is least is also faithful in much". Precisely, tirelessly!



1. To be continued

## “Separation was inevitable”

We got married after a year-long engagement when I was 22 years old and my husband was 24. We had a rosy vision of life and lots of dreams and hopes to fulfil, but unfortunately for us, they had no foundations. Our parents, who were of simple origins, had taught us certain values such as the simplicity of life, to live frugally, to make sacrifices, they taught us about the importance of Mass, but we thought that these were things that belonged to the past, we felt part of the world and so we were interested in work, beautiful things, clothes of a certain kind and friends.

All of this brought an amount of aridity into our lives, misunderstandings began to surface, along with instances of selfishness, which became stronger, each of us blamed the other and expected everything from the other person without giving. It was so sad. We had become two strangers living under the same roof, only ever speaking about superficial things.

During that period, the apparitions in Medjugorje had started and we had heard about them. I left for a pilgrimage on the bus with my two children, who were still young; my husband couldn't join us because he had some problems at work. I still carry that first experience around in my heart given the gift

that Mary gave to me in my soul.

Despite this gift, the breakdown was so strong that separation became inevitable. We thought that with the children having grown up they would understand; only afterwards we realised that children are never old enough to be able to experience the separation of their parents, they are victims who are forced to incur bad choices; even if they seem at peace and apparently live a normal life, their heart is broken and they are experiencing many fears and sufferings.

We were separated for ten years and during all that time we never thought about a possible reconciliation because we hadn't solved any problem and we couldn't forgive each other. In our humanity, we tried to live in apparent normality, but this created a lot of tension.

Aware of having done nothing with his own strength, and conscious of the time we had wasted with lawyers, my husband went on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje and put our difficult family situation into Mary's hands. Our Heavenly Mother embraced us.

In the meantime our son approached God and also thanks to his offering, our healing commenced. Together with him, we took the first steps, we shared our sense of closure, our fears, our joys and our pains of the last years. We started to pray together as a family, initially very awkwardly and then more naturally, respecting everyone's times. We managed to forgive each other from the depths of our

hearts, not forgetting our past experience, but beginning from it to grow and experience our marriage.

With a sense of opening in our hearts we also felt our children's breath, their possibility of being able to love freely, fearlessly, with a sense of peace in their hearts that illuminated their faces. Everything happened naturally, we approached each other without any obligation or sense of forcedness; on certain occasions the past cropped up again, but we were beginning to have the base on which to sustain ourselves.

Sharing, prayer and offering are fundamental steps that allow us to know ourselves in depth, to help each other and to sustain each other reciprocally.

We ignored so many things for many years! The pathway of offering of our life allowed our souls to open up and to live like new people, to heal and to experience our marriage with Love for God. Mary denied us nothing, she gave us the possibility of continuing to grow spiritually in communion with other brothers and sisters.

We now thank the Blessed Trinity through Mary with our life for having given us this second chance, for our children who, with their prayer and silent suffering, helped our growth, for the people whom she placed on our pathway and who helped us to experience conversion and our marriage truly.

Clelia G.

## It's happening in Medjugorje... From Halina's notes

### TOLLING OF BELLS

Despite the fact that the time for holidays has already passed, from every corner of the world there are people coming continually to this place that is blessed by the presence of the Queen of Peace. It would appear that Mary is making herself heard from the ends of the earth, calling “for the return to a life in God and with God”, as is the case for the sound of the bell of the church of Saint James (protector of pilgrims) which can be heard as far as the confines of the countryside around Medjugorje and which invites men “to the Lord's banquet”.

The tolling of the bells in itself has the strength of calling people back and entering into harmony with the beat of the human heart. The profound invitation that the bells launch with their melody appears to attract people to approach this place and enter into the mystery that it announces. Yes, the bells of Medjugorje enter people's ears and their hearts...

### RAYS OF SUNSHINE

Like rays of sunshine, the ministries descend from the altar of the Lord, bringing with them and distributing “the Bread that has descended from Heaven”, “the Pledge of future glory” among the people, and then they return to holy mass again. This is a daily image here in Medjugorje at the time of holy communion, that of the numerous priests who act at the service of the sole and supreme priest Jesus Christ, that Sun that comes “..... which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1, 78-79).

Priests are the rays of that blessed Sun, the rays that bring the light, the heat and the life of the living God, chosen and consecrated by Him to be at his service. “Pray for priests...” Our

Lady often reminds us through the messages delivered to Mirjana, so that they might be true mediators, profound and worthy of the Lord. But in baptismal grace we were all immersed in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ, we are all called to become the “sentinels of the morning at the dawning of every day that force themselves with all their might to make this earth ever more inhabitable for everyone...”

### THE TEN FINGERS

Some time ago, one of the brothers of the parish said in his sermon: “praying the holy rosary with its mysteries is actually a concentrated gospel”. That good brother wasn't wrong at all.

We all know that October is the month of the Holy Rosary, but those who have come to Medjugorje at any time of year can confirm that here the rosary is a prayer that is constantly loved by people. It is a pleasure to see people meditating in the company of the Blessed Virgin on divine life, the Lord's plan for salvation, his living and current action...

Our hearts are enlivened and a blessing is spontaneously born when on our pathway we encounter a young man with a set of rosary beads in his hand or an old lady with her eyes radiant, passing the beads of the rosary through her fingers; or indeed a father who helps his little daughter to join her hands in prayer and while he exclaims the Hail Mary in her place, the little one opens herself up in a smile....

The rosary is the meditated gospel, it is a powerful weapon, it is nearness to the Virgin Mother, it is an intimate prayer yet a prayer of great communion...

At the end, the same brother said: “you can pray the rosary even if you have nothing, nothing at all, because you always have your ten fingers”. □

## “I had opened the door to the Virgin!”

*Let's get back to the testimony of Davide P., who found the strength to abandon the road of drug addiction and who found the way that leads to God (see Echo 201)*

“Finally, the destination: Medjugorje, after a long journey lasting no less than 13 hours! Upon our arrival we immediately go to the little chapel at Vicka's house, where the priest who was accompanying us celebrated the Mass. I didn't receive the Eucharist because I hadn't been to confession since Christmas!

On the first evening two beers were the only company that my friend and I had. But the news that the day after we were to go to participate in the **apparition of Our Lady to Mirjana** filled me with enthusiasm, a sense of excitement mixed with curiosity.

Already in the early morning there was a large crowd of people; I tried to make some space for myself to approach the visionary, but it was impossible. People were reciting the rosary with Mirjana, and she was on her knees praying. All of a sudden I saw this young woman looking towards the heavens with her eyes shining like diamonds and speaking to *something* that was above her...She was speaking to Our Lady...while there was an *atomic* silence all around!

Nobody could see the Virgin apart from her, but you could feel a sensation of absolute peace and there was an atmosphere full of love towards those who were present. We all understood that we were participating in something unique, I felt myself vibrating! When the apparition ended, Mirjana said that Our Lady had blessed all those present, asking to pray to her always and promising that she would be alongside everyone who invoked her. It was

incredible that the Virgin looked at me in my heart and blessed me, me, not someone of great virtues! It was a dream and I immediately came to understand the exceptional nature of it.

### The caresses of children

Later on we went to a large house where we offloaded some foodstuffs. When we entered, a nun explained to us that it was an **orphanage** for children who had been orphaned by war or who had been abandoned by families that were too poor. I had never been in an orphanage.... We said a few prayers with the nun and the children and then we left.

It was then that something truly moving occurred. All the children of the orphanage came out and harassed us just to receive a caress. One of them linked himself onto our driver with a hug as though he was his father! What suffering and what a desire those children had to be loved! We who have lived with our parents in idleness and with all gifts from God cannot even imagine it. We left them unfortunately with a sense of mortifying regret. In the society in which we live we don't even think about these realities, we pretend that they don't exist but we must see them with our own eyes to believe!

### I had to open up to her

During the afternoon I wandered around the streets of Medjugorje alone and arrived in front of a hill that led up to the statue of Our Lady on the summit. It was the hill called Podbordo where the first apparitions occurred. And so I began to climb up in slippers and I noticed that as they were climbing up, everyone else was praying the rosary. I said nothing, I sat on a stone around half way up and there I tried to enter into harmony with Our lady but I couldn't feel anything at all! Medjugorje and the Virgin hadn't yet unveiled their faces to me. As soon as I returned to the hotel I knew that people were going onto Podbordo where I had just been. What boredom, again...!

We went up along this jagged mountain of steep stones like everyone else and we also recited the rosary; but I wasn't so enthusiastic about it because it was so hot and I was thinking more about the heat than about prayer! Having arrived at the summit, I sat down for a few minutes before the white statue of Our Lady and then I came back down on my own through a little laneway called the laneway of silence. But I felt an enormous sense of anger and disappointment because I couldn't throw away the evil that was within me; I remember that I hurled the bottle that I was carrying in my hand on the ground several times in frustration. I still didn't understand that I had to open up to the Queen of Peace!

### A single light in the darkness

During the evening time there was to be the adoration of the Eucharist and I had no idea what it was about. All I saw was that in the square behind the church lots of young people were also gathering to go to *this thing*.

I isolated myself from my group and sat down there at a distance of about ten metres. The square was brimming with young people and there was an enormous silence. At the bottom, on the large altar, there was a light that illuminated the Most Blessed Sacrament, that was the only light on, around it the whole square was in darkness. In various languages and with brief prayers, a priest guided the adoration to Jesus, the Most Blessed Sacrament.

It was all new to me. In that darkness, the light of Most Blessed Sacrament rendered the idea that **he alone is the Light and whoever does not live in him shall live in darkness**. I was moved. Being there was just beautiful!

Nevertheless, due to a series of misunderstandings, I ended the evening in a bar with some friends of mine. The group leader came to look for us all over Medjugorje and gave out to us, because he was very worried: where had we gone?! To tell you the truth, he treated us harshly and at the time I was furious because it had been ten years since anyone had given out to me like that.

I was really angry because I found everything to be absurdly exaggerated. Reflecting then during the night, I understood that perhaps he had done it for our own good because we were throwing away a great opportunity to be united with Our Lady: we would never have met the Blessed Virgin in any bar! Having understood this I managed to relax.

### "But do you want to change or not?"

The next day, the person responsible took me aside and asked me if I really wanted to change or not, because in his view I hadn't the slightest intention. I immediately understood that I was getting it all wrong and that I needed to open up more towards Our Lady: I didn't want to throw away this opportunity, because if Our Lady had called me there, she certainly wanted to talk to me and I wanted to talk to her. We went back to the square where the church for the Mass is....

Around the church there were tens and tens of priests from all over the world who were confessing all the faithful who wanted to confess. I thought about the fact that since Christmas I hadn't "emptied the bag" full of bitterness, defeats and disappointments. And so I decided to go to confession. I found a very tactful priest and when I told him my story we cried together and he thanked me for having given my testimony; then we parted our ways and he gave me his blessing.

Mass was on but I didn't go; I had finally freed myself...I walked around for a long time aimlessly and I cried about all the suffering and pain that I had accumulated. There was truly a lot of pain that I had been carrying around, really a lot and I cried for a long time.

Normally I never cry, but the sensations that I felt during those moments are indescribable. I felt free and the time had come to meet the Queen of peace. It was an emotion that split me in four... I cried and cried and cried for about an hour. I felt like a new spirit, I had never felt that type of relief after a confession. There was something strange: I had opened the door to the Virgin!"

(2. To be continued)

## Apparition to Mirjana

### 2<sup>nd</sup> of October

"Dear children! Once again I invite you to faith. My maternal heart wants your heart open to be able to say to it: "believe!" My children, in the trials of life faith is the only thing that will give you strength. It will renew your soul and open the pathways of hope to you. I am with you. I gather you around me, I want to help you so that you to might be able to help your neighbour in the discovery of faith, the only joy and happiness of life. Thank you".

## "I am the Immaculate Conception"

It seems more appropriate than ever to speak about the Immaculate Conception during the **jubilee year** that **Lourdes** is celebrating, which is set to come to a close on the **8<sup>th</sup> of December**. It was during that far off year of 1858 in Lourdes, to that little girl who repeatedly asked who she was, that the Holy Virgin finally revealed: "*I am the Immaculate Conception*", thus confirming the truth of the dogma proclaimed by Pope Pious IX four years earlier. Bernadette had no idea of the significance of that name said in the Provencal dialect, the only language that the girl knew how to understand and could speak. Before that in fact, she referred to the beautiful Lady simply as "Aqhero" (*That one*). This revelation therefore made her testimony believable, especially in the Church that was meant to support and protect her.

"Thus Mary reveals to her the extraordinary grace that she received from God, that of being conceived without sin, because she "looked upon the humility of her servant" said pope Benedict XVI in his pilgrimage to Lourdes at the beginning of September; "This is the pathway that Mary also opens up to man - observed the Pope - To put ourselves completely into God's hands and find the pathway of true freedom. By turning to God, man becomes himself. He finds his original vocation as a person created in his image and likeness".

Our Lady therefore did not come to the small French suburb only to endorse a dogma, but to **leave an inheritance to her children, a place where they could literally immerse themselves in the immaculate nature of Mary**: "*Go and drink from the source and wash yourself*", she once said to little Soubirous. Go means start walking, to go on a pilgrimage to seek out and find the source of grace: there it is Mary herself who gives us Jesus. The invitation to wash ourselves is part of the symbolism of the Baptism in which, through water, we immerse ourselves in the death and resurrection of Christ, to be born again to a new life, or to be a new creature, purified by the stain of origin, like Mary.

In Lourdes the Lord wanted to leave living and working signs of his plan for Salvation: the Immaculate Mother, through whom the Incarnation of the Saviour and the water came about, flowing forth from the side of Christ crucified, it gave life to the Church, in which the resurrection is operational. Every year six million pilgrims are invited to immerse themselves faithfully in those living waters, in the hope of being healed: some even physically, but without a doubt all spiritually, to be healed of the deep wounds that sin leaves in the weak soul, and washed of the scum that sin deposits on our spirit, making it heavy and feeble.

"*This water is not medicine*", Bernadette used to say when she was a nurse in Nevers, "*you must have faith and pray*". *This water would have no virtues without faith*", it is a fresh grace that restores that which gushes out in Lourdes, but it also has a profound theological and ecclesiastical capacity that says how the Church of the Heaven is so close to that of earth that it makes it more and more one in She whom God thought and created Immaculate.

S.C.

## ECHO IS CALLED TO ANSWER.... to what?

It is with a certain sense of pain that I feel an air of mistrust and suspicion as regards our little magazine. From several sides I hear the demand to enlighten, but to enlighten what? On Father Tomislav? On the fact that members of the community founded by him write in our little magazine? I am absolutely certain of one thing, that strange affirmations were never published in Echo.

If there is disciplinary action being taken as regards Father Tomislav, I believe that it is right to allow the Spirit to guide the Church. It is not by speaking about it from here that we can enlighten anyone. It is not our duty. In actual fact, as is often the case regarding the work of the press, we would only complicate things more. At this time I think of simpler people, who are far from the western world. The missionary world or the world of young and poor churches to whom this publication is sent. I am thinking about their bewilderment, their disappointment.

For me **silence and confidentiality** are important ways of behaviour if we want to arrive at the truth. Echo did not receive any measure or notification from the competent authorities. An important reason for its survival is the request made to readers, which is also manifested through financial support. On many occasions we asked ourselves if it was a good idea to continue when it seemed that we no longer had sufficient material resources and then, all of a sudden our balance sheets made us believe that we could. This criteria still remains valid today. Therefore this could be the last issue. It is up to the readers and collaborators to let us know whether or not we should continue.

I know that I didn't release any extraordinary news because I am not aware of any. That is, **I cannot take "hearsay" into consideration**. Those who are certain of being able to tell the truth should do so, taking all the responsibility for the same. The duty of this magazine, it seems to me, is to **spread Mary's message today**, and to support the faith of those who use this means faithfully. It is not the only tool or the only necessary tool, but we give thanks to God for having been able to operate as you have seen us do. *Fr. Alberto Bertozzi*

## Echo thanks you

Echo is about to reach the end of this year thanks also to you, readers of these pages, thanks to your spiritual communion, your prayers and your support. As is the case with God's things, Echo is small and needs help: it needs its brother. Yes, support passes through our brother because this is what Divine Wisdom has arranged in his divine plans. And so Echo is relying on you for the future, as was the case in the past. Echo considers your help like a sign that Mary continues to be pleased that many of her children, who live in so many parts of the earth and who have different languages and customs, are united around Her through this humble instrument. And so, if this is the case, you are contributing to the realisation of Mary's plan, and your work becomes Mary's.

## Open letter from a distributor

**Echo of Mary, always respectful and faithful to the inspirations of its founder Father Angelo Mutti, whom I knew and esteemed highly.**

I've been distributing Echo in Varese for over 20 years now and wherever I go, initially for work and now that I am retired. To see evil and disordered attacks that it is the victim of by ecclesiastical realities, attacks that have not highlighted the virtues and fraternal sense of uprightness that they should be inspired by, has saddened me deeply, not for Echo, which is - as it is - Our Lady's and she will deal with protecting it, but for my brothers in faith who throw away the living baby with the bathwater that they believe to be dirty while the baby is not so.

In fact, nothing criticisable has been written and published over these last few years: only Our Lady's messages with their wise commentary, profound teachings, respectful summaries of the interventions of the Teaching in the life of the Church and precise and punctual reports about the presence of Our Lady in Medjugorje as well as the fruits that she brought to maturity.

Even the reports about the pathway of the Offertory written by father Tomislav Vlastic over the years were always magisterial, constantly containing a pastoral, ecclesiastical register, in the orthodoxy of the Church, **it suffices to re-read them with a clean heart free of prejudice.**

I would like to thank the Lord and the Queen of Peace for having walked alongside my brothers, now in the time of their trial, faithful in the justice and mercy of the Lord. By the Grace of God the Church takes its time in discerning, but it asks us for prudence and love.

*Romano Zangarini*

### Echo fully relies on readers' donations.

To all who have been instruments of Providence for Echo, enabling us to continue to help Mary reach her children, goes our heartfelt thanks, whom we remember especially in prayer and at Holy Mass.

If you desire a written response for your donation, please kindly request it. May God reward you and your loved ones onehundredfold!

### Father Lorenzo from RWANDA:

### *The Mission is a question of love!*

*Dear friends,*

I am writing to you today on the day of my 85<sup>th</sup> birthday...My conversion began in 1938 in the country of my birth, in Italy, when my Chaplain spoke to Aldo, a young friend of mine, to dissuade him from his intention to offer himself as a victim of immolation to the Merciful Love for the salvation of souls, because he was an only child. Aldo thought about it and answered: "Jesus was an only son too and his Father immolated him".

The greatest glory that we can give to God is precisely in the mysterious secret of redeeming suffering, supported and desired with love for our brothers, exactly like Jesus did!

I understood that the "**mysticism of reparation**" cannot be limited to prayer but that it is sacrifice above all: the "*pretium sanguinis*" that Father Divo Barsotti invites us to do: "Everything for your glory Lord! In exchange for all sins, all blasphemy, all offences that men bring on you,

take me: I offer you my whole self. Put the burden of human sin wholly on me, but may you be glorified with my death, as you were with the sacrifice of your Son". You can understand then why I am always smiling: this is a beautiful way to live!

As a Missionary I want to invite all of you to reflect on the urgency of continuing to **proclaim the Gospel to everyone**. The Missionary Mandate continues to be an absolute priority for all the baptised, called to be servants and apostles of Jesus Christ.

It is beautiful to admire Saint Paul during this Paulian year, how he experienced Jesus' invitation: "Go! it is to the far off ones, it is to the pagans that I want to sent you". And Saint Paul went to bring the Good News to everyone, which may be summed up as follows: "We are all sinners, but God loves everyone; Jews and non-Jews can become *righteous* by believing in Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for them. Saint Paul had understood well: humanity could not find the Redemption and the Hope that is in Jesus, the Promise of life and our Hope. The Mission is a question of LOVE: it is the answer to the Love with which God loves us!

May **prayer** be intensified among everyone, it is an essential spiritual means for spreading the Light of Christ, entrusting the apostolic work of the Missionaries to the Lord, invoking the intercession of Saint Paul and the Virgin Mary, the living Arc of the Alliance.

The little **polio-afflicted children** of the Heri-Kwetu Centre of Bukavu recite the Holy Rosary for all of you, friends and benefactors, every evening, so that our Mother might be near to you. Every evening at 9.00 p.m. I entrust you to Mary so that she might give you her Heart.

With her, I smile at you, I embrace you and I bless you.

*Father Lorenzo Caselin*

### Those who wish to may send Father Lorenzo their contribution to the bank account in Brussels:

Ing. Bank - Avenue Marnix, 25 - B 1000  
Brussels Belgium

IBAN 3101 1803 7568 BIC (Swift)

BBRUBEBB

A/Name MISSIONAIRES XAVERIENS  
Pour P. Lorenzo Caselin comme SUBSIDES  
HUMANITAIRES pro Heri-Kwetu à Bukavu  
A/N° 310-1180375-68

### Personal cheques accepted; also International Postal Orders.

And where convenient (within Europe) by **bank transfer** (specify for Echo of Mary Assoc):

1) **Italy:** Banca Agricola Mantovana, Agenzia Belfiore Mantova, Italy. IBAN: IT 02 Z 05024 11506 000004754018  
Swift : BAMNIT21-185

2) **Scotland:** Royal Bank of Scotland, 26 George St., Oban, Argyll.  
Acc. no. 8326 0400 154351

*"If you follow Mary you will never get lost; pray to Her and you will not know desperation, think of Her and you will not be wrong. If She guides you, you will not fall; if She protects you, you will be afraid of nothing".*  
(Saint Bernard)

Italy, 25 november 2008