

# Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 November 2004:

**“Dear Children, At this time I call you all to pray for my intentions. In particular, my Children, pray for those who haven't come to know God's love and who do not seek God the Saviour.**

**My Children, be my extended hands, and by your example draw them closer to my Heart and to the Heart of my Son. God will reward you with graces and every blessing. Thank you for responding to my call.”**

## Be my extended hands

Mary calls us anew to collaborate with Her in the her work of salvation. We are called once again to **pray for her intentions**, and the call is addressed to **us all**. Make no delay, asking yourselves whether the call is for you or for another! or asking whether or not you are worthy for the task! It is not up to us to judge. Our Mother calls, and we must run to respond – even if we are unclean, she will provide for the means to make us clean; if we are incapable, she will make us suitable. All we need do is respond, without delay, and with joy and enthusiasm.

**“At this time I call you all to pray for my intentions”** and a part of these intentions is revealed to us: **“Pray for those who haven't come to know God's love and who do not seek God the Saviour.”** With this we shouldn't think of people who live so far out of civilization that the good news hasn't yet reached them. Even well-lit cities can lack the Light, and even places where it seems everything was made for life may lack the Life, and even in *Christian* families it may be that Christ is missing! In fact, it is precisely there where Christ is no longer a novelty that He is easily put aside the way one would do with a dated, useless object.

Yet, today more than ever, the world has absolute need for God. Today, after 2000 years of Christianity, God's Love is little known, even less practised, but without His Love the world cannot exist. *“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing”* (1 Co 13:3) and very little, if even that, is gained for the world's salvation. *“We love because He first loved us”* (1 Jn 4:19). From His Love we can draw love - true love - that allows one to joyfully journey through this valley of tears.

Jesus says to the Samaritan woman: *Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become*



*... give us this day our daily bread!*

*in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life* (Jn 4:13-14). And again: *This is eternal life: that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, (Jn 17:3).

It is not possible to know God without knowing His Love. It is not possible to enter into the eternal life without entering into this Love. Any love that does not come from the Love is a useless and harmful surrogate, a drug which puts out all desire for God, that stops us from **seeking God the Saviour**.

Yet God is close at hand. It is precisely because the *night is far gone* (Rm 13:12) that the day is upon us. Let's offer our hand to Mary then; she will pull us up so we can become **her extended hands**. Hands stretched out to God to implore salvation and forgiveness; hands stretched out to our brothers and sisters to bring them **closer to the Hearts of Mary and Jesus**; outstretched hands - as opposed to tight fists - that sustain, welcome, caress. Outstretched hands like those of Mother Teresa, of Mary and of Jesus. Hands stretched out so they don't close back in on themselves; that don't keep anything for themselves but give out all the love they receive from God.

Already many are the hands that are outstretched for Mary. Let's add our own; let's lend them to Mary, and she will know how to use them, and **graces and blessings** will be poured down.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 December 2004:

**“Dear Children, With great joy, I bring my Son Jesus in my arms to you also today; He blesses you and calls you to peace. Pray, my Children, and be courageous witnesses of the Good News in every situation. Only in this way will God bless you and give you everything you ask of Him in faith.**

**I am with you as long as the Most High permits. I intercede for each of you with great love. Thank you for responding to my call.”**

## Being witnesses

**With great joy, I bring my Son Jesus in my arms to you also today.** Mary thus depicts within our hearts the icon of Christmas. She has done this many times in the past; and she does it also today. The mystery of Christmas: an event of unheard-of grandeur, while also of extreme simplicity: the Woman and the Babe.

Easy to vision, difficult to interpret. For some it is *revealed*, for others it is *hidden* (Mt 11:25; 13:11). It is both light and darkness. Neither human wisdom nor science can suffice, nor can centuries or millennia, or extraordinary events and miracles, or lessons from history and the experience of man's success and failures. Whether a contemporary of Christ or a man of a thousand or two thousand years later, our response to the event of the birth of Jesus is forever personal, and on it depends our life. *He came to His own domain, and His own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept Him He gave power to become children of God* (Jn 1:11-12). The birth of God among men, if accepted, generates children out of men, true children of God (cf. 1 Jn 3:2). Christmas is this mysterious yet real exchange between God and man.

**Jesus blesses us and calls us to live peace.** In this call is the gift of peace, but we are expected to transmit the gift. Peace comes from that crib which the eyes of the powerful cannot see; it comes from that corner of the world which seems insignificant to the world's big. Peace is the seed of God's Love hidden in the womb of the Woman, now born to be the Light of the world. It cannot be hidden or managed according to human criteria. Peace comes from God alone, and he who wants to be a bearer of this Peace must pass it on to those chosen by God: *those loved by Him* (cf. Lk 2:14), that is, all men.

**Pray my Children, and be courageous witnesses of the good news in every situation.** God saves us in Jesus, for Jesus and with Jesus. Jesus alone is our last hope for all situations, for all times.

*Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever!* (Heb 13:8). Our God isn't an ordinary god; He is the God who came to us through Jesus so we would know Him; and there is no other. This is the good news, and it is always the same, as it was yesterday, it is also today and always will be, for ever. The good news matures with **prayer**, for it is not fruit of human ability, but a gift of God. The good news is transmitted through **witness**, for it is not verbal expression, but the way we live life. The good news requires God's blessing, for it is only with His blessing that we can receive the strength and **courage to witness**. Live Jesus and take Him (Who lives in us) to the others: isn't this the witness the world awaits? What else could we **seek from God in faith?**

**I am with you for as long as the Most High permits it.** *Dare we try the patience of God?* (cf. Is 7:13). **With great love Mary intercedes for each of us.** While still in time, let's accept her intercession and seek refuge in her embrace and be lost in the Babe which she carries. And for each of us, it will truly be Christmas!  
N.Q.

## ***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good***

Here is a synthesis **Pope John Paul II's message** given on 1 January 2005 in which he stresses that man's fundamental good: **PEACE**, continues to be undermined - but based on the certainty that evil will *not* prevail, Christians nourish an invincible hope.

We who've responded to the appeal of Mary Queen of Peace are well aware that for God it is ever more impelling that peace be re-established on the earth (through His Grace) so that man can live his brief earthly existence with dignity.

Our Lady insists with her appeals, and the Pope makes her appeals his own in a time when one could easily be overcome by discouragement. Here is his message:

"I have chosen as theme for the **World Day of Peace** St Paul's words: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Rom 12:21). Evil is never defeated by evil." Nay, "once that road is taken, rather than defeating evil, one will instead be defeated by evil," says the Pope.

"The great Apostle brings out a fundamental truth: **peace is the outcome of a long and demanding battle which is only won when evil is defeated by good.** If we consider the tragic scenario of violent fratricidal conflicts in different parts of the world, and the untold sufferings and injustices to which they have given rise, the only truly constructive choice is, as Paul proposes, *to flee what is evil and hold fast to what is good* (cf. Rom 12:9).

**Peace is a good to be promoted with good:** it is a good for individuals, for families, for nations and for all humanity; yet it is one which needs to be maintained and fostered by decisions and actions inspired by good. We can appreciate the profound truth of another saying of St Paul: *Repay no one evil for evil* (Rom 12:17).

## ***Evil, good and love***

From the beginning, humanity has known the tragedy of evil and has struggled to grasp its roots and to explain its causes. **Evil is not some impersonal, deterministic force** at work in the world. It is the result of human freedom. Freedom, which distinguishes human beings from every other creature on earth, is ever present at the heart of the drama of evil. **Evil always has a name and a face:** the name and face of those men and women who freely choose it. Sacred Scripture teaches that at the dawn of history Adam and Eve rebelled against God, and Abel was killed by Cain, his brother (cf. Gen 3-4). These were the first wrong choices, which were succeeded by countless others down the centuries.

At its deepest level, **evil is a tragic rejection of the demands of love.** Moral good, on the other hand, is born of love, shows itself as love and is directed towards love. All this is particularly evident to Christians, who know that their membership in the one mystical Body of Christ sets them in a particular relationship not only with the Lord but also with their brothers and sisters. The inner logic of Christian love, which in the Gospel is the living source of moral goodness, leads even to the love of one's enemies: *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink* (Rom 12:20).

To attain the good of peace there must be a clear and conscious acknowledgment that violence is an unacceptable evil and that it never solves problems. "**Violence is a lie**, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. **Violence destroys what it claims to defend:** the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings."

## ***Good of peace and common good***

Fostering peace by overcoming evil with good requires careful reflection on the common good and on its social and political implications. When the common good is promoted at every level, peace is promoted. Can an individual find complete fulfilment without taking account of his social nature, of his being "with" and "for" others? The common good closely concerns him. It closely concerns every expression of his social nature: the family, groups, associations, cities, regions, states, the community of peoples and nations. Each, in some way, is called to work for the common good, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own.

The common good therefore demands respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights, as well as respect for and the promotion of the rights of nations on the universal plane.

Certain reductive visions of humanity tend to present the common good as a purely socio-economic state of well-being lacking any transcendent purpose, thus emptying it of its deepest meaning. Yet the common good has a transcendent

dimension, for God is the ultimate end of all his creatures. Christians know that Jesus has shed full light on how the true common good of humanity is to be achieved. History journeys towards Christ and in him finds its culmination: because of Christ, through Christ and for Christ, every human reality can be led to complete fulfilment in God.

## ***Universality of evil and Christian hope***

Faced with the many tragic situations present in the world, Christians confess with humble trust that **God alone can enable individuals and peoples to overcome evil and achieve good.** By his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed us and ransomed us "with a price" (1 Co 6:20; 7:23), gaining salvation for all. With his help, everyone can *defeat evil with good.*

Though the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Th 2:7) is present and active in the world, **we must not forget that redeemed humanity is capable of resisting it.** Each believer, created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, "who in a certain way has united himself to each human being", can cooperate in the triumph of good. The work of "the Spirit of the Lord fills the earth" (Wis 1:7).

Christians, especially the lay faithful, "should not, then, hide their hope in the depth of their hearts, but rather express it through the structures of their secular lives in continual conversion and in wrestling 'against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of iniquity' (Eph 6:12)."

**No man or woman of good will can renounce the struggle to overcome evil with good.** This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love. When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails."

## ***Hands outstretched***

### ***...crescendo of meanings in child's reflection***

In a small town in the Apennines near Modena Sr. Clare read Our Lady's message of the 25th November to the children and asked them what they thought "outstretched hands" meant.

Nine year old Valerio gave these three examples in the following order:

1. A child is walking, he falls, and another one offers him his hand.
2. A father and mother go for a walk on their own and they hold hands because they love each other.
3. A priest on Sunday takes the Host in his hand and offers it.



YEAR of the EUCHARIST

## Sea stopped at Mary's feet

News of the unfortunate tragedy that hit south east Asia at Christmas has filled TV screens and newspaper pages the world round. A lot of the news is desolating, while other news is encouraging, such as the extraordinary efforts to assist and bring relief to survivors. We hope that these initial sentiments of compassion will carry through into the future with constant and concrete commitment.

Little has been said, however, of an episode of divine intervention. It happened at **Vailankanni**, a Basilica and India's most popular **Marian Shrine**, also known as the Lourdes of India.

**"Faith is always rewarded,"** it says in the communiqué released by the diocese of Thanjavur. "More than a thousand people, including hundreds of pilgrims, perished within a one-kilometre radius of the basilica, but the Shrine remained untouched. The waves reached the main entrance of the Basilica, where the statue of Our Lady of Vailankanni is situated, and then withdrew." It is noted that the waves hit hotels and houses on the same elevation just 330 feet from the shrine.

**The official statement notes that about 2,000 pilgrims attending Mass were miraculously saved** when the water stopped at the gates of the Shrine compound.

"The powerful blessing of Our Lady of Vailankanni saved thousands of lives, because those inside the Basilica were unharmed," it goes on to say.

On the evening of 30 December, in the Basilica which by now is returning to its normal state thanks to the generous help of many, Mons. Ambrose Mariadoss celebrated a solemn Mass in memory of the victims and to thank Our Lady for her providential intervention.

A similar miracle is being proclaimed at the Santhome Cathedral which was built on an Apostle's tomb: that of **St. Thomas**.

Even though the tsunami waves devastated the Chennai coast, Fr Lawrence Raj - parish priest of the Santhome Cathedral - says, "the sea did not touch our church... We believe the miraculous post of St Thomas prevented the sea waters from entering the church."

Editor

"Have courage  
for the great sorrows of life  
and patience for the small ones;  
and when you have laboriously  
accomplished your daily task,  
go to sleep in peace.  
God is awake."

Victor Hugo

## Mother of the Cross

**She went to the Temple just as every other Israelite mother to present her firstborn son.** Together with her spouse she was happy to offer up that fruit which the Lord had granted her in such an unusual way: a son generated not by human seed but by the Holy Spirit, in her virginal and immaculate womb.

Endowed with the freshness of her youth, and the innate wisdom all mothers have, Mary climbed the stairs of the Temple, holding her little Jesus to her heart. He would soon bear the mark of the blade that would officially make him a member of the Hebrew people. It was a day to celebrate, thought Mary... She still didn't know that another blade was awaiting her: a sword, invisible yet very sharp, would penetrate her heart as Simeon prophesied: "*Behold this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected - and a sword will pierce through your own soul too*" (Lk 2:34-35).

**Their mystery of love and sorrow, of how they are blended to become one is fathomless.** In apparent contradiction, they are inseparable in God's divine plan. There where love has blossomed will inevitably see the beginning of sorrow, which nonetheless is useful to that love, as it purifies it of egoism and of the temptation to use it to one's own advantage. It is thus; whilst one rejoices in the heart for the loved one, in the very depths one also perceives inexpressible suffering - at times extremely acute, if short. Other times dull, but relentless...

Mary held her babe in her arms without knowing that the **seed of a powerful tree - the cross** - had already been planted in him, the fruits of which God had destined for all men of all times. She embraced her son, and in him the cross. This was the *sword* Simeon was speaking of: a sword in the form of a cross - it had been thrust into the heart of the Mother. But it was still a seed; it had to grow and mature, like the child in her womb.

In the long years of the hidden life - humble and ordinary years - Mary hid within her heart the secret, and all the while the cross grew and got stronger, as one day it would have to bear the weight of the sins of the world together with the weight of the cross, because through His offering, Jesus took them upon Himself.

The cross grew together with Jesus. In the heart of Mary it received warmth and was nourished by her love and her sorrow.

**Then, "standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother ..."** (Jn 19:25) we read in the Gospel which tells us of that tremendous moment in which man kills his God by nailing Him to a cross.

Mary was there. She had to be there. She was there when it was born and she helped it grow. But beneath that cross she had to die too, together with her Son: die of love and sorrow; die for the sacrifice and renunciation of Jesus, her Gift. She had to die with Him so that another body of Christ could be born: His Church.

How was it that, *then*, the Virgin gave

birth? Simply by dying to herself; by accepting John in the place of Jesus; by remaining faithful to Love in sorrow; by looking up to the cross from her own littleness and loving, just loving - no matter what. It had remained in the secret of her heart all these years; and now the "*sword*" was on public show. So it was only right that Mary - who till then had been its guardian - should be there.

If it really happened as I have imagined, then I also like to think that the wood of the cross was not sunk into the ground atop Calvary, but in the warm and sorrowed Heart of the Mother, so that Her blood should blend with the blood of Jesus to form the chalice of Mercy. **Then, united in the same offering and the same priesthood**, the Woman and the Mediator obtained for us all the hoped-for redemption.

**But Christ redeemed the world! some may object.** That's true, that's what we believe and what we profess. But if Jesus-God needs no help, Jesus-Man does. He needed a woman. Nay, He needed Mary. He needed her body to be born, her faith to die, her hope to rise. Without Mary, God's human nature would not have been able to accomplish the redemptive mission.

Jesus then returned to the Father, in the fullness of the Trinitarian life, but the bond with this little woman of Israel was so inseparable, and the love of the Trinity for her so profound, that they "assumed" her into heaven to eternally rejoice in that immaculate soul that God had created and that body from which He Himself had been born .. in the shadow of the cross.

Stefania Consoli

### Holy Father:

#### "Cross generates freedom"

**Carrying one's cross as we follow behind Jesus" means being disposed to accept any type of sacrifice for love of Him.** It means not putting anything or anyone before Him, not even those most dear to us, not even one's very life.

Adhering to Christ is a *demanding choice*. It is not by chance that Jesus speaks of "cross." Nonetheless, He immediately adds: "behind me." This is the important part, for we are *not alone in carrying our cross*. Ahead of us there is Jesus who opens the way for us with His light and example and with the strength of His love.

**When the cross is accepted out of love it generates freedom.** Paul the Apostle experienced this. "*An old man now and a prisoner of Jesus Christ,*" he says of himself in the letter to Philemon, but he also says that he feels complete inner freedom. His heart is free because in it dwells the love of Christ. For this, from the darkness of his prison where he suffers for the Lord, he is able to speak of freedom to a friend outside.

The lesson in all this is clear: there is no *greater love* than that of the cross; there is no *truer freedom* than that of love; there is no *fraternity more complete* than that which is born of Christ's cross.

JP II

## Why Medjugorje?

It's amazing how you still meet **people who've never heard about Medjugorje**, despite the fact that the daily apparitions by Our Blessed Mother (it is what we and many faithful believe) have been going on for over 23 years! And the closer we get to the "experts" (priests, consecrated, pastoral workers, committed Christians) the greater the ignorance is, that's when they're not "allergic" or hostile to the apparitions. After all, **what need is there to believe in these apparitions** – they say – or what need is there to go all the way over there? And they say it with such conviction that it makes you fear you've made a mistake, that you're weak and in need of these "extraordinary and miraculous things" to sustain your faith.

Perhaps you've been plagued with similar doubts. In that case, let's reflect on Medjugorje, beginning with the words Mary always says: "Thank you for responding to my call."

**This is the first light:** that to be able to listen to and understand the Queen of Peace who speaks to us from Medjugorje, for the fact that we go all the way over there in that little place between the hills, so poor, racked by war and by ethnic disputes, **one has to be called**. I might be simple-minded and weak in my faith, but I have been called; and perhaps the Blessed Virgin has called me precisely because she sees my weakness. This helps bar pride from swelling up in my heart should I dare think that I'm privileged, and it helps me not to judge others should I dare think they weren't called. For the truth is that we are all called by the Lord and the Blessed Virgin, even if we cannot remove the fact that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14).

**Another light comes to me from a message** I read recently (25 August 1991): "Dear Children, I desire saving all souls and presenting them to God. Therefore, let us pray, that all I have commenced may be entirely fulfilled. Thank you for responding to my call."

How enlightening! These words dispel all my doubts that listening to the messages of Mary at Medjugorje is a mere refuge, a security blanket against anxiety caused by guilt feelings or by all that is going on around us. Our Lady specifically says "all souls" opening out for us a spiritual horizon that urges us to embrace the whole world.

**Now let us ask ourselves:** but isn't "saving souls and presenting them to God" the sole and the essential reason why God sent His Son into the world? And wasn't it "for us men and for our salvation" that Jesus "came down from heaven," that "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried," and that He "descended to the dead" and rose again on the third day? This is our "Creed."

Hence, we are talking about the heart of our faith. And isn't it to save souls that we have a Pope, Bishops, priests, churches, orators, sacraments, parishes, pastoral plans, etc. etc.? And isn't it the task of us all – pastors and laymen – to

"save souls," to evangelize and witness our faith through our works?

It is for this that Our Lady, star of the new evangelization, has begun this work. Hence, we understand the reason for her great concern, her many motherly calls. She really does care about our souls and the souls of our brothers and sisters. Her desire is to save everyone because she loves everyone with the Heart of God, and to this end she asks for our prayers: our prayers united to hers. Many times Our Lady has asked us to pray; here she is saying: "Let us pray, that everything I have commenced may be entirely fulfilled."

**This brings us to another mystery: when will this be entirely fulfilled?** It is the same question which Jesus left unanswered: when will God's kingdom come? No one knows; only the Father knows. Till that time good and bad will be mixed together in the world, in the Church, in our communities, in ourselves. God will continue to sow the good seed and the Enemy – the devil – will scatter darnel.

That is why we are not scandalized by the refusal of many of the Truth, and that we continue to hope that God – also through the messages of the Blessed Virgin – will concern Himself with the salvation of everyone, good and bad, even those apparently without limits in the sinfulness.

**As you can see, we are talking about the very core of the Church's mission and pastoral work.** So how can we not care? The Pope and the Bishops can't make official declarations concerning the events of Medjugorje, but everyone else is free to believe and to go; so what sense is there in such superficial attitudes, fear and even disdain for this blessed land?

**God's project for the world is wonderful and it will be accomplished in full. Our Lady has been endowed with the task to bring it into realization.** This project will see new heavens and new times. It is a project which demands our attention and our collaboration. If Mary cares so much about this project it means that it is of vital importance, because we're talking about the eternal salvation or eternal damnation of our many brothers and sisters and of ourselves.

**So it is never in vain that we listen to the messages which come from Medjugorje.** With all our hearts and all our gratitude we should be saying to the Blessed Virgin: "Thank you for calling me!"

I had the grace of accompanying a saintly doctor to Medjugorje just one month before he died of an incurable disease. He had all the reasons not to go, but he desired accomplishing this one last gesture out of his conviction that: "If Our Lady has inconvenienced herself to come down from Heaven to us and for such a long time then there must be a serious reason. Perhaps she can see that our humanity is in grave danger, so it is only right that there should be someone there for her, someone that will listen to her."

don Nicolino Mori

## How apparitions help us

**What do you think of the apparitions of Medjugorje?** This question was put to Fr. Stefano de Fiores, one of Italy's most well-known and authoritative Mariologists.

"Briefly I can say that in general when one follows apparitions which have been approved by the Church one can be sure that the way is sure. Following due discernment, it has often been the Popes themselves who have given us examples of devotion; such as with Paul VI who went on pilgrimage to Fatima in 1967, and above all with John Paul II who has been on pilgrimage to the main Marian shrines around the world.

In fact, once apparitions have been accepted by the Church, we welcome them as a sign of God for our time. However, they must always lead back to the Gospel of Jesus which is the fundamental and standard revelation for every other manifestation. **Apparitions, in any case, help us.** They help not only to throw light on the past, but to **prepare the Church for future times**, so that she will not be found unprepared.

We ought to be more aware of the difficulties of the Church which journeys in time and which is always **involved in the battle between good and evil**. She can't be left without help from above, as the more we advance the more the children of darkness advance, and the astute strategies of these can only get keener till the coming of the antichrist.

Just as St. Louis Maria Grignon of Montfort foresaw, **the last times will be marked by a new Pentecost**, by an abundant down-pouring of the Holy Spirit on priests and laypersons with a double effect: a higher degree of holiness, inspired after the holy Mountain which is Mary, and an apostolic zeal to accompany the evangelization of the world.

**Mary's apparitions in recent times at Medjugorje come under this scope:** to provoke conversion to Christ through consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Therefore, we can see the apparitions as prophetic signs which come to us from on High to prepare us for the future.

**However, as we wait for the Church to make an official declaration what can we do?** What should we think about the thousands of apparitions at Medjugorje? **Being passive about it** – taking no interest – **is definitely not good**. Paul invites Christians to discern, to keep what is good and reject what is bad. It is right that people have ideas, that a personal experience is able to mature in them born of contact with the place and the visionaries. No one can deny that at Medjugorje one experiences a deep sense of prayer, of poverty and simplicity and that many distant and distracted Christians have felt the call to conversion and authentic Christian living. For many, Medjugorje stands for pre-evangelization and a way which sets you on the right journey. These are experiences which can't be denied."



# What do we think the new year will bring?

A new year is about to begin. Once again the Lord, in His goodness, grants us a new time, a **new page in history, leaving us total freedom to write on it what we wish. We Christians are asked to live every day as an irreplaceable gift of God,** and to accept it with all the gratefulness and joy of one who receives a gift-wrapped parcel, knowing that whatever it contains it is good.

If we look at the world's situation, and at times even the reality which surrounds us, **it isn't always easy to keep our hope alive.** We must keep the eyes of the soul wide open because the Enemy uses all his strength to take away the joy of hope and to demoralize us by pointing out all the negative things. He wants us to fall into indifference which becomes pessimism, then depression, then despair.

**At Medjugorje Our Lady calls us with great patience. She regularly repeats to us: "this is a time of grace."** What does this mean? It means that today – precisely today – the Lord is granting us the possibility of choosing Him as Lord of our lives. In whatever difficulty or prison of sin we find ourselves, we can still choose God, and offer Him the little we have: our life, our poverty, our present. Nothing and no one can stop us from freely adhering to Him with our inner response to His voice which continues to call.

**At times, when we are tried in our spiritual life,** it may seem that we've reached a blind alley, that we're turning around in circles and tripping over the same errors. It is precisely then that we must lift up the eyes of our soul and rest them on the Most High. He never ceases radiating His love on us. We must not fall into the error of measuring God's action according to our human criteria.

Maybe we all have moments where it seems that in our spiritual journey we've taken one step forward and two steps back; but our vision of things is limited and partial. It is important, instead, to allow God to trace out the path of our life to the very end. He knows best, and we don't always see that certain trials have taken us forward.

**The Lord fulfils His project and works powerfully in mankind's history.** Thus, "*this is a time of grace*" means that day by day the coming of His kingdom advances; and it is what the Lord taught us to ask for in the Lord's Prayer.

In the Book of Revelation we read of the ultimate destiny of the Universe: the new Jerusalem which is none other than the new Church in which Christ is the *Emmanuel, the God-with-us*. There, the redeemed will see Him face to face "*and there will no longer be death, or mourning, or crying, or pain*" (Rev 21:4).

**This is God's wish for humanity;**

**this is His plan that He will accomplish in full.** The responses by singular souls are fundamental because they can accelerate or delay the times of accomplishment; but God's project will go ahead in any case, God's kingdom will come and it will grow within each soul except in those who freely decide to flee towards death.

If it is egoistic and illusory to await that in our lives all should begin to flow placidly without problems and pain, it is on the other hand a very precious wish that we should desire advancing on the way of holiness, to gradually learn to accept suffering, and know how to look beyond the little earthly difficulties and enter into an ever more intimate relationship with Our Lord. This is, after all, what the hope of every Christian should be. Hope is a fundamental virtue, together with faith and love.

**What will the new year bring? What do we hope the future will hold for us?** If we await the coming of God's kingdom in our souls; if this truly is our prime and sole desire, then let us rejoice together, and exult with the entire Church, for our Almighty King desires the same thing! Let us then hold firmly onto our hope: it is a precious pearl. We are the living members of Christ who both await and prepare His own desire. Yes indeed, our hope is His hope!

*Francesco Cavagna*



## Way of salvation

by Padre Tomislav Vlastic

**When the Hebrew people left Egypt they didn't know the way which led to the promised land. God was their way. Every day the people only needed to let themselves be led; to trust that He would guide their steps day by day.**

We too journey towards the "new heavens and new earth." We too are asked to ignore all the roads, by-ways and shortcuts, except one. The only way we need to know is *the Way* which leads to the Father, and that Way has a name. Its name is Jesus Christ. He is the Shepherd who leads us, and with Him is the Holy Spirit, our companion who fortifies us for the journey. But just like the people at the time of Moses, also today mankind rebels, is discouraged, denies its faith and doubts God's promises.

**Is it a bad world? Is it an ungrateful world? No. It is only a world without God's love.** When a soul is not nourished with God's love it experiences rebellion, division, and hostility. This blocks the way



because man becomes paralyzed and unable to get out of the vortex of negativity that ties him down.

How do we normally respond to this situation? With aggression, accusations, punishment... but this closes off the road even more – to ourselves and to others – and creates fronts of war.

**The key that opens the way is only one: bring God's love into souls.** Even when these refuse it, we must continue to love them; and we must remain in God's love so this love can grow within us. God's love in us will acquire sight, and

we will see what is happening in the soul that refuses His love; and then we will know what to do. God's love in us will acquire hearing, and we will know how to listen to the words that are not said. God's love in us will receive a new heart that knows how to love even when faced with refusal and closed hearts, and in us will grow patience, humility and goodness.

**It is here that the road is opened within us. On this road souls will find the way that leads to love.** If a soul has goodwill he will sooner or later accept this way, and if we have the courage to descend as far as his misery, we will be vessels of grace for the healing of the soul's every wound.

Prior to becoming Paul, Saul was a rebel, he persecuted Jesus and the Apostles. He changed life because someone, in the name of God, loved to the point of wanting to spill his own blood so that Saul's heart could open. This then is the key that opens the way of salvation.

**What will there be in the new heavens and new earth?** There will be a life of love where the soul will be free. There will be the new man, man transformed into a new creature. But to get there, we must open the road for humanity. We do this when no matter what the situation is our response is only one of love.

## Return to initial zeal

### Silence of the Heart, Nuptial Tent for the Soul

In this time Our Lady desires leading us to the celebration of the great nuptial mystery of the covenant between her children and the Immolated and Risen Lamb, who is alive and present in us: "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready" (Rev 19:7).

Through the voice of Mary God is calling us - today as never before - into that fertile wilderness where He desires speaking to the hearts of His children to show them how much love He has closed up in His divine Heart for us. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her ... I will betroth you to me forever" (Hos 2:14-20).

It is for this that in her messages the Queen of Peace calls us insistently to enter into that profound inner silence where the mystery of the living presence of the Most High in us is manifested: "During the day seek moments of silence for inner recollection" (message, 24 June 1983). "Therefore, **starting today, decide to encounter a time of the day to the encounter with God in silence**" (25.07.04).

**This is, above all, a gift to plead for - continuously.** It is a precious gift through which the senses of the soul become receptive to the Spouse. It opens up a space where God's light shines; it opens up within the heart unexpectedly, making one touch the mystery of God's presence in us. It is a profound prayer that renews the roots of the soul and places us in a stable communion with God's Heart: "Pray to Jesus to grant you the gift of inner silence. Through the gift of inner silence you can learn to pray continuously" (20 Feb. 1986).

The deafening voices of the countless idols of our time and the relentless whirling of dead words that kill men's consciences blunt - as it were - the sole Word of Life that the Most High continues to whisper to the hearts of His children: that "gentle breeze" (1 K 19:12) able to regenerate the heart of Elijah on Horeb, and which still today acts as a vehicle for the currents of grace and new life wanting to be poured into our souls so devastated, instead, by mortal weakness.

Our Lady is calling us to freely and joyously rid ourselves of all spiritual chains, so that we can descend into the chamber of inner listening which tremors like the heart of the Bride who awaits her Beloved in the Canticle of Canticles: "I sleep but my heart is awake" (Sg 5:2).

The call by the Queen of Peace is even stronger in the times of the liturgical year when the gift of grace - decisive for our own life - is manifested with greater intensity: "During Advent I strongly suggest that you withdraw into the silence of your heart as frequently as possible" (29 Nov. 1985); "None of you remembered

to withdraw into silence on Christmas day to experience the presence of the Child Jesus" (26 Dec. 1985).

If we want to enter this Sanctuary of the New Covenant where we are given to encounter "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23) the life-giving presence of the Most High, the way is the same proclaimed by Jesus in His Gospel. Thus, to be able to cross the threshold of that nuptial tent where the soul regains its original spotless state one needs to "love the Son and keep His Word" (Jn 14:23). That is, accept His "new commandment" by "loving one another as He has loved us" (Jn 15:12). It is the only way the Father can love us and the fire of the Trinitarian life can "come to us" to "make their home with us" (cf. Jn 14:23).

It is for this that Mary calls us tirelessly to unite our life to Christ's Eucharistic Heart, so that the old silence of death that oppresses our poor hearts is transformed into a space where the new heavens and new earth shine resplendent with the light of the Lamb (cf. Rev 21:23).

It is, in fact, only through this live communion with the immolated Love of the Son - who freely offers His life for the salvation of His brethren - that the silence of the heart will become the place of radical regeneration for the soul, and an endless source of new life for the world: "Thus, my Children, in the silence of your heart remain with Jesus, so that He can change you and transform you with His Love" (25 July 1998).

This is the altar for the regal priesthood of the new people of the Covenant, the place where all our history with all its suffering, joy and hope is offered to the Father to be accepted into His Heart and transfigured in the light of the new creation. This is the spiritual space being disclosed by Mary for her children where the soul adores its Lord and is mystically united to Him to generate divine life in the souls of a multitude of brothers and sisters in the entire universe: "Convert, my Children, and go down on your knees in the silence of your heart. Put God at the centre of your very being" (25 May 2001); "... this evening withdraw into silence. Your task - I say again - is nothing else but to adore God and remain in His presence" (24 June 1986).

Giuseppe Ferraro

### Eternal loneliness of a God God of Love...

Love deep, and full; overflowing.  
If but the subjects of His love would receive it, and He could live eternally with them.  
And no longer alone, but surrounded by beloved-lovers...

For this He wanted the world, beautiful and so rich: to be, to grow, to learn and acquire seeds of holiness;

And once back home, His creatures would share in all His divine attributes, with love and comprehension, befitting their state of children created in His own likeness.

God alone no longer;  
but God with His children:  
matured, they reach the heights of God.

Stefania C.

## News from the blessed land

### Lights of Medjugorje ... in a film

The Lord says: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life" (Jn 8,12). People do not like darkness. Darkness and obscurity are places of doubt. To be in darkness means to be blind in spite of the eyes that we have. So, what should we do? Go to the light. Be light.

The documentary, "Lights of Medjugorje," recently premiered in Dubrovnik. This title immediately raises the question: **what are these lights?** The documentary was made by three young men who came to Medjugorje almost by chance. They decided to bring the light they received to the life of their colleagues, and to wherever there is darkness. Flooded with light, their desire is to carry this light to others. They encountered the light in Medjugorje through Our Lady. Inspired by this light, they made the **documentary "Lights of Medjugorje."** It is a title which hides and which reveals much; but it focuses on Mary's children who came to know Jesus and who shattered the darkness of their own lives. Millions of people have received the light here, and thus, through carrying light, they transmit the message of Jesus to the whole world: He is the Light of the world.

A new year has begun. A new time, a new chance is given us. Let us make good use of it. **To be light in the darkness is a challenge.** To be light means first and foremost to be a witness of hope and of joy: fruits of faith in Christ. In his message for the New Year, John Paul II wrote: "Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but be victorious over evil by doing good." Evil does not sleep; hope is threatened and darkness is spreading with aggression, as if it wanted to darken the sun's rays. In such a context only people of faith and people that are enlightened in the spirit can be mediators of God. Guided by Mary towards Jesus, let us make our own film of witness in this new year which has just begun.

Fr. Mario Knezovic

### Christmas message to Jakov

Jakov had his last daily apparition of Our Lady on the 12th September 1998. On that occasion Our Lady told him that she would appear to him once a year on Christmas day, 25 December. As with each year since then Our Lady appeared to Jakov, and she gave the following message:

"Dear children, Today, on this day of grace, with little Jesus in my arms, I call you especially to open your hearts and to start to pray. My Children, pray to Jesus that He might be born in each of your hearts and begin to rule in your

*lives. Pray to Him for the grace to be able to recognize Him always and in every person. My Children, ask Jesus for love, because it is only with God's love that you can love God and all people. I carry you all in my Heart and give you my Motherly blessing."*

The apparition lasted 7 minutes. Our Lady came with the Child Jesus in her arms.

## Reflecting with Fr. Slavko



### Reflections on the meaning of the secrets

Our Lady is faithful to the promises she made to the visionaries. She said she would appear to them till the end of their lives. She is still appearing to some every single day, and to the others once a year. Our Lady clearly wants to remain in direct contact with the visionaries. In any case, this is a great gift for the visionaries, and also for us.

### Frequency of the apparitions

The apparitions help us to understand the meaning of: "Emmanuel, God-with-us." Mary too, since she is Mother of the Emmanuel and our mother, is always with us. There are some who ask why Our Lady appears daily, and these same people preach that God is always with us and that Our Lady always accompanies us. However, when the daily apparitions began at Medjugorje they began to say that it was impossible.

The annual apparitions to Mirjana, Ivanka and Jakov are distributed in a way that we often think of our mother, Mary. We don't know what will happen when the daily apparitions cease also for Marija, Vicka and Ivan and what period of the year they'll receive annual apparitions. However, the actual annual apparitions are well distributed throughout the year in a way that we often think of Mary: March for Mirjana, June for Ivanka, and Christmas for Jakov.

When the other three visionaries cease to receive daily apparitions I presume Our Lady will appear about every 2 months. This will be most beautiful because also after the end of the daily apparitions Our Lady will often be with us.

Our Lady will thus continue to be in touch with us and all will proceed along the same direction. At the beginning Mary was giving us messages much more frequently, then starting 1<sup>st</sup> March 1984 every Thursday. Then the rhythm changed again, and from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1987 to date, she gives a message on the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month.

Hence, when Mirjana, Ivanka and Jakov ceased having daily apparitions a

new structure emerged; it's a new school, a new rhythm.

### The meaning of the secrets

I have spoken with theologians and many experts on apparitions, but personally I have found no theological explanation for why there are secrets. Someone once said that perhaps Our Lady would like to tell us that we don't know everything, that we must be humble. So why are there secrets, and how can they be explained? I have often asked myself: why should I need to know, for example, that at Fatima there are three much-discussed secrets? And, why do I need to know that Our Lady said something to the visionaries at Medjugorje that I can't know? For me and for us the most important thing is to know all that I already know about everything she has said!

For me the important thing is that she has said: "God is with us! Pray, convert, God will grant you peace!" To the contrary, God alone knows how the end of the world will be, and we need not worry ourselves or make problems over it. Some think immediately of catastrophes as soon as they hear speak of apparitions. But this would mean that Mary comes solely to announce catastrophes. This interpretation is wrong. Our Mother, Mary, comes to her children when she knows they are in need.

I have noticed that when the secrets are accepted, people concentrate on the journey indicated by Mary, and when the journey is taken, the way becomes the only important thing.

### Motherly lessons

I have found that I am able to accept without difficulty the motherly teaching that has emerged with the apparitions. For example, each mother could say to her child: if you are good during the week there will be a surprise for you on Sunday. Now every child is curious and would like to immediately know what the surprise is. The mother, however, is concerned that her child is good and obedient, and that is why she gives him a certain interval of time before rewarding him. If the child is not good, then there will be no surprise, and the child may think that his mother had lied; but his mother wanted only to indicate a way. Those who expect only the surprise without accepting the way will never understand that it was all true.

Regarding the secrets that Our Lady has entrusted to the visionaries of Medjugorje, it might be that they don't know the contents one hundred percent. In the Bible the prophet Ezekiel speaks of a great banquet prepared by God for all the peoples of Zion, and they will come and take without paying. If someone had asked Ezekiel if it were the Zion they knew, he would have surely responded yes. Yet still today Zion is a desert. The prophecy was true, but we see that there is no banquet in Zion, but that Jesus in the Tabernacle is the new Zion. The Eucharist

all over the world is the Zion where people come and take part in the banquet prepared by God for us all.

### Proper preparation

With regards to the secrets it is definitely better not to want to guess, because it would all be in vain. It would be better to recite another Rosary rather than talk about the secrets. Impatiently waiting for the secrets to be revealed removes our concentration from what is important. There are catastrophes, floods, earthquakes and wars every day, but unless I am personally involved they are not catastrophic for me. To wait for something to happen is similar to a student who continually asks himself when the exam will be, when his turn will be and whether the prof. will be well disposed or not. It's the same as a student not studying or preparing himself for the exam even though the exam is upon him, but concentrates instead only on the "secrets," on what is unknown to him.

So you see, we must do what we can do, and the secrets will no longer be a problem for us.

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## ECHO in HEAVEN with Fr. Angelo...

**Elizabeth VARGA, first and devoted translator of Echo in Hungarian has joined Fr. Angelo in heaven.**

A professor in French, she translated from our French edition all the articles for her own monthly edition in Hungary. It is for this reason that over the past fifteen years we became dear friends. I remember the conversations we shared each time there was an edition, interspersed with laughter and personal reflections. I loved her for her generosity and devotion, but also for her straightforwardness. She was so devoted that when she was to have her first operation she postponed it so she could finish the translations and get the Echo out without any delay. Then it became necessary for daily medical treatment, and she required operations ever more frequently, causing her intense pain. When she was unable to use a computer she dictated the translations to a friend – also called Elizabeth – to whom we ensure our friendly support.

Our last telephone conversation, shortly before she passed away, was a wonderful opportunity to praise God for our friendship which was definitely made richer under the protection of Our Blessed Mother. When I tried to ring her again to wish her a happy birthday she had already flown to Heaven, and close to the Queen of Angels she received my call there.

We hold you in our prayers my dear Elizabeth. Intercede for us and for our beloved Echo.

*Yvonne Maisonneuve*  
translator for the French-edition Echo

## Our readers write ...

**Mrs. M. Williams, England:** I have really been enjoying reading the Echo. I've been receiving it for a few years and appreciate all the work put into editing it.

**Barbara Fox, England:** I enclose my donation for your publication. Thank you so much for your wonderful dedication to the Echo which I look forward to receiving. It has so much spiritual input. Many thanks and many, many blessings.

**Cristian & Maria, Argentina:** We want to thank you for sending us the Echo. Our first copy arrived recently and we were very happy. Warm greetings and much peace and prosperity to you all this Christmas and for the new year.

**Frances Cinelli, Canada:** I eagerly await each edition of the Echo (I've been receiving it since 1994). It always seems to come when I need to hear Our Lady's message most. It's providential – and in a paper which comes from so far away! Our Mother sends me comfort just at the right time. How does she do that? A mother always knows what her children need! How wonderful! Thank you for your prayers and your articles.

**Franciscan Sisters, Mount of the Beatitudes, Israel:** We've been receiving and distributing the Echo of Mary in various languages for over 15 years. Thank you for sending us Echo in English, Spanish and Italian. May the Lord and Our Lady bless you, and us and all those who read the Echo with joy and devotion. We wish you all a blessed Christmas and new year, in the hope that God in His Goodness will grant us the much desired gift of Peace.

**C. Thomatos, Greece:** God's blessings on all of you at the Echo of Mary, and heartfelt thanks for your publication.

**Cecilia Altamirano, Argentina:** The peace of Christ be with you all! I write with much joy to thank you for sending me your publication. All the members of our prayer group, "Queen of the Apostles," enjoy reading it; also our family members, and religious and priests. We all enjoy reading such a wonderful paper. Thanks so much.

## Greetings from far-away AUSTRALIA

**Bev O'Brien, W.Australia:** Thank you so much for your wonderful newsletter which I really enjoy reading and then pass on to friends. May Jesus and His Holy Mother shower you with blessings.

**Ruth McGrath, Australia:** I thoroughly enjoy reading your leaflets and loved the article on the European flag with the twelve stars placed in a circle originally modelled on the miraculous medal. Please accept my donation and keep sending me this wonderful spiritual reading.

**Marianne Nulley, Australia:** Thank you for the Echo of our Blessed Mother. I always look forward to receiving your

inspiring information, especially now that we've been on a long pilgrimage to Medjugorje ourselves. I enclose my donation. God bless you abundantly.

**Mrs. R. McDevitt, Australia:** Thank you so much for your timeless devotion to Our Lady Queen of Peace that brings us the Echo as food for our souls.

## ... and from AFRICA

**Fr. Anastasio Tricarico, Comboni missionary, Zambia:** Fr. Alberto passed away some years ago, but we'd like to continue receiving the Echo; address it to the Comboni mission. As in many other parts of the world, also here devotion to Our Blessed Mother is attacked on all fronts; but Our Lady always finds new ways so that all generations may call her "blessed."

**James Deo, Tanzania:** I greet you in the Name of Jesus our Saviour. We wish to thank you all for the dedication you show towards the Blessed Mother. Echo is an inspiration to us all. God bless you all.

**Stella Dorkenoo, Togo:** I first discovered Echo at Dakar in Senegal where I studied to become a pharmacist. I've been through quite a lot of hard times, but during the worst of them I came across a Medjugorje prayer group. We met on Wednesdays and Fridays at 1 pm in the church of St. Joseph to pray the complete Rosary, and we also fasted and included everyone in our prayer. I promised the Virgin Mary that if she helped me finish my studies I'd call my pharmacy after her. Well she did, and I did. Most of my customers, upon seeing the name, ask me who "Our Lady of Medjugorje" is. So please send me more copies of the Echo so they can see for themselves. God bless you.

### Our Prayers for you!

On the first Saturday of each month we offer up to God prayers for readers' **intentions**. Once a month Fr. Alberto also celebrates a Holy Mass for the same intentions.

### \* \* Forthcoming events \* \*

**Light to the Nations, AUSTRALIA:** Easter retreat for youth, 24-27 March 2005. Enquiries: 0427-277072; info@ltnn.org.au

**International Priests' Retreat, 25 Sept.- 1 Oct.,** at Ars, France: with Sr. Brieghe McKenna and Fr. Kevin Scallon.. Venue: Ars, home of John-Mary Vianney; patron of all priests. Contact: Retreat ARS 2005, F-81170 Cordes, France; 011-33-(0)5 63538118  
www.retraite.ars2005.beatitudes.org  
Email: retraite.ars2005@beatitudes.org

**+Request for Rosary Beads, prayer cards: 1)** M.P. Arojaraj, 2/84 Church St., Manam Pathy Kandigai, Kancheepu Ram Dist., Tamil Nadu, 603 403 India. **2)** Judy Lambert, Divine Mercy Prayer House, H.vo 57-7-20 Patamata, New Postal Colony, Vijayawada-10 (AP), India

## ECHO NEEDS YOU!

Dear Friends,

After having crossed the threshold of 20 years, Echo – by the will of God – will continue on its journey together with you who follow it with much faithfulness and love. However, as we have already notified in our previous issue, its economical situation forces us to look into the future with much realism.

The Echo, as you know, **lives solely on providence**. Many are those who've become instruments which allow the publication to continue. Nonetheless, the costs of production, printing and distribution continue to grow, with the risk that **donations may not cover these costs**. We are aware how readers are anxious to have their copy of Echo, and of how Our Lady loves this little paper which, with its Franciscan style of poverty, acts as a vehicle to carry Mary's words all round the world. Therefore, with the simplicity of those who know they are poor and in need of others, **we appeal to each of you to help the Echo continue to exist**.

**We shall be grateful for whatever donations, little and big,** you'll manage to send to keep Echo on its feet. It is important for you to know that Echo depends not only on our commitment but also on your generosity and responsibility.

Certain that we'll find comprehension and readiness in your hearts, we thank you in advance, and we invoke upon you and all your dear ones every blessing of God.

*The Staff of Echo of Mary*

### HOW TO DONATE:

**PERSONAL CHEQUES** payable to "Echo of Mary Association" - mail to same at: **P.O. Box 27, I-31030 Bessica TV, Italy.**

**Or,** if convenient, pay into one of our **bank accounts**, specifying payment for "Echo of Mary Association":

**Italy:** Banca Agricola Mantovana (BAM), Ag. Belfiore, Mantova. Bank coordinates: IT 02 Z 05024 11506 000004754018

**Britain:** Royal Bank of Scotland, 26 George St., Oban, Argyll, PA34 5SA. Acc. no. 8326 0400 154351

**Our ADDRESS:** Echo of Mary Assoc.,  
P.O. Box 27, I-31030 Bessica TV, Italy.

Ph/fax: Italy 0423-470331

**Internet:** [www.ecodimaria.net](http://www.ecodimaria.net)  
**E-MAIL:** [info@ecodimaria.net](mailto:info@ecodimaria.net)

*God have mercy on us and bless us,  
may His face shine upon us;  
that the whole earth may  
know your way,  
all peoples your salvation.*

*don Alberto*

15 January 2005