

Our Lady's message, 25 Sept. '93

Dear children, I am your mother and I invite you all to be closer to God through prayer, because He alone is your Peace and your Saviour. So, my dear children, don't go looking for consolation in material things, but look for God. I pray for you and intercede before God for each of you.

I am asking you to pray so you may accept me and accept also my messages, as in the first days of the apparitions. Only then, when you open your hearts and pray, will there be miracles. Thank you for having responded to my call.

**I am your Mother,
listen to me today:
all is possible when you believe**

For the third time Our Lady tells us: **I am your Mother!** She so dearly wants us to understand how urgent it is that we accept Her messages. This is appealing to us to listen now, before it's too late. She is worried that we haven't given Her heed with so much evil approaching. «How much She must suffer, for after so many centuries, after 12 years of apparitions She still needs to tell us: *I want you to understand that I am your Mother!*»

Pray so you may accept me and also my messages. Only those who pray seriously can truly understand the reason of Her coming, not those whose devotion is only skin deep. Accepting Mary and Her messages means accepting that the *narrow way* is the way to salvation.

I am your Mother. Jesus said: *If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins* (Jn8). And with regards to His Mother: *Oh Jerusalem, if only you had understood on this day the message of peace, but alas it is hidden from your eyes ... A time is coming when your enemies will dash you... because you did not recognise your opportunity when God offered it* (Lk 19). But those who have converted because they believed Her, now testify, and glorify this motherly mercy.

Don't look for consolation in material things, but look for God. He alone is our **Peace and our Saviour** - for those who are well and unaware, like in the times of Noah and Lot, and those who risk their lives.

And don't think that because they have had to suffer so much over these last 2 years they are guiltier than us! No, I say: *If you do not repent, you will all perish in the same way!* You look for human remedies, but: *You have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, only to dig cisterns for yourselves .. that leak and hold no water!* (Jer 2).

I pray for you and intercede for each of you before God. If only we were aware of what She can do for us! Our Lady can straighten out our most desperate situations; for She is the *Omnipotence Supplicant!* If everything is *possible for those who believe,*

The Virgin of the Eastern Gate (Ostrobramska) venerated in Vilnius (see article page 2)

then it is also possible for those who give themselves up to His Mother: She reigns over the Church and the world with Him. God has given Her endless resources for these times - for our sake - yet we ignore it!

Only then, however, when you open your hearts and pray, will her miracles happen. Accepting our Blessed Mother means listening to Her and that means **praying**, i.e. stop believing in what we do, and believe in what God wants to do for us.

So turn back to those first days of the apparitions, when you responded to my call, and in doing so you challenged the atheist Regime, derision and isolation. And you prayed, without stop, you fasted, made peace with your neighbours, took into your homes your enemies, then pilgrims who were strangers. You filled the church every day for Mass and you prayed at home under the guidance of your family head, and you read the Holy Scriptures. Monthly confession was the feast of forgiveness, and the church filled up like on feast days.

This is accepting Our Lady as Mother. Words aren't enough. It's *total* surrender, entirely trusting - like little children, full of joy, in finding the truth. We are still in time. That is why She repeats: Listen to me, **I am your Mother.** Fr.A.

Lucia of Fatima: For the power that the Father has given to the Rosary for our times, there is no personal, family, national or international problem that cannot be resolved by the Rosary.

"The humble rosary beads will be the strong chain that will imprison the dominator of this dark world." (This is the sense attributed to Rev. 20:1-2 in the locution of 7 Oct. 1992 in *To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons*)

OCTOBER: GRASP HOLD OF THE ROSARY!

Grasp hold of the Rosary: by now only the Rosary is able to bring miracles to the world and your lives. (25 Jan. 1991)

St Vincent de Paul: After Holy Mass, devotion to the Rosary has brought down more graces to people than any other devotion. The Hail Marys of the Rosary bring about more miracles than any other prayer.

St John Bosco: The Rosary is a continuation of Hail Mary, with which it is possible to defeat and destroy all the demons of hell.

Pray the Rosary for Mary's intentions - When we pray the Rosary we give ourselves up to Mary's prayer so the reason Jesus came to the world, died and rose from the dead (joyful, sorrowful glorious mysteries) can be realized in us and the world. That means praying for Her intentions, or, for what She sees as being truly necessary.

When we meditate on the **mysteries**, we contemplate how God wants our lives and the world to be transformed in Jesus. As we repeat Our Lady's titles in the **Hail Mary** we recognize how powerful Her intercession is before God in order to obtain what we need.

Padre Pio - saint of the century: *"All I leave you with is the Rosary!"*

Padre Pio called himself: "a poor monk who prays." He always prayed, wherever he was. "What humanity needs today is prayer" he'd say, and organized **prayer groups** (like the Queen of Peace). Padre Pio's favourite prayer was the **Rosary**. In a normal day he'd recite as many as 30, on some days from 45-60 beads [of 5 mysteries]. If he wasn't saying Mass or in confessional, he was always seen with rosary beads in his hands.

Once the Bishop of Manfredonia held spiritual exercises in the convent where P. Pio was. Every night for 8 nights, he got up at different hours to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and each time he found Padre Pio there, absorbed in prayer, beads in hands. It was with this prayer that he was able to obtain the shower of graces for his brothers.

He recommended the Rosary, calling it powerful, to obtain every good and send away every evil. "If the Virgin recommends this prayer wherever She appears, there must be a good reason," he'd say. The more the number of his spiritual children grew, the more beads he would say. All those gifts and prodigies obtained for others by P. Pio came through the Rosary. All those people - sinners and others led astray - that came from all over to see him were fruits of his rosaries. His initiatives, enlightened counselling, his victories over sin were all tied to the power of the Rosary.

Everything he did reflected that truth of *Mary's universal mediation:* St Bernard »

What peace has Mary come to bring us?

And if the salt becomes tasteless?

Why does Our Lady not speak about the war in former Yugoslavia, as if She weren't interested in it?

A reader from Verona asked us this question, to which we reply:

1. *Our Lady has been telling us for more than 10 years what we should do to avoid wars. Now that this war has been going on for more than 2 years, it is still the same things that can stop it. What else can Our Lady say? What we should be asking is: have we taken heed?*

2. *Besides, She is interested in the war, and this can easily be seen from the love put into the hearts of Her children. Just look at how much aid Italy and other European countries take to former Yugoslavia, and the aid workers even risk their own lives.*

All the men of the Church who receive this aid are extremely grateful, though they prefer to ignore where - or from Whom - it comes. If She had not come to that land, think how many people would have died of hunger! So you see how Our Lady does take an interest in what is happening? Yet people want to ignore this! Wisdom has been proved by her actions (Mt 11:19).

3. *Our Lady does not talk about the tragic events of former Yugoslavia (which do not regard the secrets, the visionaries say). Perhaps there is something in the air far more tragic than what is happening only a few hundred km away from us. There's a war that Our Lady would like to free us of so we could be freed of every other war. That war is the one when a human heart is at war with God. When a human heart rejects God, freedom is given to all those negative forces that spurt out, uncontrollably, causing real catastrophes.*

And the worst thing, for which there is no remedy, is the loss of a person's soul in eternity. Just think that not even the most painful purification possible on this earth can be compared to eternal perdition. That is why God can permit purification, to prevent perdition, besides stopping us from committing other evils that He knows we are capable of.

4. *We Christians are salt of the earth and light of the world. The worst evil is when the salt becomes tasteless and the light becomes dark. Then the world is no longer lighted, but gropes around in the dark; it is no longer salted, but rots.*

We are the good tree, planted by the Father, that must produce good fruit for the whole world. Our Lady did not come to remove a bit of rotting fruit from the tree; She came to heal the tree at its roots, so it can begin producing good fruit. If it doesn't it will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt 7:19). Unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way (Lk 13:3).

We need to return to Her Son. This is still the time of mercy. The Lord's mercies are not spent, they are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness (Lm 3:22-23).

Certain things, though, can only be understood through prayer and meditation of the Word of God - we cannot see things in the right perspective without the light and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Fr.A.

Printed by DIPRO, Italy

The Pope in the Baltic nations offers EVANGELICAL SOLUTIONS to crucial problems

For the first time in history a Roman Pontiff visited the Baltic nations. From 4-10 Sept., Pope John Paul II visited **Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia**. These three nations, once part of the SSR, are now independent, and like many other Eastern-bloc countries, are going through a delicate phase of change and reconstruction; not without difficulty. Estonia and Latvia suffer from the difficult relations with the Russian peoples who are quite numerous in the eastern part after the Soviet domination. Lithuania and Latvia are populated by Poles and Russians. The day before the Pope's arrival, the Bishops of Lithuania sent out a letter that spoke of "a tired and divided population."

You cannot get rid of the cross - An era of sufferance has come to an end, but one must avoid that *western* error of trying to eliminate the cross: *Suffering and the cross will never disappear*, the Pope said in VILNIUS (4 Sept.) "Yesterday's trials will be followed by new ones today and tomorrow. The strenuous task of evangelization will be carried out in different ways, but it will always be an expression of the one cross of Christ .. that must reign in the hearts of all who believe. You yourselves will have to face misunderstanding on the part of those who, due to atheistic education, may have lost, at least temporarily, their appreciation of religion. You will have to deal with indifference, misunderstanding, tendencies towards secularization, and psychological isolation within a society which is undergoing profound transformations. You will have to respond to the disturbing phenomenon of the sects, whose proliferation is abetted by widespread misconceptions about religion." The same could be said of other nations where though there is freedom of politics, there is no spiritual freedom.

The law of forgiveness - the need to give up all ill feelings: "In your eyes **there must be neither winners nor losers**, but men and women who need to be helped to leave error behind, and supported in their efforts to recover from the effects, including psychological ones, of violence, abuse of power and violation of human rights. It is important that the *losers* know it is not enough to adapt to changed social situations; but are in need of sincere conversion and, if necessary, expiation. And the *winners* must be reminded of the need to forgive, so that authentic peace, which derives from following the Gospel of mercy and of charity, may reign."

The Pope constantly appealed to human and social forces to develop the evangelical logic of forgiveness. To the **diplomatic corps** he said: "Diplomatic missions [must be] concerned with creating opportunities for negotiation so there may be less risk of conflict between cultural, ethnic or religious communities, human dignity will be better respected, and peace affirmed," recalling

p.1 » said: "The Lord willed that nothing would be given if not through Mary."

Once he was asked what he'd leave in heritage to his spiritual children, and he readily replied: *The Rosary*. Shortly before his death he recommended: "**Love Our Lady and make Her be loved; always recite the Rosary.**"

that "political forces must consider the spiritual values which the Christian message bears." (Vilnius 5/9) In Kaunas (6/9), he spoke to the **youth** about the importance of the sacraments, the Gospel and Catechism.

Pope's words applauded by Russian Orthodox Church - In Latvia, he asked the faithful to reflect upon the way they were persecuted together, saying how it was grace, that must now help them be united: "The unity of disciples, *wounded* in the past because of various historical conditions, that had nothing to do with the Gospel, is now desired anew by those who have suffered together in the cause of the faith. Once again the common experience of the catacombs leads to the quest for sharing the experience of the Upper Room. You, who at the hour of the cross knew how to hope and wait for the hour of resurrection, are now called to confirm your strength through your generous, total offering of fraternal forgiveness. This courageous, farseeing gesture of fraternal peace will thus become a pressing invitation to repentance and a conversion of heart for those who caused your suffering too."

Tending towards communion brings about spiritual rebirth in society, allowing the acceptance of the *social doctrine* of the Church to "create an atmosphere of understanding and active cooperation... for a future of fellowship and solidarity within an international society which aspires increasingly to respect and interdependence in freedom." John Paul II repeatedly brought up this theme stressing how "the committed quest for sanctity as individuals and as a community must reveal itself as the primary driving principle behind ecumenism."

The serene, inspired, words that the Pope used to address the Orthodox community were looked upon favourably even by the Patriarchate of Moscow, and this seems to have calmed troubled waters and opened the way to renewed dialogue.

Return to tradition - The themes used by the Pope appear frequently in his teachings in general. His awareness of the risk of a nationalistic separation in the Baltic nations brings him to insist on the return to common traditions. He himself visited those places that were consecrated by the religious history of the Baltic peoples: the Hill of the Crosses, the Marian shrines of the Dawn Gate and Aglona and he proclaimed and restored the centuries-old veneration of St Meinhard, first bishop in Livonia.

John Paul II knows that words, even if clear, aren't enough to keep faith alive. What is needed is communion, fidelity to the Church and acceptance of the cross.

He reaffirmed this in his address to leaders of Estonia's various Christian Churches who joined the Pope in an ecumenical prayer service in the Lutheran Church in Tallinn.: "...those 20 centuries of sanctity and of sin, of generous testimony to the words of the Lord and of dramatic superimposition of human words upon them (when sanctity and the word of the Lord triumphed over human shortcomings) the world knew moments of grace: the light of revelation shone brightly and men, having become disciples of Christ, were able to enjoy the well-being and joy that come from God.

Crises and moments of doubts arose instead when Christian unfaithfulness darkened the integrity of the Gospel, which is the Church's most precious reality! Who can deny that this is true for each and every one of us?

Edit. staff

The Pope in Denver: "Oppose the culture of death be proud of the GOSPEL OF LIFE"

Sunday 15 August, Solemnity of the Assumption. With this conclusive Mass the Pope spoke to the youth of God's love for His people.

The Woman and the "dragon"

With His Incarnation, Christ revealed to the world the great works of God, and from that moment the world has become the stage for a dramatic battle between the fullness of Christ's truth and Satan's false projects.

"This marvellous world is the theatre of a never-ending battle being waged for our dignity and identity as free, spiritual beings. This struggle parallels the apocalyptic combat: death battles against Life. A culture of death seeks to impose itself on our desire to live, and live to the full. There are those who reject the light of life, preferring the fruitless works of darkness (Eph 5:11). Their harvest is injustice, discrimination, exploitation, deceit, violence. In every age, a measure of their apparent success is the death of the Innocents.

In our own century, as at no other time in history, the culture of death has assumed a social and institutional form of legality to justify the most horrible crimes against humanity: genocide, "final solutions," ethnic cleansing and the massive taking of lives of human beings even before they are born, or before they reach the natural point of death. Today's reading from the Book of Revelation presents the Woman surrounded by hostile forces. The absolute nature of their attack is symbolized in the object of their evil intention: the Child, the symbol of new life. The dragon, the ruler of this world, and the father of lies, relentlessly tries to eradicate from human hearts the sense of gratitude and respect for the original, extraordinary and fundamental gift of God: human life itself. Today that struggle has become increasingly direct."

The mission

The Pope's words were directed at all young people: "Christ needs you to enlighten the world and to show it the path to life. The challenge is to make the Church's "yes" to Life concrete and effective. The struggle will be long, and it needs each one of you. Place your intelligence, your talents, your enthusiasm, your compassion and your fortitude at the service of life! Fear not. The outcome of the battle for Life is already decided, even though the struggle goes on against great odds and with much suffering. The paradox of the Christian message is this: Christ, the Head, has already conquered sin and death. Christ in his Body (the pilgrim people of God) continually suffers the onslaught of the Evil One and all the evil which sinful humanity is capable of."

Where can the solution to this battle be found - a battle that gets harder to fight as time goes on? The Pope says it is the true sense of Church history. The solution is found in the Virgin Mary, to whom John Paul II has entrusted the destiny of this great challenge between Life and death. Mary "is already part of the "first fruits" of our Saviour's redemptive death and resurrection. The Son took his human life from her; in return he gave her the fullness of communion in divine Life. She is the only other being in whom the mystery has already been

Open your hearts to Mary, Queen of Peace

*Surrender yourselves totally to me
Pray with your heart*

It was with these intense calls that Mary presented Herself to Her children.

They are also the titles of 3 books: a collection of meditations by Fathers Tomislav & Slavko. In them we find the real spirit of Mary's messages, with which She wants to renew the Church to save the world. They have been translated, under the evangelical sign of gratuity, into the principal languages, including Slavonic. Free copies can be obtained at: Amici di Medj., via Nirone 9, 20123 Milano, Italy

completely accomplished. In Mary the final victory of Life over death is already a reality. In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached perfection."

Mary helps Her children win the battles

"You are blessed, O Mary! Mother of the Eternal Son born of your virgin womb, you are full of grace. You have received the abundance of Life as no one else among the descendants of Adam and Eve. As the most faithful hearer of the Word you not only treasured and pondered this mystery in your heart, but you observed it in your body and nourished it by the self-giving love with which you surrounded Jesus throughout his earthly life. As Mother of the Church, guide us still from your place in heaven and intercede for us. Lead us to Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and help us to increase in holiness by conquering sin.

The Liturgy presents you, Mary, as the Woman clothed with the sun. But you are even more splendidly clothed with that divine Light which can become the Life of all those created in the image and likeness of God himself: a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower. (Jn1). Your spirit rejoices, O Mary, and our spirit rejoices with you because the Mighty One has done great things for you and for us - for all these young people gathered here in Denver - and holy is his name!"

The Pope's message left its mark, deep and clear, telling us of that battle that marks the history of mankind; a battle that we too must take part in, fighting for Christ. We know how Our Lady persists in asking for our help. Listen to the Pope: "be proud of the Gospel." Let us accept with enthusiasm and fidelity the Holy Father's command:

"The Church is asking you to go, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to those near and far. Share with them the freedom you have found in Christ. People thirst for genuine inner freedom. They yearn for the Life which Christ came to give in abundance. The world, at the approach of a new millenium (for which the whole Church is preparing) is like a field ready for the harvest. Christ needs labourers ready to work in his vineyard. Catholic young people of the world, don't let him down. In your hands, carry the cross of Christ; on your lips, the words of Life; in your hearts, the saving grace of the Lord.

Woe to you if you do not succeed in defending life. Now more than ever, in a world that is often without light and the courage of noble ideals, people need the fresh, vital spirituality of the Gospel. Don't be afraid to go out on the streets and public places, like the first Apostles ... This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is time to preach it from the rooftops!"

Edit. staff

Shrines and traditions AUTHENTIC SIGNS

in this rationalistic world
and refuge for the "child-like"

The various feast-days that fall due in the next few weeks invite us to reflect upon the value of traditions of faith. 23 Sept. is the 25th anniversary of the death of Padre Pio. The year 1993 marks the 5th centenary of the apparition of St Michael Archangel in Gargano, the 7th centenary of the shrine of Loreto, and the 8th centenary of the birth of St Clare, all important signs in the life of the Church: people and places used by God to speak to His people and transmit His graces.

The Pope for first teaches us respect, fidelity, and inner joy in welcoming these signs. The shrine of La Verna (Assisi) has become a place of pilgrimage, and Pope John Paul II, "the pilgrim Pope," went there on 17 September, the feast of the Stigmatization on the Franciscan liturgical calendar. To pay homage to Padre Pio, he went as a pilgrim to pray over his tomb.

In the Pope's recent letter to the Bishop of Loreto for their anniversary celebrations he calls shrines places "where people go to obtain grace even before they obtain favours." They are places where the Spirit's action is obvious: "How many people have gone to a shrine out of curiosity, as visitors, and have returned transformed because they heard words there which enlightened them!" That is why he says shrines are important "places of evangelization, true and proper citadels of the faith, to respond to the new challenges of secularization."

The Holy Father did not forget to venerate St Clare, showing all how important her spiritual and contemplative school is for today's Christians, religious and lay people: May the figure of Clare, the "first, tender sprout" of Francis be the model for those who wish to "observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

On many occasions the Holy Father has shown us, through his example, what a Christian way of living is: he visits the shrines, goes on pilgrimage, participates in eucharistic adoration, recites the Rosary with pilgrims on the first Saturday of every month, leads the eucharistic procession the day of Corpus Christi through the streets of the capital, meditates daily on the Stations of the Cross, and recites the prayer to St Michael Archangel after Holy Mass. And when in front of a sacred picture his profound veneration is an example for us. The Pope's discourses and letters are guides for us so we may truly live as Christians, and with his gestures and actions, John Paul II lives the Gospel for us, to set an example.

The fullness of our faith cannot do without traditions which teach us a concrete way of living the Gospel: by means of the liturgy, the cult of the saints, and in particular, through honouring the Blessed Mother of God. It is an important lesson for us, particularly today when even in the Catholic Church attempts are made at reducing the faith to a mundane level. Many are of the opinion that our traditions are by now unacceptable, calling them "pre-Council" and prefer a strange type of religion they call "post-Council." But all they've done is make havoc of the spiritual and cultural patrimony left to us by the antique and recent Church.

The Lord, though, sent us a Pope who sets the example by giving importance to the

For communities and groups:

**Fruit of communion
with brothers in God is**

CREATIVITY AND FERTILITY

true light for the Church of all times

The following is taken from Fr. Tomislav Vlasic's sermon given at a meeting for heads of fraternities in the convent of Capestrano in Aquila.

Communities and prayer groups can often be spoiled by wrongful attitudes. First of all, there is in the Church an attitude of death, a closure to everything that is novel - not just a closure to new movements, but a **profound closure of the heart**. There is another attitude that regards us more closely, we who are part of prayer groups that began from a Medjugorje experience. It is an attitude of spiritual **immobility**. There are groups where people have been praying together for years, but there is no spiritual growth; everything has remained on a level of religious activity. When creative life is not developed groups produce heresies such as pietism, bigotry, and in particular the need for self-realization. All this leads to confusion, where Satan, disguised, can easily work.

Our Lady's intention is to take people to the light, not to that fanatical and ambitious activism that characterizes some prayer groups. Thus, I would like you to concentrate more on advancing towards the light. There is only way to do this, no matter what type of community you're in: a **life of fraternal communion** with one's fellow human beings. The reason Our Lady desired this type of community is given by Her in one of Her messages: *An aspect of the Church must be renewed through this call.*

The idea is that fraternities and communities should live in a **family atmosphere**. This [the family] is the fundamental community. Life comes from the family; from an unsound family come complexed and complicated people. Besides this, every person feels the need to fulfil oneself: as a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister. Being in real communion among us means developing these fundamental needs that exist in people. The Church, too, in the beginning was like this: Jesus died and rose again; Our Lady, a woman, was the head of the group that remained. It was a family; and the Church recognizes this.

What we try to do in these family nuclei - these communities and fraternities - is to live out the Gospel with simplicity, to be authentic Church.

How can the Church be renewed? Through community life in mystical union with Jesus and among us. This is fundamental. A connection between me and Jesus is not enough. I must also be perfectly united, on a mystical level, with a part of Christ's body. This is where fraternity

comes into the picture: complete communion in Christ and among us.

What is the purpose of a fraternity? The **first purpose** of a life in a community or fraternity is that **I be reborn**. Where is a child born? Between two people. So to be born one must be in the Church, in a community, in communion. Life cannot be born if it is isolated. The more we are open to Christ in a fraternity, the more people become alive, and life is born. Physical birth is obvious, but few people are aware of this mystical birth in and around us. Jesus really is born among us! I have seen how even in convents this reality is not known. If we move towards this real presence of Christ in us and among us, then we have that new life promised in the Gospel.

Another **purpose** of fraternities is **creativity**. When Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to the apostles and sends them to drive away demons and do miracles, what He did was awaken in them creativity. But this isn't possible without purification. Also the apostles did part of the way with Jesus, like a family, before they went on their own. The Scriptures say: *The Holy Spirit and we have decided*. This is family! The Holy Spirit and them make family. **For the salvation of mankind, Jesus put His creativity into the live Church**. This is communion. So if we are live Church, and we have this communion of Christ's love, then the Holy Spirit works in and through us.

Only God can generate life. So each fraternity finds fulfilment in God alone. It doesn't take two people, or three people. It takes two or three people **together with God**. Two could be atheists, three could be a band, but two people in God can offer others healing, they can generate and create. So this call opens up an horizon so wide we can't imagine: God starts creating new skies and a new earth.

When we Christians reach this level we can say we are fulfilled. In fact, if the fundamental need to create and generate that exists in every man is not fulfilled on a spiritual level, Christian life is impeded from being fulfilled. I see the fraternity and our communities as being a privileged means where we can be purified, be reborn, and where our creativity can be developed. Here we can be born like the apostles were born, or like St Francis was born. He had not finished his theological studies, but since he had been reborn in the Spirit, his fraternity was reborn.

It's not important whether you are many or few. What's important is that you walk to God, that you feel the life and creativity in you that God alone can give. With this attitude, it is natural that a **person united to God can generate** - don't worry! **Vocations will grow**, don't worry! Two, three, four people united to God, people that aren't married to each other, but are married to God, and are thus united to one another in God, can generate life, generate vocations. I tell you, they generate!

They do not generate, though, if in the community there is just one person who kills life. That is why our communities not only have to be elastic, they also need rules. One of the rules of a community is that there **cannot be unhappy people** in them, because with God one cannot be unhappy and unsatisfied. If someone is unsatisfied, it means he/she has not found the way that leads to God. So he/she should either find it and start walking, or take another road. An unhappy person within a community could easily be a channel for Satan allowing him

to strike out hard.

Another law is this: **a community cannot have people who hate**. I don't just mean hate as an expression of aggression, but also **hate as in being cold to others**: because this is hate too! You know how envy, jealousy and arguments are present in prayer groups. These are weaknesses that we always come across; it means people haven't found life, love or satisfaction in God.

What we want is for people to be healthy. A healthy (or sound) fraternity is a small healthy Church; and through it we get healing, also for the Church. For communion to be developed though among its members, you need to **eradicate individualism**. A person who is no longer rooted in the community is for sure an unsatisfied person who is unable to love. The same way it is impossible for a sound mother to live apart from her child, or for two caring brothers to turn a cold shoulder to one another, fraternities need to get rid of every form of individualism. That's why it's important that the life of God is not reduced to the ideas of single people. I mean, God is not little like my mind or my ideas. The life of God and of my brothers, who are all originals, cannot be reduced to my limited vision.

When we banish all subjectivism and egoism, this creativity, this life, freedom and the pure love of God becomes possible. Take Andrea, Maria, Fr. Emanuele and Fr. Angelo for instance - they're originals. For me to be at the service of God's Spirit in all four of them, I need to come out of my world, my way of seeing, but when I do, what is left? **Faith, hope and love**.

How can I probe their lives, which are original and are also a dwelling place for God? Only with faith, with trust, hope and love. See where fraternal life leads us? To spiritual depths. Then we have no more gossip, or arguments, or limited vision. Instead we pray and offer ourselves for one another till we get to the point of reciprocally generating in God. It's so nice living like this: every day we discover God, live, who manifests Himself in a sister, a father or a brother.

We know the deepness and beauty in us from eternity lies hidden, because we don't feel loved by God. Jesus can suffer inside of me for many years if He is not nourished; but from when you start loving Him in me, He rises. See then what it is to live a fraternal life in the real sense of the word? By making God live in another person, you bring that other person back to life, making him/her free and strong. This then takes us to an attitude of contemplation and awareness of the divine life in others.

What is contemplation? It's when I reject all my arguments and thoughts, when nothing interests me, but I contemplate God in the others; when I remain in God with trust, hope and love, then my attitude is one of contemplation in God in the others. This costs, because it forces us to die to ourselves. It is this denial that we have to sacrifice - and that's being an "offered soul" (or one who offers oneself for the sake of others - a victim). I truly desire that you understand what offering yourself for others means.

Edit. staff

» sacredness of signs used by God to speak to men. Often we feel ashamed of being Christians and acting accordingly, influenced as we are by the world and its "anti-Gospel" culture. But the Pope spoke out loud and clear in Denver: now is not the time to be ashamed of the Gospel, it is time to announce it from the roof-tops! The traditions of the Church are a testimony, when one's heart and mind are unattached, that bear abundant fruit of conversion and the rebirth of people's souls. M.

Daily bus service to Medj. from Trieste continues. Departs 6 p.m. from bus station adjacent to train station in Trieste (ph. 40-360300). Return price: Lit. 86,200 (valid one month).

LIFE IN MEDJUGORJE

Feast of the Cross Croatian style

Aid workers who died in Bosnia were remembered in Medj. (11 Sept.) - What we dare to call the *martrydom* of Fabio Moreni, Sergio Lana and Guido Puletti (aid workers killed in Bosnia last May) was commemorated in Medj. during the **Italian Mass**. There weren't many Italians due to the alarming information given by the mass media. Fr. Slavko concelebrated with Fr. Ivan Landeka who recalled how the Italians distinguished themselves in two different moments of Medj.: in the early years of the apparitions when many forces were trying to suffocate the events, and at the beginning of the war when the only ones bringing aid were the Italians.

Msgr. Franic', archbishop emeritus of Split, came to Medj. for the solemn evening Mass, and his words of praise for the sacrifice of these young volunteers were also very moving. Fr. Leonard Orec', aid coordinator, had given them hospitality in Split just the day before, and his reflection was on the Cross of Jesus and these three men who were *crucified* for Christ.

The Cross on the hill - The big cement cross on top of the biggest hill behind Medj. was built in 1933, jubilee year of the Redemption. It was then that it took the name *Krizevac*, or Cross Hill. That was 60 years ago and in all this time the villagers have felt protected, as their crops have not been destroyed by hail since. On 30 August 1984 Our Lady said that the *Cross was part of the divine plan when it was built*. We were reminded by Fr. Jozo that over these last 12 years, Our Lady has sent us many signs through that Cross. So the feast of the Cross in Medj. is tradition. Even during Communist domination they did not stop saying Mass under the Cross on the first Sunday after the 8th September.

On 6 September 1984 Our Lady said: *Dear children, there is no peace without prayer, and for this I tell you to pray at the foot of the Cross for peace*. Our Lady's recommendation was accepted by many pilgrims who start out on foot every year, even walking for days on end. We saw them on the Saturday, on every road leading to Medj. They were in groups, many were young, determined, despite the bad weather. Storm and rain on the last night did not deter them. The next day, however, the sun came out to brighten up the feast.

How many of us were there on the hill? The local press said 40,000 but I'd say less. This year, because of the war, there weren't as many Croatian pilgrims from Bosnia, and not many foreigners either. The largest group was made up of Czechs and Slovaks. There were also quite a few Americans.

Exaltation of the Cross - 12 Sept.: The celebrations began with the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of the Holy Rosary, guided by Fr. Ivan. At 11 a.m. Holy Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Stojan Zrno, a Franciscan missionary from Zaire. Dozens

* A way of making the chain of prayers world-wide, suggested by a group from Padua: the recitation of the **Chaplet of Divine Mercy** at the hour of Mercy (3 p.m.) every afternoon, for Our Lady's intentions.

In that hour chosen by Jesus, let us give to His and Our Mother yet another weapon in the fight against Evil.

Exaltation of the Cross (12 Sept.). Frs Zrno, Ivan and Philip can be seen.

of priests took Communion out to the faithful spread over the mountain. The faith of these people is impressive, constructive. We ardently invoked peace together with them.

Fr. Jozo: this Cross is a sign!

The evening Mass was celebrated outside behind the church. Main celebrant was **Fr. Jozo**. J. Perkovic' gave us a summary of his homily which lasted more than 40 minutes:

Today we are here on Krizevac to celebrate the cross. The cross is the mystery of love. Our Croatian people became Christian before the discovery of America and Australia, where a lot of pilgrims to Medj. come from. We are an ancient European people, and Europe and the world today have betrayed us; the powerful and the politicians have left us to ourselves in our immense suffering and sorrow. Isaiah's words are very significant to us: "a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering" (Is 53:3). These are truly the hardest moments in our history! But I want to tell you all what I remember. I saw with my own eyes light coming from the cross on Krizevac and going to the church. Then it formed the word MIR (peace) in the sky.

Peace can come only from the Cross! *I also remember all the times we saw the cross turning and the times it was like lit up, all white. That was a message for us, a message to pray before the Cross, and then our crosses will also become luminous. In the beginning of the apparitions, on the third day, Our Lady appeared to Marija Pavlovic' with a black cross, and She was crying and saying: "Peace, peace, peace." Then we did not understand the meaning of Her tears, but now we understand better. Just think how many times Our Lady appeared near the cross on Krizevac, and at the foot of the cross! In fact, it was at the foot of the cross that She became our Mother and Mother of all men. Like Jesus says in the Gospel, both before and after His Resurrection: "Do not fear," Our Lady also repeats often: "Do not fear, I am with you."*

In these days, so terrible, when the devil is so horrendous, these words are hope, comfort and help for us. (...) We do not need politicians. What we need is prayer and fasts. (At this point Fr. Jozo raised his voice and invited everyone, especially the parishioners, to pray and fast as they did in the first days, months and years of the apparitions. He spoke harshly about those

who have let themselves be carried away by the desire for material well-being.)

Our weapon is prayer, fasts and sacrifice. The Rosary can bring about miracles. What the leaders can't or don't want to do to help solve this tragedy, prayer and fasts can do. Our cross then becomes victory, hope and love in faith. Also Costantine saw a cross in a dream and heard a voice: "You will win in the sign of the cross." Costantine won and the cross became a sign of hope and victory.

Let us remain united with our crosses, together with Mary Queen of Peace, Who also today is telling us: "Do not be afraid, do not fear, I am with you. You are not orphans, for I am with you!" A. Bonifacio

SPARKS OF LOVE in the kingdom of hate

A few days ago, on my way back from my parent's place in Herzegovina, I called in at Medj. It was the first time I'd seen the Feast of the Cross. It was a glorious day after the rain the previous night. Most of the 30,000 Croatian pilgrims present had arrived on foot - bare foot. Each of them had a story, a reason, for being there.

* **A young soldier tells:** "Just a few days ago I was on the front, alone, surrounded by enemies. I hid myself in an opening in the rock, where I had to stay 3 whole days. It was then that I promised the Queen of Peace I'd go on pilgrimage bare foot to Her Shrine if She saved me. I came alone; no one can understand me, my soul is overflowing with joy and gratitude. Now I can say that I live - before I was dead, not alive. I feel wrapped in the love of our heavenly Mother. I've put myself in Her hands; now I feel safe, tranquil and happy."

* **A mother** - Her bare feet are bleeding, but that's normal after walking 150 km: "I can't feel the pain and I don't feel tired. I feel happy and I'm certain that our heavenly Mother will protect my two sons and my husband. They are often on the front all at once. Who can save us all if not our Mother, the Queen of Peace? As soon as I saw the tops of the two spires, Our Blessed Mother took away all the pain and tiredness. I'm not afraid anymore."

* **A young man with crutches** on Krizevac: "Two months ago I was part of a group of volunteers taking medicines and supplies to a village surrounded by

Muslims near Konjic'. Once in the valley, we were shot at by machine guns. A bullet went through the top part of my leg. All my calling out for help was in vain; and I couldn't stop the haemorrhage. It was 8 a.m. After a while, when things sounded quiet, I tried to get up, but the machine gunning started again so I threw myself down to the ground. 2 hours later the same thing. Back on the ground, I felt hopeless!

I grasped onto the cross of the rosary beads around my neck as tight as I could. I suppose the loss of blood made me faint. Or did I fall asleep? I don't know. It was night-time when I woke and I felt better and refreshed. I prayed to the Lord to help me find my way in that unknown territory. Protected by the dark, I was even able to walk. A hand (that of the Lord or my guardian angel?) helped me find my way, right to where my companions had taken refuge; and here I am now on Krizevac to thank the Cross, my only Saviour."

There was such a **heavenly atmosphere of profound peace**. During Mass two UN aeroplanes circled overhead, but people didn't even realize. Around 6 p.m. I left for Ogulin with a bus full of pilgrims going to Zagreb. We prayed and sang all night. Many testified to the wonders God had done in their lives. This is what the Lord has done to us. Rejoice with us!"

(Ogulin, 23.9.93 - Fr. Jerko Penava)

FRUITS OF MEDJUGORJE Testimonies at Youth Festival

Young people despair even without drugs unless they encounter God - At the Youth Festival in Medj. the afternoon of 2 August was dedicated to testimonies. The young people of Sr. Elvira's *Cenacle Community* said how they suffered because of their addiction in particular to drugs, but that with the help of grace they were able to come out from the darkness. **Marco** explained: "I thought that sex, the discos, easy girls and drugs would make me happy, but it was in sacrifice and the cross that I found real joy."

Stefano: "The problem with young people today is that they have lost the sense and the value of life. Drugs are just a consequence of this. Young people don't just need money or a car or discos [to be happy]. They need to encounter the heart and the face of God. Even young people that don't take drugs despair if they don't meet God. Only God is real joy."

Fr. Liam Lawton: I cried, but Our Lady had kept me a place at the altar and She told me: I will use you. On 4 Aug. **Fr. Liam**, the tall Irish priest with that beautiful voice, gave his testimony: "I come from a Christian family that prays, but I had other interests. I wanted to become a rock star. I was a singer in a group and I had lots of [male and female] friends - yet the time came when all I felt was lonely and empty."

One day I met a young man and I noticed how happy he looked. He was a theologian in a seminary and the more I got to know him the more peace I felt in his presence. It made me think: why is he so happy if he can't sing and he hasn't got girlfriends. Then I discovered that he had something I didn't have. The more our friendship grew the happier I became and I became aware of a voice in my heart: "Why don't you come with me too?" But I resisted - I felt too

much a sinner: "Why me, of all people?" But the voice grew stronger and I finally said yes. Then I had to tell my friends, and my girlfriend.

The 7 years of seminary were easy. It was after that things became difficult, because I studied theology only with my head. In 1984 I became a priest ... luckily I had the chance to come to Medj. only 2 years later, and that was the beginning of a new life. It was here that I came to understand and know Our Lady as a Mother that cares for me. And here I came to understand Eucharistic Jesus.

One night here I cried a lot, I felt like a new-born baby. I felt that all I had to offer was my sin and it amazed me that I was a priest. My eyes were still red [from crying] and so I thought I wouldn't celebrate that evening, and then when I did decide to, the only chair I could find was behind the statue of St James - and I thought that it was Our Lady who had kept it for me. It was there that I heard that voice so kind and sweet say to me: "I will help you. I will use you."

Then one evening Fr. Slavko told me: "You have to sing for Our Lady." And that was the beginning of a new story, and now I go round the world trying to help young people. (...) I'm sure that God gives a special gift to each person. Last month I spent 4 days with Mother Teresa. She's old, weak and small - yet see how God uses her? Each person has to ask themselves: what gift have I received? Then you need the courage to make the most of that gift.

When I am in difficulty I pray to Our Lady like this: "Mary, Mother of Jesus, be my Mother now!"

Medj. awakens many vocations. The morning of 3 August was dedicated to the problem of vocations. **Fr. Petar Ljubicic**, who personifies that Franciscan simplicity and happiness, began with saying how the youth managed to resist the heat in the tent, proof that it is possible to offer many sacrifices, when done with God. (...) I can see among you many called to love the Lord in a special way. Pray to discover the plan God has for your lives. Those of you who wish to live always and only for God, who want to love Him above everything else should choose a religious vocation. (...)

God doesn't look at our weaknesses, but our decisions... everything becomes easier when you discover that God exists and that He loves you... that which seemed the hardest way will become the easiest way.

(...) You can't live for the sake of yourself - you need to get over this egoistic way of living. (...) The Medj. experience has stirred up a lot of special vocations, for priesthood and monasteries, including the enclosed ones. The secret is in discovering the value of prayer.

Alberto Bonifacio

(New communities have been born from Medj., and there are many young people joining other communities.)

Invocations of Peace from Milan - 300 representatives of different religions from all over the world gathered in Milan to pray for peace: a new Assisi. The Pope's message was read by Card. Cassidy: "No war can ever be called holy," and spoke about the tragedy taking place in former Yugoslavia.

All the representatives lit a torch as a sign of hope and signed in favour of religious peace. The 22nd Sept. was an unforgettable evening. A large crowd gathered for the event.

News from the blessed land (from Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

* In spite of the many political conferences in Geneva and elsewhere, **no progress has yet been made here**. There are now 150 Croatian towns and villages which have been destroyed in central Bosnia. While the Croats are being evacuated from Bosnia, the Muslims are being evacuated from Ljubuski, Citluk, Capljina and other towns in Herzegovina. Thousands of miserable persons wandering, broken.

* Only just a few hours before her scheduled departure for America, **Vicka** became ill: a paralysed arm that kept her bed-ridden for 8 days. Yesterday she was up again and receiving pilgrims. The doctors couldn't find the cause of her paralysis. When Fr. Svet and Sr. Emmanuel returned, Vicka said: "It was in the Gospa's plan that you should go and I should remain and offer my sacrifice." And many graces fell upon Pittsburg.

* One of our friends here in Medj. had a great idea. Hire a bus to **bring refugees on a day pilgrimage** to Medj. He was touched by their sad state after visiting camps in Herzegovina and thought that only the Virgin would be able to heal their wounds.

* **In the family way - Mirjana** is expecting a child, due in April.

* **Jelena Vasilj** has left to pursue her theological studies in an American uni in Austria.

* **Fr. Jozo** lost one of his nephews on the front: a 34 year old father of 2.

* **Soldiers on the front** come back with such dreadful stories, they make our hearts bleed. One soldier, in the Croatian army, told how last May he was near Slavonski Brod, and the area was surrounded by snipers. He told how he came across 4 Serbian soldiers washing their shirts in the Sava river. Not fearful of the reaction of his fellow soldiers, he took aim and shot one of them.

What happened next totally astonished the Croatian soldier: the other three looked up to see the other one fall into the river, then calmly went on with their washing. They didn't even bother hiding. So our soldier shot another one. The same thing: the dead man fell into the river, the two soldiers left stopped for a few seconds and then got on with their washing. A third soldier is shot, and the last one's reaction is exactly the same. The Croatian soldier tells: "I couldn't kill the last one, I just couldn't. It was like shooting at a baby."

What can be said? The Serbian army supplies their soldiers with drugs to make them fearless in dangerous situations and feel no pain when shot at. (A war that kills men twice! We also note that the Croatian soldier had lost all sense of humanity, since they should only shoot to defend themselves.)

* Marija reports how Our Lady has spoken to them about **abortion**, calling it a great sin. *Help these women ask for God's forgiveness, to confess, because God is ready to forgive everything. His mercy is immense. Dear children, I call upon you to help and protect life.*

It is the tradition in Medjugorje to pray specially for the protection of life on every 1st Saturday of the month.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. (Jn

BOSNIA : peace based on injustice not possible

Muslim parliament does not accept "partition" (of 29 Sept.) The reply of the Bosnian Parliament to the Owen-Stoltenberg plan was awaited anxiously. It had already been accepted by the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia which would have been divided into 3 territories: Serbs 52%, Muslims 31% (were 45%) and Croats 17% (as before). The reply was a *yes* with conditions, equal to a no: "we will accept the plan if all the territories where there's a Muslim majority are evacuated." (Where ethnic cleansing was practised then? Like Mostar?)

Things just keep on getting more complicated, which confirms that war does not provide solutions, but only makes the problems worse. The Muslim members of Parliament must know that the population, already exhausted, will have to face another (severe) winter. But is it right that no one has spoken up about the truth (of the Serbian aggression)? Is it right that those who are attacked should always pay?

Europe has let a sovereign state, which had just received international recognition, be invaded and then dismembered, and the fact is accepted and the aggressors are said to be in the right. This is the type of peace men are capable of!

Who knows what plot is behind this resolution. What we do know is that the **Serbs** are in a hurry to come to a conclusion. They didn't expect to find so much resistance when they decided to take Croatia and Bosnia, given the quantity and quality of their weapons. Now their advantage has taken on a different dimension and all they can do is threaten they'll keep what they've occupied. Their economy has fallen to bits, the people are starving and discontented.

The **Croatians** are also in a hurry. After having sent out the Serbs from Herzegovina and central Bosnia, they were assigned (by the European plan) those same territories, with Mostar as their capital. But then the **Muslims**, after having fought by their side, started invading Croatian territory to make up for those territories they lost to the Serbs. And the fighting continues - but what else would they do when the borders depend on how much they manage to occupy?

The mass media do not tell of these things, not even that the Croatians have to defend themselves in Mostar, and that the 55,000 Muslims in that city are besieged because they got hold of the arms depot and keep on attacking. So, violence begets violence, and massacre begets massacre!

How can anyone talk about peace in a situation like this? After so many months of war, all those feelings of vengeance and hate have accumulated and are just waiting for the right moment to strike back. And 1/3 of Croatian territory (Krajine and Slavonia) is still in the hands of Serbs who are aren't willing to give it up. And what about Kosovo, where 2.5 million Albanese are about to lose their every right? * *

What the religious heads think about Bosnia - (from *Avvenire*, 22/09/93). "There will never be peace while those who attack and those who are attacked are put on the same level, if the mass media continue manipulating the truth. The important thing now is to stop all this spilling of blood," the **Archbishop of Sarajevo**, Vinko Puljic, said. To be able to go to the meeting in Milan he was brought out by a tank then

flown to Milan in an American plane. "It's easy to talk about peace here, but there the only noises are the sounds of the bombing, the cry of the wounded and the desperation of the people who feel forsaken by God and men. I came away from Sarajevo with a heavy heart. There are always so many people at my door waiting to ask for help..."

The Catholic Church in Sarajevo has been terribly hit. There were 144 parishes (in the diocese of Sarajevo); 96 have been burnt, plundered and destroyed, 66 underwent *ethnic cleansing* by the Serbs and 30 by the Muslims.

The partition of Bosnia is unacceptable. In the name of the Bosnian Church, I ask that this country remain one, since it is not an artificial unity, like in Yugoslavia. It (Bosnia) has always been made up of three *constituent* peoples who have lived in full religious and human freedom..."

"Disobey those who tell you to kill," says the Orthodox Patriarch. The **Serbian Orthodox** representative from the patriarchate of Pavle in Belgrade, Trifunovic, said with some surprise: "What we can do now is ask our faithful who are fighting in the Christian and Muslim armies to disobey the orders to kill. Our senior patriarch, who has been fasting and praying for peace, had already launched this appeal 2 years ago. He was not obeyed because the soldiers in the Serbian army are nearly all atheists since they grew up in a country where the only religion over the last 50 years was Communism. We had told God to go away because we didn't need Him. Now our hearts are empty, but peace must come into the hearts of each of us."

The **Muslim** leader from Sarajevo, Selimoski said: "God says: a man is desperate when he has no faith. Everything that is happening in our country is fruit of this. But God will weigh what we have done with what we will do and for which reason."

Jerusalem, if only you had understood the message of peace!

There's no doubt what they say is right, but what we would like is not so much hear the pastors enunciate valid principals, but rather hear them say they **accept the Queen of Peace** - for She offers us peace where there is hate and war, and She offers us the means to obtain true Peace.

We would like to see **Her messages being accepted**, or at least the Spirit that animates them; i.e. the Gospel. Is it that Her messages are not accepted for fear of having to live out the Gospel - because it would upset our plans? Yes, Our Lady's messages, like the Gospel, are **committing**.

How much are we encouraged to be true Christians?

The important thing about accepting Mary's messages (which is accepting the Gospel) is **believing** that God exists and so totally trusting Him because there is nothing He can't do. It's putting His will before ours, and being content with what we have. It's being optimistic, fearful of no one and no thing; it's not even worrying about what we'll eat or which clothes to put on.

To understand the above, Our Lady asks that we read and meditate often on the *Gospel of Providence* (Mt 6:24-34). When we can manage to say an unconditioned *yes* to the Father, we are able to accept and love everyone as our brothers, the way they are, even our enemies.

Accepting Mary's programme means that each one's community gives utmost importance to **prayer with the heart**, adoration, meditation of the Word, Holy Mass - not just human activity, whether it be charitable, recreational or cultural, which gives the impression that a community is alive but it lacks the life of the Spirit.

It means **fasting** from sin and from all that leads us to sin, not closing an eye to certain "old-fashioned" Commandments, behaviour and fashion, that only favour the spreading of Satan's kingdom. Proof of open battle against sin is **frequent confession** (weekly, say St John Bosco and Padre Pio; at least once a month, says Our Lady). Do all those people who take Communion take it worthily, if confession has been abandoned by so many all over the world?

What often happens is that we take refuge in a "secular, liturgical, anonymous," even intense devotion to Mary, rather than accept what She asks of us, which frightens us for it would compromise the way we actually live. It's Her programme that frightens us.

But be careful that at the bottom of it all there isn't a refusal of Jesus, because Her words are the same as at Cana: *Do as He tells you*. Could it be that our faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour, has weakened - or that without realizing it, we believe in Satan's prodigies, i.e., in the power of man and his works, capable of inducing even the chosen ones into error (cf. Mt 24:24)?

So how can we have Peace, which is order, so His will can be done here on earth like in heaven? It wasn't by chance that Jesus said: *Will there still be faith on the earth when the Son of man returns?* Fr.A.

Attracted by Simplicity of messages

The messages are all the more effective when explained with simplicity. A school teacher tells how he explained the June '93 message to his students.

"Our Lady is always with us, so let's get used to thinking that She's always by our side. She intercedes for us before God, and She needs our help to realize Her plan of salvation for all mankind. We are all important to Her, for we all have a specific task in this great plan. Pulling out means making it more difficult for others to be saved.

Offering ourselves to God [to work with Him and for Him], and permitting the Holy Spirit to work in us, makes us able to love everybody, and we automatically become bearers of good and peace. But this takes prayer and perseverance; we must convert every day; and despite our good intentions, we often slip. Conversion then, means picking oneself back up, renewing those good intentions, asking God to forgive us and keeping on walking towards Him.

The instrument that will help us be open to God and His works in us is **prayer**. Prayer, however, is not just reciting formulas. It's offering the Father everything we have and do, it's talking to and confiding in Jesus, in Mary Our Blessed Mother, in the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Saints and our Guardian Angels. It's telling them our joys, disappointments, our hopes and our problems. It's praising them and thanking them for everything they do in us.

And we need to remain in silence, in contemplation, so we can hear what God has to say to us, through the Holy Spirit in us >>

OUR READERS WRITE

* **The spread of Mary's messages in Holland** - "Last March I had the joy of being present during Our Lady's apparitions to Ivan in the church of Medj. for 3 days. I was already working as a composer, but during those apparitions I asked Our Lady to entrust me with a task that would contribute to the conversion and salvation of Holland and Belgium, where Christian values and standards have been reduced to zero. 2 months after my request, the **Dutch Echo** came off the press. I didn't expect things to happen so quickly! All I can say is the Our Lady took me seriously and brought about the miracle of providence." (Frank van Strijthagen, Maastricht, Holland)

* **17 year-old tells how she made it through trials thanks to the Rosary** "... Back to school again, but not without trepidation. I know that with Christ and in Christ we are invincible - it's my slogan by now, but I fear for the environment. It's difficult being a good testimony of Christ among people who are blinded by self-love, with no Christian values, for which I am often judged infantile, gullible and immature. At times I feel discouraged, but then I think of Jesus' words: *Happy are those who mourn, they shall be comforted*, and I tell myself that only the Father and the Mother understand me and give me strength to love.

I've certainly had to go through a lot since I was 11, when I first went to Medj., but I've learnt to say the **15 mysteries of the Rosary** every day, like Our Lady requests. I started reading the Gospel and singing religious songs in my heart. Mary is my model: I try to be like Her, with a smile always on my lips, to give courage to others. At times it's so difficult, but I'm slowly starting to learn what it means to love the others. I would like to tell everyone that Jesus and Mary love them and are with them, even if they don't realize it, and that I too, love them and pray for them."

The Rosary places you in Mary's Heart - an invincible fortress. From there, with the love of God, you can attract friends, brothers and adversaries to Jesus.

* **Medj. messages reach Albania** - "We were so lucky to receive a copy of the book *Our Lady visits the earth - Her appearances in Medj. - Her message arrives in Albania*, in Albanese. Where can we find more copies? What a treasure it is! Our faith was transmitted to us by our grandparents and parents. When we were little we used to secretly go to where there used to be the church of Soja Shkodres (Our Lady of Good Council in Shkodër) - which was demolished under the Communist regime. Our mothers used to pick up a stone and a bit of grass from the spot. This book has revealed a lot of things to us that we didn't know. (...)" *Eda and Gjovalin Mosi, 30.8.93*

p.7» - eg. good thoughts and positive decisions, feelings of serenity, of joy, realizing that Jesus and Mary are with us, knowing that we need not fear because God takes care of our needs, are all ways the Spirit talks to us. Our Lady opened and closed Her message with the Holy Spirit, Her Spouse. He lives in us and will transform us to make us become authentic witnesses to the Love and Power of God." (L. Bonacina)

Donations received (September): Medj. in the East: Lit. 1,349,000; Croatia-Bosnia: Lit. 2,264,000; Radio Maria Poland and printer for Russia: Lit. 887,000.

At the Youth Festival: Frs. Slavko, Agostino and Liam

Solemn and sumptuous **matrimony for Marija Pavlovic' and Paolo Lunetti** in Milan. Friends were allowed to film the wedding. Their marriage, which took place on 8 Sept. (feast day of the Nativity of the B.V.M.) in a church of Milan was blessed by Fr. Slavko. Our Lady appeared to Marija after the wedding celebration instead of at the usual time after Marija had requested this of Our Lady in order to bless their marriage and the guests. We wish the bride and groom the Lord's blessings.

Fr. Tadeusz "struck but not dead" - "Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Thanks to your prayers our radio has witnessed many conversions and a shower of graces. Our worries are many, even personal. Poland is going through a delicate moment, but not for the poverty. Her enemies, allies of the devil, are importers of consumerism and moral decadence. Communists and Freemasons, enemies of the Church and of man, are organized and actively against the Church (and our Radio). But pureness, humbleness and prayer, are gifts from heaven offered to us by Mary. They are weapons which the devil does not have, and they clothe us in power and heavenly mercy, and will bring us the peace and love promised at Fatima. So the work of evangelization of the East continues - if necessary, as far as the Urals - bringing faith and freedom to people's hearts.

Let us remain united through **prayer** and form bridges of prayer from one country to another so they, and this country, may be rebuilt with Christian values. We look onwards with courage, fired by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus and Mary, be live tabernacles of God. I bless you." (Fr. Thaddeus, Radio Maria, Poland)

* **Youth 2000 UK** - The 2nd Int'l Prayer Festival was held at Aylesford, in Kent from 25-30 August. Among the many priests present was Fr. Slavko Barbaric' and Fr. Daniel Ange (from France). Fr. Liam Lawton (from Ireland) provided the music ministry. Ivan Dragecivic (the visionary) and Milona von Habsburg also participated.

Other Youth 2000 events this summer included one in Ireland, attended by Bishop Kirby of Clonfert and Bishop Neary; one in Scotland, attended by Archbishop O'Brien of Edinburgh and Bishop Wright of Oban.

Melbourne, Australia held one last July, and a further one is planned for November, to be led by Bishop Kennedy. Perth (Austr) will also hold a prayer festival in December.

Youth 2000 is present in Trinidad and Colombia (through mission teams who help with evangelization of the youth). »

Prayer meetings are organized by Youth 2000 in various parts of the US. It is expected that Youth 2000 groups will soon start in Peru, Poland, Italy, New Zealand and Grenada. For info: Youth 2000, PO Box 119, London SQ 7 5RH, England.

Off the book shelf: * *Introduction to the Devout Life*, by St Francis De Sales. A new translation has been done by SFS Publications in Bangalore. A treasure for all Christians. Enquire at your Catholic book store.

* *Medjugorje Day by Day*, by Richard J. Beyer: a daily meditation book based on the messages of the Queen of Peace. Obtainable from the Medj.Appeal for £8 plus postage.

* *Our Blessed Mother's Messages to the World* - a pocket-size compilation of the messages by I. Schmitzer. Enquire at the Medj. Appeal. * Other devotional books are available from the Medj. Appeal. Proceeds from sales go to the Appeal. Write to: Bernard Ellis, The Medj. Appeal, Lambs Bus. Park, Unit J, Tilburstow Hill Rd., South Godstone, Surrey, RH9 8JZ, England.

FAMILY NEWS

We invoke Our Lady's blessings upon all those whose collaboration and donations make the Echo possible. **610,000** copies are now coming off the press each month.

Confidentially, the **cost** of this Sept. issue (8 pages), was ca. Lit. 60,000,000 (27m. to print the Italian, French, English and Spanish editions; 11m. to post parcels; 7.6 million to post the single copies to Italy and airmail same abroad; 5m. for stationery, telephone and transport; 5 million for costs of Eastern editions; the rest as a help to our volunteer workers. A **special thanks** goes to all those in Italy and abroad who, at their own expenses, do so much to help distribute Echo. Our Blessed Mother knows!

It was a joy for us to print and mail out 7,000 copies of a book in **Albanese**, with colour photos, the history and messages of Medj., catechism, prayers and songs - translated by R. Prendushi (cost 10 million lire). The last of the 14,000 copies of a book in **Romanian** (with messages and prayers) have also reached their destination (cost 22m). 16,000 copies of the Romanian Echo are printed each month. A special thanks also goes to our **French** readers who besides covering the costs of their edition, give generously to the peoples of the East.

Upon the whole Echo family, who remain bound together through the chain of Rosaries (our defence and security), I invoke the Lord's abundant blessings.