

ECHO OF MEDJUGORJE, NO. 77

Our Lady's message of 25 October 1990:

Dear Children, Today I call you to pray in a special way and to offer sacrifices and good deeds for peace in the world. Satan is strong - with all his might he wishes to destroy the peace that comes from God. Thus, my Children, pray with me in a special way for peace. I am with you and I wish to help you with my prayers and to show you the way to peace. I bless you with my motherly blessing. Do not forget to live the messages of peace. Thank you for responding to my call.

LET US SIDE WITH MARY TO FIGHT FOR PEACE AND SATAN WILL BE DISARMED

At the moment Our Lady's message is deeply felt by the whole world which is holding its breath, as by now we all realize the danger of a war threat. The entire world can see that we are in danger. Why is it that this year all the armies of the Middle East are in rank? I has never happened. Victory, however, does not depend on the weapons that either side may have. Victory is in the hands of God alone.

God must change the hearts of men. The war is not between armies, but is in the hearts and souls of people. It is the restlessness and hatred that Satan puts in their hearts. Why does Our Lady continue to say to pray for peace? Hearts cannot be changed by doctors or policemen. Only God can change hearts. This is why we who have listened to Our Lady's call must feel responsible, and our prayers, fasts and offerings can do much.

Again Our Lady speaks of Satan who wants to destroy the peace that God puts in people's hearts. I do not know how we are living these times, or these messages, but for me it is clear that the battle is between Our Lady and Satan. It is a battle for each heart and for all humanity. We then are all involved in this battle. Satan would like to destroy everything that we have, and for this reason we can conclude that we are in decisive times. We cannot understand this mystery of events happening before our eyes, but if we are abandoned to God, if we pray, we can perceive these things with our hearts and so we can respond to Our Lady's call.

Here Our Lady is being a true mother. After having blessed us with her motherly blessing she adds: "Don't forget to live the messages of peace." Just like a mother who gives another peace of advice to her child on his way out to school. So let us try to live this peace, and according to what each person has felt in his heart, respond to Our Blessed Mom's call.

Oh Mary, you assure us that you are with us, and for this WE THANK YOU! We will pray with you for the whole world as the just ones in the Old Testament did. They offered themselves to save cities, like Judith who implored salvation for her people.

Mary, awaken in our hearts the decision to offer ourselves completely to God through your Heart, to offer not just the sacrifice of our good deeds, but the sacrifice of our very lives. Offer it for us so that it will be like the offering of a living Eucharist.

Oh God, we pray to You with Mary for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May the peace of the Holy Spirit descend on all the people, may it fill the hearts of those who are troubled, those who live in hatred, so that these hearts will receive peace, love and joy.

Oh God, send Your Holy Spirit to descend on all leaders of organizations, of political parties, of all countries. Send the Holy Spirit to descend on the Army, on all the leaders of the Army, on all the soldiers. Oh God, we adore You, You are God, You are the Lord, You are the King. Touch the hearts of all men so that the hearts will move towards peace, and so Satan will be disarmed and peace will reign.

God, You are our Father, You are a real Dad to Your children; embrace all of us with Your Love. We want to live for You - we realize this and we want to invite everybody, all the creatures, to recognize You as Father, as our God, our Saviour.

Lord, do not look at our sins, look at Your offering on the many altars; look at all those who pray, who adore You. We offer You all the lives, all the hosts for the salvation and peace of the world in union with all the saints, all the elected, all the angels, the whole Church, all the souls in purgatory. We beg You, give us Your peace; save the world from ruin.

May the blessing of the Almighty God descend on the whole world, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Father Tomislav Vlastic'

BISHOPS MAKE OFFICIAL VISITS TO MEDJUGORJE; SIGN THAT IT HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS MARIAN SHRINE!

Latest news: The President of the Yugoslav Episcopal Commission for Medjugorje, Franjo Komarica, celebrated evening Mass at Medjugorje on Sunday 21 October. It is a wonderful event! So far a bishop could not make official visits to Medjugorje. Even the president of the Commission always came privately.

This time he gave a long introduction to the Mass, saying how he came in the name of the Episcopal Conference and that "the bishops send me, including Bishop Zanic," and that other bishops will come. The crowd applauded loudly.

Fr. Slavko commented on Radio Maria: "This will be the start of a new phase in the relations that the hierarchy have with Medjugorje." It is evident that with the Yugoslav bishops coming officially to Medjugorje to celebrate Mass, this means that Medjugorje has been acknowledged as a Marian Shrine. Let us thank God for this and let us continue to pray so that Mary's plans shall always be fulfilled.

"OUR FAITH IS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD" (1 Jn 5:4)

There is something much bigger than the apparant events, which only faith can perceive

Fr. Dino Barsotti, theologian and father of a flourishing community, experienced a happy impact with Medjugorje and made the following observations:

Messages (especially from the Virgin) to men and Christians are multiplying. Without a doubt, many are the fruit of elated people, troubled by the events. But can we deny that at least a small part are authentic messages from heaven; and is it really easy to interpret them?

The fact that the messages are multiplying, whether or not they are authentic, is an indication of a state of expectation and consternation, of fear and hope. It is telling us that men are aware and do not want the human events to escape from an intelligence that guides

them, from a will that governs them. If the message is not from God, it is at least an appeal, as if provoking an intervention.

The vision that man has of the situation of the world, a situation which deteriorates every day and seems to have no way out, seems to call for a divine intervention. Man feels powerless, not just in preventing disaster, but in finding, and hoping for a way out. Perhaps we should not think it, but it seems to us that every power has been given to the evil one and that only the evil one has the initiative. It seems that the only movement here is backwards, a fast fall into the abyss, an irreversible race to destruction, to death ...

I ask myself, what is the life of a man, of a saint in this tragic world; and as I formulated the question, I already feel that my faith had weakened. This is where Satan's victory lies - when we let ourselves be overcome by the greatness of external events. Not only does the cross dominate all creation, all the evil in the world, but an act of faith lifts a Christian to God and dominates over everything.

What of the apparitions at Rue de Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima...? I wonder if critics believe in the historical authenticity of the miracles in the Gospel, if they believe in the apparitions of the Risen One. The latter events are a guarantee for the former ones. Who was appearing at La Salette, at Lourdes? Can you believe in the Gospel accounts of Jesus, and of Mary? I know: just like in the sixth century, the critics tend to distinguish between the faith of the Church and what history objectively tells us about Jesus and Mary. Who is Jesus for history, who is Mary? Did Mary, the Virgin Mother, really exist for historians?

But here She is appearing, announcing Herself to those who do not even comprehend as the Immaculate Conception, the Co-redemptrix. What is the relationship between Mary who appears and the historical Mary? What is the relationship between the historical Jesus and Jesus in Whom the first Christian Community believed - those same people who composed the Gospels? Without a doubt, since the Jesus of history does not correspond to the Jesus of our faith, we must not and cannot believe in the historical accounts. We must say that history misleads us, that history hides the truth, and we must therefore deny history.

This is relativism when history expects to find the truth in hard facts. History does not embrace reality. I would say that reality slips away from history. History must learn to be silent.

Faith alone knows.

Only the Spirit can introduce us to the truth. Is there a philosophy or a part of history that should not be a part of theology?

Credo ut intellegam. (I must believe to understand.)

The disciples could not understand because they had not received the Spirit. Neither can we understand if we do not receive the Spirit.

Father Divo Barsotti.

SURPRISING SPEECH BY CARDINAL RATZINGER

about priesthood at the Synod Return to Jesus "without Whom we can do nothing"

Cardinal Ratzinger began with the following consideration: "The reason why so many priests abandoned their vocation is not found only in theological reasons, however the other causes would not have had so much force if the theological foundations of the ministry were not in danger."

Christ is the uniting point between the Old and New Testaments. Christ is the conclusion of the OT, and the newness for us all.

Contrary to liberal interpretations (Christ the moralist who frees man) and marxist interpretations (Christ the rebel who opposes institutional power), the Cardinal underlined the biblical image of Christ Who was sent by God and through Whom God works.

Reference was often made to St. John who insists on Jesus' dependence on the Father: "My teaching is not from myself" (Jn 7:16); and to the connection of Jesus' mission to that of the Apostles: "Jesus gave His power to the Apostles so their mission would be a continuation of His - "When someone welcomes you they are welcoming me" (cf. Mt 10:40), "As the Father sent me so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21). So if the Son can do nothing without the Father, nor can we do anything without the Son!

So this "nothing" that the disciples have in common with Jesus expresses the weakness of the apostolic ministry. On their own, with their own strength, they can none of the things the apostles are called to do. Communion with Jesus lies expressly in their inability to do nothing without Him. But by receiving the sacrament of the Order, a priest is sent out to give exactly what he is unable to give with his own strength. He is sent out on behalf of Another, for the precise purpose of being that Other Person's instrument.

This offering of oneself does not destroy man, but it leads him to full human maturity, for in doing so he realizes the image for which he was created. Having been created in the image of the Trinity, "he who loses himself will find himself."

Faith cannot be devised by man. Conversion to faith originates from outwards; it is a gift that comes from God. When this external, divine factor is shadowed the essential structure of Christian faith is endangered. The same thing goes for the Word of God, where faith is not born from reading it, but from listening to it."

Cardinal Ratzinger continued by stressing how the mandate received by the Apostles persists up to this day because it is a gift of the Holy Spirit: The power that Christ gave to reconcile, to nourish, to teach, continues unchanged in his successors, but they are real successors only if, 'they remain faithful to the teachings of the apostles.' (Acts 2.42)

To conclude the Cardinal said with strength: In life and in priesthood it is fundamental that man be in intimate personal communion with Christ... the priest must be a man who knows Christ intimately, who follows Him and has learnt to love Him. The priest, therefore, must be a man of prayer, a man of real spirituality. Without a solid spiritual substance, he cannot last in his ministry.

He must also learn from the Mystery of Christ not to look for himself, nor try to promote himself. He must learn to spend his life for Christ and for his herd. This style of life is exactly opposed to our natural inclinations, but little by little, it becomes clear to us that he who forgets himself is completely liberated... He will have no need to look for success and thus confide in himself. By working for the Lord, he leaves the result to the Lord, and with great joy he places his worries in the hands of the Lord.

Naturally, when we are in intimate communion with Christ, the love for our fellow brothers is born in us too... He who knows Christ from within also wants to communicate the joy of his redemption that the Lord generated in him, to the others: pastoral work is born from this communion of love... and because Christ is never alone, but comes in His Body to gather men, it is inevitable that to the love for Christ, love for the Church is also added...

I would like to conclude with the words of the Pontiff, Saint Gregory I: 'What else could holy men be if not rivers...? But they would dry up quickly if they did not promptly return, out of desire, to the place where they rose... But they always return to the heart out of love; and what they pour out, do and speak before the people, they secretly attain from the Fountain of love. In fact, they learn what they express in their teachings by loving.'

P.T.

MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA PRAISES GIFT OF PRIESTHOOD

Mother Teresa began her speech with a warm invitation to all the priests present at the meeting. These are her words: "... Be holy, just as the Father in heaven is Holy."

A very clear commandment from the Heart of Jesus: be holy!

Holiness is not a luxury that only some can afford; it is a our duty to become so, more so for priests. Priests must take the joy, peace and tender love of Jesus into the families and hearts. Just think how holy a priest must be for him to take away the sins from a sinner who is on his knees before a priest.

Some time ago a man came to Calcutta without notice while we were in Adoration. He came and he prayed. After Adoration, I met him and he said to me: "A big weight on my heart told me to come to Calcutta and pray with you." At the time there was a priest in our house and I told the man: "Unload this weight, go to the priest and you will become a pure man." He went to confess his sins, and he came out of the confessional looking radiant, totally new. It was a wonderful thing to see. Then in front of the Tabernacle he knelt down and thanked God for this great love, for the great gift of a pure heart. The day after he caught his plane and went away. That's all.

Can you see the tenderness of God's love, to have made that man come for this! Can you see what an extraordinary yet terrible gift God gave to the priests, that gift of donation a pure heart?

What a wonderful gift the priests have, to be able to say, 'this is my Body.' In our house we have a handicapped child. She is both mentally and physically retarded, but when we have Adoration, I take her to the chapel, and I am struck by joy every time I look at the way she receives JESUS. Struck by the light in the face of this child who knows Who she is looking at. One day I asked the father: 'Please give Holy Communion to this girl,' and he replied, 'How can we prepare her?' I said, however, 'Father I will put her to the test.' So I took a piece of bread and a simple Host and a crucifix, I placed them before the girl and I indicated to her. She put her finger on the piece of bread and then took her finger to her mouth. Then she put her finger on the Host and then on the crucifix. Then the father said to me, 'She knows,' and he gave her Holy Communion. See how wonderful the love of God is Who

comes to us? That priest was very grateful to God for having let him give so much joy to the child.

Terrible responsibility: humbleness and purity of Mary are conditions for fruitfulness.

Priesthood is a beautiful gift, but what wonderful and marvellous responsibility in giving Jesus... what a terrible responsibility for you to be holy, because you cannot give what you do not have. That is why it is important to have a profound love for Mary. Mary will guide you, She will protect you, She will keep you for Jesus because there are so many certain temptations and difficulties in the world of today, especially where purity and pride are concerned. So let's cleanse ourselves, let's try to be pure and humble like Mary. She will help us to be holy like Jesus. God Himself was attracted by this purity and humbleness, and that is why She was chosen to be the Mother of Jesus, that is why She was chosen to give a body to Jesus. In all sincerity, She can say, 'Yes, this is My Body,' and yet, She was never chosen to be a priest.

She gave everything to Jesus and for this reason you priests must remain attached to Her, you must love Her, and She will become your real Mother. She will guide you and protect you.

Take to the people the joy of the Eucharistic Adoration!

Mother Theresa continued by reminding the priests the value of the Eucharistic Adoration: I can declare without any difficulty, that we must thank God for having given us Adoration in every community... Take the joy of Adoration to others. We are trying to take it to all the parishes at least once a week, because the people are hungry for God..

When we look at the cross we know how much Jesus loved us, and when we look at the tabernacle, we can see how much Jesus loves us today. For this reason, it is extremely important that every priest should have a tender love for Jesus in the Sacraments and in the Eucharist. Mother Theresa stressed the importance of the priest being the only one able to give the Sacraments which are needed by the poor and dying people to be able to meet God with pure hearts. In this way the sick people in the houses of Mother Theresa die in peace, and the Sacraments and Adoration are the biggest help that these people receive.

People die from hunger all over the world. I picked up a man on the street; he was covered in worms, and I took him to our house. The first thing he said was, 'I have lived like an animal, but I will die being loved and helped.' It took me three hours to remove the worms from his body. I took them out one by one. At the end we prayed for him, we gave him a ticket for St. Peter (baptism) and he died with a big smile on his face. And he went to God. We must thank God for His tenderness and for His love...

I will pray... so that you will grow in the tender love of Christ... so that you will feel that complete attachment to Christ, just like St. Paul says, 'Nothing will separate me from Christ's love.' Let's make a firm and intimate resolution to grow in this personal attachment to Christ. May Jesus be everything in your lives.

- P.T.

YOUTH 2000 - DAY THREE MARY AND THE EUCHARIST

If you want the fruit you must possess the tree that bears it; if you want the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, you must possess the tree of life, Mary (Montfort 164).

Initial Adoration: I adore You because You gave me Your Mother

To begin with we will remain in silence and invoke Jesus' Name just as Mary did. Where will this lead us to, if not in Mary's Immaculate Heart!

Then we will learn to pray the Hail Mary; we will pray slowly, with our hearts, as if we were praying only one Hail Mary all day long. Then we will sing aloud Ave Maria.

The Hail Mary is a prayer of perfect spiritual harmony which embraces the life of Mary in the first part and us in the second part. There is no greater admiration than that expressed in the first part where we repeat Her titles (full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus), and in doing so we recognize Her power before God that She uses for our sake.

So let us try to fathom this harmony.

Life and renewal of Church can only come from the Mother

I wish to share two sorrows with you. First, it is hot and so you will not be able to reflect properly on the theme. The second thing is the greater of the two: the world and the Church do not take Our Lady seriously.

It is important to understand that the Mother can be seen only in a frame of love. For this reason, I invite you to look at her within this frame of divine love so that we may meet Our Lady.

The theme for the day is "Mary and the Eucharist". Mary and the Eucharist are always together. Mary appears only in churches where there is also the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the centre of life and goes together with the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, life always begins with a mother. The great saints that founded the religious orders began in the heart of Mary. Today we remember St. Mary of the Angels where St. Francis began. I have given you these cures to make you understand certain things which regard Medjugorje.

Why does She appear every day and for so long? Why has the announcement of Our Lady of Medjugorje reached the whole world? Why are so many opposed to Our Lady's presence? The woman Mary brings new life to the whole world, to the whole Church. Mary wants to renew the whole Church, the whole world, through the grace of God.

Why Mary, a creature? Many theologians and ideologists ask this question. I reply that no other possibility exists (said three times). God has decided. According to the natural law there is no other possibility: through a mother life is given. In the womb of a mother life begins. Could God have done it any other way? Could God have expressed His love in a better way? He has come to us as a mother who feeds her child with her tenderness and her own blood. The Love of God has presented Itself to us in the tenderness of a mother. Only in this tender love can a healthy life begin, grow and develop.

Here then, we have a benevolent God who made a perfect mother and donated Her to us, He gave Her to us in these times so that life, not religious ideology, can be renewed. Why does Our Lady appear now? Why is She present in such an evident manner, in all the continents, in these days? It is because God wants to renew the divine life in the whole world. God wants the Church to be renewed - for the year 2000, He wants the Church to be radiant! This is why we are invited to abandon ourselves to the Immaculate Heart... Only there will you receive life. Only through Mary are you able to receive the complete grace. Only for Mary. The omnipotence of God that acted in Mary's heart will also act in you, and there is no one more than a mother who desires to give to a baby so much. No one approaches the heart of a baby with such tenderness as that of the mother's. We will receive everything through Mary.

Let's all sing: Ave Maria. And a song to God because He gave us the Mother: Kumbaya..!

The Mother wants to enter our hearts to repeat the incarnation.

Do you know then why Satan persecutes the woman - i.e. why does Satan fight against Mary? I think that you may be able to understand now. Because life is given through a mother, through tender love. Of course, if he impedes the Mother, he impedes the life in us. This is why there is such a big battle in human hearts. It is a battle more dangerous than between powerful states. Letting the Mother enter the hearts of men means Satan's defeat. This then is the battle. Our Lady wants to consecrate the hearts to God and Satan wants to put a stop to it at all costs.

Let's leave Satan for now. We need him only to show what we mean. It is important to understand the gift of Mary's presence here. Our Lady does not want to be an exterior object with Her presence, and not even a theological idea. She wants to enter our hearts as a Mother. The grace offered here at Medjugorje is the grace of maternity, both physical and spiritual. Those who accept the Mother in their hearts accept the Mother Who received the Word of God - and in our hearts, the incarnation is renewed. Who then will understand Our Lady here? Those who receive Her in their hearts. Those who want to accept Her as an object or an idea do not understand Her. That is why, from Fatima up to today, we are continually invited to consecrate ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That is why the ultimate triumph is called triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is why Our Lady comes: to prepare for the year 2000. That is why She is looking for the little people that want to accept this gift in their hearts, because Mary wants the Incarnation to be repeated in each of us - and thus the Kingdom of God will enter our hearts.

Some points to distinguish between Mary and Satan. Mary gives us humbleness, Satan pride. Our Lady tender love, Satan aggression and hatred... She pardon and peace, he vengeance and division.

So let's decide for Our Lady: tender love, humbleness and pardon!

Beware: Satan will try to steal these gifts from you. If he steals the mark of Our Lady from you, life cannot develop in you. Your future, oh youth, will be beautiful only through Mary. (song and pause)

(Resumption: a song of love: Trouver dans ma vie ta presence... Rosary.) To say Hail Mary

is to admire, and thus accept Mary's gift.

(The Rosary is recited in 15 languages, and even with gestures by a mute person present which was very moving.)

A question: I have been asked if Satan is stronger when one is closer to God. No, Satan is angrier, but weaker. He suffers when one is closer to God's love. For us, contemplating God is bliss, for him it is hell. That is why he cannot support people who are similar to God and Mary. That is why there is a battle between him, Mary and Her children... When God's love grows in the world, he fights to survive.

Q. How does one tell the difference between a possessed person and attacks by the devil? The first are in Satan's power. Holy people, however, are attacked by negative forces, so that there could be legions of demons around the saints, but they persevere in love and they destroy the satanic forces.

I shall give you an example: here in the community I am tranquil when I feel disturbed by Satan. I am sure that we are on the right path. When we did Adoration day and night and everyone offered themselves, we were greatly disturbed. Some thought that we were possessed, but it was Satan who was very angry.

So love intensely and terrorize the demons - because the Divine Love destroys the satanic forces and the world will be free from his presence. Our Lady wants you as Her instruments to destroy the satanic works. Thank you for having been good...

(From a registration.) Fr. Tomislav, 2 August 1990

YOUTH 2000 - Seven Vocations

Paul MacLernan from the Scottish college of Rome wrote to tell us that he got his vocation during the festival in Medjugorje, and 2 other young men and 2 young women have entered a monastery and 2 other young people have entered a missionary family; all following a call to the vocation in Medjugorje.

FORMER ROCK FAN SPENDS NIGHT ON KRIZEVAC AND FINDS CONVERSION

"The evening of 15 September, day dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, I went up Krizevac on my own. At dusk I started the Way of the Cross with a group of friends, but after the first station we parted. A third of the way up I kneeled down while facing the church of Medjugorje as it was the time of the apparition. I felt a sensation of solitude and at the same time of wonderful communion. As I admired the beautiful view I felt relaxed, though music from someone's stereo far off reached my ears.

The last people I met were a mother and father each with a sleeping child in their arms. It was already dark and difficult to see one's way down. I ask them pardon now for not having

lent them my torch! I'm sure Mary would have watched over them and helped them down. A light wind has risen, and the bustling noise made by the photos and petitions pasted on the big cross at first frightened me. But then I saw the Cross! What a sight!

After the first couple of stations I had removed my shoes because Krizevac is a new Sinai, but also because our Mother is there. I tried to recite the Ten Commandments but after 30 years was unable to remember them.

About 11 p.m. I was alone on the mount and wanted to sing one of the famous spiritual songs of my friend Alamo, but I couldn't. Inside of me I was crying out of joy. When I had fun at the dance halls and discos I thought I had experienced the greatest joy possible, but now I know that it was nothing compared to the joy that God gives! How good Jesus and Mary are for having given us the mount of conversion and reconciliation!

After I had finished praying I was about to get into my sleeping bag behind the cross, when I heard footsteps: I turned my torch on so that people would know I was there, as it was very dark - it was a young lad, he also all alone, who wanted to leave a gift at the foot of the cross without being seen. I rolled over and pretended to sleep. At about 11.30 p.m. someone in front of the cross started singing at the top of their voice accompanied by the guitar, as if they were on stage. At first I thought it was the echo of a microphone, carried up by the wind. I slowly walked around the cross and found a bare-chested young chap singing non-stop - a nice chap from Naples, I'm sure Mary would have appreciated his efforts. It was about mid-night when a real party started - groups started coming and going for the nocturnal Way of the Cross. The first to arrive was an elderly priest with a charismatic group, and with whom I would like to make contact. After having thanked Jesus and Mary, he invoked the Divine Spirit, and blessed all of us (on the hill) with blessed oil. We all savoured an extremely sweet experience that can be felt only in certain places. As I was being blessed, I could feel myself falling and I couldn't do anything to stop myself. I was slowly falling into the repose of the Spirit. Then, as though in a diving suit, I could hear everything, but I couldn't move. It is so difficult to describe that wonderful peace and communion with the cosmos that I felt in those seconds, or minutes, I don't know which.

I wish I could say more, but it is so difficult to describe justly. I wasn't the only one to feel this either, but everyone that was there on the hill with the priest and his group, and I believe that I was the one that felt less, as at first I had resisted. Some started uttering incomprehensible phrases, and one even asked us, in a whisper of a voice, to stop playing the guitar. (So guitarists all, let's use God's gift with humbleness and sweetness.) I immediately felt the need to make a general confession and to bury my past up there on the hill. After a few hours, peace once again reigned on Krizevac and so I took advantage of the fact and napped for a while longer, only this time I was no longer alone. It wasn't long, however, that I was soon wakened and had to move, as at dawn, Krizevac started being populated again and due to the poor light people were treading on me. What a night! So many faces, so many things happening - just when I thought that I would have been alone all night long!

I was puzzled by a few things in the early morning. I had secluded myself in the area behind the cross when two elderly ladies, one younger one and a man appeared from behind some bushes, all smiling at me. At first I thought that perhaps the thought of me sleeping up there had aroused their sympathy, but I soon realized why they were smiling at me when I saw

them open up their cool boxes and set up an array of drinks on a pic-nic table. They had obviously wanted me to buy from them. They had pitched a tent on the mount in a clearing (somebody had burnt the bushes to make it). They even had a guard dog who had bothered me during the night, or perhaps it was I who had bothered him. Of course, everyone has the right to live as they wish, but I had never come across a Way of the Cross that finished with a drink stall. Even half way up there was a stall with a sign that bore a cross and an ice-cream (sic).

After the unusual awakening, I recited payers and a Rosary, lulled by the beautiful local songs. It then became impossible for me to pray any more, as groups of English-speaking people arrived; posing for photographs, laughing and talking aloud and generally disturbing the peace. Only just a few days before I had read in ECHO that the pilgrims (especially Italians) were criticized (and rightly so) for not respecting the silence that should reign in a place of prayer. I think it right to point out the above so that Krizevac can remain a place of prayer.

My friends climbed the mount to meet me in the morning, and after a light rainfall, we went back down. Despite the difficult climb, we noticed much prayer, suffering and many elderly people going up with walking aids, sick people being carried up on stretchers, or on people's backs, even blind people being led up by their hands, and many languages. I understood that the world is much bigger than what I thought, that my small world back home isn't everything, and that an egoistic existence cannot give joy.

Dante Passerini - Bologna, Italy.



OUR LADY'S ANXIETY FOR RUSSIA has penetrated hearts of Medjugorje converts.

Bishop Paul Hnilica, encharged by Cardinal Groher, blessed and inaugurated the new Medjugorje centre in Vienna on 11 October. There were thousands of young Austrians present.

On the 13th at Marienfeld, the spiritual centre of Germany, all the young Marian groups got together to reflect on Evangelization 2000, the theme proposed by the Pope. The zeal for the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart was strong in those who had been to Medjugorje: "Caritas Christi urget nos" (Christ's Love is urging us.)

This love cannot be expressed in a better way than to help Mary realize her plans for Russia. This is why these Marian groups willingly accepted the proposal made by the Bishop, and that is to adopt the Church of Russia, and offer prayers and daily sacrifices and crosses to sustain the pastoral needs of Russia. There will thus be a house in Moscow close to the Domus Mariae house so that there will be constant contact with the people so they may see in the missionaries Christ's real face.

Those who return from Medjugorje show an ingrained sensibility towards Russia. Mary's anxiety has penetrated their hearts. I found many forces in the East, secretly prepared by

God in these times for Russia. 40 seminarians from the East are studying in Rome, waiting to become priests for Russia. They do not live in the Roman seminaries, however, but rent a few humble houses, fitting as many as possible in the houses, and sleeping in sleeping bags - but this way it will be easier for them to maintain the spirit of poverty and love for their brothers. There is also a group of about 40 catechists - girls from the East - who are going to theology lessons for lay people at Rome, and also lessons in the Russian language and spirituality for apostolic work in Russia.

(From a conversation with Msgr Paul Hnilica.)

JASNA GORA LIKE MEDJUGORJE

Night vigils for Synod. Black Madonna declared Queen of Poland

The title of Jasna Gora was endowed on Mary in 1600. Now in Poland, after 45 years of Communism, the new government has again declared her the Queen of Poland. Crowds of people can be seen at the shrine praying, confessing, meditating and adoring, in silence and with great devotion. It's just like being in Medjugorje, but while we find it difficult to live the same atmosphere at home, here in Poland it is completely normal. Not a lot is said about the Synod, because the people pray a lot. All the Polish seminarians take turns to pray at the all-night vigils being held at Jasna Gora for the great and important event.

FIRST MARIAN PILGRIMAGE TO BULGARIA

Moving testimony of real martyrs
All that they boast of is their loyalty to Pope

The organizer, Fr. Andrea D'Ascanio, a Capuchin from Aquila, writes: "For months we were told that our Bulgarian brothers and sisters were anxiously awaiting our arrival because of their great thirst for God and His Word. They desired to see Our Lady walk once again on their soil. Bulgaria has for the last 45 years suffered a martyrdom where to profess one's faith meant death.

So we left with Our Lady and many rosary beads, Gospels, catechistic literature and prayer booklets, all printed in the local language. It was like seeing the dead rise again as Our Lady passed through the streets. Their tired, sad faced lit up with smiles, and hope seemed to fill their hearts." Nine Italians took part in the spiritual adventure which was an official tour over two-thirds of the country.

It was a miraculous one. Just think that at the beginning, the statue of Our Lady of Fatima wasn't allowed inside with the passengers, then it was put in the first row, taking up the places where three diplomats should have sat. All doors were opened, almost magically, before the Queen of the East. Our astonishment continued when the person in charge at the

Bulgarian check-point in Sofia stood up as we entered with the statue of Our Lady in our arms, crossed himself and bowed before Our Lady and let the whole group pass, saying, 'I am Catholic'...

It is the first time that a sacred image enters the Communist Bulgaria officially, and more so, carried in someone's arms through the streets and the country-side, in the hotels and the churches and amidst general surprise. It was the Mother searching for Her most tried children and Her children recognized Her.

Friends tell us that the Communist Party in Bulgaria have changed their name, but besides that, very little else has changed. The economical situation is disastrous - the average wage is about US\$40 per month, basic foodstuffs are lacking and devaluation is at 400%. Despite this: .. faith has held up well thanks to the martyrdom of numerous faithful guided by heroic priests, who, unlike the Orthodox, did not wish to give in to the government so that they would not become unfaithful to the Pope, to the Church of Rome, and for this reason most of the priests and nuns ended up in prison, where almost half the priests lost their lives.

During the pilgrimage, the voyagers met with various priests who told of how they were persecuted.

We shall report only two of such encounters. ... We were thanking one of the most tried priests, for his martyrdom and he replied: 'Thanks for the martyrdom? That's a big word, the only thing important for us was to keep our faithfulness.' 'Faith,' we corrected, thinking that his Italian was imperfect. 'No, faithfulness! Faithfulness to the Church of Rome, to the Pope! This was our real battle: remain faithful to the Pope despite the pressure and intimidations.'

With the pride of a champion who knows to have won his battle, he adds, 'We all kept our faithfulness, not one Bulgarian priest lost his faithfulness to the Pope.'

We met Bishop Method Stratiev in his two-roomed council flat which he rents. This man is tried by persecution and suffering, he spent the first eleven years of his episcopate in prison, in hallucinating conditions. No trace of ill feeling, however, can be seen in him, only sweetness and love can be seen - sentiments which we found in all the priests and nuns tried by persecution..

We didn't take note of all the places we visited... but the atmosphere of faith and the warm reception was common to all... it was the same everywhere... On the Red Sea, at Burgas, a small procession spontaneously started up behind Our Lady; it was the first religious manifestation outside of the Church after 50 years! On the 3rd August, before we left, we received an invitation from the Bishop of Sofia (there are 25,000 Catholics in the capital). The little cathedral was full. The Bishop and the parish priest received us as the people sang. The young people had even learnt an Italian hymn that honours Our Lady. The Bishop explained how the people left their jobs in the factories to greet Our Lady and he apologises because there were not many people at the first meeting as they had not been warned... That was the last delicate gesture of that world that was offered to us and which by now is being carried in our hearts.

P.T.

REPOSE OF THE SPIRIT

Some readers have asked about the repose of the Spirit.

Laying on of the hands is a normal gesture during divine invocation that any priest has the power to do, just as he has the power to bless. (The laying on of the hands is quite different to the sacramental one done at Confirmation or Ordinations.)

The rite of the anointing of the sick recalls St. James' words: "If one of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the church and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over his" (Jm 5:14).

Those at Fr. Jozo's (or anywhere else) who receive the repose of the Spirit are ordinary people in need of the Doctor: perhaps for liberation, a spiritual need, of physical or inner healing (none of us can say we are not in need of this).

Should a priest lay his hands on us and we fall into the repose of the Spirit, or receive particular graces, then we should thank God.

The repose of the Spirit is the complete surrender of human power to God's Spirit where problems or memories that disturb the heart vanish, and where the soul gives in to God's will.

These are normal gifts that God gives when and to whom He thinks best. It is our fault if through ignorance we have made them become so rare or extraordinary to the point that we are shocked when we do see them. Thus, the laying on of the hands is not a strange or superstitious gesture, but is a sacrament.

If only all priests would return to using the powers that were bestowed upon them at ordination!

Fr.A.

WOMAN: ENEMY OF SATAN "Be Strong in God"

Fr. Gabriel Amorth comments the references to Satan in Our Lady's messages.

"Pray, my Children, so that Satan may not shake you as the wind does to the branches of a tree; be strong in God... Pray constantly so that Satan cannot take advantage of you" (25 May 1988).

The evangelical call is evident; and is always present in the Virgin's messages. Jesus put His apostles on guard because "Satan got his wish to sift them like wheat" (Lk 22:31), but Jesus prayed so that Peter's faith would not fail and because he would in turn strengthen the faith of his brothers.

Apart from the importance of this evangelical passage regarding the supremacy of Peter, Satan's power that sifts all of us is made clear here. Mary repeats it to us and also points out that it is with our own strength that we succumb, and that we need to pray, and pray very much, to obtain help from God, for only He can defeat the devil.

Even in cases of diabolical possession, it is possible to free oneself without the aid of special blessings, but it is not possible to be freed without much prayer.

"Do not fear, for I am with you even when you think that there is no way out or that Satan reigns" (July 25, 1988). This too is a big temptation. When everything goes wrong (health, family affections, work...) we lose heart and think that evil is stronger than good. Why do perverts triumph? Why does everything go right for scoundrels? The psalmist asked these questions too. Our Lady invites us to be courageous, to trust, and She assures us Her Motherly presence and thus Her intervention. But She wants us to surrender ourselves completely, and to pray very much: "Satan is strong; and so my Children, draw near to my motherly Heart with unceasing prayer" (Oct 25, 1988). Jesus gave us many gifts, one of them was His Mother; so chin up and get rid of all that pessimism.

We must also, however, make a decisive choice for God. "Pray so that you may decide for God only, without any satanic influence" (Nov 25, 1989). Jesus told us quite clearly that we cannot serve two masters; Our Lady persists with this decision to be completely on God's side - She knows how clever we are at compromising. We are all tempted to mix religious faith with worldly ideas, with egoism, with our research for worldly goods, with our consent to passions and so on. Take for example the extreme cases - when I bless possessed people, a starting point is often a confession, a change of life style. Often, the people who are struck, are those that live in irregular marriages, or who had abortions, or who bear a grudge against somebody, and are unable to renounce the situation. It takes real conversion; and I have found that renewing the baptismal promises is very useful, insisting on renouncing the devil and everything that ties us to him whether voluntary or involuntary (involuntary when caused by others). The Gospel is very demanding: there is no room for compromises, or as the prophet Elijah says, it does not tolerate those who try to be partly with the Lord, and partly with the world.

The devil tries to enter our hearts in ways which are quite common, and Our Lady warns us: "Pray and do not let Satan act in your lives through misunderstandings, incomprehensions, and through not accepting one another" (Jan 25, 1990). Jesus wants us to be one heart and one soul, but we are weak, imperfect and irritable; we are quick to gossip and to bear grudges against those who hurt us. Misunderstandings and incomprehensions are inevitable since we are imperfect. We must know how to forget and to forgive, to bear with and realize that we also have much that others must bear with and forgive us for. For, if we break that charitable love amongst ourselves, it is impossible for us to remain united to God. The two biggest precepts of love are interdependent and the devil knows this very well. He tries to create division among us so that he will eventually turn us away from God. One must keep his eyes open through prayer, for these dangers.

Q. If Christ defeated Satan with His death, why is it that he still seems to have so much power?

Well, to be brief, Satan is very strong, but Christ has given us His strength to defeat him. To cite the Second Vatican Council, the history of mankind is pervaded by a tremendous battle against the powers of the darkness, a battle which started right from the beginning of the world... `the battle against the evil spirits continues and will endure, as the Lord says, till the last day.' (Gn 3.7) The faithful must endeavour to remain firm so as to avoid the traps set by the devil and to confront him on the evil day... In fact, before reigning with Glorious Christ, when the last course of our earthly lives will be finished (there is no other trial), we will all appear before the tribunal of Christ to report what we did during our mortal lives, whether

good or bad. At the end of the world, those who did good deeds will come out and be resurrected in life; while those who did bad deeds will come out and be condemned. (LG 48)
Fr. Gabriel Amorth