

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Message of 25 March 1995:

Dear children, I invite you today to live peace in your hearts and your families. My little children, there cannot be peace where there is no prayer, and there cannot be love where there is no faith. So, my children, I invite you all to decide again today for conversion.

I am close to you and I invite all of you, dear children, to come into my arms so I can help you; but you do not want to and so Satan tempts you, and even in the smallest of things your faith falls short.

So pray, my little children, and through prayer you will be blessed and you will have peace. Thank you for responding to my call.

Decide today for conversion, take refuge in my arms

Once again Mary is inviting us to prepare for Easter and to **decide for conversion**. Decide again, but make that decision today: *if you hear his voice today do not harden your hearts* so as not to fall, like your fathers, into disgrace before the Lord. Just a few words, but Mary has X-rayed our most inner selves which she sees in the light of God: thus each of us feel so touched by her words.

Conversion is living peace in our hearts and our families. "Living" peace is not a nirvana of quiet individualism in the absence of all needs and desires as in some oriental ascetical practices, but it is the dynamic and joyful acceptance of God's will even before obstacles and crosses, because we believe that He guides all things and knows how to move mountains. Thus, it becomes a relationship of love, harmony, caring and understanding towards others.

Peace comes from prayer with which we subject ourselves to God. Through prayer He gives us His peace and makes us see what is necessary for our peace. Where there is no prayer there is no peace, but there is anxiety, worry and divisions. **Love comes from faith** that God is Father and loves everyone, bad or good: He sacrificed His Son also for the worst of us. Jesus teaches us to donate our lives for our brothers and do to others what we would like them to do to us.

Without **prayer** you are anxious because every negative thing upsets you. If you are without **faith** you are in the dark and you are unable to see your brother who needs love. *All you see is yourself and everything represents an obstacle for you.*

Mary thus reveals to us what is at the bottom of lack of peace and love. If there is no peace in you, if you do not cultivate love in you, then your pretty words mean nothing and your religiousness is a castle in the air.

"We are Risen with Christ" - *The great Anastasis or Resurrection by the "Comunità Cenacolo" of Medj. (see article Echo 117)*

Our Mother, though, will not leave us alone in these commitments she is asking of us. She awaits us with open arms, desiring so much to help us and remove us from Satan's grasp: **I am with you, come into my arms.** Who else if not little children are seen in their mother's arms? Let us become little and run to Her for protection.

But you do not want to. In this glorious day of God's descent into her womb, Mary does not invite us as other years to rejoice, but appeals to us with tones of gravity, just as she did in the message to Mirjana and in the sad signs of the tears in Italy.

Every mother "knows" her children are at risk when they are not with her. Only those children who remain home and ignore their parent's love, like the elder son in the parable, cannot see the loving anxiety, passion and tears of Mary who is Mother also of those who thoughtlessly race towards perdition.

Without Her, we are at Satan's mercy who tempts us in little things to make us then fall in big things, as far as our faith falling short. His evil power which influences everything and everyone seems to carry away our every defence *with his power of deception* (cf. 2Th 2:10-11) *where if possible, even the chosen ones fall into error.* It is only too clear that this is "his century."

We need to be clothed in impenetrable armour: Mary's Immaculate Heart! Let us consecrate ourselves to her Heart everyday, entering into it to pray worthily, and our Easter will be sincere - and we **will have the blessing and peace of God.** *Fr.A.*

Abduct, oh Lord, with the sweet, burning force of your love, all the worldly things in my mind, that I may die out of love for your love, just as you deigned to die out of love for my love. (Prayer said by St Francis)

Mary says: your heart is hard before God's love If you love you will not fear the future

Our Lady said to Mirjana on the 18th March (Mirjana's birthday): *"Dear children, as your Mother, I have been teaching you for many years about faith and God's love, but you have not shown gratitude towards your dear Father, nor have you given Him glory. You have become void and your hearts hard and loveless toward the suffering of your fellow men. I teach you love and show you how much your dear Father has loved you, but you have not loved Him. He sacrificed His Son for your salvation, my children!"*

If you do not love, you will not recognize the love of your Father. You will not recognize it because God is Love. Love and do not fear, because in love there can be no fear (cf. 1Jn 4:18). If your hearts are open to the Father and full of love for Him, why should you fear what will come? Those who do not love are afraid because they await punishment and know how empty and hard they are. I lead you, my children, to Love, to your loving Father, to eternal life. Eternal life is my Son (cf. Jn 17:3)."

Our Lady came at 3.15 pm and remained with Mirjana 10 minutes. We heard her pray 3 Our Fathers and Glory Be's with the Blessed Virgin... for those who do not know God's love, for the souls in Purgatory and for those present at the apparition. When Our Lady departed Mirjana was unable to hide her disappointment.

She later told Fr. Slavko: " She was not happy as in other times. She spoke to me about the secrets, but I cannot say anything. I cried because it is so bitter to see Her depart.

JUBILEE 2000: prepare humanity to return to Christ

In his apostolic letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, so simple and so prophetic, the Pope presents Christ as the centre to which humanity must converge in these last and troubled years of our century. With St Paul he says: *Our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted* (Rm 13:11).

"John Paul II is asking the aged, tired and at times discouraged Christians to become contemporaries of the Christ of the Gospel, to rediscover the vigour and fervour of the apostolic times," wrote Card. Etchegaray, president of the Jubilee Committee. The Church must make her original figure emerge. A Church that taught only what the world can learn on its own would soon become an insignificant Church; it would stop being a Church. From the start to the end of his letter the Pope says how the future belongs to Christ: *In Him the Father gave the last word on man and his story. Christ is the conclusion of the yearning of all religions in the world, thus he is the one and only approach.*

Such is the central axis of our faith that the Holy Father, in the name of the Gospel, wishes to strengthen and even straighten the Church which marches toward the year 2000. More than a flight forward, it is a return to the founts of salvation... An epochal passage like this, from one millennium to another, is like the passage over the Red Sea, a great Easter, this time for all humanity: *In a certain sense, in fact, Jesus is in possession of all mankind.*

A "trinitarian" triennium to prepare for Jubilee

This is how the Pope, at the end of his letter, traced out the journey which must lead the Church to the great Jubilee.

1995-96: Ask for the intercession of all SAINTS. For this reason the Martyrologies of the universal church will be updated, paying

When I am with Her there is a fullness in me and when She goes I realize I am on the earth, as if abandoned. It is so hard to accept that if it happened more frequently I don't know how I would resist... I see this message as one of love and consolation. We need not fear when there is love in us."

(News from A. Bonifacio and Sr. Emanuel)

You are worth more than the sparrows - not one hair on your head will be removed!

The message seems to highlight the division between man who believes in the Father's love and man who lives only for this life. Do you fear future events? the secrets? that the tears of blood may be announcing catastrophes? Fear of the future is typical of he who lives closed up in his earthly life and does not foster hope (even if he "says" he believes), as if it all ended here. He fears losing these goods, not the true Good. He who knows his life is in the hands of the Father does not fear: You are worth much more than hundreds of sparrows... and even if the world was full of terror, he would see and proclaim the Father's Love. **

careful attention to the married and ecumenical saints.

1997: JESUS CHRIST. "The distinctly Christological character of the Jubilee needs to be emphasized, for it will celebrate the Incarnation and coming into the world of the Son of God, the mystery of salvation for all mankind: JESUS CHRIST, THE ONE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, Yesterday, Today and Forever.

Primary object of the Jubilee: the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians. Necessity to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness. A renewed appreciation of catechesis about the person of Jesus Christ and his mystery of salvation. Mary contemplated in the mystery of her Divine Motherhood."

1998: THE HOLY SPIRIT. "Incarnation was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. The primary tasks of the preparation include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit, who acts within the Church in the Sacraments and the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church. In our day too, the Spirit is the principal agent of the new evangelization. Christians are called to prepare... by renewing their hope in the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God.

Mary, who conceived the Incarnate Word by the power of the Holy Spirit and allowed herself to be guided by his interior activity, will be contemplated and imitated during this year above all as the woman who was docile to the voice of the Spirit..."

1999: GOD the FATHER. Believers should broaden their horizons, so they will see things in the perspective of Christ who saw things in the perspective of the Father.. The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father: a journey of authentic conversion... which emphasizes the theological virtue of charity and thus the Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast. Mary Most Holy, the highly favoured daughter of the Father, will appear before the eyes of believers as the perfect model of love towards both God and neighbour..."

The Year 2000: **year of the Eucharist.** "The Celebration of the Great Jubilee will take place simultaneously in the **Holy Land, Rome and the local Churches** throughout the world, with the aim to GIVE GLORY TO THE TRINITY from whom everything in the world and in history comes and to whom everything returns. Since Christ is the only way to the Father, in order to highlight his living and saving presence in the Church and the world, the INT'L EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS will take place in **Rome**, on the occasion of the Great Jubilee.

YEAR 2000 intensely EUCHARISTIC: in the Sacrament of the Eucharist the Saviour, who took flesh in Mary's womb twenty centuries ago, continues to offer himself to humanity as the source of divine life..." There will be visits to the **holy places**: those associated with Abraham and Moses, through Egypt, Mount Sinai, Damascus, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, plus a meeting for all Christians (on Mount Sinai?).

Prayer to Mary: "I entrust this responsibility of the whole Church to the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer. She will be for Christians on the way to the Great Jubilee of the 3rd Millennium the Star which safely guides their steps to the Lord..." **

The Pope: "Work without spiritual life is slavery"

In his meeting with the "world of work" on St Joseph day, the Holy Father went to Molise (south Italy) to celebrate Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows. He spoke of St Joseph's life and saw in it the perfect realization of the life of prayer where God takes the initiatives - liberal and surprising - and man trustingly obeys and gives up his own ideas and evaluations... From the second reading we see that Moses' heart was so, ready to listen to what God had to tell him, Who desired letting Himself and His will be known (Ex 3:1-15). For this reason man's every activity becomes good if his heart rests in prayer, willing to listen first to the Lord.

Even work is part of the divine plan, but respect must be given to: "its spiritual - and in a certain sense - divine dimension which reveals it as being the continuation of the loving work of the Creator and makes its burdensome aspect comprehensible and acceptable in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ." Man bears fruit in his life if he is subjected to God's will, in the certainty that God overlooks nothing, but takes care to see that His children reach the goal for which He created them. The Holy Father spoke of the Gospel of Work, using an example from the Bible: "The Pharaoh, or capitalism which exploits man's work, distracts men from family life and from serving God. It is right to fight for true social justice which consists of recognizing the dignity of human labour in fair reward and adequate interventions in favour of those who - though unwillingly - find themselves in precarious and discouraging situations of disoccupation."

Spiritual life is in fact, "like a renewed offering of Alliance by God, who is *tender and compassionate, slow to anger and most loving* (Ps 103). The Lord's grace and His infinite mercy commit us, as individuals and communities, to cultivating the plant of spiritual life, hoeing around it with penance and fertilizing it with the Word of God till it bears fruit for the future (cf. Lk 13:8-9)."

The bond between the magisterium of John Paul II and the school of Mary is obvious. It is not just a matter of contents, but of the same root of deep communion, and in fact, during the celebration, the Pope reminded the faithful of that: "singular tie of faith and suffering that binds him to Our Lady of Sorrows."

In his invocation to Her at the conclusion of his homily, he prayed so that She: "may obtain for us *abundant fruits of justice and peace, eating the same spiritual food and drinking the same spiritual drink from the rock... which is Christ* (1 Co 10:4). Christ remains that rock from which we drink the same water." This is precisely what Mary wants from those who listen to her messages. profound communion with her intentions - which means converting to her desires of primacy to faith, communion and prayer.

At the end of the celebration the Pope asked the Blessed Virgin to protect all the women who work at home like She did - today she would have known as a "house-wife" and as such is a model for all women, true craftswomen of the house. "Grant that they may be women of Christian wisdom, skilled in prayer and human kindness, strong in hope and affliction, artisans, like you, of authentic peace." **

Leave everything to God and everything will heal, rise and bear fruit

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic was with us on St Joseph's day. He led Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary and Holy Mass. The following is taken from his meditations.

Following Jesus for 40 days along the path indicated by the Church means to be in a healing and rising process for 40 days. This is the liturgical sense of Lent. The basic question is this: God has the reply for man who laments, suffers, who does not feel redeemed. God enters us and replies to these laments. Participating in Jesus' work is listening to and understanding His reply.

If we do not listen and do not understand, we remain in our sorrow like angry children or immature people that flitter from one place to another. In fact, we may feel perplexed as we observe the problems of society, the Church and the world, see only details and not understand! Today the Lord desires that we listen for and understand his reply as we make our way towards salvation. Without this we cannot understand the meaning of prayer and penance or what Jesus wants of us.

In the first reading (Ex 3:1-8, 13-15) we heard how God made the first move to help the people of Israel. It always is God who makes the first move, even with us. Keep this in mind: within you God acts. His Holy Spirit moans within you. He wants your salvation to a degree which goes far beyond your own capacities and expectations, just the way we saw how He presented Himself to Moses.

What did Moses do? When he sees the burning bush God says to him: *Come no further, remove your sandals, the place where you stand is holy ground.* For us this means removing everything in God's presence: our problems, thoughts, projects, worries, our own justice and logic. This alone will enable us to accept God's reply. Jesus said that if we remove everything and entrust ourselves to God, we will be given all that we need, all that is right for us.

In our prayer we must remove everything before God, just as Moses removed his sandals and prostrated himself. When the religious prostrate themselves before the Altar during the ceremony of solemn profession it signifies a total surrender, because they have chosen God. This type of attitude should be in us all. It allows us to accept God's presence and his salvation. Moses had it and God revealed Himself: *I Am Who I Am, Yahweh!* God can speak in the same way to a soul who has stripped itself of everything. Often, what we think is useful for us is nothing but idols, or just our way of seeing God.

The true image of God who reveals Himself cannot penetrate our souls or reach us because there are too many gods, worries, values and priorities that fill our lives already. All must go! Then God will be able to show Himself the way He is. How is He? In the Bible, God came to save the people of Israel because he heard their laments. God always presents Himself as He who saves, who heals, rises, who gives divine life. When God shows Himself to man He gives a full life which cannot fail because He gives everything. When a soul strips itself of everything, it opens up to the encounter with God and it is only then that a new world and a new society

begins being built in that soul.

Why did Our Lady appear? Why does she appear in many places? Not for the pilgrimages or to make us meet the visionaries or for the souvenirs, but to help us meet the living God. You will see that the crisis in our society that is worrying you is natural and necessary for man's purification. He needs to see that he has to open his eyes and look for God and a life in God. These times of trial have to exist and we have to use them to search for God's hand and His presence and His will to save each of us and our society. Moses opened his heart to God and was able to conduct his people.

Don't anyone say that Moses was a special person either, because each of us are special and could be called: to conduct our family, to live in harmony with our spouse or for any other task. Each of us receive God's grace and if we open our hearts, if we strip ourselves of everything else and allow God to show Himself as our Saviour we will be able to guide others in daily situations. God wants to conduct souls; He wants to save them. This is beautiful. He cannot fail. Happy are those who desire understanding, being open and being led by God.

That which happened to the Israelites and the apostles when they understood they had to depart, to overcome the hardness of their hearts and trust in God, must also happen to us. The Jews overcame the problem of the Red Sea. Have you never encountered the Red Sea in your lives? It is the sea of our problems placed before us to make our faith grow. In our faith journey there are stops that must be overcome.

So what is the meaning of prayer, fasting and renunciations? Their purpose is to remove our ideas and open us up to salvation to see God within us and hear His voice which saves, which cannot err!

I like the positive example offered by Jesus in the Gospel (Lk 13:1-9) where He allows the gardener to hoe around an arid fig tree and fertilize it. When Jesus calls us to conversion He means: 'You are a plant that can bear fruit. I placed all the necessary grace within you. If you are unhappy, if you have hatred or anger within you, you are on the way to being lost. Look at yourself! Start hoeing inside yourself to cultivate that grace!' If man does not convert and does not understand that all the wealth is contained within him he will be lost. Jesus hands Himself over for each one of us.

So what is conversion? Jesus wishes to heal your personality, your life, so you may become a fruit-bearing tree. The invitation of this evening is one of healing, of a more fertile, happier and more fulfilled life. Dear brothers and sisters, I hope you will understand these words this evening and start putting them into practise; then you will be able to bear the image of God the Saviour, His true image. There is no one that cannot begin realizing a happy and fertile life.

Being a Christian is beautiful! But it is beautiful to be a Christian when our hearing and sight are healed. It takes penance and renunciation to be healed: removing our "sandals" and prostrating ourselves before God, before the Crucifix, even together with our family and saying: "Hear I am, I entrust all to you. You, God, unveil your face to me. I wish to follow you like Moses and reach my salvation."

Pray, pray, pray for your heart to be healed

Mary's Heart is calling us: it is still time of mercy

Bishop Paul Hnilica, known for his dedication to spreading the Fatima message, has written to Marian prayer groups so that during Lent they may accept the call to conversion through the consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart. "...The Lord comes again through an extraordinary effusion of his Truth and Mercy to renew the world and his Church which so needs the new Pentecost to help her rise from the deep crisis she is in.

Many are the prophetic voices that the Lord has roused in this century to announce the coming of the great purification for the whole world... God does not want to frighten us, but neither can He remain indifferent before so many scandals which have not even spared the Church... We are far from having seriously taken Our Lady's requests to *establish devotion and consecration to her Immaculate Heart in the world* as the only solution to the problems of the world and the Church... Though the consecration of Russia and the world has been done and was the cause of the fall of Communism, still today Russia represents a threat for the world peace because it has not received from the Western world that spiritual and material assistance with which to heal her wounds produced by 70 years of atheism...

Without a doubt the greatest threat denounced by Mary in Fatima is eternal perdition, a vision of which she showed to the shepherd children: *Look how many sinners go to hell because too few offer sacrifices for them.* In the new evangelization of the Immaculate Heart of Mary we are called to be, together with Mary Co-redeemer, apostles of the new advent, where our lives are a sign of conversion and of announcement of the approaching triumph of her Immaculate Heart. We are responsible for the salvation of others who do not know Her love. Let us become little, with humble hearts, so God's saving grace may flow through us which is impeded by the sin of pride.

We, the little children of Mary Co-redeemer, are her only hope. She is looking for the just to help her save the world... *We are called to complete in our own bodies what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ: accepting our crosses and making sacrifices for the salvation of sinners...*

I would like to conclude by recalling what I witnessed in Fatima on the 50th anniversary. I went there on pilgrimage with Paul VI. At the tomb of Jacinta I saw Sr. Lucia cry bitterly. The Bishop of Fatima said: "Do you know why she's crying? Shortly before Jacinta died, Jacinta told Lucia that she would remain on the earth for many years to spread the devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Sr. Lucia cries because she feels she has failed since the message of Fatima has not been accepted as it should have..." **

and thus be able to accept God who reveals Himself in your poverty. Even where things seem to have reached their end, God reveals Himself and says. "Here I am, I have come to save you and lead you to a new land, a new life." Let us pray with joy. **

SEEN IN MEDJUGORJE

News from the blessed land

* **Fr. Slavko's Mission in America** - He returned to Medjugorje on the 13th February after a month away. He took words of trust to Guatemala - a land that in the last 34 years has been torn apart by war, earthquakes and poverty. Many here bore witness to benefitting from Medj. In El Salvador he was received into the President's family. He also led many prayer meetings in Ecuador, Peru and Chile where great crowds attended.

In Quito (Ecuador) he was received by Cardinal Echeverri who showed a lot of interest in the apparitions. In La Paz (Bolivia) 6,000 people attended the prayer meeting which received authorization by the Archbishop Luis Sanz Hinojosa. Three days of prayer were held in Paraguay with 2,000 people present. As reported in Echo 118 the Archbishop of Asuncion had asked the Pope about the mission of a priest from Medj. in his diocese and received this reply: **Authorize everything that regards Medjugorje.**

In Argentina Fr. Slavko guided numerous meetings in Buenos Aires and Cordoba and also met the Nuncio Msgr. Julio Calabres who expressed his desire to visit Medj.

On his way back, Fr. Slavko also held two meetings in Italy.

* The new **Episcopal Conference** of Bosnia and Herzegovina held its first session from 27-29 January in Mostar. There is no mention of Medj. in the official communiqué.

* Fr. Adrian Langa, a Franciscan in **Mozambique**, was in Medj. for the first time. Though this country has suffered greatly, first under Communism, now because of poverty and drugs, the Church knows about Medjugorje even if the press does not mention it. "My impressions of Medj. are very positive. I admire the faith of the pilgrims and the work of the Franciscans."

* Besides the communities mentioned in Echo 117, there is another called *Regina Pacis* which is very near to completion. It belongs to the **Piergiorgio Community** of Udine (Italy) and is for the disabled and the sick of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fr. Ciani, untiring in his work, has relied on Providence!

* Fr. Slavko's **Village for young** war orphans will be built, and also in Siroki Brijeg a **college for young girls** is being built and will be run by nuns.

(From the Press Bulletin, Medjugorje)

* **Lent** is a very strong experience here, with some people living on bread and water for the entire 40 days. Twice a week the parish organizes the Way of the Cross after Holy Mass. Many climb the hill to pray. During one Lent **Jelena** received this message: *Dear children, during Lent I wish for you to especially feel Jesus' Passion. Only this way will you be able to rise with Him. I desire that among your proposals for Lent the first one should be help for the people who suffer.* (15 March 1990)

* The **prayer meetings** of Ivan's group began again on the last Friday of February on the hill, at the blue cross. Now they will meet on Tuesdays (not Mondays) and Fridays. His wife, Lauren, is expecting a baby.

* During his mission in France, **Fr. Jozo** visited 6 churches. He did not speak of "Medjugorje," but of the Queen of Peace and roused a profound spirit of prayer at the meetings. At Rouen he held a meeting in the house of the Beatitudes. One of those present, Stephen, was healed from a heart condition.

Fr. Jozo also spent one week in Slovakia. He is now in Germany. At the end of April he will be in Italy.

* **Our Lady prays in Hebrew** - In her apparition to Marija on the 14th March Our Lady first prayed in Croatian then in Hebrew. She does this when there is someone present at the apparitions belonging to her people. On that day there was a Jewish woman who had become a Catholic. It's interesting to note that in the plan of salvation Israel and the Church are the one and same thing and in the end the chosen people will recognize Christ.

(From Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

* **Bishop of Avellaneda tells of conversion on Podbrdo.** - When Msgr. Rubeiro, a Bishop from Argentina, was in Medjugorje he told of when he was in Italy and met his father's cousins. One was a Communist, the other a Fascist, and talking to them was nearly impossible.

"After some time I heard that they had become devoted Catholics. When I spoke to them they told me how they had been to Medjugorje to accompany their wives on holiday. Curiosity took them up Podbrdo and they saw the sun spin and the cross on Krizevac in flames. They were so shocked that they went straight to the church and lined up for confession. They began a new life. It is their conversion that urged me to come here and thank Mary for having poured Her love onto my relatives."

Humility and Charity smooth the way to Unity among Catholics and Lutherans

"The Catholic-Lutheran relations have made giant steps ahead in these 30 years since the Second Vatican Council," said Card. Ratzinger at the **dialogue conference** in Farfa, Italy, on the 450th anniversary of the Council of Trent. "It seems that the issue which is giving less problems is precisely the doctrine of justification" (which was behind the Protestant schism). The Lutherans have also dropped the excommunications and the doctrinal condemnations that they held against the Catholic Church, it has been informed.

The dialogue was a revision of reciprocal prejudices and to the overcoming of misunderstandings. From this point of view the Pope's visit to the Scandinavian countries has become decisive. When the Pope received the participants of the Conference he told them: "what we have in common is much more than what divides us," and he encouraged them to redouble their efforts so "we can celebrate the Great Jubilee, if not completely united, at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium... When we look at what has already been achieved, we have every reason to be confident that the *Lord himself who has begun the good work within us will bring it to completion* (cf. Phil 1:6).

Fr. Slavko explains the sign of Medjugorje

In a meeting with Italian pilgrims in one of the green tents on the 11th March Fr. Slavko was asked if the tears of the statue of Our Lady in Rome could be a sign. His reply took in much more than this single fact.

Once, Jesus called this a *perverse and unfaithful generation because it asked for a sign* (cf. Mt 16:4). Yet He Himself gave signs which means He had nothing against signs; He knows our reaction to them can be positive. What He condemns is that we want "our" signs. So He said: *You will be given no sign other than the one of Jonah*, i.e., His death and resurrection, but they didn't accept it because they didn't want to convert. They were asking for signs that suited them.

We witness a similar thing for Medj.: some can't accept it because the apparitions last too long, others because the messages are too simple and old-hat. It is our pride and mentality that makes us say yes to some things and no to others. Jesus too was told: *Come down from the cross and we'll believe!* What would they have said had He descended from the cross? Perhaps that He worked with the head of the demons like when He healed the blind and deaf man (cf. Mt 12:24). They lacked humility and open hearts to be able to say: It really is Him.

Why do we accept the presence of Our Lady? Because we did not try to reason, but through accepting God's will we were able to understand that the messages were real. One cannot impose conditions on God.

Being humbly disposed is what opens our minds and hearts to understanding and desiring God's will and this brings true peace. Our Lady wants to help us avoid fighting against God's will. Often our prayers are reduced to a fight with just this as we try to get what we want; and when we don't get it we are disappointed. In a message Our Lady says: *Turn to God for His love for you, not for your needs.* That is why we have people who feel bitter towards God, but God doesn't play these games.

It is easy to say to God: have mercy on me, but asking forgiveness of someone you offended is easier than making peace with someone who thinks badly of you even if you haven't offended him. And if someone offends you? Perhaps you'd like him to make the first move. It is up to you, though, to go to him and make peace. Jesus wants us to do this before we make our offering to the altar. And are you happy if your enemy suffers? How much a mother must suffer!

If we do not want to leave aside the bad things that destroy us, how can we leave those things which are not bad but which impede us from being free? You say: Mary asks me to say the Rosary, to fast, to confess... but then it comes to nothing! What she wants is our spiritual growth, with freedom of heart.

The 14th anniversary is nearly upon us. Mary is asking us to be missionaries, but this is not a question of leaving the messages in other people's mail boxes - who perhaps leave them there because they don't like them. Only those who live the message are true missionaries and carriers of the message.

A mother never frightens her children! Is Our Lady crying tears of blood? Is she announcing sad events? *I am the maid*

servant, she said, and *I am your Mother!* Let there be investigations, but when a mother cries in her home it is not for the future, nor to frighten anyone. She undoubtedly cries for the present situation of her children. It is today, right now, that the children must change, for their own good. When we speak of dramatic events in the future people are immediately alarmed, but two days after they have forgotten everything. Our Lady wants you to change today. If a son has not forgiven by evening, his mother is uneasy because she knows he feels wounded and will be unable to start the new day well. If he does forgive all will pass and he'll be at peace.

The future? It depends on us. Jesus says not to think about tomorrow, to carry one's burden day by day. A mother does not frighten her children. Rather, she warns and helps them, but she does not announce frightful events to her children towards whom she is loving and protective. Too many already have too much fear in their hearts. Our Lady wants to free us from fear, though she sees that trials will be needed to purify us. A child cannot accuse his mother of not loving him or of frightening him when she has to take him to hospital for an operation.

Someone asked: "What about saying something to people who behave badly to frighten them?" This doesn't help. How can one help drug addicts just by talking about the consequences of drug addiction? They don't care much. Love, on the other hand, is far more convincing - as when a person offers his life for them, like Sr. Elvira. For her they are: "pearls fallen into the mud." Our Lady teaches us to do likewise, to love as a mother does.

In his letter of 8 December, the Pope appeals to women so that with their maternal hearts they become workers of peace. That is what the Queen of Peace wants and she is helping us to get there. Our Lady is advancing with her army...

Post-war worse than war - What can one hope for when politicians treat both the aggressors and the victims in the same manner? What can one expect from a world where politics and groups are more important than individuals? where people kill to earn money? where the trafficking of weapons is the highest paid business? where peace negotiators are incentivated to continue with their useless negotiations by their earnings of \$20,000 a day?

Post-war conditions are worse than the war itself. Now not just the houses are destroyed, but the social structures and moral ethics. There is no more State, no authority, which is why the mafia and the black market are prospering and why the drug market has moved to here. It is better to have a son who is disabled rather than one who is a drug addict. Here the way is free for all criminals who collaborate with war-loving nations.

Then we have those destructive conditions of hatred, suicide, despair and madness - destroying families and individuals. Has the war really finished, or will it start up again? Our Lady had forewarned us, but she didn't do as some had wanted which is why they didn't accept her. For her to stay here they expected that she should have their permission... **

Conversation with Vicka Our Lady is often sad

If you wish to see Vicka go to the Campo della Vita (Field of Life - Sr. Elvira's community) - you'll probably find her there helping out in the kitchen or greeting people in the dining hall with her friendly, smiling manners which immediately put you at ease.

Everything about this place echoes the Queen of Peace. If you're looking for somewhere that speaks of Her, come here.

The "boys" invited me to lunch, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that Vicka was seated next to me at the table. The following is from the conversation that followed.

Q. Do you still receive the apparitions?

A. Yes, every day at the usual hour.

Q. And where? **A.** At home or elsewhere, like here, or when I visit the sick.

Q. Has anything changed or are things like the early apparitions?

A. Well, the same, but every encounter with Her is always new. Words can't describe it, nothing can be compared to it, not even being with your mother or a best friend.

Q. A spiritual director of visionaries in Italy is surprised that the visionaries of Medj. never talk about Our Lady being sad.

A. Well I often see her sad because of the way the world is going; and I have said it [see Echo 116]. She cried the first day when She said: "Peace, peace, peace!" but She has also cried because men live in a state of sin and because they do not understand the Holy Mass or because they do not accept the Word of God. But Our Lady does not want us to be pessimistic; She wants us to look to the future with trust and this is why She calls us to prayer and fasts which can do so much.

Q. What does Our Lady do when She appears? **A.** She prays with me; at times She has something to tell me. *Like what?* Well, like saying what Her desires are, or asking us to pray for peace and for the youth, or telling us to live Her messages so to defeat Satan and let Her plans be realized, or to read and meditate a passage of the Bible every day.

Q. Doesn't She say anything for you personally? **A.** Whatever She says for everyone is said for me too. *And don't you ask for anything for yourself?* **A.** That is the last thing I would ask for.

Q. When will you publish the story of Our Lady's life? **A.** It is ready and will be published only when She says so.

Q. Are you living in your new home now?

A. No, I live in the old one with my mother, father and three brothers. *But haven't you got a new house?* Yes, but it is for my brother who has a family and for another two.

Q. Do you go to Mass every day? **A.** Of course, it is the most important thing of the day. Sometimes I go to morning Mass in the church, at times here, and sometimes at home when there is a priest with us.

Q. Vicka, unlike the other visionaries, you do not intend marrying - and so in a way you belong to everyone. Marriage is a great sacrament for someone called to this vocation, and today especially with so many families breaking up, we need holy families which I think the visionaries would have certainly formed. However, a virginal state makes you closer to those models of visionaries such as the shepherd children of Fatima and Melania of La Salette who consecrated themselves

totally to God... **A.** Yes, like this I have more time for God and for the pilgrims since I have no other ties.

Q. That's why you're the one who everyone wants to see. I've heard that you might be going to Africa with Fr. Slavko - or would you prefer to stay home? **A.** I have no preference - going or staying is the same for me. What I care about is doing the Lord's will

Q. Are you well now? **A.** Yes, very well. (In fact, she looks it.) My arm is better and I feel in perfect health.

And after eating a typical northern Italian dish, and a delicious roast fish, she went to the kitchen to help clean up for the happy brigade of 60 table companions: the "boys" and various guests. * *

In another interview

Q. Does Our Lady give the same graces today as in the beginning?

A. Yes, it is we who must be open to receive what She desires giving us. When we don't have problems we forget to pray; when we have them we rush to Her for help. We need to desire what She wishes for us, then we can tell Her our needs. The important thing is that Her plans, not our intentions, are realized, for they are God's plans.

Q. What do you say about the young people who feel empty inside, and of their absurd way of living?

A. It is because they do not give prime importance to what really counts in life. They must change; Jesus must occupy first place in their lives. They waste so much time in pubs and discos! If only they could find half an hour to pray, the void in them would cease

Q. How does one give first place to Jesus?

A. Starting from prayer to learn to know Jesus as a person. Believing in God in an abstract sense (someone up in the clouds) is certainly not enough. We must ask Jesus to give us the strength to meet Him in our hearts so He may enter our lives and guide our steps.

Q. Why do you always speak of the Cross?

A. Mary appeared once with her Crucified Son. Seeing how much He suffered for us just that one time was sufficient! But we do not see this and we keep on offending him day after day. The Cross is something truly great for us too if we accept it. Each person has his cross. When we accept it it's as if it disappears and this enables us to see how much Jesus loves us and the price He paid for us.

Suffering is also a great gift for which we must be grateful. He knows why He gave it to us and when He'll take it away - He asks us to be patient. Do not say: "why me?" We do not understand what our suffering means to God, so we should ask for the strength to accept it with love.

(From *Stella Maris* 2/95)

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readers' donations. Echo has no other source of income. It is your donations that make possible its publication and distribution also to those people not in a position to donate any sum of money.

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Thank you for all you can do.

The tears of Mary: examine selves before denying, they could be a sign for us

The first reaction of many environments, Catholic and non, was to ridicule everything, calling it "deviant religiousness," "paranormal phenomena" or easily explained tricks, especially on the eve of electoral competitions! Why so much zeal in trying to deny it? Also the Pharisees did this with Jesus' signs. The other possibility has not even been considered: what if the tears were real? We could be induced to change our course in time. "What one shouldn't do is close one's heart to the possibility that there are things in the world which cannot be comprehended."

There is a strict relationship between the passion of Christ our Saviour, Mary our Mother and our state of sin. We do not understand and do not wish to admit how grave our state of sin is and thus we do not understand the infinite Love of Jesus which is manifested in the Blood He shed for us. Neither do we understand how fatal is our refusal of His mercy. We can imagine how much Mary suffers - to the point of weeping **tears of blood** - since her impassioned appeals of love in Medj. have been refused by the ministers of salvation. It was through a statue from Medj. that Our Lady wept, and in Medj. she said: *I beseech you, do not allow my Heart to weep tears of blood for souls who are being lost in sin. Therefore, my dear children, pray, pray, pray!* (25 May 1984)

In Her apparition of 19 Sept. 1846 in La Salette Our Lady told the two visionaries Melania and Maximino: "How long I have been suffering for you! If I do not want my Son to abandon you I have to pray to Him continuously, while you do not care at all. There is much to pray and do: **you will never be able to compensate for the suffering I have taken upon myself for you.**"

Fr. Tomislav reminded me that on the 5th August (the two thousandth birthday of Mary) he and Jelena presented a statue of baby Mary (brought from Lourdes) to Our Lady for Her to bless it and thus have a memento of that special date. Tears started rolling down from Our Lady's eyes, then these became tears of blood, these then turned into golden tears which descended onto the statue. "There is a meaning in this," said Fr. Tomislav. "Reparation will be made for the tears of sorrow through the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart. The message given to Mirjana on the 18th March regarding the sufferance of God confirms this."

My Mother truly is crying

The message by Jesus to a charismatic person on the 6th March thus doesn't seem so odd. It seems to refer to the lachrymations of Civitavecchia, Rome.

"My Mother truly is crying, my children. If an earthly mother wept tears of blood she would be seen as a mother whose love is indeed great, but, instead, the Heavenly Mother is mocked: scandal for the press, an object of derision for those who wear my robes, reason for superstition for those whose faith is fanatical and "wear" her to ward off evil. In this moment of profound sorrow, Mary is clothed in the robe of humiliation and sheds tears of blood out of pure love, because she sees her children going towards perdition.

No one listens to her anymore, brothers and sisters. Love her; she will lead you to salvation and you will see that my Name shall triumph through her name. Do not be confused by the disappointment of men. Do not renounce being children of Mary and the object of her Love - she calls herself Mother of humanity because this grand title was bestowed on her by the Father. Follow her steps and you will certainly be saved. Cover yourselves with her mantle; it is the mantle of humility.

Do not lend your ears to men; be silent, as she is. Remain whole in your spirit and rather than say vain words, remain silent. In silence, my Mother meditated and was united to God. Make room for Her in your hearts so Her Heart may be joined to yours and the communion between you will be one: a perfect unity between Mother and children, and She will make you sit at her dinner table in the house of Nazareth.

Never feel that poverty and humility make you a lesser person, but be proud to be the children of such a Mother and worthy children, through Her, of the Father. So venerate this holy image which weeps tears of sorrow for her children. I (Jesus) give you my Heart. love her with my Heart."

What Card. Ratzinger says - Asked to give a reflection on the recent and numerous cases of lachrymations at the opening of the international Marian Congress of Loreto, the Cardinal replied: "Our faith is not founded on signs and miracles, though these can help. What counts in the end is the much more profound and radical foundation in the encounter with God. So, there can be an initial time, an awakening of the sense of the supernatural, but this cannot be the final situation.

Much caution is needed: we never know how these things end up. We cannot overestimate said phenomena. Yes, we can leave men with these aspects which can help them, but at the same time we must be very clear: this is not a foundation of our faith, and if something is shown to be non-supernatural, our faith will not break because its foundations are very much deeper." (22 March 1995)

Take the signs seriously. If from God, they'll hold up to the test - Following Card. Ratzinger's intervention, Fr. Tomislav explained:

"When placed before signs from heaven we must be serious, not superficial, not look at them with pure human logic. Some signs of this type have been recognized by the Church (eg. Syracuse, sth Italy). To these phenomena we should reply with faith and practical conversion to God, then they would become the object of true discernment: from the effects that result one would see whether they are from God or not. If they are from God the fruits of conversion will grow; if they are false, all will finish.

A sacrament is a sign of the grace of God who works through them, and He can also work through many other signs. Also the satanic manifestations are connected to Satan who works through them.

Our faith cannot be founded on signs, but only on the Word of God. If God calls or makes Himself heard through signs, we must accept them as they are because He has thought good to give us a further proof of His Presence, and to call us to live the essential."

Some questions for Fr. Amorth

1. *If a curse is launched against you what is the difference between being and not being in God's grace?* **A.** A person in God's grace is protected as if by a suit of armour. Look at what St John says (cf. 1Jn 5:18): *He who is begotten by God does not sin and God protects him so that the devil cannot touch him.* There can be exceptions permitted by God for a greater sanctification of that person, as has happened with various saints who were tormented and bashed by the devil. Generally, though, a person in God's grace need not fear. What we must fear, instead, is he who can kill our soul.

2. *Only those priests who receive nomination from their Bishops are authorized by the Church to exorcise and can be called exorcists. Can the other priests exorcise people in private?* **A.** Only the exorcist priest (never a lay person) can administer the special sacrament which involves the Church authority and is a public prayer. The other priests, and the faithful, can recite prayers of liberation according to Christ's mandate: *those who believe in me, in my name will cast out devils* (Mk 16:17). They are private prayers and if pronounced with faith are very effective. No authorization is required to recite them and since they are not bound by any special formulas, set prayers or improvised prayers can be used.

3. *Can prayers of liberation always be recited, or should they not be said for people who are under the care of an exorcist? Can they be recited by individuals or should they be done by groups prepared for this type of prayer?* **A.** Prayers of liberation can always be done. Even if a person regularly receives exorcism by a priest it is very useful that prayers of liberation are also said for him. Above all, it is useful that he be helped to begin a life of prayer and Christian instruction. Yes, prayers said by a specially prepared group who know how to offer these prayers with faith, while observing the precepts given by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, are more efficacious. However, individuals can also recite prayers of liberation.

4. *We often hear of certain lay people having the charisma of liberation who exorcise without authorization. How should we behave in their regard?* **A.** If a person receives the charisma of liberation from the Holy Spirit he will have more force than an exorcist. It must be clear, though, that he does not do exorcisms, but prayers of liberation. The Apostolic letter, *Lumen Gentium* (no. 12), points out that it is up to the ecclesial authority to verify the charisms and control their use. Of course, it is up to our own good sense to discern first on our own, then listen to what the priests have to say, as suggested by the Holy Father in his Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*. We're full of would-be charismatics, so common sense and prudence are necessary to help us understand how we should behave.

5. *Many groups are forced to meet in private homes. Can the inhabitants receive any sort of harm from the prayers of liberation or the exorcisms that are performed in them?* **A.** No, these are not contagious. Neither the people, nor the houses can be hurt. On the contrary, it is very charitable to offer one's own home for prayers, including those of healing and exorcism, when for these particular prayers no other place is available. Normally these are administered in churches or sacristies, or other adjacent rooms.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth

Should we believe the prophecies of catastrophes?

"Should we take them literally these predictions of imminent catastrophes which many messages contain?"

Like John XXIII I do not like prophets of "disaster" because: they are not infallible, their prophecies veil the truth, and lastly they can end up creating mass psychological phenomena, inhibition or excessive, useless and costly precautions. For example: some time ago, some charismatic groups started giving too much credibility to a "prophet" who had announced the destruction of a large city in Quebec (Sherbrooke). The prophecy was largely influential and caused a slump in the real estate prices, thereby allowing real "predators" to buy houses and flats at very low prices. Others, out of fear, prepared for an escape. All of this for nothing.

Let it be clear that prophecies are never fatal! The book of Jonah teaches us this. The prophet said: *Niniveh will be destroyed*. The inhabitants, however, did penance and Nineveh was saved! The prophet even got angry about it - we read in the Bible - because what he announced did not come true.

Three days of darkness - Many talk about these three days of darkness which will obscure the earth. This is not a new prediction, but it became widely known in Canada in 1990 when a paper from Quebec, the *Michael Journal*, spoke about the prophecy that a religious (David Lopez) from Temora in Texas was supposed to have received in Medj. on the 15th August 1987: "During the three days of darkness there will be no devils in hell for they will all be on the earth. Some peoples will be martyred. It will be so dark that we will be unable to see our own hands. Close the windows and do not pay heed to the voices you hear outside during those days... Those who are in the hands of God need not fear. After the three days things will be serene, the water pure and the life new..." The visionaries of Medj., in particular Ivan, whom the Journal mentioned, categorically deny that this message was given through them.

The visionary Annamaria Taigi (died in 1837) spoke about this same prophecy, also many others over these last two centuries, but no one has given a precise time. Many have added that only blessed candles will give light in those days to believers devoted to Mary! So will Mary protect only those who have the candles?! This is ridiculous and selfish.

If darkness comes, according to the biblical image of the ninth plague of Egypt, this darkness will be above all obscuration of faith, sins and human disorder from which our only defence is the light of our faith locked away in our heart.

We know the real evil is sin and loss of God. All the rest, including the threatened material chastisements, can be either a consequence of this evil, a representative figure or a warning to make us escape from it: *I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, obeying his voice...* (Dt 30:15-20). It all serves to provoke in us a more intense will to convert,

pray and offer personal and collective sacrifices for the salvation of all, besides being an invitation to us to be more vigilant.

We also know which position the Cross and human suffering holds in the work of redemption and our purification. Jesus invites us to be trustful, joyful, full of hope! Fixing our thoughts on prophecies of disaster wastes our time because it distracts us from the only thing we are asked to do: concentrate on living a holy life according to the Lord's precepts, and pray with trust to the Father who will not allow one hair fall from our heads. The future belongs to Him.

"Another thing to remember," says Laurentin in *Stella Maris*, Feb. '95 edition, "is that a prophecy is never certain and in the best of hypotheses is but an open window to the problems of the future. The future belongs to God only and our behaviour can change His decisions. A true prophecy is generally incomprehensible prior to its realization. It often confounds the prophet because its realization can refer to a different context to that imagined."

And the secrets of Fatima? Pope John opened these in 1960, but thought best not to reveal them - it was not the job of a Pope to publish a private revelation, but if at all of the Bishop of Leiria. This unrevealed secret for many became a legend, for others a type of bogeyman. It probably warned about calamities that would happen to the Church after the Council but were misinterpreted: a marked decrease in the faith and Christian practice and education, crisis in the clergy (40,000 abandoned priesthood) and the loss of moral values. Knowing beforehand such danger could have opened people's eyes and roused in them a commitment to prayer and vigilance which could have impeded the prince of darkness from causing such desolation. There was also the danger, however, that people would limit their vision to the material aspect of the catastrophic predictions and rouse only alarm so that the spiritual message of conversion would be dispersed.

Laurentin concludes: "The times we live in are difficult ones. God needs our prayers, generosity and vigilance, not our divination, to realize the explosion of grace so needed by the world, and for that to happen we need to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit." *Fr.A.*

In Bosnia I discovered ... Love!

I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith, says St Paul (2Tm 4:7). I, however, did not put up my fight, I had stopped racing, like one who has no more to give or receive; my faith was a distant light in my life of egoism, money, arrogance and quarrels. I had everything, but I had nothing and my anger was so deep I could control it no more.

I became involved with aid delivery because I have a lorry. At first I'd find excuses not to go past Pese but I gradually went right into Bosnia, and though I would have preferred not to repeat the trips, an external force drove me to go again and again. I knew nothing about Medj., nothing about the war. I witnessed true suffering and saw people who were in

dire need of help.

On Easter Saturday 1992 the trip was more difficult than usual. We had to travel with our lights off as we took aid to Makarska where children and women had taken refuge; the men were on the front. I travelled with Fr. Jozo and Chiarina. We opened the container and distributed sweets to the children and their mothers. They gave us decorated hard-boiled eggs. For me it was a lesson of dignity and love, and now, for me, these eggs are more precious than gold.

But doubts filled my head and my heart and my pride was still very strong. I was pleased with myself when Chiarina would ask me to go again and I'd say no, but eventually, in December 1992 I went again.

In Medj. I found Our Lady again who was dearer to me than what I'd admit, and I found the people. I put the pieces of my heart back together, but one piece of it remained there. I started understanding the meaning of "give to receive" and I felt loved - despite all my limits and falls, I felt loved! More than anything, my heart was now at peace. I found peace where there was war, in a world where people build their peace day after day, with "calloused hands and feet," Sr. Elvira's "boys" say.

My faith was still green and needed assurance. Well, it never lacked. January 1993: Mostar, curfew, lights off. We unloaded near the Franciscan convent. Their supplies had finished. People were outside waiting as we unloaded. They were hungry, and so were the friars, but they joyfully gave up their meal of eggs and cheese for us drivers. It was their way of thanking us. Perhaps, if anything was left, they would eat the following day after they had finished distributing to whoever asked: Croatian, Muslim, Serb, whoever. The sun rises and sets for everyone, they say.

I was reborn here in Bosnia and I understood that: *Love does not come to an end... When I was a child, I used to talk... think... argue like a child, but now that I am a man all childish ways are behind me... The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love* (1 Co 13:8-13) Luciano

With this testimony we wish to pay homage to all the generous aid deliverers who make their way to the former Yugoslavia amidst danger, discomfort and great difficulty. They know only too well how Mary has always pulled them out of impossible situations so that they could carry out their work of charity towards Her poor children. **

Is it dangerous to go to Medj.? Unheard of! Never has a pilgrimage to Medj. been disturbed, not during the war and nor will it be now when Mary is there waiting for us "with open arms."

By road to Medj. - The road along the Adriatic coast is safe. The bus from Trieste (bus station adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening at 6pm and arrives in Medj. at 8am. Return fare Lit. 128,500 (ticket valid 10 days). For reservations ring Italy 040-425001. **By sea to Medj.** - From Ancona Italy to Split. Departures from Ancona: Mondays and Wednesdays 9pm, Fridays 8pm. Arrival in Split 7am. Departure from Split: Sundays 9.30pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9pm. For reservations ring Italy 071-202033.

The Saint of Joy: St Philip Neri

We cannot forget to mention this saint this year on his 400th anniversary. He is known as the "prophet of joy and reformer of the eternal city, who still today," said the Pope, "maintains that irresistible charm that he used with whoever approached him." Born in Florence in 1515, his mother died when he was young. He was cheerful and playful, just like his other young friends who affectionately called him Philip the Good.

At 18 he went to live in Cassino with his merchant uncle and while there was attracted by the monks' life of prayer. At 20 he went to Rome to study at University but only a short while after he decided to consecrate his life to prayer. With his friendly and joking ways he attracted to himself throngs of youth to whom he gave an education. "*Keep still if you can,*" he would tell them. "*Rather than see you sin, I would prefer you to hit me over the head. Lucky you, with so much time ahead of you to do good.*" Such was the goodness and wisdom that flowed from his heart filled with the Holy Spirit.

Out of obedience he became a priest at 35 and with a group of young men founded the Priests of the Oratory, which quickly became the spiritual centre of Rome, where the Word of God, singing, art and service to the poor was cultivated. This centre produced great saints and great men.

He begged for the poor, kicking at the doors of the rich people. He once received a slap in the face; Philip smiled and replied: "*That was for me, and I thank you. Now give me something for the poor.*"

Philip's spirituality was joyous, alive and spontaneous; typically Italian. God filled him with such a great supernatural love that he was unable to contain it. In one of his night visits to the Catacombs his heart so filled with God's love and joy that his ribs broke. "*Withdraw yourself, my Lord,*" he exclaimed, "*keep back the wave of your grace!*" And aware of his own weakness, he prayed: *Keep your hand on my head; Lord, crush my pride!*

He became the reformer of the clergy through his example of lay Christians and the way he united his priests in common life. He held spiritual retreats and visits to the 7 Churches and other forms of popular piety, which for those times was indeed daring.

During Holy Mass his body levitated and to avoid making a spectacle of himself and to come back down he would get the parish priest to read "jokes" to him. He fell ill when he was 80. Upon receiving Communion he would exclaim with joy: "*This is my medicine.*" He died on Corpus Christi, 26 May 1595. **

Once more a Church of Martyrs - "Our Church has again become a Church of martyrs who are often unknown: the unknown soldiers of God's great cause." A new *Martyrology* is being prepared for the Jubilee. Nearly 500 missionaries - priests and nuns, but also lay workers - have been killed over the last 30 years, without counting the 248 religious killed in Rwanda. "As the Pope says, the sowing of martyrs continues." The young people from the Pontifical Missionary Work organized a Missionary Martyr Day on 24 March with the theme *They gave their life*. Apart from the Way of the Cross in the streets, the day was one of fasts and works of mercy (visits to a sick person), television sets off and the planting of commemorative trees (last year they planted 1,000). Many participated.

China: the persecution continues -

Over these last months there has been a new offensive against the clandestine Catholic Church: some churches were destroyed, three priests were arrested, two convents were closed down and the police disturbed celebrations in three provinces. Behind the raids are secret accusations by the governing Catholics and the zeal of local governing bodies. In Jianxi (southeast China) the legitimate Bishop of Yujiang, Thomas Zeng, a victim of oppression, has been opposed by Bishop Wu Shizen from the official church. From Asia News we also read that in February twelve young Catholic women who had decided to live and work together in a small dress maker's shop were accused of organizing a convent. They were fined and sent home.

For the Unity of the Church in Russia

- The Pope sent his blessing and well wishes to **Fr. Werenfried** who has been sick "but is a little reckless... I have been carefully and anxiously watching the development of the events in the former Soviet Union. I am staggered to see the return of Stalinism... We must acknowledge that 70 years of Communist indoctrination have caused incurable psychologic, spiritual and moral wounds: a plague yet to be eliminated... People are becoming aware that God's Spirit who fills the Church wishes to breathe with two lungs: i.e., the sister Churches of the West and the East...

To work for this reconciliation would be for me the greatest joy of my life. Western Christianity must recognize its error and in a spirit of reconciliation help the Eastern Church with prayers and hands full of goodness: Bibles, books, printed matter, radio, TV, modern means and financial help..."

We can do our part. For information contact "Aid to the Church in Need": Surrey, England - ph. 081-6428668; Dublin, Ireland - ph 013 77516; POB 576, Deer Park, NY 11729-059, USA; POB 250, Montreal Quebec H3P 3C5, Canada; Eastwood NSW 2122, Australia - ph. 02-6791929.

* We have learnt from friends that in the monasteries and houses of prayer in Russia fasting is practised twice weekly, Wednesdays and Fridays. They break their fast only after receiving the Eucharist in the evening. Is this not what the Queen of Peace has been asking for? as if to unite the two Churches?

God's answer to a prayer

I asked God for strength to carry out great projects; He made me weak to keep me humble!

I asked God for health so I could realize great undertakings; He gave me pain and sorrow so I could understand it better!

I asked Him for wealth so I could possess everything; He made me poor so I would not be selfish!

I asked Him for power so men would be in need of me; He gave me humiliation so I would be in need of them!

I asked God for everything so I could enjoy life; He left me with my life so I could appreciate everything!

Lord, I received nothing of what I asked, but you gave me everything that I needed, and nearly against my will.

The prayers I did NOT say were answered! Praised be you, my Lord! Among all men no one possesses what I possess!

Kirk Kilgour (Sports champion confined to a wheelchair after an accident)

ECHO IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Italian: Eco di Maria, C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **English:** Echo of Mary, Cas.Post. 27, I-31030 Bessica (TV), Italy. **French:** Echo de Marie, 18 Allée Thévenot, F-39100 Dole, France. **German:** Echo aus Medj., C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **Spanish:** Roger Watson, c/o Antonucci, Via Verrotti 1, I-47100 Aquila, Italy. **Catalan:** Amics de Medj., c.Carme 11 baixos, E-08700 Igualada-Catalonia, Spain. **Portuguese:** a) Gilberto Correia, rua de Brito 24, 4915 Vila Praia de Ancora, (ph.911181), Portugal; b) Servos da Rainha, Caixa p. 02576, 70279-970 Brasília DF, Brazil. **Dutch:** Int.Medj. Comitéafd.Nederland-Belgie, Misericordeplein 12C, NL-6211 XK Maastricht, Holland. **Polish:** Czesława Mirkiewicz, ul.Ign.Krasickiego 21a/3, PL 30-515 Krakow-Podgorze, Poland. **Russian:** Dom Marii, Plotnikov 3, 121003 Moscow, Russian Federation - fax 007095-2415057. **Hungarian:** Fraternitas, 1399 Budapest, p.f. 701/85 Hungary - fax 36-2176183. **Romanian:** Ecou din Medj., P.O.B. 41-132, Bucharest, Romania; **Albanese:** Jehona e Medjugorje, L.1 p.10, LAC, Albania

ECHO from the ECHOES

From France: "Echo is the publication which I wait for most impatiently and read most joyfully. I give it to monks and nuns who devour it..." (Françoise Bertin)

From Albania: "I received the good news that the Archbishop of Shkodër has asked for several copies of Echo." (R. Prendushi)

From Brazil - the Portuguese edition has now reached the 150,000 mark.

We receive mail from all corners of the earth, and it brings us great consolation.

From Bergamo, north Italy: Ricki writes: "With your wonderful help I am persevering along my faith walk... I would like to help young people onto the same path... What do you think?" *Dear Ricki, Keep your love for Jesus. This love flows over by itself onto others. It is the Lord who, through our obedience, makes us His instruments of salvation and may even call us to a particular task. The greatest of tasks, though, is falling prey to His love and continuing with His prayer and offering, for the good of all. He will use us when we cast the net in His Name.*

Giovanna Ellis, who till not long ago distributed Echo in the US is now in Naples working for the US Consulate. She writes to say she is still involved in the White Army, and in response to the Pope's invitation, is organizing in Naples a movement of **women, teachers of peace** called PAN (American-Neopolitan Projects).

With all the women who work for peace, Mary is weaving a robe for Christ who suffers in mankind so that tomorrow it may rise according to the image of God its Creator.

Echo must remain the way it is - from France, Sr. Dominique writes: "I write on behalf of many who wish to say: Keep Echo the way it is: modest and sober. There is no need to make it more pleasing to the eye: nothing extra for the reader, but extra burden for you. Echo responds perfectly to our needs: sober, plain and dense like the pages of the Bible. The Word of God does not need accessories. It is light, portable, easy to put in one's pocket, easy to pass around and ends up 'wearing out' it is read so much. We like you, we are grateful to you and we pray for you." *Thank you for this consoling confirmation.*

May the **Pasqual Sacrament** and the **Mother of the Risen One** awaken in us faith and prayer so we may have love and peace to donate to others. Let us open our hearts then to the motherly blessing in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.