



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace 129

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Mary's Sorrows and Mary's Rosary

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Our Lady's message of 25 July 1996:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to decide for God every day. You speak a lot about God, my children, but you give little witness to Him with your lives. Thus, my children, decide for conversion, that your lives may be real before God, so that with the genuineness of your lives you bear witness to the beauty that God has granted you.

My dear children, I invite you anew to decide for prayer, because it is with prayer that you can live your conversion. Each of you will become, in all simplicity, similar to a child who is open to his father's love. Thank you for responding to my call.

Again and again: invited to decide for God!

Our Lady is not saying anything new. Mary speaks to us always and only of the essential things, repeating them to us in new ways, so as to counteract our forgetfulness and fickleness which are nourished by this world: it has no backbone and is unable to tell the difference between good and bad. So, once again, Mary is inviting us to decide for God. When we are not decided, it is easy to turn back and even the greatest of gifts are lost. Do not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord (Jm 1:7).

The invitation to decide [for God] is repeated 3 times. To this Mary adds: every day. Every day we must begin again our conversion (25 April 1996). Jesus asked His disciple to carry his cross every day and not to put it down. Therefore, we must pick up the fight against evil every day and choose the good which God places before us, even when it costs. Above all, we must break every bond which keeps us tied to sin.

If our conversion stops advancing it is because compromising and ambiguous behaviour is still part of our lives. Jesus tells us: say only yes, yes, no, no, while the devil tries to keep us from making decisive steps so that a fissure remains open for his works. Also St. Augustine felt drawn by old passions until he made a decisive break: that decision marked the beginning of the way of holiness.

Deciding for God means to seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, His will and holiness in each of

our actions, and all the rest will be ours as well (Mt 6:33). This will enable us to experience God; and we will not only speak of Him, but we will testify to Him with our lives because, as our Mother always says, the others will see Him in us. So, decide for conversion and your life will be real before God who "searches hearts and is able to see one's secret intentions."

Our life is real when it reflects the beauty of God. As Paul says: We, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2Co 3:18). Our life is real when it corresponds to God's will and develops according to Jesus our model through reading His word, and not through following the pagan models which the world adores and avidly follows. These pagan models envelop us in darkness; this impedes us from seeing God's beauty in ourselves.

Our bad behaviour deforms and obscures the beauty of God which is reflected in man; which shines in the eyes of those who are as simple as doves, whose hearts contain no deception or other malice; in those who do not judge others, but whose gazes are fixed upon God. We must renounce all deceitful behaviour and attitudes because on the day of judgement men will render account for every careless word they utter (Mt 12:36).

Decide for prayer so you can live your conversion. Through persevering in prayer we are able to understand what God wants from us and we receive the necessary grace to carry it out. When prayer is a serious confrontation with Jesus and His word, light is shone on the dark spots in our hearts and we are able to see where we need to change.

Is something stopping us from opening our hearts to God and making that decisive step towards conversion? Our Lady ensures us that prayer brings conversion and conversion brings child-like simplicity which opens us up to the Father's love. This brings to mind those beautiful biblical expressions of the Father who lifts the child up into his arms (Hos 11), and the child quieted at its mother's breast (Ps 130). Through true conversion our lives find rest, like a child in its father's arms. Remember: unless you turn and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:3).

Fr. Angelo

Our Lady's message of 25 August 1996:

Dear Children, listen! I wish to talk to you and invite you to have more faith and more trust in God who loves you boundlessly. My children, you do not know how to live in God's grace, so I invite you all again to carry the Word of God in your hearts and in your thoughts.

My dear children, place the Holy Scripture in a visible place in your families: read it and live it; instruct your children, because if you are not an example to them, they will follow the way to atheism. Reflect and pray, then God will be born in your hearts and your hearts will be full of joy. Thank you for responding to my call.

Trust God, live His Word and give It to your children

This time Mary begins with: Listen, I wish to talk to you. We see a mother calling out to her distracted children, forgetful of her advice. This is a motherly warning, so impassioned and solicitous, that you cannot remain indifferent. In this invitation we hear the echo of God's first commandment: Hear, O Israel (Deut 6:4) and the Book of Wisdom: Come, O sons, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord (Ps

33).

Indeed, what does it mean to invite us to have more faith and more trust in God? Mary, who knows God well, would like us to have Her same faith in Him (Blessed are you who believed!) because God always keeps His promises and all He wants for us is good, infinite good, because He loves us boundlessly. Place your trust in God and not in men. Remember: The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. Ignoring God can only bring harm to you and make you sink ever more into the abyss of agitation, fear and lack of peace. Mary knows how God loves us and what He has prepared for those who love Him (1Co 2:9).

You do not know how to live in God's grace: painful but true(!) and it must make us reflect. Living in God's grace means being His friend, free of mortal sin. This grace (free gift) makes us able to live a rapport of filial communion with God and it becomes possible for us to defeat sin, which is otherwise not possible. How to live in God's grace? Mary responds: by carrying the Word of God in our hearts and thoughts, just as psalm 118 tells us: "I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Mary invites us again because She has already told us many times. The Apostle Paul says it this way: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col 3:16) so it can guide our thoughts and choices, as it did with Mary, who kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Lk 2:19).

Thus the invitation: place the Holy Scripture in a visible place in your families (see also message of 18 Oct. '84). In the famous Stories of a Russian Pilgrim, it is >>>> page 8

>>>> from page 1: written that the devil fears even the place where the Holy Scripture is kept. The Word of God gives him the lie: Jesus defeated all the temptations with it; that is why Satan fears it so. Keeping it on a shelf isn't enough.

It is to be said that Catholics, in general, tend to be a little prejudiced towards the Bible, unlike Protestants who gladly attend Bible reading classes. It's true that they read it without taking into account Church guidance (Jesus entrusted the Word to the Church so it would be correctly interpreted), but we are under her guidance and she offers us the Word in abundance, especially in the liturgy, and invites us to meditate on it. Further, the new catechism is based on it.

Therefore, the more we know the Scriptures and Church teachings the more our view of things is open. The Bible is the fount of true piety. Also Mary's messages repeat the Word of God using simple words (see also Echo 94:7 and 101:4).

Read and live the word of God: what sense is there in knowing it, even perfectly, if you do not live it? Instruct your children, Mary urges, for He who created your children also tells us: These words ... shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deut 6:6). What of our children? Baptising them and exposing them to a little external practice is not enough to keep them from following the way to atheism. Mary also urges us to reflect and pray. If we listen to His Word and put it into practice, and be doers of the word and not hearers only (Jm 1:22) we will experience God in our hearts, Who will be born into our hearts as though for the first time.

This is our wish for all of you, and that you obtain it through the merits of Mary's sorrows and with the support of Her Rosary.

God bless you all and your families!

Pope says: make every effort for unity

The Holy Father continues to reveal his passion for unity desired by Christ; like a strong man running his course (Ps 18) he exalts in view of the millennium. His Angelus prayers this summer were bridges across the gap to the eastern Church which he called an essential heritage for the whole Church. "Although there is still disagreement on this point or that, we must not forget that what unites us is greater than what divides us." ... "It is time for Catholics and Orthodox to make an extra effort to understand each other better and to recognize with the renewed wonder of brotherhood what the Spirit is accomplishing in their respective traditions towards a new Christian springtime." (11 Aug.)

The great heritage of the eastern Churches

"The great Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon that were held in the East in the centuries when there was full communion between the Eastern Patriarchates and Rome are an imperishable reference point for the universal Church." (7 July) "A great element of unity between Christianity of the East and the West is our common veneration of the Fathers of the Church. Particularly influential were two schools that both arose in the East: Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria. Most of this thinking reached the Christian West, giving rise to a vital exchange of doctrine and holiness... Among the great figures, we recall St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom who contributed greatly to deepening the Christian vision of God: His ineffable nature is beyond all our thoughts, yet he is also the One who became close to us in the history of salvation through Christ. The great fathers and doctors of the West, from St. Ambrose to St. Augustine, from St. Jerome to Gregory the Great, continued the journey of penetrating the mystery. They were different but converging voices, at the service of the one Christian truth. Patristic thought was truly a great symphony of thought and life." (4 Aug.)

In his reflections on the wealth of Eastern Christianity the Pope dedicated his Angelus message of 28 July to monasticism: "a choice of radical renunciations, which has always been the very soul of the Eastern Churches, and from which also Western monasticism drew inspiration (through St. Benedict). While Western monasticism has gradually developed into many new forms of consecrated life, in the East it has retained a great unity, marked by its strongly contemplative character. It continues to have a special fascination for contemporary man who, frequently pressed by the frantic pace of life, is in search of himself. Monasticism offers the possibility of peace and interior life, and the ideal of deep harmony." The veneration of Mary and the Saints "is a bridge vitally linking the Churches of the East and West, fostering the exchange of spiritual gifts and the way to full unity. One could say that Western and Eastern Christians compete in their love for the Blessed Virgin, recognizing in Mary the synthesis and culmination of the marvels worked by God for man. In the East, Mary's Dormition is considered the greatest Marian feast, for which the faithful prepare with eight days or more of fasting and prayer. ... The famous akathistos hymn to the Mother of God presents Mary as a compendium of the truths of Christ. Together with Mary, the saints are the Church's great treasure, in the East as in the West. Many of the saints are common to both traditions, eg., Gregory the Great who was an ambassador in Constantinople and appreciated by Eastern Christians as Gregory the Dialogist. This evocative expression serves as the inspiration for a programme of holiness and ministry, having the ability to listen and the intense quest for communion among the brethren. (18 Aug.)

Works of Unity from the past

On 7th July, the Holy Father and the Eastern Bishops celebrated the Divine Liturgy according to the Ukrainian-Byzantine rite in St. Peter's Basilica to mark the 4th centenary of the Union of Brest (the return of the Ukrainian Church to the See of Peter). "Until the time that the divisions that have existed between us for so many centuries give way to unity among all the baptized, we must never tire [of working at unity]," he said

The Union of Uzhorod was celebrated on 18 August. This marked 350 years of the time when a great number of Orthodox from Ruthenia, tied to Moscow, joined the Church of Rome. "The whole Catholic Church," said the Pope, "is pervaded with divine joy for the application of Christ's call for unity."

The martyrdom of the Bishop of Orano in Algeria was occasion for the Holy Father to invite Muslims to work for peace and brother-hood (4 August). Also the vacation period was an occasion for the Pope to call man to "discover his own contemplative dimension and recognize God's traces in nature and in other human beings." (Cadore, 21 July)

Neither does the Pope forget the tragedies in the world. On 24th July the Holy Father condemned the slaughter of hundreds of Tutsi civilians in Burundi and the forced repatriation of thousands of Hutu refugees from Rwanda. "Burundi," he said, "continues to sink into an abyss of violence."

The Pope's catecheses during the General Audiences continue with reflections on Mary's virginity. "By Mary's decision, she becomes the archetype of all those in the Church who have chosen to serve the Lord with an undivided heart in virginity." (7 August) He also spoke of Joseph and Mary: "in view of their contribution to the mystery of the Incarnate Word, they received the grace to live together, the charisma of virginity and the gift of matrimony." (21 August)

Pope's health all right - The famous chief physician from the hospital in Bologna said in an interview to an Italian daily: "The Holy Father's enormous will to carry out his work and keep his commitments, and thus to heal, is surprising. [This will] can defeat sickness. He has undergone serious operations, yet he recovers in an exceptional manner each time." He also has a good Star looking after him!

* **Man of Mary and unity** - On the day of the Assumption, Fr. Max Thurian passed away at the age of 75. He was the first to work with Bro. Roger Schutz in the building of the Taizé Community. A tireless seeker of the truth, he became a Catholic priest in the later years of his life (1987).

In his book, *Mary, Image of the Church*, which helped to rediscover Mary's central role, he wrote on the Woman of the Book of Revelation: "This woman, this great sign in heaven, is the fulfilment of the messianic expectations which had already been foreseen in Genesis. She fulfils the promise of victory made to Eve, mother of all living beings... and symbolizes the Church which will one day be totally victorious over the powers of evil; over the serpent already mortally wounded by Christ."

Editorial team

What else beyond the Eucharist?

Alexandrina M. Da Costa: born in Portugal (1904-1955). When she was 14 she threw herself out the window to escape from a man who had entered her home to take advantage of her. She consequently suffered from myelitis (inflammation of the spinal cord) and excruciating pain. In her solitude she

consecrated herself to the Tabernacles in reparation for eucharistic profanation and for the way the Lord is abandoned.

In 1935 Jesus ordered her to ask the Pope to consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. During the war she offered herself victim for Pius XII and she wrote to him to ensure him that he would have been spared. From March 1942 to her death her sole nourishment was the Eucharist.

On various occasions Jesus told her: "No more nudity; people are to dress! More modesty! No more vanity, no more waste! ... Penance! Prayer, much prayer! More vigilance by those who govern the nations! ... The Church begin first because the devil is preparing very hard things [for her]... Pray and trust [in me]! The victory will be mine!"

Our Lady told her: "Speak to the souls! Speak of the Eucharist! of the Rosary! That they nourish themselves on Christ's Flesh, on prayer and on my Rosary, every day!"

For her tomb she wrote: "Sinners, if the ashes of my body can help to save you, then come and stamp on them till they disappear, but sin no more! Stop offending our Lord Jesus!" Her mission to call souls closer to God continues and proof is had from her biographies, the pilgrimages to her tomb and the number of graces.

St. Francis wrote in his testament: "I see no other thing, physically speaking, in the world of the Most High, the Son of God, except for His Most Holy Body and His Most Holy Blood which are consecrated by priests and which they alone administer to others. May these most holy mysteries which are above all other things be honoured, venerated and placed in precious places. Wherever I find names, written words and objects of His in indecent places I will take them up, and I ask that they be taken and placed in respectable places."

The Angel of Fatima taught this prayer to the three shepherd children: "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You most profoundly and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, present in all the Tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the insults, the sacrileges and the indifference by which He is offended, and by the infinite merits of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners."

John Bosco said to his youth: "Do you want the Lord to grant you many graces? Then visit him often. Do you want Him to give you few graces? Then visit Him rarely. Do you want to defeat the devil? Visit Him often! My friends, visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is a means of defeating the devil. We cannot do without this means.

St. Catherine of Genoa used to say: "The time spent before the Tabernacle is the time I have spent best in my life!"

Can Commissions suffice to define supernatural events?

The value of "popular piety"

Laurentin was asked: What has the Commission (for Civitavecchia) determined so far? He replied: I do not think that work carried out by the Commission is so important. Generally these are destructive; they are made up of theologians who are very rational and prudent who often destroy even what is limpid and transparent. I think it is very difficult for a commission to acknowledge an apparition because the

conclusion is never certain but always probable. Thus, a commission will conclude its study by declaring that there is no supernatural ascertainment; the question remains open, but the judgement is negative. Recognition is not important. Look at the case of the Miraculous Medal in Paris. It never received official acknowledgement, but the Pope went there and he prayed with the bishops and he believed. In this way the cult has continued. Thus, official recognition is not fundamental. I advise bishops not to seek recognition, but to observe the people's piety. If the fruits are good and the people pray they should not hinder, but encourage. The bishop from San Nicolas in Argentina did just this: though he was ever prudent, he took part in the prayer with his faithful, and hinting at the apparitions he asked them to follow the heavenly advice. Thus, I repeat, official recognition is not important.

Q. Why do people need signs: phenomena that go beyond the mystery of faith?

A. The Eastern Churches have many icons; these have an important function: to help people enter into contact with the Virgin represented in the icon. God is invisible, but people seek tangible things. The presence of miracles helps people become more sensitive and helps develop their faith.

God sends His Mother to wake us

Rather than official recognition, fruits of "sensus fidelium" are valid. Many saints and shrines venerated before recognition!

That is what Daniel Ange said in Linz, Austria about Medj. "One of the greatest signs of God's grace today is that He sent His Mother to Medjugorje... and it's because He wants to waken us from our sleep."

Q. Why the bloody wars in Rwanda and Bosnia: the countries where Mary appeared? Isn't this a negative element of proof?

A. It is the apocalypse where we see the Queen of Peace in heaven crowned with stars fighting against the dragon. It happened in Bethlehem when Our Lord was born, and the innocent children were slaughtered.

In my opinion, the war is a negative demonstration of the truth of the apparitions of Medj. The Mother of our Lord appeared for the first time 15 years ago and told the children what would have happened. At the time there was peace in the country and the people did not listen to Her message. She had come precisely to invite the people to avoid war through prayer and fasting.

Q. Our Lady speaks a lot about prayer and little of the importance of evangelization...

A. In Medjugorje Her entire work is a one of evangelization. She speaks of many things, such as faith, Jesus, conversion and peace: this is a Christian announcement! Mary also reminds us of the things we so easily forget - this is usually prayer, and this is the foundation of evangelization.

Q. Can you say something for those who try to spread the messages but are often hindered, in some cases by bishops?

A. We must say to everyone that these apparitions are not the first in 2,000 years. Often, God sends His Mother or a Saint to remind us of the essential things which we so easily forget. We know what the results of apparitions are for God's people. See Lourdes: the Church declared a feast day in honour of Her apparitions here! We all know what Mary said at Fatima and what has happened in Russia! The Popes themselves have recommended that the faithful go there on pilgrimage.

Many say: "yes, but Medj. hasn't been officially recognized by the Church." The Church has to wait for the apparitions to end. It can be compared to the process of beatification, where the Church has to wait

for the Saint to end his worldly life. This doesn't mean that we can't acknowledge the holiness of a person before his or her canonization: St. Francis was held a saint while still alive; likewise with Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Should I stop listening to what Mother Teresa says, or stop reading her books because she has not been canonized yet? Of course not! The same can be said for Padre Pio and the Curé of Ars: the people went in streams to them while they were still alive. The Church takes the "sensus fidelium" very seriously, i.e., the faith instinct of the people: how they feel about, how they venerate a saint. In the case of the apparitions, the Church acknowledges the places where people go on pilgrimage and where the fruits of faith are evident.

Besides, Medjugorje did receive recognition in 1991 by the then Yugoslav Episcopal Conference as a place of devotion to Mary, as did Kibeho in Rwanda and Rue du Bac...

[Card. Kuharic of Zagreb said: We bishops of the Commission have ascertained that Medj. is a place of prayer and a Shrine (Glas Koncila, Aug. 1993). How then can the press say that the Vatican has forbidden private pilgrimages? (See Echo 128:2)]

Edit. team

Bishop from Uruguay says: Wherever Mary is hearts open to Jesus

At the start of June Mons. Raul Scarone, Bishop of Uruguay, visited Medjugorje. During his two-day stay he celebrated at various Masses in the different languages and during the evening he blessed the faithful present for the Croatian Mass.

"This is my first time in Medjugorje," he said. "It is a wonderful grace. The Providence led me here. I am happy. I wasn't aware how great that the phenomenon of Medjugorje is, even though it is known world-wide.

To walk continuously towards holiness one needs to purify his intentions; the only motivation behind his intentions should be to glorify God. I always reflect before confessing and ask myself: am I a Bishop because I desire to serve the Church or to serve my own interests?

You parishioners of Medjugorje received a wonderful gift with Mary's presence. She can help all of us to evangelize because She will always guide us towards Jesus. Mary opens the doors of people's hearts and of families. I have seen this also among my people who are secularized and invaded by sects. Wherever Mary is hearts open up to Jesus. What we must do then is to evangelize with the help of Mary."

Bishop of Vienna says: "One breathes peace here; there are many conversions"

After his recent visit to the Austrian military in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mons. Christian Werner, auxiliary bishop of Vienna, visited Medjugorje. As far as we know he is the 5th bishop to visit Medjugorje this year. In these 15 years, about 100 bishops and 10 cardinals have visited Medj.

After his visit, Mons. Werner was asked what he thought of Medjugorje by a journalist who works for Oase des Friedens. He said: "The day I visited Medjugorje was a very quiet day. It is interesting to note that the soldiers who were with me did not buy postcards, but rosary beads. I experienced silence there. We sat outside along the side of the church in silence and at peace. Though we remained only a couple of hours, we could feel that Medjugorje radiated something special. Both for myself and for the soldiers it was magnificent.

I spoke to the soldiers about the many conversions that happen in Medjugorje. People can have different opinions about the apparitions, but the important thing is that thousands of people confess there and go to pray on the hills. Another thing is that many young people visit the shrine. It truly is a place of great grace and life..."

Californian Bishop says: "I see realization of Mary's role"

The Bishop of San José in California, Mons. Pierre Dumanie, who has a Croatian parish in his diocese, paid a visit to Medjugorje after visiting the shrine of Siny. He said: "I came here because I noticed that many in my diocese who had been came back with a strong devotion to Our Lady .. and from what I can see, it is evident how Mary's role is that of bringing the faithful closer to Jesus and the sacramental life. I also notice that your people think very dearly of the Catholic Church and the Holy Father. I have appreciated it all very much; it is something to cherish."

(Press Bulletin)

* 15,000 friends from Radio Maria in Poland on pilgrimage in Rome were given a warm welcome by the Pope. He told them to announce the Gospel with courage. Radio Maria was founded and is directed by Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk. He is helped by 4 fellow priests, 3 nuns, 200 volunteers (in the office in Torun) and hundreds of others in all of Poland. 4-5 million people listen in every day, while about 8 million listen in regularly. However, the peak is 12 million listeners!

News from the blessed land

Mary said to Ivanka: "Pray for those under Satan's dominion"

25 June last, Ivanka received her annual apparition which Our Lady promised she would receive on each anniversary. The apparition lasted 7 minutes. Ivanka said: "Mary was so radiant that for me it was the most beautiful apparition ever. Mary thanked us for the prayers and the love with which we have responded to Her. Her wish is that our days be filled with love and prayer and She asks us to pray for all those under Satan's dominion."

Fifteenth Anniversary - Further to the news given in the last issue of Echo we report that the solemn Mass on the eve of the anniversary (25 June) was celebrated by Fr. Jozo and on the 25th by Fr. Ivan Dugandzic, professor of Holy Scripture at the Catholic University of Zagreb. On the same day Masses were celebrated in 15 languages for pilgrims who came from all over the world.

The 5th Peace March was also held on the 24th June. Ten thousand people took part, beginning at the abbey of Humac at 7 am. The Blessed Sacrament headed the 17 km march to Medjugorje. The peace march was born in the hearts of the pilgrims who first organized it in 1992 when the war was raging, in an effort to counteract the violence and hate. It is also an invitation to prayer in favour of true peace and reconciliation. (Press Bulletin)

Apparitions on hill: "Pray for my intentions; pray for priests" - On the 15th anniversary grace upon grace was showered upon the thousands of pilgrims who came from all five continents. Our Lady crowned the feast with Her apparition on the hill to Ivan. She came with three angels and was very happy

to see so many people present. Mary said: I carry you all in my heart. Pray more because I need your prayers. In your groups pray for the priests.

Prayer is one of Mary's constant requests because with prayer things in us (and the world) change. During the meeting at the end of July Our Lady said to Ivan: I don't want to tell you anything but this: pray! Pray for my intentions!

Vicka says: "Be part of Mary's plan, not through doing a lot, but through praying a lot!" - Vicka was asked what Our Lady means when She says: You are living in a time of grace (25 Feb. 1996) and if it meant that we should expect hard times. "No," she replied, "it does not. What Our Lady means is that we should take full advantage of this time, starting right now, and of the wonderful graces that Her Son and She Herself are giving us in this time.

The most important thing is entering to be part of Her plan. Many people busily do lots of things, even in Her honour, but they are not really [participating] in Her plan because they are not praying. They do lots, but without prayer. It is only through prayer that we can be part of Her plan and thus bear fruit. Today, many people keep their gazes on catastrophes, but they should rather collaborate with the Blessed Virgin for Her plans, and Her plans are for nothing else but Peace."

(Sr. Emmanuel)

Youth Festival Depart "from the darkness Go into the light"

Also this year, from 31st July to 6th August, the youth festival was a great success. "In this 7th year we have decided to change its name and call it: International Prayer Meeting for Youth so that more than just a moment of singing and joy, it will be, above all, an encounter with the Lord," Fr. Slavko pointed out on the first evening at Eucharistic Adoration and added, "thus, through prayer during this week, we will grow together and do as Our Lady desires."

From the Darkness into the Light was this year's theme, though each day had its own theme which was elaborated by the various speakers and inserted into the midday prayers and the testimonies by the visionaries in the afternoons. It was held in the shady, though slightly uncomfortable park grounds between the church and the school. The days began with psalms at 9 o'clock and ended with the evening programme for all in the open: Rosary, Holy Mass and blessings.

How many participated? About 6,000 (the most credible number supplied by the Parish Office). This number grew to 15,000 when counting the other pilgrims on the eve of and on 5th August: Our Lady's birthday.

This year the most numerous were from the East with 25 buses from the Czech Rep., 22 from Slovakia and many from Romania, Poland and Hungary. For the first time there was a group from Bulgaria, for which Medj. is like a sanatorium after decades of atheism. There were numerous other groups, from Italy, France, Latin America, Germany, Austria, Holland, Africa and even China, Japan, Korea, Lebanon and the Virgin Islands.

And the problem of language? The novelty of this year was the simultaneous translation into 9 different languages so that nearly all the participants, with their own transistor radios and headphones, were able to listen to the meditations and prayers in their own language.

The new religious communities present in Medjugorje each had a role in the organization of the festival. The Beatitudes, together with Agostino and friends, animated the music and together with the Oasis of

Peace members they welcomed the youth in the square behind the church. The Kraljice Mira community was in charge of the 24-hour long Adoration and welcomed the youth into their chapel which was always full. Yes, the young people desire meeting Jesus in the silence of their hearts!

For pilgrims without means there were 600 bunks in tents set up by the UN peace forces. The site included bathroom facilities. The Community of the Most Precious Blood offered their services to prepare food and spiritual assistance; these were assisted by members of the Kraljice Mira community.

The Youth Festival day by day

On Friday evening (2nd August) a Eucharistic Procession embraced the 4 hamlets of Medjugorje (Bijakovici, Vasilj, Miletina and Sivric): it seemed endless, so many were those participating. The youth were all present, singing and praying as they walked behind the Blessed Sacrament for the 12 kilometers which took Jesus through the land blessed by His Mother.

Fr. Slavko spoke about confession, and Fr. Müller from Germany on reconciliation. From the first day long lines formed before the confessionals and the other fathers on the benches outside the church. On Saturday morning Sr. Elvira, founder of the Upper Room Community, overwhelmed the listeners with the power of Life that exudes from her person. She invited the youth to listen to Mary's messages so as to discover that life which the Gospel speaks of. She also spoke a little of the life of prayer and work in the communities she founded in various parts of the world to recuperate drug addicts. (See Echo 117:4) The youth themselves spoke of their experiences in the afternoon.

That evening pilgrims filled the square behind the church to listen to the delightful musical put on by Sr. Elvira's youth which portrayed the various passages in their lives: from the darkness of drugs to the light of the resurrection. Significant passages from the Old Testament and the Gospel were read in the various languages during the dances.

On Sunday evening a song festival was held in honour of Mary. Groups of musicians from many nations took turn to offer a song to Mary. It was held in an atmosphere of immense joy and was wonderfully directed by Fr. Slavko. No one, or rather, all were winners!

In the morning, Fr. Cosimo gave a lesson on prayer. "When you pray don't think of saying a nice prayer. Place the good and the bad of you before Jesus, because He wants you just the way you are. Even if you're terribly distracted and unable to communicate with Jesus, He is close to you. If you say a nice prayer, you might feel pleased with yourself, but Jesus likes the prayer of the poor man. All you need to do is be faithful to your prayer- because you need Him; be there and He will give you what you need..."

Monday the 5th: Mary's birthday! With intense passion, Fr. Jozo who was parish priest of Medjugorje when the apparitions began, referred to Mary's messages and the Gospel to give a profound meaning to the 15 years of Her presence. "Do not fear to take Mary with you; welcome Mary the way John did... Do not fear to transmit Her messages, even though others may not believe; we didn't believe the visionaries either in the beginning. Our disbelief did not deter them, and thus they took the message to everyone. When you return home, do not be afraid to give Mary's message to the world, because it is from this that the salvation of souls begins. [Her message] is the Gospel being preached to today's world. Do not be deterred by your "littleness," your "poverty," but give to Jesus all that you have, no matter how insignificant it may seem, like the child who gave his five loaves to Jesus. With those few loaves Jesus was able to feed a great crowd and still there were twelve basket-fulls left over..."

For the feast of the Transfiguration a stream of young people started ascending Krizevac at 3 am while praying the Rosary. Holy Mass began at day break. At the end of the Mass Fr. Slavko bade good bye to the youth while exhorting them to continue to be "broken bread" for all humanity. The week dedicated to

the youth was thus an opening to the new life, as many had testified. "We met Mary," many said, "and we'll come back here on pilgrimage."

Nicola

Sr. Elvira said to youth: be the hope for new humanity

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to proclaim God's work! The greatest and most important of God's works, which will never end, is man. We are here in this little town called Medjugorje. It has become a centre of love, faith and blessing, thanks to Mary's presence. We are not here because good organizers were able to bring us, but because Our Lady invited us, for She has something to say, almost in a whisper, to each of us...

We're here for a festival. At the song festival of San Remo many songs are heard and applauded and in the end many are disappointed, for it is not always the best song to win. This festival is different. Our Lady wants us all to be actors and actresses. You are on a stage: the stage of life from where we must announce and testify! We all make up the cast, none of us are spectators. Don't wait for anything else. Be active! ...

Forgive us adults for the lack of ideals and true relationships - "The family, the world, and the others are happy with the minimum: when you work, produce and earn money you are considered normal. Well, I say that you've been doped. The [world] couldn't care less about who and what you really are inside. Young people are confused and look beyond themselves for things that appear to be attractive, without looking at the real nature of things.

Are you tired of the masks? Are you looking for freedom, for joy, for a smile? All this is not something, but someone: it is the face of God! We are unable to recognize this, afterall, where are the models to imitate?

So, your task is to go home and upset the daily routine of your parents who gave you everything and who did not teach you how to make sacrifices, who tell you to go to church and to be good but who are not good to each other and are not even very religious. This is your moment. We adults, with our false religiousness, are without vitality; our boat is sinking. When a conversion is without charitable love, without care for those who die of hunger, it is a false conversion. The adults go home and say: I went to Medjugorje. Don't you do the same; you act!

You were born for the light, and the light is the truth. My young people, you have Christ's heart within you! The Pope doesn't say this to the theologians; he speaks to the young people: you are the hope for the new humanity. Take on the responsibility of re-ponding. We "oldies" cannot. You are the light and I ask you forgiveness on behalf of your parents, the Church, the educational system! Forgive us for making you walk in the dark! You must be the light for the world; it is Jesus who tells you this. If you are not light, you are darkness. If you are not dialogue, you are mutism, a cemetery! If you are not a smile, you are dead. This wealth is in us so we can give it to others; make others live. It is a duty, not something we feel like doing! If you are not happy with what you are and you want to change then ask yourself: who do I want to be, not "what will I do when I grow up?"! I ask you: who do you want to be in this world marked by your presence? God planned you for this world, so you have to give an answer.

Here are some recommendations. If at home there is no peace, you must become peace. If there is falseness and darkness, you must be light and truth. Do they argue where you live? Is the atmosphere tense? Is there war? Our Lady says: remove the war from your hearts and then help. Who do you want to be? Within you beats the heart of Jesus. Jesus said: I am the light, the way, the truth and the life. If we

want it, we are what Jesus has already established in us. I can tell you, I can shout it to you, because it is already reality! The encounter with God which gives life is already part of our present. I am telling you what already exists: Jesus is present and lives in the hearts of men, as you will see Saturday evening in the show put on by the youth from the Community.

No sin, no matter how grave; not even the most tragic of deaths can make us fear, for we have Jesus, the son of God. Get rid of the picture of God who lies in wait for us to punish us. This is a god invented by us because we are bad! We know how God truly is because Jesus told us, and His countenance is that of Mary...

Very much light; a few dark spots

1. As I contemplated the show by Sr. Elvira's youth I asked Jesus: what do you think of all this? and I perceived this reply: "they are all my children, you know." I was moved because it made me understand how great is the love of Jesus and Mary for each of us and how they look at a person's heart, not his exterior.

There was also a less positive side to the festival: some of the speakers did not turn up; for instance Sr. Briège, Jean Plivar and General Morillon, however, this did not make the festival any less fruitful. Despite Fr. Slavko's repeated recommendations, many of the youth, especially the young ladies, were dressed more for the beach than for a holy place, though it was not excessively hot. It saddened me and I thought it was the sign of a conscience not only light-hearted but insensitive to the harm which can be caused in others [by our behaviour and attitudes] and which does not know how to reap sacredness from a relationship with the divine. (Nicola)

2. The intense programme did not allow for enough moments of silence for private and/or group contemplation. Night adoration could not substitute this need given the weariness and need of sleep. Many noticed how the meeting was aimed at awakening people's faith and that there was no consideration for those who have been attending Mary's school for some time. After so many years, Mary surely desires that the meetings be used to guide people towards holiness, rather than just awaken their faith. I hope that in the future consideration will be given to this necessity, which many young people desire. (Pietro)

3. Works moulded with prayer - There were many young people who came here without even knowing what prayer means, yet they let themselves be involved in the climate of prayer! I saw them at the evening Mass as they prayed and sang: they were composed and meditative despite the enormous crowd. It was the effect, of course, of the intense prayer that prepared and accompanied the festival. One could hear Sr. Elvira's boys call out the Hail Mary response to one another as they put up and took down the stage equipment for their show.

During a visit to their Community in Ugliane, I was overwhelmed by the joy with which they greet the visitors, serve them and listen to them, and at hearing them announce that the Providence had arrived, which was a truck full of noodles and another full of water! Those walls were moulded with prayer. Everything there talks about the work of the Spirit. One would say: God is present everywhere with His children. (Rossano)

Jelena's prayer group (see news in Echo 127, 128) is once again active: good news. Jelena Vasilj spent the entire summer in Medjugorje and was thus able to catch up with her old friends from the group which has not met since 1991. Now, each Tuesday evening, the members of the group meet close to the church. Of this group Our Lady said: "it is more powerful than an atomic bomb." It was Our Lady who had asked

that the group be formed and who guided it. All prayer groups should have this same power. To friends from Brescia Jelena said that she would not be able to be present a great deal since she must continue her studies in Rome. In Rome she does not go to any group and neither has she felt the need to form one because she said that her group is the one in Medjugorje. Jelena confirmed to them that she still receives inner locutions (Mary speaks to her in a mysterious way) usually during the moments of intense prayer. They asked her what she thought about spiritual aridity - when you have no desire to pray -and she said that it could be for an unconfessed sin which dulls our souls, and added that normally God makes His presence be felt and gives us fervour, especially when you have begun a spiritual journey or have received a special call. She said that at other times God can try our faith with aridity.

On the need of a particular priest for confession and spiritual direction for a group Jelena pointed out that for confession any priest will do while for spiritual direction a group should personally choose a priest. She said that a group should start from the lay people even though it needs qualified spiritual guidance. The lay people must be active and decisive when it comes to the needs and aspirations of the group. Jelena was asked how a group similar to hers could be formed. She replied that the necessary requirements have already been published but that each person must be serious about his or her will to meet and pray and read the Word. When this is established the desire to pray grows. She added that Our Lady never fails to help.

(Pietro)

Teresa prayed for Mary's intentions; Mary resolved Teresa's problems

Teresa's daughter, Vera, lived with Teresa. Vera's husband called them bigots, while he said he did not believe in God and had no intention of accepting those "silly things." Teresa went to Medjugorje the same day that her daughter had to go to a lawyer to begin divorce procedures. Teresa took her sorrow to Mary and was particularly worried for her granddaughter, Harmony, who divides her time between mother and father; they beat one another and talk about the divorce in front of her. On her part, Harmony wants a little brother or sister to play with.

Once in Medjugorje Teresa heard about the "pact" which one can do with the Blessed Virgin. Mary has often said: Pray for my intentions ... I will take care of yours. So Teresa did just that. After the "contract" was concluded, Teresa went to the blue cross on Podbrdo and prayed fervently for the non believers, the youth, the sinners, the priests and for peace in people's hearts.

That evening Vera rang to say that she had cancelled the appointment with the lawyer and that she and her husband would try one more time to save the family. During her stay in Medjugorje Teresa continued to pray only for Our Lady's intentions and went every evening to the blue cross and prayed fervently for these.

When she returned to her home in France, Teresa was surprised to find that her son-in-law was a different man. Vera explained that one evening, at about 10 pm, while he was watching the TV, he called her to see the big white cross above the TV set. Vera could not see it. "Look properly," he said, "I can see it." Teresa explained how she knew the cross and that she was praying before it on Podbrdo when her husband saw it.

Our Lady was pleased with Teresa's pact and had indeed taken care of her son-in-law. Since then (June '95), Vera and her husband have returned to the Church. They both confessed (she after 10 years, he after

20). Now they pray every day in the family and little Harmony is anxiously awaiting a little playmate, due in Autumn. (Sr. Emmanuel)

Spiritual guide - The spiritual guide entitled: "Follow me with your heart" by Fr. Slavko Barbaric has recently been published. At the moment it is available in Croatian and English. Translations into the other languages are underway. The guide lays out the basic facts of Medjugorje and will help the pilgrim to discover the places of prayer in the proper way (the church, the hill of apparitions and Krizevac) and above all it will help pilgrims to begin to pray. It is available in the bookshop next to St. James' church and in the information office.

Frances leaves her crutches in Medjugorje

Fr. Slavko tells: Frances arrived in Medjugorje on 11th April 1996 with her sister and a group of pilgrims led by Sr. Margaret. On Wednesday the 17th, with her crutches under one arm, she asked to speak to me. When I learnt why I fixed an appointment for her. She came accompanied by Sr. Margaret.

Frances Russel from Boston is 43 years old. In 1980 she had a very bad accident in the hospital while carrying out her duties as a nurse. At the time she was 27 years old. At first the doctors didn't realize how bad she was. In fact, the injuries involved her spinal chord and her muscular and nervous systems. When they realized how grave her condition was, they operated, not just once, but five times in all. After the second operation Frances' condition worsened. In the end Frances was unable to turn her head, to lift her hands to the back of her neck, or to lift herself up. The doctors said that they were unable to do anything. Till her arrival in Medjugorje, Frances spent most of her time in hospitals.

Q. What happened in this pilgrimage, Frances?

A. I prayed a lot and took part in the evening programme, in the adoration and the meetings and listened to the information, like everyone else. On Saturday 13th I went to Siroki Brijeg. Fr. Jozo spoke and prayed and I felt an intense pain in my heart and I saw my life together with all its sufferings as though in a film. I cried and in my heart I heard these words: "Give me your wounded heart!" I felt that my heart was healing.

Back in Medjugorje I greatly desired going to Mass and adoration, but I felt so tormented that I asked Our Lady to give me the strength to return to Siroki Brijeg. I had to wait a long time, but when Fr. Jozo blessed me I felt sick and I was shaking. It felt like thorns were piercing me all over, however, something was changing in me, though I was unable to understand what. When I returned to Medjugorje I waited in vain to speak to Fr. Slavko. On Tuesday I went to the Blue Cross like the others. I had been told that Our Lady had asked the pilgrims to pray for the sick. In the meantime, my headache gradually got better and I was able to lift my arms to the back of my neck and I realized that I was able to walk...

Fr. S. - What was it that made you suffer the most prior to Medjugorje?

Frances: After the accident I was terribly frustrated, for I had dreamt of forming a family and becoming a doctor! The pain got worse as time passed and I suffered unbearable headaches. I couldn't stand the light so I had to live in the dark and often desired death. I couldn't even lie down on the bed so I spent the nights in a chair. As time passed also my muscles and nerves got worse: I would shake uncontrollably. All this made me feel very bitter.

Fr. S. - How was your faith all this time?

Frances: I went with my crutches every morning to the church close by and took Communion and then said the Rosary. This gave me the strength to live, but the pain just kept getting worse, from my head down to my toes.

Fr. S. - When did you first hear about Medjugorje?

Frances: A long time ago and I had always wanted to come. The worse I'd get the more I'd ask Mary for the grace to come here. I tried various times but had always been dissuaded. In the end I understood that if I didn't come now I never would. Also the problem of the expense was overcome. All the same, I did not come to ask to be healed.

Fr.S. - Are you convinced now to be healed in your body and your soul?

Frances: Yes. To tell the truth I feel in excellent health (and to demonstrate it, Frances got up and ran down the steps).

Sr. Margaret's Testimony

Fr. S. - You are the group leader. Do you know this pilgrim?

Sr. M. - I knew from her sister that she was gravely ill. At the airport we had to ask for special assistance. Till midday today I did not know she had been healed. At lunch time the entire group continued to rejoice and give thanks for her healing. Frances now appears completely different. She is happy. Her sister can't stop crying.

Fr. S. - How does a group leader feel when someone is healed?

Sr. M. - This is the 54th time that I have come to Medjugorje and I have seen many extraordinary things happen in people's souls and bodies, and people change their life style, which is the most important thing. When a sister from my community asked why I go so often I told her: "When miracles stop happening in people's souls and bodies I will stop going." I feel very happy for Frances. Thanks be to God!

Fr. S. - Frances, what would you like to say to the others on this happy day?

Frances: I never doubted that God and the Blessed Virgin loved me. God knows each of us and Mary is with each of us. To those who come here I would like to say that they should first seek God. I would like the parishioners and everyone to realize how great a grace it is to have Our Lady here. On my part, I will never tire of thanking God for this immense gift. I spent the whole day today in church to pray and give thanks. I can't say how happy and grateful I am.

Fr. Slavko also met Frances' sister who exclaimed: "God is great. I cried all day. I am happy. I can't believe that my sister doesn't need crutches anymore and I can't wait to see Mum's face when she sees Frances come home without crutches. Thanks be to God and to the Queen of Peace!" And then she burst into tears.

(From Glas Mira, May 1996)

* Humanitarian concert - On 21st July in front of the church of Medjugorje the young people's orchestra from the city of Essen in Germany held a concert for children who lost their fathers in the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This was the last of a series of concerts held in various cities of Croatia to raise funds for the orphans.

* Spectacle of music, "A Message of Peace to the World," directed by Maestro Vjekoslav Sutej, was held on 21st June and featured Josè Carreras, Cecilia Gasdia, 12 choirs from 12 countries and the orchestra of the Croatian Radio and TV. On the 15th Anniversary a well-known group of Croatian musicians, called the Zagrebacki soloists, held a concert in St. James Church at the end of the evening programme.

Man of today on the run discovers self in brotherly communion

"A mirror reflects only the exterior aspects of a body. A person manifests his real self only with his readiness to help himself and his community, and as far as possible, all those whom he meets. This is the mirror which reflects man's true soul." (I.B. Singer)

Man of today always on the run! He runs from the others, in his desire to be independent, free, his own master... The problems of society, family and marriage reflect more than ever man's inability to live communion with others. Why? The reason is that man finds it difficult to meet others (they are diverse, with different habits, limits and forms of negativity) because it is easier to maintain relationships which are superficial and/or occasional. These relationships are not as sincere; they are easier to live with. Often, man does not want to see the "log" in his own eye; thus, the "speck" in others' eyes provoke and disturb him so much!

Man of today forgets to look at himself! He does not want to see his own reflection, i.e., his own condition and the quality of his interpersonal relations which would show up his capacity to personalize these relationships and also measure his level of intimacy and sincerity in his relationship with God. Furthermore, interpersonal relations would unveil the depth and "purity" of his love and his level of maturity in the acceptance of reality.

Man of today is afraid! He is afraid of meeting himself: a limited and weak person in need of others and of love, because today's culture, television, sport and publicity only offer him the ideal of perfect, intelligent, beautiful and powerful people. Behind the screen, however, these are limited and fragile just as much as he is. When man refuses himself he also refuses the others and he creates false images of himself and the others and a world of false values in a continual search of artificial behaviour, attitudes and thoughts.

Man of today has lost his identity as man! He has lost the sense of what it means to be man created in the likeness of God, who is a son of God and as such knows where he comes from and where he is going to: a pilgrim and stranger on the earth. For this reason he is unsatisfied, unhappy, unrealized and alone, tied down as he is by his hundreds of little possessions, personal insecurity, a comfortable life and laws, and thus by the hundreds of unresolved problems, relations and situations.

In fact, man of today is unable to grow and fully live his state of being a person!

Jesus Christ, with all that He went through, wants to teach us how. He had the same difficulties that we also face every day: disappointment, humiliation, incomprehension, abandonment, suffering, pain, betrayal, mockery, contempt, failure, weakness... Jesus' life is simply a continual growth in faith, hope and love; it is a progressive growth which took Him to the full possession of the divine life in His humanity. This fulness peaked at His complete donation of self on the cross for the sake of the others. Jesus Himself reveals the secret of this "journey": "... whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:43-45).

This is the basic rule for all our relations, whether in the family, in marriage, at work or in community: be a servant! Jesus who appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1Jn 3:8b) knows that "being a servant" destroys all the concepts and laws of this world; it destroys the original sin of Adam and Eve who desired "being like God," masters of life, of good and bad; it defeats all passions which attack our members and which "are the causes of all the wars among us" (Jm 4:1). Serving means to destroy Satan's world of pride and false idols, so as to restore the eternal commandment: You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve (Lk 4:8). Jesus Who is Life desires that we also live: We know

that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death (1Jn 3:14).

Thus, by looking out [onto the world] with the eyes of Jesus, we can see how our neighbour, brother, sister, husband, wife, friend, etc. is the mirror of our happiness and life. The more we love the others, the more the divine life is in us. The more we are able to see beyond the limits and weaknesses of others, the more God's Love in us is purer, stronger and greater. And this is precisely what community life is: become instruments for one another and provide the opportunity [for each other] to leave death behind and pass onto life and love.

The prophetic spirit had already announced, through the Frenchwoman Marthe Robin (1902-1981), that "the world will be saved by communities." Truly, only communion among men is what truly mirrors the individual.

Only community life is what today's man cannot run away from because he either begins building up sound relationships with others or he remains isolated. In fact, in community life, "there is no other alternative: you either love or you live in hell" (Fr. Ephraim in 'Marthe Robin, love or die'). It is only in the community that man can look at himself in the mirror and be looked at in his entire existence; it is here that his heart can be worked on and become ever similar to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is only through living in communion with others that man can stop being afraid, because he can experience what it is to be loved - love leaves no room for fear; there is no need for armour.

Little by little everything becomes simple and natural.

In the security of a community man can learn to leave behind all that he does not need and be free to accept God's Kingdom in himself and in everything that surrounds him. For it is only in the community that man can feel that he is part of the Mystical Body in which, together with other brothers and sisters, with all other men, he can attain to Fullness. It is difficult to find such communion, but Jesus, in the Last Supper, said this was our task: "When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.' " (Jn 13:12-15).

What does this request mean for us Christians, and in particular for us who desire to "offer our lives for our brothers"? What should our behaviour be in our daily lives, in our "communities," i.e., our families, marriage, confraternities, schools, work places, convents, etc.?

Jesus invites us to "lay down our garments": our pride, desires, reasonings... everything that we are unable to accept, and invites us to put on the GRACE that He abundantly pours out onto us with the sacraments and in particular with the Eucharist, through which He feeds us with Himself: merciful love. Thus robed in Grace, we are invited every day to welcome, forgive, pray and offer ourselves for every "dirtiness" in ourselves, in the others and in the world.

The task Jesus left us is great and difficult, but it is also "little" because it begins with ordinary, every-day situations, and it is also "easy" because not only did Jesus indicate it to us, but He has already realized it: He is waiting for us to discover, through faith, the Resurrection and the Life which is within us.

Therefore, Jesus opened the way of Grace for us with His death. Through His sacramental presence in the holy Church and through each single prayer this way is made wider in souls and in the universe. Each of us must reflect and see where and how we should commence. Perhaps we only need to change our way of seeing things, and begin looking beyond the shortcomings of others. What I mean is to begin

"looking" with one's heart. With this in mind, the following story may help us to understand how much our way of "looking" can change the things around us.

"One of you is a great saint"

An Abbot went to visit a famous wiseman. "What do you seek?" he was asked. The Abbot told him his sad story. The abbey had been known for its spirituality; the cells were full of young candidates and the church rang out with the monks' songs. Then came the hard times; fewer and fewer people came to Mass to nourish their souls, the flow of novices had come to halt and the church was immersed in silence. All that was left were a handful of monks who carried out their duties, but with hearts laden with sadness. What the Abbot wanted to know was this: "Is it for a sin we have committed that our abbey has been reduced to such a state?" The wiseman replied: "Yes, a sin of ignorance... One of you is a great saint under false guise and you are unaware of it." After having said this, the wiseman retreated into prayer and contemplation.

Back in the abbey, the Abbot related his discovery. The monks looked at one another in amazement. A great saint? Here? Incredible! In disguise... but how could we not have recognized him? Who could he be? Everyone in the abbey has his shortcomings. Could he be Friar Cook? He's a little nervous at times, but who wouldn't be when you're busy all day long trying to find ways to keep everyone happy? Friar Porter? Well, he's not perfect either, but he's always so ready to welcome and help whoever is in need. Friar Superior? He also has his limits, but he's so willing to meet everyone's needs and he's so understanding and forgiving.

And on they went. The result was that they began treating each other with respect and consideration. "You never know," they thought to themselves when in each other's company, "it might be him." The abbey began vibrating with joy because the hearts of the monks radiated with the spirit of Love.

Sr. Paula

SOS from aid deliverers

Having understood that Mary, present here in Medj., is united with Her homeless children, many pilgrims come with savings or supplies. After visiting the refugees or the ruins, they say in the confessionals: "Our intention was to give, but we have received much more," or: "I came to Medjugorje to ask God for many things, but now all I can do is thank Him." The encounter with those less fortunate than ourselves makes us richer; it transforms us and prepares us for a real encounter with Jesus in the Sacraments.

The following letter is from Alberto Bonifacio, an aid deliverer from the ARPA association in Milan, on the difficult situation for the many volunteer aid deliverers: "Now that the weapons are silent people think there is no more need to help. The mass media report no more on the situation of the refugees or the most remote and devastated regions: people are tired of seeing these things and of having to hand out money! Yet there are still situations where people are in dire need!

It is with nostalgia that we recall the times when it took convoys to carry all the aid, and the plentiful donations that permitted us to load up vans and lorries and even shiploads with hundreds of tons of food and supplies. Now the donations have greatly diminished and only a few manage to fill up a van and join us. Many have also been discouraged by the long hours we are made to wait at the customs - sometimes

days. Yet despite everything we still deliver twice monthly.

After our appeal in Avvenire and other national papers, we now appeal to the readers of Echo, so that for the love of the Queen of Peace, they will give us a hand - in one way or another.

At the end of March we started going to the extreme north of Bosnia, to a place called Gracanica where 60,000 Muslims live. We found 160 Catholics and with their help we get aid to many refugee centres which the local authorities signal. There are thousands of widows and children of all ages whose husbands and fathers were massacred in Srebrenica, Bratunac, etc. They have nothing. We try to give a bit of trust and hope to the poor mothers who have often lost all hope. We also try to help these abandoned Catholics to keep their faith alive. We hope to soon get aid to those living in misery near Tuzla...

On 31st May, escorted by Italian IFOR soldiers in Sarajevo, we started taking aid to the few thousand Serb refugees in Bosnia.

Multi-ethnic schools have been opened by the Catholic Church in Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica to help the youth of the various ethnic and religious groups to study together, as a contribution to dialogue and peace, but they need money! Mons. Sudar, auxiliary bishop of Sarajevo, has appealed to our generosity. In the meantime, let us pray, that many "dear children" may hear the pressing invitation of Mary, Queen of Peace: "They have no more bread, no medicine, no home; most of all, they have no more love; they feel they have been abandoned!" Do we dare to keep on pretending that we can't hear the voice of this mother!"

"Jesus did not tell the parable of the rich man only for the sake of poor Lazarus who found solace in the arms of Abraham, but for the Lazarus's of today who first suffered under the Communist regime of terror, and now succumb to the vision of our state of well-being."

(Fr. Werenfried)

Some questions for Fr. Amorth

A prayer group for young people in Brescia asked Fr. Amorth:

Q. For our prayer group, formed as a result of Medj., do you think we should also recite prayers of liberation? If so, which ones? A. Recite all the prayers of liberation and healing that you wish. There are no official or prohibited ones. You can even invent them.

Q. Some of us have been to meetings with Mons. Milingo and they found them very useful. Do you think it is harmful for our prayer group to participate in these meetings?

A. Mons. Milingo is not harmful. It displeases me to hear of the prohibitions in his regard. He only does good.

Q. Is it harmful for a woman suffering from strong satanic disturbances to participate in prayers of liberation in general, even those said by us? A. All prayers would be good for her. Of course, in cases of possession, exorcists are also needed.

Q. Should the prayer engraved onto the medal of St. Benedict be said only by priests and exorcists? A. Those prayers of St. Benedict can be said by all.

* House of Belgian in Bijakovici finally ready to open. The owner has now decided that it be used for preparation of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. His decision follows his own experience with St. Montfort's Treatise. The house will be entrusted to a local Association.

* Local newspapers of Mantova recently featured a good article on our Echo; one included photos of the latest consignment. May Our Lady bless all those who work for Her and us, whether aware of it or not.

MEDJUGORJE: Information office: 387-88651988; Parish Office: 387-88650206 / 88651333; fax 387-88651444; Robofax for Press Bulletin: fax "tone mode" 387-88651555.

* Bus for Medj. from Trieste departs daily 6 pm; arrives 8 am next morning. Adjacent to train station. Return journey ITL. 180,000

Satan cannot do anything. Thank you for your response to my call.