



# ECHO OF MARY

## Queen of peace

### 141

September-October 1998 - [Info](#)

## Our Lady's message of 25 July 1998:

Dear Children, I invite you today, my Children, to be with Jesus through prayer, so that through personal experience of prayer you may discover the beauty of God's creatures.

You can neither speak of nor bear witness to prayer if you do not pray. Hence, my Children, remain with Jesus in the silence of your heart, that He may change you and transform you with His love.

This is a time of grace for you, my Children, so make good use of it for your personal conversion; as when you have God, you have everything.

Thank you for responding to my call.

## Mary's medicine is Prayer with the Heart

Our Lady insists on prayer with the heart, for there is no other way to encounter God, and it is when we have God that we have everything.

1. Personal experience in prayer is the way to discover the beauty of God's creatures. This means to remain with Jesus; so that you should hush all external noises and find the time to be alone with Him. In the frenetic rhythms of our modern days, Our Lady invites us to establish a moment in the day to be alone with God, that He may capture us, and help us to see, and to live.

This is the medicine Mary offers us to counteract all religious illusions, though it implies being violent with oneself, to insist without being discouraged: Ask and you will receive... That great saint, Anthony of the desert, said, "...it is not prayer unless one is able to say every day: in my heart God and I are alone."

2. If we remain with Jesus in the silence of our heart, He can carry out His work in us to change and transform us (or "transfigure", as some translations say) with His love, so that we may see with His eyes. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light (Mt 6:22).

Everything will be illuminated, and we will discover the presence of God in all others: they will reflect His image and become His message, signs of His beauty, and witnesses to His providing love. In prayer, we will discover that each person is our brother or sister, so they will no longer be enemies or unpopular to us, but others to love and help, others to whom we can offer a helping hand that they too may obtain eternal salvation. Then we will see the grandeur and the beauty of God's making and we will see how we are that beauty, and this will give us the strength to get back up after defeat.

3. We will look upon the creation with child-like awe, and recognise the hand and face of God. Oh God so immense, wherever I look I see You; in Your works I admire You; I recognise You in me

(Metastasio). And we will say no more 'Our God,' to the work of our hands (Hosea 14).

Man's great works make him proud, but the splendour of God's glory reflected in all creatures fills us with the holy fear of offending Him by abusing of them. The Pope said: "In this tech-nological age our life is at ever greater risk of becoming an anonymous function of the productive process. Man thus becomes unable to enjoy the beauties of creation and, even more, to see the reflection of God's face in them" (12 July).

Mary is aware that God's creatures are easily soiled, that they abuse one another and make havoc of themselves. So we must beware of making indecent show of ourselves, so that sins of desire are not awoken in others. Let us not forget that our bodies are God's living temples.

4. You can neither speak of nor witness to prayer if you do not pray. Those who have experienced prayer with the heart and have let Jesus be the Lord of their lives know that everything is possible for whoever believes (Mk 9:23), and are able to announce with joy the good news. Without this experience speaking of God and of prayer is vain.

5. This is a time of grace for you for in the general confusion of these times God is showing us the way with Mary's messages. With this incredibly lengthy presence by Mary on the earth, God opened the skies and is pouring down on us a sea of graces.

In Medjugorje one receives the desire to pray, and the grace of conversion. Men feel shaken by God's call, though beforehand they were convinced of being good Christians. The distant repent and return to God, those who have retained their faith shake off the tepidity and begin to walk on the way to holiness. In Medjugorje that which would have seemed otherwise impossible becomes easy.

So let us make the most of this fount of grace while it is still available, for our personal conversion; it is when we have God that we have everything.

Do not let such a grace pass by in vain; St. Augustine said: "I fear God Who passes by without returning." Fr. Angelo

## Message of 25 August 1998:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to be even closer to me through prayer. I am your mother, my Children; I love you and I want each of you saved and with me in Paradise. Hence, my Children: pray, pray, pray, till your life becomes prayer. Thank you for responding to my call.

## Pray till your life becomes prayer

The message speaks of light, paradise, and eternity, and once again it contains the call to pray, pray, pray. It is a message which should make us decide once and for all for a joyful, light-filled union with God. So let us ask ourselves: is prayer the most important part of my day? When we say prayer we mean prayer with the heart, for it is this which animates every other moment of prayer, such as morning and evening prayers, frequent invocations, and the daily offering of my work and chores, and of my crosses and worries.

It is for our own good that our Blessed Mother invites us to be closer to Her, which means to be closer to God. Not only should we direct our prayers to Mary, but we should pray with Her, that is, pray with our heart in Her Heart, so that Her prayer becomes ours, and our heart can receive the love, peace and joy of

God. A person who prays this way, rather than simply reciting, is a luminous person because that person is in communion with God. This is the prayer which makes us good, pure, generous, sensitive to others' needs, wise, prudent and just.

"I am your Mother," Mary repeats to us. Just as an earthly mother generates children, educates them and accompanies them during their life time, so does our Blessed Mother generate us as children, nourishing and instructing us with Her messages, all the while guiding and accompanying us along the way of holiness which leads to Paradise. Our destination is Paradise! Mary doesn't tire to remind us that our destination is Paradise! We live in a time of immense moral upheaval, of profound bewilderment; Christians included. Times are difficult also for Mother Church; this time is one of great seduction, fragility and apostasy. So let us thank God our Father for giving us the grace of the presence of Mary our Mother, that She may accompany us in our earthly pilgrimage so full of dangers and traps, some of which are caused by our own humanity, or by the world, or by evil. It is so easy to get lost; to stop persevering along the line of good.

Our Blessed Mother has been with us for 17 years, to bring the world back to God the Father. Part of a plan which began in Fatima with an appeal for conversion directed at a world which wants to go on without God ("I want to save all souls and present them to God"), this time of grace continues. It is a call to conversion for the fulfilment of Christian vocation which is one of holiness and a lifestyle in the example of Christ.

Our Blessed Mother takes care of each of us. There is no one who is not protected, helped, or looked upon with love, because from the Cross Jesus entrusted all of us to Her. Mary takes this mission of Universal Mother most seriously. Mary works so that everyone reaches the end of his/her earthly existence and the joy of Paradise, for it is here that She wants all Her children.

If Mary's presence among us continues for so long, then it is to tell us that this generation risks getting lost, and She wants to save it from falling into the Abyss. In this light, Her triple appeal for prayer is an impassioned appeal. Our Mother wants us to pray so our life becomes prayer, or in other words, continual communion with God. Hence, our praise, obedience and love will be real Christian witness.

## **Sanctify feastdays Not weekend but day of the Lord**

If you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father (Is 58:13-14).

The Pope, with his apostolic letter *Dies Domini* which was released on Pentecost day (31 May), invites us to rediscover the "extraordinarily rich meaning and importance of the Lord's day." The Letter wants to check the culture which has grown around the "weekend" and Sunday trading, that the primacy of God and of the individual may be given proper respect.

The Holy Father points out that, "it has become largely accepted that the weekend be intended as a time of rest, spent either at home or away, and often characterized by cultural, political or sport activities which generally fall on the feast days. Both a social and cultural phenomenon, it is not lacking in positive elements. Nonetheless, when Sunday loses its original meaning and is reduced to pure weekend, it can happen that man's horizon becomes so narrow that he is unable to see the sky." Christ's disciples should not confound the two things. The Holy Father, with the Letter, goes over the profound doctrinal

motivations which are at the base of sanctifying feastdays. He calls the feast day with five different titles, which he recalled in a simpler language during the Angelus prayers.

1. The day of the Lord. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day, and blessed it and hallowed it (Gen 2:2-3). The biblical sabbath is tied to this mystery of God's rest, which is not idleness, but joyful satisfaction with which the Creator contemplates the work of His hands. On the seventh day, "God turns to look at man and the world with admiration and love. The prophets do not hesitate to tell of this loving relationship in nuptial terms. Christians stop working on this day not only out of need for lawful rest, but above all to celebrate the work of God, Who is creator and redeemer. This celebration becomes a fount of reasons for joy and hope, and this gives new zest to one's every day life, and are the vital antidote to boredom, to lack of sense and to desperation which at times tempt Christians."

2. The day of Christ. After Redemption, Christians made the first day after Saturday their feast day, because it was that day that the Lord's Resurrection and Pentecost took place. From the seventh day, it became the first day. Dies Domini becomes Dies Christi. "Unlike civil calendars, the liturgy does not consider Sunday the last day of the week, but indeed the first. In this way its dignity is underlined and it is stressed that with Christ's Resurrection time "begins again," made fruitful by the seed of eternity, and marches on towards its ultimate goal which is the glorious coming of the Son of God, anticipated and prefigured by his victory over death. Sunday is thus the day of faith par excellence, a day in which believers, contemplating the face of the risen Christ, are called to repeat with Thomas: 'My Lord and my God!', and to relive in the Eucharist the Apostles' experience when the Lord entered the Upper Room and made them a gift of his Spirit."

3. The day of the Church. "Sunday is the day when the whole community is called together; this is why it is also called dies Ecclesiae, the day of the Church. The Eucharistic assembly is the heart of the Day of the Lord. Therefore, to observe Sunday properly, our first task is to take part in Holy Mass. This is a serious obligation, but, yet more important, it is a deep need which cannot but be felt by Christian souls. The sacrifice made once and for all on Golgotha is renewed in every Eucharist, and the Church, uniting her sacrifice to that of the Lord, announces his death and proclaims his Resurrection as she awaits his coming..." Since the Mass is not meant to be an individual experience, it is not good to encourage the celebration of Mass for small groups. When the faithful are called to participate at the one Mass they are enabled to gain deeper understanding of the meaning of communion and unity.

Christian communities are invited to celebrate Mass by preparing for it with special care and by giving it an air of festivity; special care should be given to song. Even when a priest is not present, it is a good thing to encourage the faithful to gather together, however, everything possible should be done to arrange for Eucharistic celebration as frequently as possible. Transmission via radio or television of the Eucharistic celebration does not absolve one from the obligation of personally attending Mass, except in cases where one is impeded by a serious reason such as health or child care..

4. The day of man. For Christians it is normal that Sunday be a day of feast and joy and thus of rest. The Church could never renounce those legislations which guarantee man's weekly rest. Also in our present time, man has the obligation of seeing that others are ensured freedom, rest and respect of the relative religious, family, cultural and interpersonal needs. Of course, the worker's right to rest implies his right to work. Sunday, furthermore, has to be a day of solidarity. For example, to keep company with a lonely person, or visit the sick, or provide for a needy family, or give up an hour or two of your time for a voluntary association, would certainly be a way of bringing to others Christ's love received in the Eucharist. To conclude, Sunday, "day of man's peace with God, with self and with one's similars" becomes the occasion to discover and enjoy the beauties of nature which are so often ruined by man's thirst to dominate.

5. Sunday, lord of days. It is the soul of the other days, and it is representative of a day which knows no evening. "With Christ's Resurrection, Sunday is the day which reveals the meaning of time. Christians answer the questions on future by pointing to Christ as the very meaning of history. In his divine and human mystery, He is at the origin of the world and the goal of Creation. In the light of this mystery, history assumes a positive meaning for Christians, despite the sometimes deadly trials and risks to which sin subjects it. Christ is stronger than sin and death! And Sunday, by making the memory of His Resurrection present at all times, is an opening of credit for the future, a comforting certainty, a prophetic reminder of the day when Christ will come in glory.

To help us live Christ's mystery in time, the liturgy is divided into the various phases of the liturgical year. In addition to the fundamental moments (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost) other feasts of great importance are also solemnized by the Church as days of precept, with the obligation to participate in the Eucharist in accordance with the model of Sunday, rightly considered the "primordial feast". By deeply experiencing the riches of Sunday and those of the whole liturgical year, Christians will become ever more aware of their identity. This will also help them prepare properly for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

To conclude, the Holy Father entrusted the fruits of the letter to Mary, Mother of the Lord and of the Church. "In the Sunday assembly the faithful learn to remain at the foot of the Cross with Mary to offer Jesus' sacrifice to the Father, while uniting to it also their own lives. They experience the joy of the Resurrection and the words of the Magnificat become their own in an endless hymn to the gift of divine Mercy in the endless flow of time."\*\*

**To those who are far from the Church or are non-believers** the Holy Father says: "Do not be afraid to seek God, because He is seeking you and loves you." (Borno-Brescia 19.7.98)

**"And I would like to tell young people**, who are the hope of the third millennium: invest your life wisely, for it is a talent to be made fruitful; remember that you only live once."

**To the Pro-Life Movement:** "No human authority, not even the State, can morally justify the killing of the innocent. This tragic transformation of a crime into a right is a sign of the disturbing decadence of a society." (22 May).

**20 Years as Pope!** On the 16th October next, our Pope will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his election to the papacy. His have been 20 years of extraordinary activity and fecundity! As children who have responded to Mary's call, let us be all the more united to the Vicar of Christ, Our Lady's Pope. Offer him your affection and fidelity by praying the Rosary and having a Holy Mass said for his intentions on that day, that he may be able to fulfil the mission God has entrusted him with.

### **Pope in Croatia to beatify Stepinac**

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has issued a decree in recognition of the martyrdom of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, who died (probably poisoned) in 1960 at the age of 62. He had spent 16 years in prison under Tito's regime and 9 years of confinement in his home town of Krasic. The Pope will be in Zagreb on 2 October and on the 3rd at the national shrine of Marija Bistrica to declare Cardinal Stepinac Blessed.

## **"It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail" (Jn 6:63)**

We continue with a catechesis on the Holy Spirit (which began in Echo 139 pg. 3 and continued in Echo 140 with notes by the Curé of Ars).

Spirit, Jesus' gift - The Spirit was present in Jesus' life, starting from the Incarnation and the time in Mary's womb, to His baptism and the temptation in the desert, to the time He preached with authority, and worked miracles with the finger of God, to when with the eternal Spirit he offered himself without blemish to God (Hb 9:14). And with His death and resurrection Jesus poured out the Spirit promised to all those who believe in Him.

St. Irenaeus said: "Men were not used to living with the Spirit, Who was entirely 'something else', beyond all human experience. Thus, it was necessary that He first try to live with us, as though in an urn of pure alabaster. This urn was Jesus' humanity and was entirely filled with His scent. At the moment of His death the urn was broken; also physically, the Lord's side was pierced. Hence, the Holy Spirit was poured out onto the world, and flooded His Church with His scent." This is the Divine breaking out into the human.

The Evangelist St. John wrote that Jesus on the Cross gave up his Spirit. These words do not simply mean that He died, but that He "gave His Spirit." The Risen Jesus came amongst His disciples again on the evening of Easter. He breathed on them, as if to evoke the creative breath of the beginning, and said: Receive the Holy Spirit.

Then came Pentecost, the solemn outpouring of the Holy Spirit onto the Church. When the day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast) had come, they were all together in one place (Acts 2). This is an important fact; it says they were all together. This does not only mean in a physical, geographical sense, for a few verses previously we read that they were in the Upper Room, with one accord, devoted to prayer. This is a constant factor. The Holy Spirit comes when believers are unanimous and perseverant in prayer.

Jesus said: "The Father gives the Spirit to whoever prays to Him, to whoever asks for it." Thus, while they were all united, they heard a sound come from heaven, like the rush of a mighty wind. The apostles knew that wind has the same name as spirit, for in Hebrew and in Greek 'wind' and 'spirit' are the same word. They saw tongues of fire, then the mystery: they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the invisible reality which changed the face of the earth.

Our Pentecost - Pentecost is not just an historical event which happened once and cannot effect us. Instead it is a family event; something which each and every Christian must go through. A Christian life void of Pentecost is similar to a Mass without Consecration. On the outside all may seem perfect: the same rite, the same prayers and invocations, but nothing happens. Pentecost is Jesus' Spirit in us, which renews our way of thinking, of choosing and of speaking. It is Jesus' Spirit Who guides our life; and we become similar to Jesus in the world.

What did it mean for the first disciples to be filled with the Holy Spirit? They do strange things which they would not have done before. They lose face before the others, and pass off as drunkards. What happened is that they went through an upheaving experience of God's love. Wherever He comes, the Holy Spirit always brings God's love. St. Paul says: God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). The same thing happens each time there is a Pentecost in the life of a Christian. The effect, at times sudden, at other times slower, is that the person discovers he is loved by God. In the discovery that he is loved, he cannot but love as God loves. This is revival in the Spirit. Not some-thing abstract, or ideological that happens in the brain, it is rather an experience of life. According to Luke, the immediate effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit at

Pentecost is the Church's mission. Shy people, who were closed behind doors, were suddenly animated by an explosive desire to evangelize, and they went out to announce the mighty works of God. In Jerusalem at the time there were people from all the various nations known to men, and this stands to say that the Church speaks to the entire world; not to one particular race of people, but to the ends of the earth. The Spirit is her strength and He will allow her to reach the ends of the earth. Prior to Jesus' Ascension He said: You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The orthodox patriarch of Antioch said:

Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away; Christ is but a memory of the past; authority is domination; mission is propaganda; Christian action slave-like.

With the Holy Spirit, God is present; Christ lives today; authority is free service, mission is a Pentecost; Christian action is the action of God's children.

A French writer adds: "There is no Christian community without the Holy Spirit, and without the Holy Spirit there is no Church. A Christian who does not have the Spirit is worth nothing. Perhaps the person is 'active' in the parish or community, but it is a noisy, painful and selfish action. Such a person is dominated by the spirit of the world, with ambitions, opportunistic modes and jealousy. A Christian community which is not a bearer of the Holy Spirit is worth nothing. It is but a structure like any other structure," a body without a soul. "Material, exterior activity has no sense unless it is the Spirit Who bears and animates it. It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail (Jn 6:63)."

Where there is the Holy Spirit, one serves and loves in the name of Jesus, and puts up with and accepts the Cross in silence; one confides in the divine power and not in one's own works; prayer and religious practices are encounters of love where the Spirit intercedes on our behalf. Under these conditions souls grow, nourished by the Word of God, with submissiveness and active love, with brotherly correction and imitation of one another and of the saints who preceded us. This is the Church which lives, in peace, the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22).

## News from the blessed land

### **You do not disobey by going to Medjugorje!**

Immense satisfaction was felt by pilgrims, groups and all those tied to Medjugorje, for the declaration by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Echo 140). There is no further need to fear that a pilgrimage to Medjugorje may be an act of disobedience to Church authority. The Press, which has always given abundant space to false negative interpretations, has made no mention of this positive document. It wasn't to be expected, we know; it's the type of treatment given to the things of God.

On the 17th anniversary immense crowds of pilgrims from around the world were in Medjugorje on the 25th June. It is thought that around 40,000 people were present. The most numerous were from Poland (2,000 with 50 priests). There were many Croatians, many of whom arrived barefoot. The Holy Masses were celebrated in 16 languages. Between the eve and the feastday, 40,000 holy communions were given out.

At 7 am on the eve, 7,000 pilgrims left Humac for the Peace March led by the Blessed Sacrament. They walked 13 km to arrive at the church of Medjugorje.

## **Our Lady to Ivanka: pray for families of the sick.**

When Our Lady appeared to Ivanka for the last time on the 7th May 1985, She promised She would appear to her every year on the anniversary. Also this year, on the 25th June, Ivanka received Mary's visit in the intimacy of her home. During the apparition, which lasted 6-7 minutes, Mary was radiant with joy, and spoke about all the secrets. (Not all prophecies of misfortune then, as many say.) As usual, Our Lady prayed with Ivanka, also for the intentions that she had offered up, and invited us all to pray for the families, in particular for families where there are sick people. Mary also invited us to open our hearts to Jesus and thank Him for the many graces He gives us. In the end, Mary also thanked us for the love we have for Her and for our prayers. After the apparition, Ivanka said that never before had she experienced such intense joy as this time.

Our Lady's recommendation to pray for families where there are sick people helps us understand the delicate situation which they live. Usually, one prays for the sick person to be healed, and not always do we pray for the sick person's salvation, or for the family during the period of trial which must show all the love and patience it is capable of. The Lord has His plans for the good of all, often making use of an illness to heal first the hearts of family members.

When there is a sick person in the home, it is God paying a visit to that family to call them to understand the mystery of the cross, to serve the sick person with love, as though he were Christ, and thus help him find relief in Christian hope and the perspective of eternal happiness in the encounter with God. This is the great task requested of the family. Hence, we should help these families with our prayer, visits and service. Another person's illness thus becomes an occasion for purification and reciprocal growth in faith and love.

**150 priests from 15 countries** took part in the international meeting "Priests at Mary's School" held from 30 June - 6 July and guided by Frs. Slavko, Cosimo and Jörg Müller. At the end of the meeting they joyfully expressed their gratitude to God: "for having rediscovered their vocation; for having understood the meaning of Mary's presence as mother, teacher and pilgrim; for having received new incentive for personal prayer, fasts, celebration of the Holy Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation; for having rediscovered the priestly power to combat evil."

They also declared fidelity to the Pope and submission to Church judgement on the facts regarding Medjugorje. They concluded: "we shall return to our parish communities with a profound desire to communicate our Medjugorje experience."

**The new hall** built where the big tents were situated was blessed on the 28th June by Fra Zoran Ostojic. It covers an area of 1,000 sq. m., and its sliding inner walls can divide the hall into 3 separate rooms. The hall is air conditioned and complete with an amplifying system.

**A first-aid station** was inaugurated on the 1st July 1998 and blessed by the Parish Priest of Medjugorje. It is situated on the left side of the road that goes from the church to Krizevac. It was providential during the heat of this last week.

**NOTICE** - The 6th Seminar of Prayer will be held in Neum (Hotel Sunce) from 28 February to 5 March 1999; the theme will be: "Pilgrimage: Journey of the Believer." The programme includes:

Sunday 28 Feb. celebration of the Eucharist at 7 pm.

1 March Prof. Adalbert Rebic will speak on "the document of the Holy See on pil-grimages in the year

2000"; in the afternoon a meeting with the monks of Medjugorje.

2 March Fr. Stanislav Kania will speak on "pilgrimages to the great Marian shrines"; in the afternoon a meeting with the visionaries.

3 March Fr. Slavko Barbaric will speak on the formation of Medjugorje pilgrimages.

4 March day of prayer.

5 March a day in Medjugorje. Each day there will be group work in the morning and a meeting with a speaker in the afternoon and Holy Mass in the evening.

Those intending to participate should advise by the end of November at fax no. 387-88-651444 or e-mail: medjugorje-mir@medjugorje.hr (specify "message for Information Centre") Simultaneous translations will be provided for all languages spoken by the participants.

Price 315 DM per person in a double room. For transfer from Split airport to hotel, advise name, flight no., time of arrival to Medj.-Mir Assoc. at fax no. 385-21-361354.

(From the Press Bulletin)

**Vicka**, for the second time this year will remain without apparitions for a period of 45 days beginning 24 July. She will see Our Lady again on 6 September. Vicka said: "If it is Our Lady who wants this then I am happy to abide.

The important thing is to do as She wishes, not as I wish." Vicka's birthday falls on the 3rd September, and usually on birthdays Our Lady stays with the visionaries a little longer and embraces them, and She manifests Her marvel before God for the gift of life. Vicka's sacrifice may thus be more burdensome this time.

**Do not fear to have children** - Mirjana often reminds pilgrims about Mary's desire for couples to have many children and not to fear the future. More than once Mirjana has said: "Those families who can have children but do not want them will be sorry for it later on.

It will be more difficult for them." The Mother of God is the Queen of Prophets, thus She sees far beyond the limited horizons of the mass media and beyond the obvious aims of atheistic legislations.

Asked if these words were hers or Our Lady's, Mirjana replied they were hers. But Our Lady has said: The more children you will have the better it will be. Mirjana added, "Our Lady knows why She says this, and I know too, but I can't say what it is. Couples come to Medjugorje to present their children to Mary, thanking Her for having convinced them to accept them.

So, many children who owe their lives to Mary's messages of hope, are now the joy of their parents."

**Sr. Elvira** will open a new house for female ex-drug addicts. The house will be situated 3 km from Medjugorje on the way to the river Neretva behind Podbrdo. For the well-keeping of their vocation of prayer and work, the male Community has had to decide to limit visitors.

Thus, it is no longer possible for pilgrims to visit the Community on Tuesdays or Fridays.

(Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

**Fr. Slavko** on Medjugorje at National Marian Symposium at Marija Bistrica Shrine, 5-6 June. Fr. Slavko was invited to offer a meditation on the theme:

"The meaning of Marian Shrines of Croatia for the spiritual renewal of Croatia." After speaking on the events regarding Medjugorje's beginning, Fr. Slavko said how Medjugorje together with many other shrines helps the man of today particularly with confession and other concrete aid, which Our Lady's messages inspire.

## A night on the hill of apparitions

Sunday 2 August Fr. Slavko invited the youth and other pilgrims for prayer at 10 pm on Podbrdo around the metallic cross which marks the place of Mary's first apparitions.

The joyful mysteries of the Rosary accompanied the endless flow of pilgrims as they climbed the hill. In the meantime other groups on top of Podbrdo were praying and singing. Eventually, the hill of grace was literally covered in people, sitting as best they could among the rocks. And as always, the feeling of peace seemed so tangible as to be able to touch it. The recitation of the glorious mysteries was led by Fr. Slavko, whilst Agostino led the singing; then the prayer, alternated by singing, continued with meditations by Fr. Gasparino. These were translated into the various languages.

Many asked about Mirjana since it was the 2nd of the month, wondering if she'd received a message. Fr. Slavko explained that Mirjana does not know when Our Lady will appear, however, in Her latest apparitions the time has been around 10 or 11 pm. Mirjana spends the day in prayer, beginning early in the morning. So that evening she was still at home waiting on the Mother's apparition. The Queen of Peace was close to everyone, though She left no message.

Mirjana says to pray for non-believers. It is clear that Our Lady's desire was to associate the youth, and not only them, to the need to pray for the non-believers, or all those who have not yet known God's love. This is the Virgin's greatest concern, for they are all Her children, and because all evil comes from those people who do not know God's love. So let us make haste to become missionaries for our less fortunate brothers and sisters and be united to Mary for this prayer between 10 and 11 pm on the 2nd of each month. It will be a way to show Her that we truly do love Her.

(Manlio)

## What a Youth Festival!

The 9th International Prayer Meeting for Youth was held in Medjugorje from 31 July to 6 August amid torrid heat. About 10,000 young people from around the world came for the event. According to Fr. Slavko about 6 to 7,000 were present for the daily programme, while as many as 15,000 attended the evening Mass outside. The number is given by the number of Holy Communions distributed (about 11 to 12,000 each evening). Between 200 and 240 priests concelebrated at the evening Masses, without counting those who celebrated in the morning in the various language Masses.

The presence of people from the East was impressive: 2,000 Czechs, more than a thousand Slovaks, a thousand Rumanians (most of whom were Orthodox with their popes). The 1,000 Croatians were reason for joy; also the 190 Lebanese, and the bus from Ukraine. From the West there was a massive presence: Italians, Germans, Irish and Americans, plus groups from Japan, Cina (!), France, Portugal, Canada, Holland, Slovenia, and more.

In preparation for the great Jubilee, the Church meditates on the Holy Spirit, in this the year dedicated to Him, so that ways may be opened for Him to act; and all the while our eyes are turned to Mary. For 17 years in Medjugorje She has been teaching us with motherly patience how to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit; He will instruct us on everything (Jn 16:7) and transform our hearts. The theme of the meeting was the same one used for this second year of preparation: Come, Creator Spirit!

A surprise this year was the presence of young priests who received their vocation in Medjugorje. There was a Bosnian from Herzegovina, an Austrian, a Croatian, a Slovenian and a Slovak. In turn, they

presided over the evening Mass.

The days normally began at 9 am with prayer, followed by a reflection by a priest. At 4 pm the speaker picked up his theme, and this was followed by the testimony of a visionary. In the evening, there was the Rosary and Mass in the open. After dinner the Festival continued with Adoration or some other manifestation.

Saturday 1 - Fr. Hans Buob firmly announced that nothing can begin or happen without first invoking the Holy Spirit. To show what he meant, he carried out an experiment on the youth. He asked them all to pray, that someone might offer up their vocation to God. The result was negative. So then they prayed to the Holy Spirit, that He may inspire young people to offer up their lives to Jesus. Result: a great number of young people felt the call. Fr. Hans then gave a reflection on the Holy Spirit as God-Love, and explained how the desire that He inspires in us is so great that it exceeds all our fears, even fear of death. In the afternoon Jakov Colo spoke about his experience, joyfully recalling the early days of the apparitions, when Our Lady instructed him on many things and taught him how to pray in a way that he never thought possible. Jakov invited everyone to pray in the family.

Sunday 2 - Fr. Andrea Gasparino, well known as a teacher of prayer at retreats for young people in the Cuneo region of north Italy, spoke to the youth on Podbrdo. His reflection is given on next page. Mirjana spoke about her encounter with Our Lady on the 2nd of each month.

Monday 3 - Fr. Cosimo Cavalluzzo spoke about the healing power of confession. His reflection will be published next issue.

In the afternoon, visionary Marija spoke about her personal experience, saying: "In the beginning we were completely taken by the events; we would have given our lives without a second thought." She then confessed that the journey of holiness is not easy for them either, but that it is necessary to decide for God every day.

The triumph of the Blessed Sacrament - In the evening, immediately after Mass, the Eucharistic procession took place. About 50 priests took part and at least 15,000 faithful, most of whom were young. The people in procession prayed and sang and carried lit candles as they walked for 2 hours along the 5 km from the church to Bijakovici and back. It was the most impressive moment of this entire meeting for young people. It was the Church with people from all parts of the world walking together with her Saviour, at night, to form a ring of prayer around the parish.

Tuesday 4 was dedicated to Sr. Elvira, Vicka and the youth from the "Cenacolo" Community. Sr. Elvira's meditation is on the next page.

The evening show - "This evening's recital," said Sr. Elvira, "will surely bear fruit because the boys prepared it under the cross. In fact, for three months they renounced their games of soccer and basketball so they could be better prepared for their testimony of this evening." In the recital the boys from the Community confronted the life of the world with Jesus' agony in His passion and crucifixion. The parallel was obvious each time the scene was one of hungry children, or someone shooting heroin in his arm, or the death of a soldier in one of the many conflicts. This was followed by pieces of a film on Jesus' passion with close-ups of His suffering face, of the scourging on the pillar, or of the crowning of thorns.

What cut deep into hearts was the scene of passers-by who remained totally indifferent to what was going on around them. This represented the lack of interest, the coldness, and the silence which the mass media practise in regards to world events, directed as they are by the evil one. Dressed in poor rags, or in suits, or as your next-door neighbour, the "boys" were interpreting their own lives prior to their

conversion. The audience was clearly moved.

When it seemed that everyone had succumbed to evil, a light, at first weak, broke its way onto the scene. It grew, and it blinded the evil one who before then was certain of his triumph. Then angels with trumpets announced: JESUS HAS RISEN! and in His resplendent clothes He advanced among the young people and raised them up. This scene provoked a great round of applauses by the public. The recital concluded with dancers bearing lit torches to represent the descent of the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire.

Wednesday 5 was Fr. Jozo Zovko's turn. Despite the intense heat (on some days the temperature reached 40°), the young people turned up also on this day, which means that they had opened their hearts to Our Lady's call. No doubt, Fr. Jozo's popularity helped them to forget about the heat and their tiredness. True to his charisma, he began his talk with immediacy and sincerity. He recalled the first days of the apparitions, of when he didn't believe and then of his experience with the visionaries and of his conversion. He continued, and spoke of the meaning of these apparitions for the world. We could have gone on to listen to him, just as he could have gone on to talk about Our Lady, "last Star of salvation." More on his talk next issue.

This was followed by the testimony of a one-time dancer who converted when she met Jesus through Mary here in Medjugorje. Though she had never really given herself to evil, her heart was closed to God's love, making her life burdensome and void. Only God, with His love, can fill man's heart, and fruit of this fullness is joy, forgiveness, harmony and peace.

At 10 pm the youth celebrated Our Lady's birthday with a concert in Her honour. The twenty or so songs accompanied by the orchestra were sung by different groups which represented the various nations.

Rain on Krizevac for conclusive Mass

Thursday 6, the Transfiguration. After the intense heat a sudden wind brought pouring rain which nearly jeopardised the programme. But despite the rain, at 3 o'clock that morning a long line of young people started making their way up Krizevac whilst reciting the Rosary. The top of the mountain was covered in people. At a certain point in time it stopped raining on the mountain, whilst it continued to pour down on the plain. Fr. Slavko was thus able to celebrate Mass, though he could not distribute Holy Communion because the hosts were all wet. The youth, however, received Jesus through spiritual communion. At the end Jesus, through the mouth of the celebrating priest, told them: Be my witnesses in the world.

After the Festival many youth decided to ask for Baptism. A great number of them confessed for the first time. Countless were those who returned to God. The most moving thing of all was the profound joy in people's hearts.

The day after Ivan went to pray on the hill. Through him Our Lady said to the many youth still in Medjugorje: My dear Children, I invite you to pray in particular for my intentions. Give me everything, that you may receive everything.

## **"Prayer opens door to Spirit" said Fr. Gasparino**

On Podbrdo: "Prayer is the door which the Holy Spirit passes through. The Spirit starts to act wherever there is prayer. Open the Gospel and the Acts," he told them. The father pointed out the prayer of the first community whilst waiting for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. For example: All together they lifted their voices to God in prayer, and the place in which they had gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 4:31). Cornelius too gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God, though he was a Gentile, and the Spirit descended upon him and his family (Acts 10:2, 44).

Jesus made a solemn promise: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Lk 11:13). Jesus did not say that the Father will give the Spirit to whoever is worthy, but to whoever asks. So, even a sinner and a person far from God can receive the Spirit. Put up your hand if you need the Spirit...

(Song: Veni, Sancte Spiritus)

Dear young people, you are all caught up in your problems which depend on your state of weakness. Now you can react by not thinking about it, or by running away from them, or by being afraid. But this is not the right way to face burning problems. You need the Holy Spirit. Before He spoke to us about the Holy Spirit, Jesus said: Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Lk 11:9). Therefore, ask for strength from the Holy Spirit; united to Mary ask for it, and you will see the power of the Spirit.

One day a desperate young man came to me and said: "I can't defeat the evil in me. My impure vice has become my drug." I said to him: "You haven't been using the right medicine; you need the Holy Spirit." Many times you young people are in danger, and you also fall. The most intelligent thing would be not to get into dangerous situations; but your will is weak. Who is it that can strengthen your will? No one else but the Holy Spirit. Jesus, too, when He was in Gethsemane was weak. So what did He do? And being in agony he prayed more earnestly. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven to strengthen him (Lk 22:44-45). (In the Acts, Luke calls the Spirit also "Angel" - see 8:26-29.)

My dear young people, when you need to make a decision you need the Holy Spirit. Listen to what the Pope says: "Wherever people pray in the world, there is the Holy Spirit." Have you prayed today? Then you are bathed in the Holy Spirit. Remember, though, that we humans are experts on false and verbal prayer, but every now and again our prayer is also real. So if your prayer has been such today, then you are bathed in the Holy Spirit... Always invoke the Spirit when your prayer becomes weak, because He is the guide of your prayer.

Now let us all together place ourselves before the Holy Spirit, Who is in our heart, and call out with faith: "Come Holy Spirit, that I may understand today what true prayer is, and that my prayer be real." Now let us all remain in silence; then we will ask for our Blessed Mother's intercession...

### **On ways of praying: "Prayer begins after praying!"**

1. To fight distracted prayer, you must stop and let yourself be guided by the Lord.
2. You must pray with the heart; verbal prayer is ruinous and useless. You must remain in silence until Jesus speaks. Some say the Our Father in an hour. You need to give time to prayer. When you pray say: 'Jesus I love you,' and say it out loud.
3. Prayer begins after praying. If the Spirit is present in your prayer, then He will make you understand what God wants. After this a new relationship with God begins; you become more conscientious of doing His will, so as not to offend Him.
4. Pray with a pen in your hand. It is easier to reflect when you write.
5. Read the Word of God, underscore It and meditate It. What would you say about a far-away sailor who writes to his wife every day, but she doesn't read his letters because she is too busy? God speaks to us, but we do not read what He says because we are too busy. We cannot pick up God's messages because we do not give Him time.

Make life-long decisions at 18 - From 15 years of age onwards is the time to ask Jesus what He wants of you. It is better to decide at 18 rather than at 20; better at 20 than at 22 or 25. Deciding at 30 is already late. If someone feels called to the consecrated life, he or she should keep away from tepid communities. Rather than enter a tepid seminary or community which do not transmit the life of God, it is better to remain in the world. Many young people with the vocation are dissuaded by priests, because these do not

help them since they are afraid to give directions out of fear of proposing something too burdensome.  
(From the afternoon talk)

## Sr. Elvira's Lesson

"The need to meet God" - Always vivacious, Sr. Elvira spoke on the problems which regard young people and their families, and on the Holy Spirit Who changes people's lives and Who knocks at hearts day and night. "I have great news for you. God exists and I have met Him! I met Him in loneliness, in the darkness of my sin, when I thought I had failed. I met Him in the drunkard, in the despairing mother, in injustice. We possess an immense treasure because we have God.

This community is God's making... Don't look at me, but at God... You too are God's dream. When God dreams He creates and each of us are this dream, created from His powerful love. God wanted you. He wanted you. ... Stop being pagans. God exists and He loves you."

Proof of love is sacrifice - "These days, young people are orphaned; they are alone, because they have not found the nuptial, fraternal love of God. Look up at Crucified Jesus every day: there is the love; He is the answer. It is only from the Cross that comes the exhaustive, and full answer to the why of our life. Before you choose a girl or boyfriend, or a community, or anything at all, choose the cross. True love is seen from the capacity to sacrifice oneself for another; this could include the sacrifice of not seeing one another for three months. Then, you know you will be faithful to that person.

Perhaps you will become a servant for the sake of the family, to then become its queen. You will wash the feet of the others, remain at the saucepans for them, while your husband is out. But you will be the queen. When you want to donate something to the others, for first, give yourself. Girls, women, take the proper place which God made for you: woman was created for man to seek her out, to be of help to him (cf. Gen 2:18); instead today, it is the woman who tries to seduce the man.

Though young people pray, they still doubt. True prayer helps you listen to God and desire His will. Without a live contact with God we do not find the courage to leave behind our fears, our complexes and our sins. So the god we say we pray to is not true; he is but a ghost. God exists and I met Him in the world; not in the third world, but in my world. You will meet Him in whichever mission God has entrusted you with, there in your home, with those you live with. It is a waste to look for Him elsewhere...

We will be happy here on the earth if we embrace (not put up with) our cross. This is what we propose to the drug addicts whose lives have been hell. They are asked to carry their crosses every day with love; it is the cross of living with others, of renouncement, and of many things which they like. It is only through the cross that life can be reborn. There is no happiness without cross. Don't kid yourselves! Even if you saw Our Lady, there would still be the cross.

The most important thing is the scandal of our conversion which surprises those who seek God, and angers those who do not want Him."

**Forgive us!** - At the end Sr. Elvira asked the young people to forgive their parents, their priests, their teachers and all those they met during the course of their life who weren't good examples for them, who didn't show them the way to find Jesus.

"Dear young people, you are tired of this world; this world of success and fame at all costs, of people selling off those great, false promises. In the name of your families, of the Church, of the religious, today I beg you to forgive us for not having been consistent. We are not capable of being the mirror you seek. None of us can satisfy your hearts, or fill the void in you. Not even your friends can quench your thirst for love. Only Jesus can do this. He is the only one. If we want to be happy, we must be ready to accept

the cross when it comes.

NOTICE: Due to lack of space, the talks by Frs. Cosimo and Jozo will be published next issue.

## Mary's Priests

### Fr. Giovanni Bozzo: the joy of dying to be with God

After much suffering, Fr. Bozzo silently surrendered up his soul to God on the 12th May 1998 at the age of 82. He died joyfully, knowing that he was returning home. In 1972 he received permission to leave the parish so he could retire in a little Marian shrine in La Spezia which overlooks the Ligurian Sea. After years of silence and prayer a family of spiritual children began to take shape, and 7 years ago a community of sisters was founded.

During one of the first pilgrimages to Medjugorje we couldn't help notice the devotion with which he celebrated Mass, and the way he spoke of Mary's power against Satan, which as an exorcist he experienced directly.

His soul was crystal clear and was always in peace, and joy was always present in his heart and on his lips. Despite the hard trials he had to undergo, his motto was always: "Keep silent, smile, and pray."

Fr. Bozzo knew he was dying, yet rather than fear death, he saw it as a wedding feast, and it was precisely a joyful feast that he wanted his funeral to be.

To his spiritual children he wrote: "My boat is nearly in port; God is there, and Our Holy Queen, Mary Immaculate... all Paradise is there waiting for me. How beautiful it is to be one with the Heart of the Most High, in the joy of eternity!"

Under the photo of his ordination (1942) he wrote: "Yes, a date to remember, but how much more beautiful will be the day of my death!"

His testamentary letter to the sisters is enough to help us comprehend his ardent desire for God: Here I am among you in a more real and live way than before. In a human sense my death has sorrowed you, but I must tell you that I had been desiring it immensely; as I did not feel at home in this world.

I assure you that I had no fear, but to the contrary, a profound joy, like that of a person in exile who cannot wait to return home. I am certain that God's Mercy will be sweet with me, because I had let It do everything with me during my life time. The only thing I cared for was to always say yes to His will. Do not cry for me; my happiness is too great... I embrace you all warmly and I console you from this place of ecstasy in the Holy Trinity.

In his spiritual testament he wrote: "I thank the Holy Trinity for the sorrow He so generously poured out to me, especially from 1935 onwards; woe to me if I had not suffered. I am equally grateful for the exquisite grace of the hermitage, which allowed me to pass from active to contemplative life, far from any form of dissipation. *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo.*"

His funeral was held on the 13th May, the anniversary of the apparitions in Fatima. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Sanguineti, and attended by numerous diocesan priests and seminarians. His body was returned to the earth as if in a crib which will restore it at the end of times.

### First priest for Kraljice Mira Community

Fra Ignac Domej, received the imposition of hands by Bishop of Gurk-Klagenfurt in the Cathedral of Gurk on the 27 June 1998. The young man was in charge of the House of Talhof in Austria which

belongs to the Marian community of Fr. Tomislav Vlastic.

At an evening Mass at the Youth Festival Fr. Slavko presented the new priest and explained that Ignac left behind him a splendid career. As an electronic engineer he was earning 10,000 marks a month.

When he came to Medjugorje he heard the Lord's call, left his job and began to prepare for the priesthood, while all the while taking part in prayer groups till he finally joined Fr. Tomislav's Marian community which is fruit of the apparitions.

The local people from Medjugorje were visibly satisfied, as Fr. Tomislav was the spiritual guide for the visionaries and pilgrims in the early years, and the town remembers him fondly. God bless the priesthood of Fr. Ignac and the Kraljice Mira community.

## **"Bless always!"**

### **How and when should lay people bless?**

After our article in Echo 140, page 3, some readers asked for further indications on Our Lady's recommendation to the first prayer group (that is, to always ask for a blessing and to bless). They asked: "how, when and with what formula can we bless?"

To answer briefly:

By virtue of the common priesthood received at Baptism, all Catholic lay people can bless people, places and activities within their own environment. To bless is to invoke God, that He may grant His grace and fulfil what pleases Him. For this, to bless is to confirm God's will and help to carry it out.

Lay people have many occasions in which to bless. At the end of the divine office, for instance, when there is no priest or deacon the prayer concludes with the following blessing: "The Lord bless us, keep us from all evil and lead us to eternal life. Amen."

But bless in which way?

- a) By tracing a sign of the cross on a person, such as a father or mother would do with their children;
- b) By sprinkling holy water in the sign of a cross and saying: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" as would be done, for example, by the head of the family over the dinner table, using some hyssop or rosemary, on Christmas Eve;
- c) By invoking God's blessing with one's own words and making a sign of the cross in any circumstance of need.

Lay people cannot bless in those circumstances and with those formulae reserved for priests and deacons from the rituals. There are, however, many occasions in which to bless, including any which regard enemies or far-away Christians. Above all, our life must become a blessing; that is, produce in those with whom we live the good which comes from God.

Fr. Angelo

More than 400 Marian prayer groups from around the world took part in the Novena of Pentecost to offer up Rosaries so that the Church might define a new dogma of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate.

At Pentecost 70 bishops and more than 100 group leaders from around the world met in Rome for a work and prayer study of this which will be the fifth Marian dogma. They will boldly carry forward the cause through study, preaching, prayer and sacrifice, in the certainty that this definition will bring onto the world a river of graces and the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart. "When will this dogma be

proclaimed?" many ask Dr. Miravalle, the fervent promoter of the cause which has millions of supporters. "When depends on how spiritually generous you and I will be," he responds.

## **Queen of Peace Shrine in central Africa?**

"With all of Africa ravaged by endless wars which decimate thousands of innocent people every day, isn't it time a Shrine was built, where not only people from Cameroon, but from all Africa can come to implore the grace of Peace upon this poor continent?"

Its name will be 'Shrine of Mary Queen of Peace.' " So says the bishop of Mbalmayo in Cameroon, Msgr. Adalbert Ndzana, whom we saw in Medjugorje in June 1997 (Echo 135, page 6). He had asked Fr. Gianni Sgreva, founder of the Oasis of Peace Community, to open a new house in his diocese. The house was opened last July.

A hill facing the city has been chosen for the Shrine; like Podbrdo it is stony, and also about the same height. It is hoped that the Shrine will be built before the year 2000, however, the Bishop has entrusted the plan to the Community which trusts in Providence (as in Quixadà in Brazil, Echo 140, page 4). The parish of Medjugorje has also shown an interest in the project.

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## **From Atheism to love of the Cross, thanks to Messages**

We often receive testimonies of the grace of conversion received at Medjugorje, such as the following. "My name is Alfonso Terramoto, I'm 35 years old. I was born into a Catholic family in Guadalajara, Mexico. When I was young I learnt from a teacher to consecrate myself to Jesus' Sacred Heart through Mary's Immaculate Heart.

I studied at a Jesuit college, and at a certain moment I felt impelled to ask to join the order. At the first interview I was advised against it, which hurt my pride. Perhaps out of rebellion, I joined the Communists (it was so popular among the youth in the 70's), and I became interested not only in social justice, but also in astrology and eastern religions.

In the meantime I graduated in medicine and went to Madrid. While in Europe I joined the movement for the renewal of Spanish socialism. I spent my time at parties and seeking out pleasure; I was totally egoistic and hungry for fame. Back in Guadalajara I became ever more interested in all those things which distanced me from God, such as astrology, mental control, transcendental meditation and reincarnation. Many years had passed since I last went to Mass or confessed or even prayed. But deep down I was aware of my spiritual void.

It happened that in a bookshop I picked up a couple of books which moved me deeply ("The Apparitions of Medjugorje" by Fr. Svetozar Kraljevic, and "Medjugorje, Our Lady's School" by Xaverian priest Fr. Tiberio Munari). More than by miraculous signs, I was moved by Our Lady's messages of prayer, fasting, and surrender to God and His Providence.

It wasn't easy, but step by step Mary accompanied me on the way to Jesus. This renewal which began with the encounter with the Virgin of Medjugorje and continued with the daily Rosary, fasting and the Eucharist, helped me to become a better doctor, more devoted to the needs of the sick. And God gave me the wonderful gift of a family. My spouse has always supported me, and our three year old boy is our joy.

Not least, God has granted me love for the Cross, for poverty, for a sobre and modest life-style."

**Seeds of unity** - As a sign of fraternal union, the "Church in Need" has arranged for a "boat-church" to visit various Orthodox parishes in the Volgograd area along the river. Its crew of priests and deacons, chosen one by one by the Bishop German, will celebrate various religious services.

Alberto Bonifacio tells of his latest voyage to bring aid to 2,384 families of Serb refugees who received help for the first time. The aid deliverers visited the city of Nevesinje, and some villages close to Mostar where about 150 families returned, to find their homes were totally destroyed. They have moved into a few cellars without water or electricity. They intend to rebuild.

Fr. Leonard has asked us to help 21,000 refugees from Kosovo who have moved across the border to Montenegro. This gives us an idea of how much need there is; so please keep on being generous. Contact your nearest Medjugorje or Caritas centre.

\* The main language editions of Echo of Mary are available in Medjugorje at the MIR-Shalom shop opposite St. James church and at the Ain Karim shop, in the arcade under the International Hotel.

From **Greece** - Sr. Despina from the Greek Echo sent us a copy of a leaflet on Mary composed by a young Orthodox man. She says: "I am continually edified by the fervent and silent witness of the Orthodox close to us; they live on Mary's love."

From **Canada** - Henry Kovacic, who thinks Echo is a fantastic publication, has asked if he can print 20,000 copies of Echo for distribution.

From **California** - Ron and Fran Venditti, distributors of Echo, write: "We are amazed at the letters which arrive from all over asking for Echo. We even have someone on death row from a prison in Colorado who wants to receive Echo. Praise be to God."

Many are the letters with similar expressions of gratitude. It is certainly not thanks to us; we feel weaker and have more difficulty. We ask our readers to pray for the sick members of the Echo family: Fr. Angelo, Otto Müller, Elisabeth Varga, Roger Watson, and others.

Our thanks to Mary for giving me the strength to compile this latest edition of Echo, and for our diligent translators and helpers all over the world.

May the Holy Rosary unite us all in a chain of prayer for the Pope, the pastors, the families, the non-believers and the victims of the culture of death.

Upon you all I invoke the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Villanova M.

27 August 1998

Now, nobody is important except God.