



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

150

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Mary's message of 25 January 2000:

Dear Children, I invite you my Children to unceasing prayer. If you pray you are close to God and He will lead you on the way of peace and salvation. So today I invite you to give peace to others. Only in God is true peace found. Open your hearts and become donors of peace; and the others will discover peace in you and through you; and that way you will witness the peace and love which God gives you. Thank you for responding to my call.

From Unceasing Prayer comes Gift of Peace

To continue with last month's message Mary again insists on the theme of peace: "only in God is true peace found." It is the central theme of all her messages, and Mary never tires of reminding us! We can't pretend to find elsewhere that which can be found only in God. And as always Mary indicates the way to attain this peace: unceasing prayer (1 Thess 5:2).

Prayer should not just be a moment in our day, but must be continuous, nonstop, part of all that we do during the day. It must pervade our every action, thought, movement, and behaviour; every instant of our daily lives, whether we are working or resting, awake or asleep. Prayer is living in the presence of God; it is being aware of His presence, adoring His presence in every place and every circumstance, in us and also in each person we encounter. If you pray you are close to God and He can guide you on the way of peace and salvation. Prayer is communion with God; hence prayer is necessary to be able to walk under His guidance on the way of peace and salvation. Our Lady then exhorts us to give peace to others, not just to "transmit" it. If we do not live in communion with God, if we do not discover that He alone is our peace, then we cannot give peace to others. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough, as it's not a question of our own peace and salvation, as Our Lady adds: others, in you and through you, will discover peace.

Called again, as we are, to be donors of peace, we should ask ourselves if we have perhaps misunderstood or underestimated her previous calls. Which peace are we invited to give? If true peace is found only in God, then we can open our hearts and become donors of peace only if God dwells there. Otherwise the most we could give is a weak sign of human solidarity or consolation or of fleeting hope, but we could never touch or reach the depths of a heart where man needs to be touched by God so that his wounds can be healed and so salvation can work in the depths of his soul.

We have to bear witness to God's peace and love, be the living proof of this peace and love, and prove - with our lives and not just with words - that the Resurrection is not utopia, but its first fruits are blossoming on the earth since Jesus' birth. All you need is eyes to see. When Jesus truly does live in us

there is no need for means of information to communicate His presence. It will be reaped in a mysterious way, without need of words. In us and through us, others will be able to discover that peace which only He can give (Jn 14:27).

Nuccio

Our Lady's message of 25 February 2000:

"Dear Children, wake up from the sleep of unbelief and sin, for this is a time of grace which God gives you. Use this time and seek from God the grace of healing of the heart so that you can look at God and men with the heart.

Pray especially for those who have not known God's love, and witness with your life, so that they too may know God and His immeasurable love. Thank you for responding to my call."

Wake up to Love

As usual, I would like to recall the previous message. I hope we have not forgotten that we were called to "unceasing prayer." To pray without ceasing does not mean to pray continuously the Rosary or be continuously at Mass or at Adoration, but it means to encounter God - first with the prayer of the Rosary, at Mass, at Adoration, in the confessional, by reading the Bible - and then after this encounter, nourished by God's grace, we can recognize God in the nature which surrounds us and, above all, in our fellow men. You see, in the end we will be judged by the way we have treated our fellow men. If we are unable to realize this encounter with our fellow men everyone will ask us: 'what does prayer mean to you if you are unable to encounter others with love?' Here then is what we should do: pray that we are able to encounter others, and in the encounter with others, that we are able to encounter God. Our Lady said: If you pray you are close to God and He will lead you on the way of peace and salvation.

In our prayer (the Rosary, Mass, etc.) Our Lady wants us to encounter God so we are close to Him. But to be 'close to God' we need to be freed of whatever impedes that closeness; in particular our pride and selfishness, and sin in general. This is a big task for all of us.

So to be able to experience peace in God we must come close to Him through prayer and discover Him in all we do and in every-one we meet. The first condition is still: "open your hearts!", and unless we do that, our efforts are useless. I hope that having tried to live the January message we are now more able to understand this message.

The first invitation is: "Wake up from the sleep of unbelief and sin." The imperative tone of "wake up" is found frequently in both the Old and New Testaments. To wake up is to believe, to throw off your sin. This is the great message of this month, but also for the time of Lent. As we think of the 40 days of prayer and fasts which Jesus spent in the desert, we too feel the need to renounce and to pray and fast more.

Only this way can God give us the grace of faith and free us "from the sleep of unbelief and sin." To begin to pray and fast more during Lent is already a spiritual alertness in the desire to advance.

Mary says that this time "is a time of grace which God gives you." This is not the first time that Our Lady has spoken of this "time of grace." We know that for God all times are times of grace; but on our part we

need to use discernment, because Lent and Easter, for example, are special times during which it is easier to open one's heart. How many people, for instance, don't go to Mass during the year, but go at Christmas and Easter. Through these apparitions, Our Lady wants us to see the need to become more aware that God is always merciful and always grants grace; but that it also depends on our response.

Mary calls us to "use this time to seek from God the grace of healing of the heart," a grace which only God can grant. I believe that we really need to take this time of grace more seriously. Apart from the time of Lent, we should ask for this healing of heart every day. Sin is the great wound, and the consequences (cont.pg 8) (from pg 1) of sin are all those wounds in the heart and soul, and these are the cause of the sicknesses of the body.

However, before we can ask for this healing of the heart we need to acknowledge our sins, and our wounds, starting from childhood to the present day.

Our Lady invites us to ask for the healing of the heart for a particular reason: "so that you can look at God and men with the heart!" In fact, when the heart is healed we are able to see God and hear Him through His word, and contemplate Him in the creation and in others. Sin, instead, makes us blind and this impedes us from seeing God and the others and even ourselves. Sin also makes us deaf, and we are unable to hear God or the others. Hence it is very important in this time to continually ask for this healing, for we all need to be healed in the heart so we can look at our life and at God with a new heart.

The last part of this message is the same intention for which Our Lady asks Mirjana to pray. (Since the 2nd October 1987 Mirjana prays with Our Lady on the 2nd of every month. In the beginning this prayer meeting with Our Lady was with "inner locutions," but now Mirjana says that she sees Our Lady.) I think that to know God's love is the most important thing of all, for when we know God and His love it is not difficult for us to begin to pray, to love, and to convert; spurred on by God's love our lives surely change. However, Our Lady is not asking us just to pray for those who haven't known God's love; she also wants us to be an example for them.

How many times has Our Lady said: "God exists," and "give God first place in your lives"! That isn't just for us, but also for those whom we encounter and with whom we live and work. If our life changes, then it is certain that the others will come to know God and His immense love. What a great and wonderful task we have been given: throw off our unbelief and sin, and ask for our hearts to be healed, and pray for those who do not know God's love. If we live this message, the way Our Lady has asked us, then it is certain that this year will be a great Jubilee for us all.

Nuccio

Pope's Resignation? Here is his reply!

Adding to the many rumours which are spread from time to time about the Pope or the Church, was the rash interview of Bishop Lehman, president of the German Episcopal Conference, on the possibility of the Pope resigning in case of grave inability. The media and others (of the Church and non) were put into a real fuss, anxious as they must be to see this old Pope go. The bishop later clarified his declaration, acknowledging that the Pope is completely efficient in his ministry despite his evident physical tiredness and the disease that makes his hand shake.

The bishop added that he admired the Pope for the way he followed the month-long conference of the German bishops, saying he never missed a word and promptly replied to all questions.

It is known that the Pope never misses his many appointments which would crush any other man in all his strength. In the past, it never happened that a Pope resigned for reasons of health. Only Celestine V renounced his pontificate because he said he was unable to fulfil his duties.

However, we are concerned with the Holy Father's teachings, which he gives us also on this occasion. He said: What right have I to decide for the future of the Church? It is the Lord who decides when to terminate my pontificate. On the 10th January, four days after the interview, he received the Diplomatic Corps and to them said: When God entrusts us with a task, he never asks for anything greater than what we can bear; and with the load he also gives us the strength needed to carry it. Then after having listed the serious evils which torment the world he added: I feel invested by a universal paternity.

Can the Pope renounce his fatherhood? The Church is not a company with a manager who needs to be constantly in top shape. It is a family, for which Jesus gave us a father to bear its weight and be responsible for. "Feed my lambs and nourish my sheep" without an expiry date. Hence his reply to Ernesto Olivero in the audience for members of the Young Missionary Service who said to the Holy Father: "Thank you for your old age." The Pope retorted: "But I am not old!" Who cannot see that his paternity, which he untiringly exerts with firmness and illumined watchfulness, is an example of that zeal which should animate all pastors to the point of "spilling blood"?

"It is precisely the physical weakness of the Pope that has sharpened the power and strength of his spiritual and ethical message," says theologian Forte, "and which has made John Paul II the only free voice whose authority is recognized worldwide, to the detriment of other voices which only seek approval."

Believers are able to see a superior power which disposes of the Pope's mission according to his will, and which mocks all human calculations. This superior power is visible. Take the succession of exhausting programmes and appearances, yet the Pope is always attentive and caring of everyone and everything; and the times when his strength fails him, from which he quickly recovers with renewed vigour.

Who can judge his state of health, or rather, the supernatural strength which sustains him? "It is the Lord who gives death and life, brings down to Sheol and draws up..." (1 Sam 2:6). Dante would say: it is a waste of time to go against the plans of God.

Where does Peter's primacy come from? The Pope himself, it seems, gave us the answer even before the controversy regarding his resignation arose. It was the 21st December and he was speaking to the Roman clergy: "Peter's primacy is founded on the words of Jesus. We read from the Gospel: You are Peter (Mt 16:18). I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers (Lk 22:32)." Thus, Peter's primacy does not come from his capacity, but from the power of Christ who prays for him. It is thanks to Christ's power that Peter can support his brethren, despite his personal weakness. "All that the Lord wills he does in heaven and on earth" (Ps 134). None of us should ever forget this truth on the petrine ministry.

Fr. Angelo

Do you wish to open the door of your life?

The forerunner of the Jubilee is witness to the light since he is a friend of the Lamb. God did not want to come into the world without a Mother on one part or a Forerunner on the other part. John the Baptist, thus, has a decisive role - at times ignored by many - in this time of passing from one era to another. He

was and is the Preparer of each Visitation by God.

It can also be said that the forerunner of the Year 2000 is another John: John Paul II. His twenty years of pontificate, his entire ministry, all his actions, have had no other orientation than that of bringing the Church into the third millennium. For him the thirty-five years of the Church since the opening of the Second Vatican Council have been a continuous preparation. It has been thirty-five years of Advent, where all desires, all humanity's cries have been oriented towards these events.

As in the time of John, still today the "pharisees" ask their questions: what right have you to tell us these things? In whose name do you speak? What is he meddling in? However, the poor and humble greet him as the greatest prophet of our time. More than a prophet, he is a witness and a donor of the Saviour. And more than a witness, he is a friend of the Groom.

The humble see in his voice the voice of God; and they let that voice touch their hearts to be illumined, converted and gladdened by it. Those who listen to John Paul II today are the same as those who accepted the teachings of John and Jesus; and who tomorrow are able to accept the new Visitation of God in our time.

The message of the forerunner has been untiringly realized by this Pope. Do they not echo the Baptist those exhortations to the various categories of people (children, youth, families, the various professionals, heads of state), and his continuous petitions for the third world debt to be cancelled? Both cry out: "Jesus is coming! The Kingdom is here! Return to the Father! Accept God's forgiveness!" that we may all generously and joyfully share what we have, and that each of us may be sincere with God.

John invites to be purified in water; John Paul II invites to be immersed in the living water of mercy which gushes forth from the open side of Jesus. John announced the baptism of fire, while for the third millennium John Paul II announces a new spring, or a new Pentecost, under the breath of the Spirit. For the great Eucharist of the Jubilee, as for each Mass, the acknowledgement of guilt (*Mea culpa*) precedes the Gloria, and the Lord I am not worthy prepares the Communion. So that the Jubilee be harmonious and the exultation be overflowing, the acts of humility have been multiplied on all levels.

At the European Synod in Rome in October 1999, Cardinal Christophe Schönborn, in the name of the Bishops from the West, asked forgiveness of those from the Centre and the East for their public silence during the long years of Communist persecution. At the same Synod the delegate of the Orthodox Patriarch from Bucharest asked forgiveness of the Greek-Catholic Bishops; and on the 13th December the Bishops of Spain asked for the Lord's forgiveness for the crimes of abortion and euthanasia and for the sexual revolution which has profoundly wounded the fundamental human ecology.

During this great jubilee year we will see many other reciprocal confessions, so that the peace of hearts, of the family, of the people and of the Church may become ground well prepared for the gifts which God has for us. May the thousands of confessions rejuvenate God's people so that once its paralysis has been healed, it may dance in the Father's house during the new century.

Yes, "the Church expresses her true desire to take all believers into her embrace to give them the joy of reconciliation." Then truly: "the whole Church will lift up to the Father a hymn of praise and thanks. In His incomparable love He allows us to be members of God's family in Christ." Then, the Bride of Christ may "shine in all her beauty."

Fr. Daniel Ange

"Ecumenism: problem of conversion"

Ecumenism must be seen in the wider vision of conversion. That is why the Pope has included it as a commitment of the great Jubilee. This Pope stresses the importance of conversion, and invites us in this sense to feel our inner sufferings in all their gravity. The division of Christians is a scandal which all of us need to become aware of and feel responsible for. Saying it is up to others to mend the wounds (Church hierarchy, theologians, etc.) cannot be justified.

Ecumenism also means to sacrifice one's own way of looking at history and others. In other words, we need to begin to see that also those who are not in full communion are loved by God, and blessed by God.

Theologian Sartori

NEWS OF THE JUBILEE

Jubilee, year of grace - The Father wants return of all

"This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous may enter. I will adore him in his holy temple. Open the gates of righteousness to me, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord" (Ps 118). With the words of the psalm the Pope crossed the Holy Door on Christmas night and thus officially opened the Jubilee year. The doors of righteousness were opened onto the whole world, and each man of good will may enter through them to thank and adore the Lord who in His great mercy has desired a year of grace for man that he may be reconciled with God.

At the Angelus on 1st January, solemnity of the Mother of God, the Pope expressed his filial love for the Virgin by entrusting her with the new year. The first day of the year is placed under the special protection of Mary. Let us begin the Year 2000 under the loving gaze of the Mother of God, who gives Christ, the Prince of Peace, to the world. May she spread the mantle of her motherhood over all of us, protect us from evil and free us from hatred and violence. May every person discover in others, beyond every border, the face of brothers, sisters, friends: members of the same family.

Kids world wide come for Children's Jubilee

The first special Jubilee celebration was held in Rome on 2nd January and was the Children's Jubilee. An immense crowd of children filled St. Peter's Square and adjacent streets in a sea of enthusiasm, joy and life.

"Dear boys and girls! I am very happy to be with you. Thank you for the enthusiasm with which you fill this square with festivity!

Your presence is a reminder that the Jubilee is a time of joy. God is a good Father, always ready to forgive and to offer his children opportunities to start to live and hope once more.

(..)We cannot forget all those of your own age who suffer hunger or violence. How could we forget the many children who are denied even the right to be born? When people want to build a world ignoring God and his law, they are in fact giving rise to a situation of more and more suffering and injustice. With

the Jubilee the Lord invites us to correct these wrongs by cooperating in the great plan he has for every person and for the whole human race. Jesus also needs you for this task. He is entrusting his plans to you and he is asking you: Do you wish to be my friend? Do you wish to help me to make the world more beautiful and welcoming? Do you wish to be witnesses to my love in the Church and in the world? Say 'yes' to him with enthusiasm, and bear the joy of the Gospel into the new millennium."

During the Angelus of the Epiphany the Pope sent a message to the eastern patriarchs who were in Bethlehem to celebrate the 2000 years of Christ's birth.

"To the Orthodox Churches and the Eastern Catholic Churches which celebrate Christ's birth tomorrow, I wish a happy Christmas, and I offer my wishes for prosperity and joy. I do so while participating in spirit in the song of their Liturgies and sharing in the many gifts the Lord has lavished on their traditions, which enrich Christ's Church."

Heart of Jesus calls His brethren to unity

"Unity! Unity!" With this exhortation the Pope opened the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which this year was made to coincide with the opening of the Holy Door in the Basilica of St.

Paul-Outside-the-Walls (18 January 2000).

For the first time in Church history the Pope opened the Holy Door together with representatives of other Christian churches. He was joined by Metropolitan Athanasios of Heliopolis and Thera, who represented the Ecumenical Patriarch, and by Dr. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of the Anglican Church. Together they kneeled in prayer before the Door, symbol of Christ, to acknowledge that He is the only Door of salvation for mankind. Representatives of 22 Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities also attended. This ecumenical event is no doubt the greatest one of all Church history.

During the service the Pope said:

'As you, Father, are in me, and I in you, I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me' (Jn 17:21-23). The unity desired by Jesus for his disciples inflames the entire Church - gathered here in prayer with her various representatives - to implore the Father for the help and courage required to remain on the path of unity, which is not always easy, and for forgiveness for all that in Church history has compromised God's plan of unity.

Said the Holy Father, with sentiments of profound humility:

"I wanted the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to coincide with the opening of the Holy Door in this basilica dedicated to the Apostle of the Gentiles, to stress the ecumenical dimension that should mark the Jubilee Year 2000.

Dear brothers and sisters, welcome to you all! Welcome to this gathering which marks another step towards the unity of the Spirit in whom 'we have been baptized'. The Baptism we have received is one. It brings about a sacramental bond of unity among all who have been reborn through it.

The humble symbol of a door which opens bears in itself an extraordinary wealth of meaning: it proclaims to all that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6). He is such for every human being. The more united we are, (we are seen as Christ's disciples who love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn 13:35, 15: 12), the more effective this proclamation will be.

The Second Vatican Council has fittingly recalled that division openly contradicts Christ's will, scandalizes the world and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

The unity desired by Jesus for his disciples is a sharing in the unity he has with the Father. Consequently the Church cannot fail to look constantly at that supreme model and principle of unity which is resplendent in the Trinitarian mystery.

The apostle Paul wrote: 'by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.' Can a body be divided? Can the Church, the Body of Christ, be divided?

In contrast to this mystery of unity, which is a gift from above, the divisions bear a historical character that attests to the human weaknesses of Christians.

In this year of grace, each of us must have a greater awareness of his own personal responsibility regarding the breaches that have marked the history of Christ's Mystical Body. This awareness is indispensable if we are to advance towards that goal which the Council described as the restoration of our unity. But unity cannot be restored without inner conversion, because the desire for unity is born and grows from the renewal of mind, the love of truth, self-denial and the free outpouring of love. Thus: conversion of heart and holiness of life, with personal and community prayer for unity, are the nucleus from which the ecumenical movement draws its strength and substance. The longing for unity goes hand in hand with a profound ability to 'sacrifice' what is personal, in order to dispose the soul to ever greater fidelity to the Gospel. Preparing ourselves for the sacrifice of unity means changing our viewpoint, broadening our horizons, knowing how to recognize the action of the Holy Spirit who is at work in our brethren."

To conclude the Holy Father prayed: "In this basilica built in honour of Paul, let us ask Christ to forgive all in the Church's history which has compromised his plan of unity. Let us confidently ask Jesus to support our steps, make the progress already achieved long-lasting, grant us the support of his Spirit, so that our commitment will be ever more authentic and effective.

From this basilica I look ahead to the new millennium. My fervent wish is that in the not too distant future, Christians will at last be reconciled and able to walk together again as one people who can repeat with one voice the joy of a renewed brotherhood."

Feast of Consecrated Life, great sign of light and hope

"Every year a vast throng of consecrated persons assembles at the Tomb of Peter for today's liturgical feast. Today, this throng has become a multitude, because consecrated persons have come here from every part of the world. Dear brothers and sisters, today you are celebrating your Jubilee. I welcome you with the Gospel embrace of peace! In you I see all your brothers and sisters throughout the world: my affectionate greeting also goes to them."

The Celebration began with the Liturgy of the Light. The Pope, in firm yet paternal tones, said: "... Having been a pilgrim in so many parts of the world, I have been able to appreciate the prophetic value of your presence for all Christian people. Men and women of this generation have a great need to meet the Lord and his liberating message of salvation. On this occasion I am also pleased to note the example of generous Gospel dedication offered by your countless brothers and sisters who devote themselves unreservedly to serving the poor, the outcast and the lowly."

The vows of poverty, obedience and chastity for the kingdom of God are a message about man's ultimate destiny, the Pope told them. "To have your heart, affections, interests and feelings centred on Jesus is the most important aspect of the gift that the Spirit works within you. He conforms you to the chaste, poor and obedient Jesus.

The first vocation of those who endeavour to follow Jesus with an undivided heart is "to be with him" (Mk 3:14), to be in communion with him, listening to his words in constant praise of God. I am thinking at this moment of prayer which rises from so many monasteries and communities of consecrated life in

every corner of the earth."

At the end of his homily John Paul II spoke words of encouragement: "Invited to leave everything to follow Christ, you no longer define your life by family, by profession or by earthly interests, and you choose the Lord as your only identifying mark... The invitation to renunciation is not meant to leave you 'without a family' but to make you the first and distinctive members of the 'new family,' a witness and prophetic example for all whom God wishes to call and bring into his house."

He concluded by consecrating all those present to the Blessed Virgin, that they let Mary be their example and support, and let the Holy Spirit always guide them.

Jubilee of the Sick "Pain is source of hope and salvation"

When the Pope decided to celebrate the Jubilee of the sick in St. Peter's Square, the organizers objected, saying it would be too cold in February; but the Pope replied: "Don't you think the Father will take care of that?" And, in fact, the fine weather drew a crowd of 15,000 people in the morning and 30,000 in the afternoon. "Dear suffering brothers and sisters, we are indebted to you. The Church is indebted to you, as is the Pope! Pray for us." A sick man amongst the sick, a man used to living with physical pain: thus is our Pope, but never has he succumbed to it or been crushed by it. Thanks to his condition of infirmity the Holy Father is able to comprehend the feelings, thoughts, worries and fears of the sick, thousands of whom crowded St. Peter's Square on 11th February 2000, day dedicated to the Jubilee of the Sick and Healthcare Workers.

From the Cross of Christ "all suffering has a possibility of meaning, which makes it remarkably valuable. It is, of course, right to fight illness, because health is a gift from God, but it is also important to be able to discern God's plan when suffering knocks at our door. Those who are able to accept it in their lives experience how pain illumined by faith becomes a source of hope and salvation." Thus, John Paul II urged the faithful to look beyond and see in suffering the saving message of Christ who was crucified, and died but then rose to live in the Father's glory.

It was in 1993 that the Pope dedicated this day, feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, to all who bear the cross of sickness, in the knowledge that the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes has always shown special concern for her suffering children. And, of course, the Blessed Virgin, health of the sick, was in the hearts of all, especially those who go on pilgrimage to the Grotto to seek healing, solace, and relief from their sufferings. In the afternoon a torchlight procession, similar to what is held in the French shrine, was held in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The Church dedicated this jubilee day not only to the sick, but also to the volunteers and healthcare workers who generously help their less fortunate brothers and sisters. To them John Paul II said: "May Christ be the Door for you too, dear friends who accompany the sick and take care of them. Like the Good Samaritan, every believer must offer love to those who live in suffering. It is not right to 'pass by' those who are tried by sickness. Instead, it is necessary to stop, to bend down to their illness and to share it generously, thus alleviating their burdens and difficulties."

It is what the Pope does with us, to bring us relief for the spiritual illnesses which make us stagger and totter on the path to God's kingdom. An attentive and caring Pastor, he never spares himself, nor does he tire of sacrificing his body for the sake of Christ's Body, the Church, which in many ways is so much in need of treatment and healing.

Editorial Staff

"Return to primitive fervour"

Mary teaches: Christian forgiveness is compulsory gateway to peace

(continued from last issue)

So that our inner purification proceeds along in a serious and concrete manner, Our Lady reminds us from time to time (amongst other things) of the fundamental importance of the sacrament of forgiveness through frequent confession. (See messages of: 6 August 1982, December 1983, 25 March 1985, 7 November 1983, 25 February 1987, 25 January 1995, etc.)

Nonetheless, the procedure of profound purification proposed by Our Lady requires unconditional readiness on our part not only to accept the love and forgiveness which God grants, but also to become a real and active instrument of the Father's mercy for the others.

Now this demands a basic conversion which leads from a simple level of receiving and offering forgiveness, to a free and mature decision to offer your life to God for the salvation of the world. This is a fundamental step in the teachings which the Queen of Peace offers us at Medjugorje. "Dear Children ... you know I love you and that out of love I come here to show you the path of peace and of salvation for your souls... Witness with your lives and sacrifice your lives for the world's salvation. I am with you and I thank you..." (25 Feb. 1988).

Only through the unconditional offering of one's life is it possible to fully accept the forgiveness which the Father offers us. In fact, God's love is only one, and it is truly possessed only by those who offer it to the others. This is the only way that one is able to live the gospel precept: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36), and this other one just as demanding: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn 15:12-13).

It is here that we find the nucleus and the essence of the spiritual call by Mary at Fatima and at Medjugorje, and this is the characteristic spiritual note which we find in the great witnesses of this century (St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Faustina Kowalska, Madre Speranza, St. Maximilian Kolbe, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, etc.).

We see it as a sign of great hope that the Jubilee of the third millennium ("the year of grace of the Lord") was mysteriously prepared through the special presence of Mary amongst men and through an extraordinary outpouring of the Father's merciful Love upon the world. The prospects of the final victory of God's love and forgiveness shines ever more radiantly, and the light of the sacrificial Lamb paves the regal way for those who are ready to accept unconditionally the call of Mary for the final triumph of Her Immaculate Heart over the powers of darkness which are present in hearts and in the history of man.

G. Ferraro

Forgiveness is God's gift, not human conquest!

The following testimony by Italian businessman and kidnap victim, Giuseppe Soffiantini, is a story of forgiveness. He wrote it for the magazine "Luoghi dell'infinito."

"I have never told anyone, but I am convinced that had my kidnappers and jailors received more comprehension by their fellow men, then perhaps they would not have been such hardened criminals

today. Naive, you say? Not at all. Naivety is one thing; forgiveness is another. And there's a big difference. I should know because I spent 8 months in the hands of anonymous kidnappers. That was 237 days, and every minute of them I had to defend my life and my dignity. Truly, my life was hanging by a thread. I survived; I was freed, but I don't consider myself a hero for having resisted, or for having forgiven.

Rather, I would say that I am alive by miracle. I'm your everyday man who found the strength to resist and to forgive in God. To be kidnapped is a terrible experience, where you risk being ruined, physically and morally, even if you are freed and return to your family, friends and job.

There is only one way that you can be truly free; and that is to forgive the persons who caused you so much hurt. Otherwise, you remain chained up by hatred, ill feelings, desire for revenge, etc., thus becoming your own jailor. For those who believe that life is a good, and that the scope of life is love (of God, of those around you, of nature) forgiving is a necessity. After my liberation, when I said in public that I had forgiven my jailors and kidnappers, I was accused of naivety, of being foolish. But I'm neither naive, nor foolish. I am a normal person who has decided to forgive.

The people who kidnapped me must be punished for the wrong they did, but my wish for them is that while they do time they are able to rediscover the dignity they lost. That is why I am against the death penalty. We who hope against all hope cannot deny that hope to others. I am convinced that forgiveness not only does good to me, but also to my jailors. In the beginning you don't see its effect, but when I think back I am sure that in certain crucial moments I wasn't killed because of the way I treated them. The strength to resist and to forgive doesn't come from nothing. I prayed a lot during those 237 days on death row, and the closeness to God helped me a great deal. God is real and so is forgiveness; they're not empty words!

I went to the Shrine of Loreto with other kidnap victims where we offered up to the Blessed Virgin a broken chain.

Only love can work prodigies, and it is love which makes our lives an unceasing Jubilee day after day."

G. Soffiantini

News from the blessed land

Apparition to Mirjana

On the 2nd January a great crowd gathered to witness the apparition to Mirjana. After the apparition Mirjana was joyful and referred some of Our Lady's words: "Dear Children, today as never before my heart is asking for your help. I, your mother, am begging my children to help me fulfil that for which the Father sent me here. He sent me amid you because His love is great. In this great and holy time in which you have entered, pray especially for those who have not yet felt God's love. Pray and wait."

Vicka responds

In the following interview Vicka responds to Fr. Livio during a programme on Radio Maria at the start of the year. Through the replies readers will be able to see in her an authentic witness of this time of grace, not to mention her profound spirituality and her continuous and intimate union with the Lord and Our Lady.

Love makes you beautiful

Q. After many years of apparitions, can you tell me if you have matured in the faith through Our Lady's teachings, or is it enough to be in her presence?

A. It is enough to be with her to mature. I did not expect to receive so much from Our Lady, however, it is true that I have done my part. I have never asked anything for myself, and I don't intend to... Even before Our Lady began to appear I was very happy with the gift of life; but now it is up to me to transmit this light which is in the heart, and slowly draw the many people out from the darkness, especially the young people who are tired of living, and are weighed down by fleeting things, and ignore the beauty of spiritual things...

When you look at Our Lady the beauty of her face is so wonderful that words can't describe it. She herself has said that she is beautiful because she loves. This is the way we must be beautiful - above all, beautiful inside - so that our faces can radiate this beauty too... Unfortunately, we hide our faces behind many types of masks; we hide everything inside.. We have to begin to love to be beautiful. With all our hearts we should begin by loving those in our homes, our family and then the others around us. True beauty is spiritual beauty."

Some say that it is easy for Vicka to encounter the Lord because she sees Our Lady every day. Vicka replies: "It is not so important to see Our Lady, as it is to feel her presence inside you. It is particularly important to practise what she tells us with her messages."

Irrepressible peace and joy

"God has given me the great gift of peace, and I don't have words to express my gratitude. It is a grace which corresponds to Our Lady's mission as Queen of Peace. Peace grew in me, and grows with each day, because I wanted it and I continue to want it, and for this I pray every day...

My smile and my joy? There is nothing I want to do more than fulfil Our Lady's wishes. I am her servant; I gave my life to her and so I am ready to face whatever she asks of me. This is where my joy lies.

I wish others could feel the way I do and be granted the grace to transmit the love which Our Lady has for each of us... I know that it is a desire of the Blessed Virgin to transmit her presence to the others, i.e. to show us that she is amongst us..

Knowing that every day I have to meet pilgrims who come from all parts of the world - and who suffer for various reasons, or are distant from God - I am not able to be sad.

Each morning as I wake I pray thus: "Here I am Lord; here I am Holy Virgin, do with me as you wish."

We cannot have peace, or tranquillity if we let ourselves be upset by problems. Unfortunately, many today live stress filled lives and are upset by insignificant things. People who do not have peace have to find the time to stop a little and think about their soul; to speak personally with God; to tell the Lord what it is that makes them upset; ask Him to free them of those burdens. Once you've found true peace, it is not easily lost.

It makes me very happy when, at times, someone who doesn't know anything about God comes to me, because then I can transmit to that person the love of God, who is Father and so close to each of us. Then that person can slowly begin to seek His presence in and around him. Sadly, there are many who rather

than blind, are closed in their hearts to God."

Suffering is gift from God

Vicka has been sick a number of times; including recently, with physical disturbances which doctors aren't always able to diagnose with precision.

Q. Vicka, you have been sick many times. Have you ever asked to be healed?

A. No! Never. I ask for healing for the others, but not for myself. Our Lady knows.

For me, suffering and sickness are gifts, and I am happy for them. I thank God with all my heart for these gifts. I want to tell all the sick people that when Our Lady appears, I pray especially for them, then for the others.

I would like to urge the sick people to pray thus: 'Oh God I beseech you, through my suffering may I still have something good to offer you. All I ask for now is the strength and courage to bear my cross with all my love and with joy.'

Personally, I am happy that I have been able to suffer and offer in the knowledge that when you offer your pain to Our Lady you are helping her.

Our Lady says that today there are very few people who readily accept their sufferings as a gift. With all my heart I say that suffering is a great gift. I say it because I have experienced it. Suffering is a gift because through it God's plans are realized for the benefit of those who are close to us and those who are far from us.

The offering of your sufferings and sicknesses to God is the best offering one could ever make.

A new year in Medjugorje

On 1st January, feast of the Mother of God, Marija received her apparition at the Oasis of Peace community. Our Lady, she said, was radiant, and looked at and blessed each person present, and for this reason the apparition was longer than usual.

On the 2nd January, Marija went to Citluk to visit Sr. Josipa's orphanage where Our Lady appeared to her before the 90 orphans. The children had prepared songs to offer to Our Lady as a gift during the apparition. Marija referred that as they were singing the Blessed Virgin watched them lovingly. The apparition was long and Our Lady gave this message: "I am the Queen of Peace, and I am also your mother. Remember that I am your mother and that I love you." It was a moment of great joy for the children.

(Sr. Emmanuel)

Missionary travel of Fr. Slavko

At the invitation of Medjugorje pilgrims Fr. Slavko Barbaric visited Germany from January 14 - 23, 2000. Upon his return, he said about his impressions:

"I held a series of prayer meetings in parish communities, the first of which was in Freising near Munich. Despite the very cold weather the church filled with faithful. Ten priests also came together for the concelebration. There was a beautiful atmosphere of prayer. After the prayer program there followed a talk and discussion.

On Saturday and Sunday, January 15 - 16, a meeting with about 300 young people in Schäbisch-Gmünd was held at St. Bernard House which is directed by Fr. Hans Buob. The programme began around 9 am with prayer, songs and talks, and a Medjugorje evening programme in the afternoon, with testimonies by young people. A late evening programme for youth began at 9 pm. They stayed to pray the whole night. Especially noticeable was the group "Totus tuus" which is very active and includes many young people from all over Germany.

The young people put on a play that evening about a real family that was on the brink of breaking up. Life had become impossible. The mother was bitter about the behaviour of her husband and children. There was no prayer in the family. Television, radio, departures and late arrivals, misunderstandings and quarrels were all that kept them together. The mother happened to find her grandmother's rosary beads, and she began to pray with them. Meanwhile they found out about Medjugorje and came on pilgrimage and everything began to change. It was touching to watch, and the whole play was based on a real event. After the pilgrimage they begin to pray, got rid of the television, and in its place they put the statue of Our Lady bought in Medjugorje. The family finds peace and happiness.

From Sunday 16 to Thursday 20 I was in Hochalting for a retreat with about 70 participants organized by Fr. Buob. The theme of the retreat was "The way with Mary to the Divine Heart." Talks, prayer, the Medjugorje evening program and adoration filled the days. All the participants witnessed to the way the pilgrimage to Medjugorje changed their lives. How I wished that the visionaries and parishioners could hear them, especially those in Medjugorje who still do not understand the intervention of God's grace. On Thursday 20 I went with Fr. Dietrich von Stockhausen to the parish community of Marksteinach near Schweinfurt; and on Friday, Fr. Dietrich and I went to Heroldsbach, where I held a course in prayer with the evening program for about 250 faithful.

Missionary travel of Fr. Svetozar

At the invitation of Medjugorje pilgrims and Centres of Peace, in February Fr. Svetozar Kraljevic visited the USA and England. Upon his return he said:

"More than ever we realize that the priests from Medjugorje have to travel even to the most distant places in the world and get around to the prayer groups and communities that have come together for the purpose of personal and community Christian renewal, for a more intensive Christian living and for spreading the message that Our Lady has spoken through the visionaries in Medjugorje.

A Marian conference is held every year in February in the California city of San Ramon, near San Francisco. The chief organizer is Anna Marie Maagdenburg with Rev. Richard J. Culver.

In this Jubilee Year the main theme of the meeting was "The Year 2000 of Christ's Presence". Main participant was Bishop Kenneth Steiner. About 1200 participants with hearty applause welcomed his strong call to practical living of the holy sacraments and daily prayer. Listening to Bishop Steiner all of us again discovered how it is possible in a joyful and interesting manner to speak about the truths of Christian life.

I spoke about pilgrimage as being prayer made incarnate. The believer on pilgrimage experiences the essence of prayer which biblically engages human life and helps the praying person to experience prayer and clearly to witness his Christianity to the world.

Fr. Rene Laurentin spoke about the place, meaning, and nature of Marian calls in the modern Church and world. The words of visionary Ivan Dragicevic, full of courage and hope, were listened to by all with gratitude. The birth of his daughter stirred a special feeling of respect in everyone.

A retreat for Medjugorje prayer groups was held from February 18-20 in the town of Nuneaton near

London. About 80 leaders and members of groups gathered in the monastery of the Dominican Sisters. Daily Eucharistic celebration, the rosary, adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, meditation on the reality of the cross, sufferings, and death of our Lord, meditation on the Christian life and vocation that we have, were our themes for the 3 days.

The participants especially stressed how they realize that they need to organize this kind of Christian spiritual encounters to maintain the spirit that Mary began in the hearts of all, and even more so to be able to live a Christian life in the modern world, full of temptations and doubts."

(Medjugorje Bulletin)

* Thanks be to God for the gift of life! Mikaela, daughter for visionary Ivan and wife Laureen, was born on the 15th January in Boston (USA).

Aid delivery continues - For Alberto Bonifacio and helpers, the jubilee year began under the sign of charity. Despite the snow which made travelling very difficult, on 28 January he delivered aid with 20 vans to Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and Albanians from Kosovo in Sarajevo and Mostar; and on the 18th February he took aid with 14 vans to people in Nevesinje and Graecanica in the south of Bosnia, and Mostar.

* The 11th International Youth Prayer Meeting in Medjugorje will be held from July 31 - August 6, 2000. The theme is: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"

Presenters at the youth meeting are: Primo Martinuzzi, Wayne Weible, Fr. Francesco Carlino, Fr. Selwaine, Sr. Elvira Petrozzi, Fr. Cosimo Cavaluzzo, Fr. Jozo Zovko, the visionaries, Fr. Slavko Barbaric and other witnesses. Eucharistic adoration will be take place during the entire meeting.

Jubilee of Consecrated Persons in Medjugorje

Members of religious communities in Medjugorje particularly felt the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit and Mary when they reunited for a novena for the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus which this year fell on the same day as the Jubilee of Consecrated Persons. The conclusion of the message to Mirjana (2 Jan. 2000), "Pray and wait," was fount of inspiration for some heads of communities in Medjugorje, who felt the need to reunite in prayer around Mary, as the primitive Church did when Jesus asked them to pray and wait for the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

So for nine days we were witnesses of this living prayer with our blessed Mother as guide. In us was born the certainty that Our Lady's call for surrender to her means we cannot let ourselves be crushed by problems, for that would mean we are not totally surrendered. We are, instead, called to entrust to her Heart everything which we think is impossible, knowing that nothing is impossible for God. It is then that the soul is able to truly pray.

We were also able to experience her joy for the communion and spirit of collaboration which was recently born amongst the various communities. Following this experience we understood that Jesus suffers very much for the lack of trust by consecrated people, more so than for their sins. And for this reason we feel urged to pray for the gift of faith and surrender to God.

I think that for each of us this novena was a move forward in communion, faith and surrender; something we all experienced during the offertory of the conclusive Mass. Lunch, taken together, was a another joyful moment and reason to offer up a big thank you to God for the gift of consecrated life.

Paula

* Despite his age, retired archbishop of Split, and great friend of Medjugorje, Msgr. Frane Franic made a private visit to Medjugorje on 10 December. During his one-day visit he celebrated Mass in the chapel.

* Msgr. Pavao Zanic, former Bishop of Mostar, returned to the Father on the 11th January at the age of 82, in Split.

In his systematic opposition to the apparitions, he was surely an instrument of Providence for the purification of hearts and so that the truth regarding these events could shine forth. Let us pray for him!

* We are happy to say that Echo is now being translated into Slovak. We wish to thank all those who patiently work to do the translations, permitting us to get the edition out together with the other language editions.

Prepare for worldwide "Totus Tuus"

"All yours" Mary, is the motto chosen by John Paul II for his pontificate. The motto comes from St. Louis De Montfort, of whom the Pope is very fond. In this Jubilee year the Pope desires extending his Totus Tuus to the entire world through a very meaningful act which is programmed for 8th October next. It is: "the act of placing the new millennium under Mary's protection." On the same day the Bishops will celebrate their Jubilee, and these will come from all over the world to meet in St. Peter's. On this occasion, then, the Pope with all the bishops will consecrate the III Millennium to Mary.

Now the Pope also desires that this great act of consecration be prepared for! His desire is that we pray united, all together, all over the world, so as to obtain the profound and convincing adhesion of all the bishops, priests and faithful.

To fulfil the Holy Father's desire then, there must be a great prayer which will unite us to Mary and all of us to each other. Witnesses and supporters of the Pilgrim Virgins will use also this little publication to keep us informed.

We must stress that this movement of unity wishes to respect other people's spirituality and charismas; it does not want to promote an association, but to the contrary, it wants to stimulate the creativity of individuals for the organization of the "Visitation". The choice of the statue or icon for the pilgrimage is left to the individuals. "It was through the Holy Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that He must reign in the world." (St. Louis de Montfort)

So, to begin, Fr. Jozo wrote to tell us:

Accept the Pilgrim Virgin into your family!

On the feast day of Mary's nativity, (8 Sept.) in 1995, a great Marian initiative began. The Notre-Dame Confraternity of France began its ambitious project, conforming to the documents and teachings of the Church, to extend the glory of the Blessed Virgin to the peoples. The project is known as the "Pilgrim Virgins."

Just as Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth in her home and family, today in the same way, Mary wants to visit the whole world. Mary's Visitation always brings peace and good, and it represents the beginning of

a better world. She continues to look for a place for her Son. The latest messages which the Queen of Peace gives in Medjugorje are a call to prayer, in particular for Christians, and to take peace to others. The Virgin is the pilgrim who took peace to Elizabeth and her family. Through us, the Full of Grace desires reaching all her children. Today, more than ever, when we are faced with failure and destruction of the Christian family, we need the Virgin and the Mother. Today, with life on our planet in danger - not only the lives of unborn children, but all forms of life, we need the Mother, giver of life, who gathers her family in prayer and keeps it united.

The Notre-Dame Confraternity of France has had thousands of statues made, thus giving the possibility for communities, parishes and dioceses to offer one to Mary. This movement wants to invite individuals and families to open their doors to the Mother who gives peace and hope.

The first 250 statues and icons of Our Lady, blessed by the Holy Father in St. Peter's, left for destinations around the world, to call all men to prayer and conversion. During these five years the "Pilgrim Virgins" have visited more than 120 countries (including Iraq, Vietnam, Lebanon..). At each meeting the faithful take part in the Eucharist, prayer, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The numerous conversions are a visible sign which accompany the pilgrim Virgin.

Let the Virgin enter also your family and parish. Welcome her with prayer. Open the door of your life for her so that she can offer you peace and joy.

Many come to Medjugorje, yes, but there are too many in the world who don't have the chance to hear her call. That is why it is so important that the people meet the pilgrim Virgin in their own towns, parishes and families to hear her messages.

When you accept the Virgin in your parish or family respond with the prayer of the rosary, the litanies and the consecration to Her Immaculate Heart. May this meeting with the Virgin Mary change your life into one of prayer, and may your sacramental life be profound!

Dear friends, allow the Queen of Peace and the pilgrim Virgin to depart on pilgrimage! Accompany her with your prayers, fasts and sacrifices, so the spring-time of the Church may blossom all over. May this call, in the Jubilee year, be the Church's preparation for the new Millennium and the new century! With your prayers and sacrifices you will participate in the great project of our generation. Thank you for responding to this call!

Fr. Jozo Zovko

For anyone without a statue or means the Confraternity will supply a statue (excluding postal expenses, except in special cases and funds allowing). Contact: La Governante, Confrérie Notre-Dame de France, 11 rue des Ursulines, BP227, F-93523 St Denis cedex 1, France. Ph. 0033-164956556, fax 0033-164596522. www.vierge-pelerin.org

St. Bridget symbol of unity amongst Christians

St. Bridget was elected by the Pope as co-patroness of Europe, together with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Therese of the Cross (Edith Stein), since their holiness was expressed in historical and geographical circumstances with particular significance for Europe, and that European Christians may draw spiritual benefit from the contemplation and invocation of saints who represent their history in a special way. This Swedish saint who lived at the beginning of the XIV century, was considered by many Popes as a

bridge between North Europe and Rome, between Lutherans and Catholics. In fact, back in the XVI century Scandinavia broke away from Rome; hence, Bridget represents a strong ecumenic signal, given also that her order works in this sense. Recently at Augusta, in Germany, an agreement was made between the Lutheran and Catholic Churches on the theme of justification. This agreement further stresses the importance of the ecumenical contribution made by St. Bridget to the Church, especially when you consider that it brings an end to the dispute begun by Luther centuries ago on whether salvation is had through faith or works.

Born in Sweden in 1303 from an aristocratic and wealthy family, she was mother of eight children and very involved in family life, and also the receiver of extraordinary visions. Together with her husband, she dedicated time to the poor, founding a small hospital for them. In 1341, when her spouse died, Bridget dedicated her life completely to God, and it didn't take Him long to make Himself be heard, calling her for a new mission. She received extraordinary mystical graces. She left Sweden in 1349 and went to Rome, see of the papacy. Here she founded the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, known as the Brigidines. She went on many pilgrimages in Italy and Europe and also to the Holy Land. St. Bridget's participation in the building up of the ecclesial community at a crucial moment of its history was due more to her profound sense of Christ's mystery, than to her pilgrimages.

Her experiences in the faith made her a reference point for many people of the Church of her time; and she was not afraid to make severe admonitions on the moral conduct of the people and the clergy.

She died in Rome on 3rd July 1373

("Il regno - doc. 1999")

Five new bishops in China for patriotic Church

On the 6th January in Peking five bishops were ordained for the patriotic church (the church with government recognition) while in St. Peter's the Pope ordained on the same day 12 new bishops for the Catholic Church. This decision of the patriotic church roused both wonder and disappointment in the Vatican since it makes the possibility of dialogue very difficult.

The Vatican agency, Fides, informs that seminarians from the national seminary of Peking (more than 130) decided not to attend the celebration, whilst the day before they were forced to take part in the practices. That evening, however, they made a unanimous decision not to participate since the ordination is against the principles of the Catholic faith. One student declared that they all now fear pressure and even persecution by the government and the Patriotic Association, and in a message they ask friends for prayer and acts of solidarity. Fides also informs that also very few faithful participated - not even 200, while generally an average of 600 attends Sunday Mass in the cathedral of Peking. Those who did attend say they were pressured to do so and that the ceremony seemed more of a funeral than an ordination. Also the 5 new patriotic bishops had to undergo extreme pressure before accepting to be ordained.

In East Timor people dying of hunger

Missionaries working in East Timor inform that even if the war (with severe clashes between Christians and Muslims) appears to be over, the problems for the population are not, as the people are dying of hunger, sickness or misery. The lack of water, due to the monsoons, makes the risks of epidemics even greater in those areas where the people are already stricken by poverty.

Tension in the Moluccas is still high, with peace between Catholics and Muslims difficult to reach. Also the Holy Father has launched an appeal for reconciliation with the islamic people of the archipelago

devastated by violence.

Our Readers Write

* Sr. Luigina, Japan: "Father, all the good you have done in the world with your Echo will be your crown in heaven."

* Mariangela, Italy: "The 'Echo of Mary' is an excellent publication which we read with joy in the family. It helps us meditate and pray. I wish to say thank you to Fr. Angelo for the help and consolation he has given us over the years."

* Sr. Lydwina Farrell, Ireland: "Thank you so much for the 'Echo of Mary.' It is greatly valued here in Ireland."

* Judy Paterson, South Africa: "Thank you so much for being so faithful in sending your Echo. All who receive it speak so highly. It really is great inspiration to us, especially with all the sadness of life around us; it gives us hope! I send a small donation (our Rand now is worthless, but we give with all our heart). God bless you all."

"I hear the souls of heaven calling me"

That is how Fr. Angelo responded to anyone who said they looked forward to seeing him back in the parish. And after several days of intense physical suffering, and filial surrender to God, he entered with joy and serenity into the Father's house, on the 3rd March. God, in His goodness, called him on the first Friday of the month, knowing how devoted he was to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Fr. Angelo would invite the others to place great trust in Jesus' Heart, saying: "put your heart in Jesus, and His Heart in you." Fr. Angelo knew that his lengthy illness was wanted by God: "The Lord calls some people to be closer to Him and share in the sufferings of the cross for the salvation of the world, of those who do not understand."

We suffer for the detachment, but our hearts are filled with peace and the certainty that following Christ on the way of the cross and of love is the quickest way to reach fullness of life and happiness in heaven. The funeral rites were celebrated by the bishop of Mantua and 70 priests on 6th March. A large crowd of parishioners and friends was present.

Fr. Jozo's gratitude - "Fr. Angelo was a guardian angel for the great Marian movement and renewal in the Church which comes from Medjugorje. Thank you, Lord, for your son Fr. Angelo who so many times protected the Mother with her Son, just like St. Joseph.

The Echo of Medjugorje was the voice which united millions of pilgrims in all the continents. It was a great mission with many obstacles, but Fr. Angelo overcame them all. He lived to witness and to love. Thank you! Dearest Queen of Peace, take your son into God's kingdom!" Fr. Jozo, 7 March 2000

And Sr. Emmanuel's - "Fr. Angelo Mutti was a chosen instrument for the Gospa, and spread her messages in very many languages. The blessing of God was upon him, and through him this blessing extended to millions of readers whom he nourished with precious manna. Let us pray for him and ask for

his prayers, so that the work begun will continue in the Holy Spirit!

The frequent visits of Fr. Angelo to Medjugorje often encouraged me His departure doesn't deprive us of a friend, but rather gives us a new advocate near the Father. Let us not leave him jobless in caring for the needs of the world and those of Medjugorje." We sincerely thank our readers for generously sending in donations, which are necessary for us to continue producing this paper. May the peace and love which flow out from the Immaculate Heart of Mary compensate you already on this earth for what you do for us. Thank you, also, to all those who support the Echo with their prayers.

Villanova, 8 March 2000

Therefore, consciously live the Holy Mass.