



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

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Our Lady's message of 25 January 2001:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to renew prayer and fasting with even more enthusiasm, until prayer becomes joy for you. My Children, the one who prays does not fear for the future, and the one who fasts does not fear evil. I say to you once again: it is only with prayer and fasts that even wars can be stopped - the wars of your unbelief and of your fear for the future. I am with you, and I teach you, my Children, that in God lies your peace and your hope. So come close to God and give Him first place in your lives. Thank you for responding to my call.

In God is peace and hope

Our faith is based on God's love for us. God loves each of us. Humanly speaking, His love is incredible. It flows through the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Believing in God's love is the indispensable premise to our response of love. We must believe that in God is our peace; we must place our hope in Him. We must come close to God and give Him first place in our lives. This is what Mary teaches; this is the essence of her every message. Living our faith is acknowledging the lordship of God's love and responding to this love with love that involves all our faculties, and which cancels the distance between us and the others (cf. Mk 12:29-31). But how is it possible to love God "with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and with all your strength"? Mary continues to repeat to us that it is possible through prayer and fasts. Praying is acknowledging God's closeness, and seizing His presence. It is placing our trust in Him; being open to His love, and being in communion with Him. All it takes is to be sincerely disposed. We don't need to know lots of things about Him; all we need know is that He loves us and wants to hold us close to Him. We only need to desire being held in this divine embrace.

Fasting is living with moderation; it is removing all abuses, from our eating habits and our relations with others. Fasting on bread and water and then sowing the seed of discord, creating divisions, and treading on other people's rights, is not fasting. Fasting is doing away

with waste, banishing the logic of power, distinguishing between necessary and superfluous, seeing the beauty of life and of creation beyond all consumerism. Fasting is placing in God our every need. If God can clothe in such splendour the lilies of the field, which blooms today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, will he not provide much more for you, O weak in faith? (cf. Mt 6:25-30).

Our Lady invites us to renew prayer and fasting with greater enthusiasm, because prayer and fasts are powerful means of lifting one's spirit to God. Prayer will not only become joy for us, but: the one who prays does not fear for the future, and the one who fasts does not fear evil. Ever more people experience this in their lives. We are, in fact, all called to make the same experience, and to be living testimonies of these words.

Real joy is fruit of communion with God. Fear is a consequence of separation from Him. Human events can neither give nor destroy this joy; just as they cannot eliminate fear for the future or fear of evil.

Our Lady reminds us that only with prayer and fasting can wars be stopped, "the wars of our unbelief and of the fear for the future," she adds. What Our Lady means here in a strict sense is not quite clear, but broadly speaking, prayer and fasts can stop the enormous damage (including bloody wars) which break out because of lack of faith.

To take Our Lady's admonitions seriously is to accept her suggestions en bloc, without preferring some and eliminating others. Hence: renew prayer and fasting, and do away with all fears and unbelief. I am with you and I teach you, my Children, that in God lies your peace and your hope. Nothing else is more important.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message of 25 Feb. 2001:

Dear Children, this is a time of grace. Therefore, pray, pray, pray, until you comprehend the love God has for each of you. Thank you for responding to my call.

Love revealed through Prayer

The first thing we notice in this month's message is its brevity. The shortest message of all (25 Oct. 1991) is: "Dear Children, pray, pray, pray!" which didn't even end with the usual "thank you". On the 25th October 1999 Mary said: "Dear Children, Do not forget that this is a time of grace; therefore, pray, pray, pray! Thank you for responding to my call." These two messages, together with this month's message, are the shortest of the so-called messages of the 25th of the month, and all include the triple exhortation: "pray, pray, pray!" More of a petition than a command, it sums up Mary's motherly love and the very reason for her presence in Medjugorje: to bring her children back to God; to mend the relationship between God and man, because it is severely eroded, if not broken, and when man breaks away from God he heads for self-destruction. Like it or not, man cannot live without Him.

Acknowledging that man was created by God is not enough. Not even believing in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Job is sufficient, nor in the God revealed by Jesus. Even

Satan acknowledges God's existence! Man has to establish a real, concrete and vital relationship with his God. There has to be dialogue, and communion, so that he feels God's presence. In brief, man must pray, pray, pray.

Prayer is this direct line which connects man to Life, enabling him to experience the living God in his own environment, time, place and position. Prayer is the means by which man finds light and hope, and the wisdom to understand God's love. Pray, pray, pray until you comprehend the love God has for each of you. So our prayer needs to improve. Easily said, but not so easily done; and Mary knows. That is why she so patiently reminds us and continues to encourage us: this is a time of grace, that is, a favourable time when God can be found; a time to mend broken ties, to return to the house of the Father, knowing that He awaits us with open arms.

Mary assures us that in prayer we will discover the love God has for each of us. His love is not for all of us indistinctly, but for each of us. He knows and loves each of us personally. Don't be discouraged by your sin; don't let your misery, or your wealth, or your intelligence or your ignorance be an impediment to you. God loves you just as you are. Well before the world existed He loved you with infinite love. Believe in His love, experience it, then witness it. You received without cost; and you must give without charge. Praying, more than an act of doing something, is a way of being. It means surrender to God. It is seizing and experiencing Jesus' intimacy with the Father in ourselves. Praying is cancelling all distances created by our pride, arrogance, and egoism, or in one word: our sin. Praying is letting grow in us the image of the Son which the Holy Spirit deposited in us at our Baptism. If we do this we become channels through which God's grace flows, and authentic witnesses of His love, and bearers of peace and resurrection in situations of conflict and death.

"This is a time of grace," Our Lady has been repeating to us. We must believe it, and pray the way Our Lady suggests, with sentiments of humbleness and great filial trust in God's love. If we each do our part the Church will sail towards the new era, as our Holy Father has said. N.Q.

Novo millennio ineunte

"Let us go forward in hope!"

At the end of the holy year, John Paul II published his apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (At the beginning of the new millennium) in which he reviews the elements of the Jubilee year, and offers to the Church guidelines for her ongoing journey into the third millennium.

"The core of the great legacy," said the Pope, "is the contemplation of the face of Christ": Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery. And he invites the Church to draw new zeal for her spiritual and pastoral commitments from the abundance of grace received during this Jubilee year: "Now we must 'put out into the deep', trusting in Christ's words: *Duc in altum!* The experiences we have had should inspire in us new energy, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt."

Time spent on reading all this beautiful document, written for the bishops, the clergy and the faithful alike, will be well-spent. Truly, it deserves our total approval and gratitude for its wide coverage and objectiveness; and with satisfaction we note that many of the themes touched on by the Pope are ones which Echo has also brought, or will be bringing to your attention. Following is a brief outline of the document which is divided into four main headings.

I) Meeting Christ, the Legacy of the Great Jubilee

"To purify our vision for the contemplation of the mystery, this Jubilee Year has been strongly marked by the request for forgiveness. This 'purification of memory' has strengthened our steps for the journey towards the future and has made us more humble and vigilant in our acceptance of the Gospel. Much awaits us, and for this reason we must set about drawing up an effective post-Jubilee pastoral plan. It is important, however, that what we propose should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of 'doing for the sake of doing'. We must resist this temptation by trying 'to be' before trying 'to do'.

II) A Face to Contemplate

Men and women of our own day - often perhaps unconsciously - ask believers not only to 'speak' of Christ, but in a certain sense to 'show' him to them. But our witness would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face. The contemplation of Christ's face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in Sacred Scripture .. so that St. Jerome can vigorously affirm: 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.' When firmly anchored in Scripture, we open ourselves to the action of the Spirit.

III) Starting Afresh from Christ

'I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:20). From this assurance we must gain new impetus in Christian living, making it the force which inspires our journey of faith. Together with St. Peter we also ask with trusting optimism: 'What shall we do?' (Acts 2:37) without thinking that we shall find some magic formula. We shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person! It is not a matter of inventing a 'new programme,' as the programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition; it is the same as ever. It has its centre in Christ, who is to be known, loved and imitated. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. But this programme must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. What awaits us in an exciting work of pastoral revitalization - a work involving all of us." And the Pope goes on to indicate some pastoral priorities.

a) Holiness - To place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: 'Do

you wish to receive Baptism?' means to ask: 'Do you wish to become holy?!' The time has come to re-propose to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living. The personal paths to

holiness, however, call for a genuine 'training in holiness'.

- b) Prayer - This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished in the art of prayer. Prayer cannot be taken for granted; it has to be learnt. It must develop that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends. Is it not one of the 'signs of the times' that in today's world, despite widespread secularization, there is a widespread demand for spirituality, a renewed need for prayer? .. It is essential that education in prayer should become a key-point of all pastoral planning.
- c) The Sunday Eucharist - It is necessary to stress particularly the Sunday Eucharist and Sunday itself experienced as a special day of faith. Following "Dies Domini", I wish to insist that sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person. The Sunday Eucharist is the most natural antidote to dispersion in a time when profound interweaving of cultures and religions is effecting also countries which have been Christian for many centuries.
- d) The Sacrament of Reconciliation - The Jubilee Year, marked by a return to this Sacrament, has given us an encouraging message, not to be ignored: if many people, including many young people, have benefited from approaching this Sacrament, it is probably necessary that Pastors should arm themselves with more confidence, creativity and perseverance in presenting it and leading people to appreciate it. We must not give in to passing crises!
- e) The primacy of grace - There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God, of course, asks us really to cooperate with His grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that 'without Christ we can do nothing' (cf. Jn 15:5).
- f) Listening to the Word - There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God.
- g) Proclaiming the Word - To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be 'servants of the word' in the work of evangelization: this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor 9:16). This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which must involve all members of God's People.

IV) Witness to Love

To make the Church the home and the school of communion is the great challenge facing us in this new millennium if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings. Before making practical plans we need to promote a spirituality of communion ... and unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. We must be more than ever intent on valuing and developing the forums and structures which serve to ensure and safeguard communion .. (such as) .. the Petrine ministry and episcopal collegiality; they have their foundation and substance in Christ's own plan for the Church." (...)

"Unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. (...) And special attention must be given to the pastoral care of the family, particularly when this

fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis."

On ecumenism: "The Jubilee has offered some truly moving and prophetic signs, but there is still a long way to go. Jesus' prayer in the Upper Room - 'that they may be one in us' (Jn 17:21) - is both revelation and invocation. It reminds us that this gift needs to be received and developed ever more profoundly."

On charity: "We must ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words. And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity? Or by the problems of peace; or by contempt for the fundamental human rights of so many people, especially children? Countless are the emergencies to which every Christian heart must be sensitive. Let us go forward in hope! The missionary mandate accompanies us into the third millennium. If the symbol of the Holy Door now closes behind us, it is to leave more fully open the living door which is Christ."

NEWS FROM THE JUBILEE

"The Holy Door closes ... but Christ's Heart remains open"

At the end of this Great Jubilee, which concluded with the closing of the Holy Door at St. Peter's on Sunday 6 January, it is natural to want to remember the most significant events which most impressed our minds and hearts. At a meeting with the Roman Curia just before Christmas, the Holy Father praised the Lord for the Jubilee year as he recalled significant moments, and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the positive outcome after the "year of hard work", while underlining the need to continue "on the way which is opening before us. The Holy Door is about to be closed, but the living Door which is Christ himself will stay wider open than ever."

This Jubilee year has seen many significant moments, thanks to God's grace which accompanied us, but thanks also to John Paul II for his total dedication and ability to communicate the love and mercy of God. Among the many, we like to recall the embrace of the cross in St. Peter's on 12 March 2000, with which the Holy Father underlined the penitential character of the Jubilee, while also asking forgiveness for sins committed by men of the Church during the course of the centuries. Then there was the opening of the Holy Door at St. Paul-Outside-the-Walls to underline the ecumenical prayer which characterized the Jubilee Year; and the pilgrimage to the Holy Land where the Pope became a pilgrim with the pilgrims and asked for the grace of conversion for the Church.

Perhaps the event which has remained most vivid is the Jubilee of the young people. Said the Pope: "not only because of its remarkable size, but above all because of the commitment shown by the 'Pope's young people', with whom I established a sort of privileged dialogue thanks to mutual feelings of fondness and deep understanding." An important message was received with this Jubilee, speaking of deep yearning for the authentic values which are found in Christ in full.

The Jubilee was also a year of more intense awareness of the urgent need for charity, so we

can't forget the Pope's appeal to all Christians to adopt an attitude of generous sharing. Though the Jubilee year has been formally closed, the Church must continue on the way which has been opened. "In the spiritual world there are no pauses!" said the Holy Father. "Start again from Christ! This is the password which must accompany the Church on her entry into the third millennium. We must be Christ's witnesses in the future that awaits us." With his apostolic letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*, the Pope instils new courage and energy into the Church to plan for the future. The guidelines offered in his Letter will help the Christian community to start again from Christ, and "put out into the deep" with complete trust in Him who is the same yesterday, today and always!

At the beginning of my pontificate, and on many other occasions, I cried out to the children of the Church and to the world to throw open the doors to Christ. I wish to repeat it here today, at the conclusion of this great Jubilee and the beginning of the new millennium. Jesus Christ is the ultimate aim of each Christian; there is no hope of finding salvation unless we have faith in Him.

Agnese Rubino

Dialogue generates peace

May the Lord give us his peace, peace which is not the result of human compromises, but the surprising effect of his benevolent gaze upon us. This is the peace we pray for today, as we celebrate the 34th World Day of Peace. Thus said the Pope to the world on the first day of the new millennium, 1 January, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. But the much invoked peace falls on land made arid by prevailing atheism, encumbered with the stones of reasoning and human justice, suffocated by thornbushes of hedonistic and egoistic behaviour. Yet, it is right to sow the seed again, that a new shoot might spring up and bring peace, harmony and reconciliation to all the yearning hearts.

To underline the urgency of the appeal, John Paul II declared the year 2001 the "international year of dialogue between cultures." "Today I renew my heartfelt invitation to every person of good will to take the privileged path of dialogue with confidence and determination. Only in this way the specific riches that characterize the history and lives of persons and peoples will not be lost but will contribute to building a new era of fraternal solidarity."

In the Message written for this day ("Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace") the Pope indicates with extreme clarity the road to take so that "relations between people are increasingly inspired by the ideal of a truly universal brotherhood. Unless this ideal is shared, there will be no way to ensure a stable peace," he said. Aware that humanity still suffers from open wounds - many regions are beset by bitter and bloody conflicts, where people of different cultures and civilizations live together - the Pope says: "Love for one's country is a value to be fostered, without narrow-mindedness, but with love for the whole human family and with an effort to avoid those pathological manifestations which occur when the sense of belonging turns into self-exaltation, the rejection of diversity, and forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia." Might these important words penetrate all minds, since ever more frequently we come into contact with people from other countries! It is a clear call not to transform our sense of

belonging into a form of closure. A way of broadening our minds is to broaden our knowledge of other cultures so we are not prejudiced by negative judgements. The many different cultures is a positive aspect. The Pope points out: "Western cultural models are enticing and alluring because of their remarkable scientific and technical cast, but regrettably there is growing evidence of their deepening human, spiritual and moral impoverishment. The culture which produces such models is marked by the fatal attempt to secure the good of humanity by eliminating God, the Supreme Good. Yet, as the Second Vatican Council warned, 'without the Creator the creature comes to nothing!' A culture which no longer has a point of reference in God loses its soul and loses its way, becoming a culture of death."

Dialogue, then, is urgently necessary; it "leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity."

"Immigrants," then, "must always be treated with the respect due to the dignity of every human person."

"Dialogue is often difficult because it is weighed down by the tragic heritage of war, conflict, violence and hatred, which lives on in people's memory. For the barriers caused by noncommunication to be bridged, the path to take is the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. From a Christian point of view it is the only path which leads to the goal of peace." And in this time of Lent, we must keep our gaze fixed on Christ Crucified, who says: "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). He will teach us how to forgive.

S.C.

Jerusalem, city of discordance

"The violence in Jerusalem is in total contradiction with the city's nature and vocation. It was God's wish that it should be a city of reconciliation, but today it is a city of non-reconciliation," said Mons. Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. "After the political solution there must be a religious solution; the political and religious leaders must take into consideration the holiness of the city, which is the patrimony of all humanity. Political leaders need to find a way to maintain the city's holiness, the respect and safeguarding of civil and religious rights, freedom of cult and freedom of access in time of peace and of war. It needs a special statute acknowledged by the international community to guarantee stability. So that everyone is offered equal protection (Hebrews, Muslims and Christians alike) just laws, not discriminatory laws, must be made; because Jerusalem's nature and its divine vocation cannot allow for any type of discrimination."

In 1922 Christians represented 51% of the population of the city of Jerusalem; in 1947 this dropped to a third; and today this has dropped to a mere 2% of the local population. Mons. Sabbah concludes with a note of hope: "One day the conflict will end. Authentic Christian living is a battle of love, in a constant building-up of the ecumenical spirit, with interreligious dialogue, justice and peace."

(Fides)

* UKRAINE - Pope likely to visit Ukraine next summer (23 - 26 June). After Georgia and Romania, Ukraine is the third country with an Orthodox majority to be visited by John Paul II. Civilian authorities ardently desire the visit; the problem is overcoming the diffidence by the Orthodox Church which is divided, internally, into three (one is faithful to the Patriarch of Moscow, two are autonomous). In a letter written after a meeting of the Orthodox synod of Ukraine in Kiev, Metropolitan Vladimir asked the Roman Pontiff to postpone his voyage, because in his opinion the Orthodox Church of Ukraine "had not been officially advised." Another problem is represented by the "lack of regularity in the relationships between the Greek-rite Catholics and the Orthodox in west Ukraine, and the existence of schismatic situations within the church of Ukraine."

The letter points out that eventual meetings between the Pope and schismatic leaders would be seen as "serious interference in internal affairs with grave consequences in relations between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches," such as: "cessation of all relations between the two Churches which would close the era opened by Vatican Council II with regards to Catholic-Orthodox relations. We pray to the Lord that this won't happen," it says in the letter signed by 42 bishops of the Ukraine Orthodox Church.

It is our duty to pray for the Pope, that inspired by the Holy Spirit, he will heed God's voice and not that of men.

* VIETNAM - Appeal for religious freedom. Regime responds: subversion. Leaders of four different religions in Vietnam appealed to the government for the recognition of human rights decreed by the UNO: religious freedom, the return of confiscated property to rightful owners, no government interference in internal affairs of the religions. In response they were accused of being hostile forces attempting to overthrow the regime. The religious leaders write: "After the conquest of South Vietnam in 1975 the Communist party imposed a regime of brutality on religions." Nonetheless, "religions have continued to protest in nonviolent ways; and will do so until religious freedom becomes a reality." In the meantime, religious repression continues.

* CUBA - Forbidden to wear religious objects at school. Fides agency informs that Primary schools in the capital of Cuba have said that children who carry religious objects on them (such as crucifixes, medals, scapulars, devotional pictures) will not be allowed in class. Parents of the children made an official protest. According to the department (of education), the measures were taken to impede religious expressions from hindering the politico-ideological work carried out on the pupils.

* KOREA - Korean Church celebrates Great Jubilee under banner of reconciliation. The year 2000 saw meetings between the two presidents of North and South Korea, the visit of a delegation from the Vatican, and meetings for the reunification of families. It can be said that that which the whole world is applauding as a sign of peace, is fruit of the Jubilee. While Seoul was defending itself from attacks (including nuclear threats) from the north, the Church had the courage to talk of "reconciliation and unity".

Things started changing in 1984, when South Korea celebrated its 200 years of evangelization, which included a visit by the Pope. Since then the Church of Korea has seen

great transformation. From a church which used to receive aid from abroad, she has become a church which helps others. This help, both material and spiritual, has been spent especially on the brothers and sisters of North Korea.

In March 2000 each diocese in the south began a special relationship with a province or city in the north; a relationship based on prayer, research and distribution of aid. But man doesn't live on bread alone. For this reason the dioceses also launched a campaign of prayer and support for evangelization of the north. Some months ago a school of reconciliation was opened in Seoul; and in the Jubilee year, 1,200 people enrolled. The first lesson at this school is that reconciliation begins by forgiving and asking forgiveness.

Let the children come to me!

This was Jesus' command when the apostles tried to protect him from contact with children for fear that they might disturb Him (Lk 18:16). From this we see the Lord's predilection for children, whose innocence is still fresh and untainted by "adult reasoning." Children express themselves with spontaneity, and are sincere and loyal in their relations with others. They are capable of expressing a pure, unselfish love; and this is Charity. Acknowledging their own weakness, they place all their trust in the adults closest to them; and this is Faith. And children love to dream, fantasy and games fill their day, so that even when some things are denied them, hope lives on strongly in their hearts. The three main virtues, then - faith, hope and charity - are present in children

in a natural way; and this is why Jesus tells us we should imitate them. Today instead, we watch with horror as children fall victims to the deadly poison of egoism and oppression which destroys all that is pure and tender. Many are the dramatic situations (child labour, sexual abuse, exploitation, abandonment, etc.) which bring to the surface man's ugly thirst for power and riches. Rooted deep in man's heart, this ugly vice leads him to use children as instruments of hatred and death.

Such is the case of child soldiers. More than 300,000 children under the age of 18 (but half of them are aged between 5 and 15!) are involved in dozens of conflicts around the world: Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Burma, Colombia, Uganda, Angola, Sudan, Burundi, Congo, and Palestine, Peru, Chechenia and Kurdistan... a long list of countries where children are denied the right to be children.

The countries may be different, but the same cruel methods are used: abduction, beatings, threats, indoctrination, drugging; and then sent to war. International organizations have moved very little; but thankfully, various lay and religious organizations have been able to pay "ransom" money to save some of the young victims, and help reunite them with their families (where possible), and provide basic needs, re-education and counselling. But this is trying to clean up after the storm, while the storm is still rampant. The following appeal is made by a young woman from Uganda who has been trying to move public opinion on the matter for over a decade!

Prayers needed to restore situation in north Uganda / south Sudan - Children are abducted daily and the world doesn't move a finger to help. The children are beaten, raped, killed, recruited as front-line soldiers. They witness and undergo unheard of violence - and this has been going on for 13 years! For a disaster in the Galapagos Islands aid was immediate; are

the Acholi children from north Uganda less important?

Only prayer can help move the international community so that a stop is put to this genocide! Please help us pray that this may come true!

Prisca Ojok Auma

John Paul II's Lenten Message

Forgiveness is only way to Peace

"Love is not resentful" (1 Cor 13:5), is the theme for this year's Lenten message. "The road towards Jerusalem is the model for the Christian who is committed to following the Teacher on the Way of the Cross. Also the men and women of today are asked by Christ to 'go up to Jerusalem'. He insists on this, particularly in Lent, a propitious time for self-conversion and for finding full communion with Him, intimately taking part in the mystery of his death and resurrection.

In the contemporary world there are baptized who, in the face of this demanding appeal to follow Him, offer indifferent resistance and sometimes even open rebellion. Some live the experience of prayer in a somewhat superficial way, so that the Word of God does not touch them. Even the sacrament of Penance is thought by many to be insignificant and the celebration of Sunday Liturgy only as a duty to fulfil."

"How is one to accept the invitation to conversion that Jesus addresses to us also in this Lent?" asks the Pope. "It is necessary, first of all, to open the heart to the touching messages of the liturgy. Lent is a precious opportunity to draw closer to the Lord, turning inward and listening to His voice within us.

Some Christians think they are able to do without confrontation with the truth of the Gospel. So as not to disturb their way of living, they try to minimize words such as: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you' (Lk 6:27), because when taken seriously these words demand radical conversion. Instead, when a person is offended or hurt, he is tempted to give in to the psychological mechanisms of self-pity and revenge.

Instead, daily human events clearly show how forgiveness and reconciliation are undeniably needed if a real personal and social renewal is to be had." So when these sentiments are unable to take root in the hearts of people and communities "the desires for peace that arise from every part of the world are ineffective."

But a true Christian is never pessimistic; joy is his strength, and armed with filial trust he continues to turn to "God's merciful love. The love of God finds its highest expressions precisely when man, sinful and thankless, is brought back to full communion with him. The only way to peace is forgiveness! For nations in search of reconciliation and for those hoping for peaceful coexistence among individuals and peoples, there is no other way than forgiveness received and offered! How rich are the beneficial teachings which resonate in the words of the Lord: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Mt 5:44-45)! Love for a person who

offends you disarms the adversary and can even transform a battlefield into a place of co-operation. The challenge concerns us all, and it concerns families in a special way. Reconciliation can be difficult enough when the blame is your own; but when the other is to blame it may seem absurd humiliation. To take a similar step one needs to experience inner conversion. Christ leaves us with no doubt: a Christian must make peace even if he feels that he has been unjustly offended and wronged." "Love is not resentful. Paul reminds us that forgiveness is one of the highest forms of practising charity." Our Lenten offering is made richer when it "is freed of resentment and indifference: obstacles which keep us far from communion with God and with others." And if the way is difficult it certainly isn't impossible! "St. John Chrysostom recalls that Christ does not leave the disciples ignorant of the struggles and sacrifices which await them. He stresses that to renounce one's ego is difficult but not impossible when one counts on God's help granted through communion with Christ." Edit. Staff

"Return to Primitive Fervour"

Constant reminder of Christ's saving Love

The eternal fire of the Trinitarian Love is poured out over the world with surprising abundance every day through the Immaculate Heart of the Queen of Peace. God, "rich in mercy," revealed at the beginning of the history of salvation to Moses on Mount Sinai that His main attribute was mercy: "The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6-7). This mercy was revealed more fully in Jesus Christ: "God is love," (1 Jn 4:8); "God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit," (CCC 221). Now, when spirals of darkness seem to envelop humanity, God sends the Queen of Peace among men to make manifest the glory of his merciful love. And it is the ineffable sweetness of a Mother's heart the channel for this love: "Dear Children, these times are special times; that is why I am with you - to love you and protect you; to protect your hearts from Satan and to bring you all ever closer to the Heart of my Son Jesus" (25 June 1993). "Out of love for man, God has sent me amongst you, to show you the way of salvation, the way of love" (25 April 1995). She again repeats: "For this I am with you, to instruct you and bring you close to God's love" (25 May 1999). Our Lady is urging us to freely and sincerely decide for conversion; to joyfully offer Him our poor hearts, hardened and darkened by burdensome stories of sin and by countless wounds, so they can become fashioned anew by the divine flame of love in Her Immaculate Heart: "My dear Children, you seek peace, and you pray in many ways, but you have yet to give your hearts to God so He can fill them with His love" (25 May 1999). This is the only way that our souls can be healed, really healed, and in us will be life in full, true peace and true joy which radiates unceasingly from the Heart of Christ our Saviour: "Therefore, I invite you all to open your hearts up to God's love which is immense and open for each of you" (25 April 1995). "You know that I love you and that I

burn with love for you. Therefore, my dear Children, decide for love too, that you may burn for God's love and know His love every day. My dear Children, decide for love so love may reign in all of you - not human love, but divine love" (20 Nov. 1986).

Mary shows us how to truly open our hearts so that we can fully accept the river of love which the Father desires donating, to us in our time, "without measure." We must open our hearts to the grace which comes from His presence, and put His messages into practice, so that the Word of truth in the Gospel might become alive and working in our hearts. Mary assures us that this can be obtained through prayer with the heart and unconditional surrender to God: "Pray, so that through prayer, each one of you may reach complete love" (25 Oct. 1987); "My Children, pray; and through prayer you will discover love" (25 April 1995); "God does not want you to be tepid and indecisive, but to be totally surrendered to Him" (20 Nov. 1986); "Surrender yourselves to God so He can heal you, console you and forgive everything within you that is a hindrance to the way of love" (25 June 1988).

Our Lady desires that we accept God's love fully into our hearts, so we can better fulfil the great commandment of the Covenant: "love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength" (Dt 6:4-7), that our soul might open to the Love of the Father which is so wonderfully granted us through the mystery of Creation. "Dear Childen, Today I invite you all to waken your hearts to love. Observe nature and see how it wakes. This will help you to open your hearts to the love of God the Creator" (25 April 1993); "My Children, rejoice in God the Creator because He has created you in such a wonderful manner" (25 Aug. 1988) "... so that your life may be one of joyous gratitude which gushes from your heart like a river of joy" (ibid.).

Our Lady asks us to trust God completely; to rid our hearts of all traces of spiritual self-centredness which would otherwise render terribly barren the effects of her work in us. Neither must we forget that we can possess the merciful love which God grants us in such abundance, in the same measure with which we let it flow out onto our brothers and sisters, that they too might receive the light of God.

"Dear Children, today I invite each of you to begin again to love; to love first of all God .. then those who are close to you" (25 Nov. 1995); "Do not forget that your life does not belong to you, but is a gift with which you should give joy to the others, and guide them towards eternal life" (25 Dec. 1992).

Giuseppe Ferraro (to be continued)

Saint Joseph took his wife into his home ...

We are called by Church tradition to reflect during the month of March on the person and mission of Saint Joseph, whose feast day is the 19th of March. Many are the faithful who, certain of his generous friendship, pray to him daily. One of the best known prayers to the Saint is a 30 day novena to honour his 30 years

spent with Jesus, known as "The Holy Cloak." Many saints chose him as their special patron because of his powerful intercession as the husband of the Lord's Mother.

A man of many qualities, he was chosen by God to be the guardian of the family he chose to be born in. John Paul II dedicated an Apostolic Exhortation to Saint Joseph, called

Redemptoris Custos (Guardian of the Redeemer, 1989) in which he stresses the fundamental role of Joseph in the mystery of Incarnation. Also

Pope Pius IX had pointed this out when he elected the Saint as "Patron of the Catholic Church."

Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model.

The following extract will hopefully give us a deeper understanding of the relationship between Joseph and Mary, and throw light on the reality which every Christian family is called to imitate.

"As can be deduced from the gospel texts, Joseph's marriage to Mary is the juridical basis of his fatherhood. It was to assure fatherly protection for Jesus that God chose Joseph to be Mary's spouse. It follows that Joseph's fatherhood comes to pass through marriage to Mary, that is, through the family.

While clearly affirming that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that virginity remained intact in the marriage (cf. Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38), the evangelists refer to Joseph as Mary's husband and to Mary as his wife (cf. Mt 1:16, 18-20, 24; Lk 1:27; 2:5). And while it is important for the Church to profess the virginal conception of Jesus, it is no less important to uphold Mary's marriage to Joseph, because juridically Joseph's fatherhood depends on it. Thus one understands why the generations are listed according to the genealogy of Joseph: "Why," St. Augustine asks, "should they not be according to Joseph? Was he not Mary's husband?... Scripture states, through the authority of an angel, that he was her husband. 'Do not fear,' says the angel, 'to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.' Joseph was told to name the child, although not born from his seed. The Son of Mary is also Joseph's Son by virtue of the marriage bond that unites the. In this marriage none of the requisites of marriage were lacking: "In Christ's parents all the goods of marriage were realized: offspring, fidelity, the sacrament - the offspring being the Lord Jesus himself; fidelity, since there was no adultery: the sacrament, since there was no divorce." (St Augustine)

At the culmination of the history of salvation, when God reveals his love for humanity through the gift of the Word, it is precisely the marriage of Mary and Joseph that brings to realization in full "freedom" the "spousal gift of self" in receiving and expressing such a love.

"In this great undertaking which is the renewal of all things in Christ, marriage - it too purified and renewed - becomes a new reality, a sacrament of the New Covenant. We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple. But whereas Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Saviour began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his

all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family - that sanctuary of love and cradle of life." (Paul VI)

How much the family of today can learn from this! The essence and role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God's love for

humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his bride. This being the case, it is in the Holy Family, the original "Church in miniature (Ecclesia domestica)," that every Christian family must be reflected. Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families.

St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that he "cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation" and is truly a "minister of salvation."

His fatherhood is expressed concretely in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it. Since it is inconceivable that such a sublime task would not be matched by the necessary qualities to adequately fulfil it, we must recognize that Joseph showed Jesus by a special gift from heaven, all the natural love, all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know. Besides fatherly authority over Jesus, God also gave Joseph a share in the corresponding love, the love that has its origin in the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15). S.C.

"Thy Will be done..."

Our Lady invites us to pray nearly every month; which means that prayer has immense value in the plan of salvation. Which prayer is suggested by the Virgin; and how can we make our prayer effective and pleasing to God? Fr. Gabriel Amorth, in a comment of the messages of the Queen of Peace at a meeting in Rome, helps us find the answers.

"The prayers of many are only requests: 'give me this, and give me that,' and when they don't receive what they want they say: 'God didn't answer my prayers!' The Bible says that the Holy Spirit prays in us to obtain the graces that we need. Prayer is not a means by which we can bend God's will to get Him to do what we want. Though it is normal for us to ask for the things we think we need, our prayer should always be subject to God's will, and not vice versa. The prayer model we must adopt is Jesus' prayer on the mount of olives: "Father, if you will, take this cup from me! Nevertheless, your will be done." It often happens that through prayer we receive much more than what we ask for, because God knows our true needs and gives us what is best for us. Prayer, then, becomes a great means which bends our will to that of the Father; and we conform to His will. Other times our prayers may sound something like this: 'Lord, this is the grace I need, I hope it conforms to your will; but I need this grace, so please give it to me.' As if we knew what was best for us!

But let's go back to Jesus' prayer in the garden. It may seem to us that His prayer wasn't answered, because the Father didn't take the cup from Him. Jesus drank the very last drop of that cup, yet in the letter to the Hebrews we read that the prayer was answered. This means that God often answers prayers in His own way; and, in fact, He answered not the first part, but the second part of Jesus' prayer: "Let your will be done, not mine," and since the Father knew that the best thing for Jesus, for mankind, and for each of us was that He should suffer, the Father gave Jesus the strength to suffer.

Did not Jesus tell the disciples of Emmaus: "You foolish men! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" It was for our own good, because our

resurrection - the resurrection of the flesh - comes from Christ's Resurrection.

Our Lady urges us to pray in groups and in the family. In this way our prayer becomes a fount of union and communion. Also in this case we need to pray to receive the strength so that our will conforms to God's will. Being in communion with God enables us to enter into communion with others; and unless there is communion with God, there cannot be communion with others." (From a registration)

One of the two "inner locutionists" (people to whom God speaks internally) whom the Queen of Peace chose as instruments for her messages is Jelena Vasilj. She, and her friend Marijana, began to experience special gifts such as "inner" visions (seeing "with the eyes of heart,") and in June 1983 they were asked to form a prayer group (directed spiritually by Fr. Tomislav Vlastic). Through it Our Lady gave messages - which the locutionists "heard internally" - to lead the group, and which Our Lady wanted as a model for all other groups in the world.

It continued for four years, according to Our Lady's request. Jelena's reflections, written for Echo, will begin each time with one of these messages.

On the 27th February 1988 Our Lady said: "My dear Children, recognize Jesus who suffers in every person. He needs your love. Love your brothers and sisters; out of love, however, and not by force. Earnestly try to find Jesus in them..."

"The true essence of Love"

by Jelena Vasilj

Love is like a light; whenever we try to catch it, it escapes. The word "love" often hangs from our lips; it seems so familiar, even though we have to admit that we do not know its face. In our days, the word "love" is connected to a state of being which is rich in emotive energy and strong experiences; but in the end the person is put down and left with a greater void than ever. Despite this, some still say that it is better than not loving at all. Given that our passions are so invasive, experiences of this type occur because one clearly ignores the project conceived before time even existed, when the Father generated the Son in His eternal plan of love which is the Holy Spirit. The Father breathed love on the Son, and the Son on the Father, and in so doing

they created the world in their eternal dance of love. When we speak of love, or when we love, we are drawing from the source of love - i.e. the image of the Holy Trinity - which is carved into the heart of each man.

Any other love, if it is not founded on this image, very quickly ends up being idolization of the others or of self.

The first characteristic of love is, in fact, its capacity to transcend not only one's self, but also the omnia facta (all creation); and this is a pure gift of faith. The infirm human heart is in constant ascent, and is often burdened by self love; hence it moans and fights so that it doesn't withdraw into itself again.

Only the pure see God. It seems these days that the virtue of purity is in contrast with love. It's called a consequence of the much-talked-about inhibitions which one should be freed of. Often, even amongst Christians, purity is seen as an "optional" as though the body were not a shrine in which we live, or is seen as a house which doesn't need tidying up.

To the former I would say that the inhibition they talk of is the original sin which our first forefathers handed down to us. Even if Jesus of Nazareth took this burden onto His own shoulders and burnt it in the fire of His love on the cross, we still suffer the effects. To the latter I would add that only the virtues can cleanse our hearts, and that a Christian cannot live two sides to his faith, as if the body belonged to one reality and the spirit to another. It is clear, then, that love is based on an eternal truth, and when it is reduced to an obscure maze of human emotions it is untruthful and confusing. Human emotions are not at all underrated in the Christian conception of love. In fact, the greatest gesture of love known by man is Jesus' Passion. We only need to look at our own offerings; if we are able to offer our prime fruits to God then we can call ourselves Abraham's children in the faith.

The desire for love is present in every man, Christian or non. St. Augustine said: "All I wanted was to love and be loved." Of course it refers to the person who meets our heart's desire, not just anyone. The nostalgia which remains in our heart even after we've satisfied our desires indicates that the problem with modern man isn't not wanting to love, but not knowing who to love. Under these conditions, man is without a "homeland", and is destined to drift from one experience to another.

If only we Christians were a sign of hope for the world which wanders aimlessly! In Medjugorje Our Lady says that non-Christians are those who don't know God's love, which is the real object of all their desires. It is up to us to be like Mary: pure and transparent so God's love may shine through. She is the Moon who gets all her light from the Sun, who is the Lord Jesus.

News from the blessed land

New in Medjugorje: "Field of Joy"

To give joy and hope back to the many young women who bear the wounds of drugs, and not only drugs, is the aim of this new initiative in Medjugorje. Building began more than two years ago; and it was opened on 1st November 2000. It lies adjacent to the "Kraljice Mira" community. It is the first house for females outside Italy for Sr. Elvira's Comunità Cenacolo. The project was firmly desired by Sr. Elvria who was inspired to provide homes also for female drug addicts. The house, called Campo della gioia (Field of Joy), is a creature born from the house called Campo della Vita (Field of Life - the house for males), in the sense that many young men suffered and prayed for it, and through it many found new life as they gave the best of themselves to build walls and roofs, and shape rooms.

Sr. Elvira told the young women who opened the new house: "Our mission is to serve wherever we are, as this is what a Christian is called to do. The call of a missionary is to joyfully announce that in his solitude and desperation he encountered the Risen Lord. God's power is living power; it is not the power that comes from your own capacities. We all want to love. Love is your life which develops with a gaze, with a gesture, with sorrow. The woman in particular has the fire of love within her; it is a fire which burns. Woman was born to become wife and mother."

We interviewed some of the young people involved in this experience in Medjugorje, that

we might get a better understanding of what Our Lady is doing in the Campo della gioia.

Marco and Cinzia, with their 5 month old son, Daniele, are one of the first couples to live in the Community.

Q. Marco, you were the foreman; can you tell us how the house was born?

A. Years ago, thanks to Fr. Slavko, we managed to obtain this piece of land (5,000 m2). Initially it had meant to serve for an extension of the male community, and we put a sign on it saying, "Comunità Cenacolo." With all the other commitments this one went to the bottom of the pile. Then, one day Sr. Elvira asked if we had begun work on it .. so we set out to begin. As we were doing it we came to realize that it really was Our Lady's wish. The work was extremely hard, but to see the women so happy here today makes it all worthwhile.

Q. What role does the house play today?

A. We cannot receive groups as yet; only women in need. Interviews were being held already for some years here in Medjugorje and we risked losing those people who really did want to enter. That's why we rushed to complete the works.

Q. How many women will be running the house?

A. There are 12 women, plus my wife, Cinzia. They come from a number of fraternities around Italy and their linguistic origins are various (German, Croatian, Italian, French). Lately we have interviewed a lot of women from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. After the interviews, we meet together and pray for each situation. Our Lady helps us much in this task.

Q. Is it expected that you will receive groups of pilgrims?

A. Yes, but we don't know when. However, Sr. Elvira wants a chapel big enough to hold at least 200 people for those who come to listen to the testimonies.

Q. Flavio, you were here when work began. What is your experience?

A. When we began the work I had only recently arrived in the Community; now I am 16. So my rebirth is connected to this Campo della Gioia. To see the house finished, and the women in it, and knowing that here too the lives of many people will be saved (the way mine was), gives me immense joy. This house means a lot to me because it is fruit of the suffering of many of us. We used to get up at 5 am, and I would often ask myself what I was doing here. At the end of the day I was physically exhausted, but now I see how beauty was produced by suffering.

Giorgia is one of the 12 women who will run the house.

Q. What has changed in your life since your arrival?

A. At first, in the Community, I didn't feel Our Lady's presence very much. It was very gradual, and thanks to prayer, that I began to feel attracted to Medjugorje. When I found out that I was to come here, I was very happy. To start with we didn't know each other; and because of our different backgrounds and characters, I suffered in the beginning, but I also experienced a joy I had never felt before. I would often turn to look up at Podbrdo and was aware of Our Lady's presence. This helped me go on. I've always been a sceptical person. My mother used to tell me about Medjugorje, and she prayed for me. Now I realize that it is probably because of her prayers that I am here today.

Q. Women from many countries have already started arriving. How does it feel to be on the reception side?

A. It's strange, even perturbing at times; but it helps me feel grateful. It makes me see what I have now and that this is a call. Before, I used to think that only people like me existed, that there was only evil, that beautiful things didn't exist, and that there were no people who really believed. Instead, here I see so many young people - there is a wealth here that is renewed every day. I think this truly is a place of conversion. Even here in the Community there is something different with respect to Italy. Every day, every minute, I have to give thanks, and recall what I was and what I am now.

Nicola Bertani

* A short time before his death Fr. Slavko celebrated Mass at the Comunità Cenacolo. To the young former drug addicts who suffered for the lack of peace in the family he said: "Do you know how you lose your peace? It is when you begin to see only one aspect of a person - an aspect which you don't like - and you don't consider the person in his whole. When this happens the critical spirit takes possession of us, and we forget all the other aspects of the person. Focusing on the things which bother us makes us blind, even if that fault, or limit, or sin is real. We lose sight of the beauty of that person's life - all the things he did, the things he gave, the things he suffered, etc. So our vision of that person is totally wrong, and we become prisoners of that false vision. Feelings of gratitude disappear; but without gratitude we cannot have peace, for it is gratitude which prepares for the coming of peace." (Sr.Emmanuel's diary)

* 6th Int'l Meeting for Priests, Medjugorje 2-7 July 2001. Contact fax 387-36-651888; e-mail: medjugorje-mir @medjugorje.hr; phone 387-36-651988.

Fr. Angelo helped me find God...

This is the little story of the great conversion which changed my life. I was an atheist; I grew up in an atheist family, but I got married in church to make my wife happy. One day she asked me to accompany Fr. Angelo to Medjugorje as his driver. I flatly refused, but she kept on nagging at me for more than a week, and in the end I accepted without even knowing why. I said goodbye to my atheist parents who asked me not to waste money on "madonnas" or rosary beads! I had never seen or met Fr. Angelo before. We left, and after 12 hours of travelling amid cordial conversation, we arrived in Medjugorje. The next morning I accompanied him to Sr. Elvira's community for former drug addicts where he celebrated Mass. During the celebration I was the only one (and there were 75 men) who didn't kneel down, and I felt so embarrassed that out of respect for them I went down on my knees. It was the second time in my life that I had done that. Fr. Angelo remained to confess, while a seminarist took me to the places of apparition. It was there that I found a small statue of Our Lady which I would later give to my mother.

In the afternoon while I was taking him to some other part, Fr. Angelo asked me if I wanted to confess. I firmly refused, after all, there was no sense in it for me, but with great calm he explained to me the meaning of this great gift, and for the first time in my life I confessed. I then went on my own to Krizevac where God touched my soul even more deeply. The next

morning Fr. Angelo invited me to go to Communion. As I received the Eucharist I felt an intense warmth in my heart, and to my surprise I began crying and couldn't stop. By this time I was feeling confused. I couldn't, but wanted to understand what was happening. People I met were telling me that I wasn't in Medjugorje by chance; that Our Lady had wanted me there. My mind by now was in turmoil, also because I had to decide what to do once I got home: say nothing or accept the change and the consequences. After a sleepless night I went back up Krizevac and there I surrendered myself completely to Mary, promising that if everything I experienced was real I would become her witness for life.

I set off on the long walk of conversion, and I felt a presence within me which gave me strength and courage. At home, however, my children and parents refused everything. I was assailed by doubts and uncertainty, and I felt uneasy about going to Mass in my town where I felt out of place and judged by the others.

Temptations were strong, particularly when in church, and my old habit of blaspheming was particularly hard to shed. But my conversion continues amid joy, serenity and peace: gifts of the Lord to those who persevere with Him. He alone can satisfy my heart's desire."

Luciano Begotti (Reggio Emilia, Italy)

One year ago ...

One year has passed since Fr. Angelo left us (3 March 2000). But there is no doubt that he continues to stay close to us; it's just that his activity has been "transfigured" - from heaven he prays for us before God's Throne, he consecrates us to the Blessed Virgin, and he gives us precious advice for the drawing up of his beloved Echo through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We still see his smiling face, and as we think of him gratitude swells in our heart for all the good he did here on the earth and the good he continues to obtain for us from his place in heaven.

His collaborators for Echo of Mary

The Mail

Maria Jose, Flor de Cruz: "Our thanks especially to Jesus and Mary, to Fr. Angelo, and to you all, for the much-desired Echo..Thanks to this little paper Our Lady's message has reached the greater part of the clergy and the faithful here. Many now pray and fast; and rather praying for their own intentions, they pray for Our Lady's intentions. God bless you."

Monica Chin, Christmas Island (W. Australia): "Father, thanks a bouquet of special blessings of the most holy Rosary! Thanks to God's goodness, your prayers and blessings, we have already installed 5 electric lights on the Millennium Marian Hill (behind the church) where 14 large crosses and the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, were erected in 1999 by a few Catholics and the help of Christmas Island Buddhists..."

Fr. Humberto, Bahia Tortugas: "Your paper reaches as far as this little corner of the Californian desert. I was touched by the prayer and faith of the thousands of pilgrims from

around the world in Medjugorje..."

Maria Kemp, England: "I was given a copy of your Echo, and upon reading it I gained so much from its content."

Fr. Kevin Ryle, Ireland: "God continue to bless the Echo, and may God's message through His Mother continue to spread!"

Br. Benedict, Bronx NY: "May the Lord bless your work continually. Thank you for your amazing work with Echo of Mary."

"Start afresh from Christ, you who've found mercy. Start afresh from Christ, you who've forgiven and accepted forgiveness. Start afresh from Christ, you who know pain and suffering. Start afresh from Christ, you whose heart is tepid: the year of grace has no end. Start afresh from Christ, Church of the new millennium."

(JP II)

God bless you,
Don Alberto

Villanova, 28 Feb. 2001