



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

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Our Lady's message of 25 March 2003:

Dear Children, also today I invite you to pray for peace. Pray with the heart, my Children; and do not lose hope, for God loves His creatures. He wants to save you, one by one, through my coming here. I call you to the way of holiness. Pray; for in prayer you are open to God's will, and this way, in all that you do, you are realizing God's plan in you and through you. Thank you for responding to my call.

Way of holiness

While the world is deeply saddened by war and its consequences of death and suffering, Mary invites us to keep on "praying for peace, to pray with the heart, and not to lose hope." Also the Pope calls us with insistence to pray for peace. Far from seeking to evade, we aren't called to recite a few prayers or make alms, and then forget about it, leaving it all to God.

We are called, instead, to enter into the mystery of God's holiness and with Him resolve the war. "I call you to the way of holiness." That is precisely where John Paul II is going, and we have to follow him. Our Blessed Mother encourages us: "Don't lose hope, for God loves His creatures;" while urging us to "Pray with the heart," so that our heart beats are lost in Mary and Jesus' Heart, and so Their same love for God and for our brethren might burn within us. It is this prayer (with the heart) that makes us not only "open to God's Will" and able to embrace it, but it makes us desire His Will having understood that individuals and the world alike can enjoy peace if they seek His will.

Peace is offered to all those who are willing to accept it; and it is the same peace which the Lord offers at His Birth (Lk 2:14), on the eve of His Death (Jn 14:27) and upon His Resurrection (Jn 20:19).

We journey along the path to holiness when we allow His will to be accomplished in us. For this we were created; for this the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14); for this Mary is our Mother; and for this She came to Medugorje: "He wants to save you, one by one, through my coming here." This is God's Will: to save us in Jesus through Mary. So what's lacking for our salvation, our sanctification? The answer is: our fiat, our yes. We can't hide behind excuses of being unworthy, or unable; for it is not on our own that we become holy! That

is God's task. He wants us to be holy, that is: be reserved for Him, be consecrated to Him. All we need do is let Him do it by being open to His action of grace which doesn't stop at us, but reaches out to the whole world: "This way, in all that you do, you are realizing God's plan in you and through you."

Made in His image (Gen 1:27), and called to be holy as He is Holy (1 Pt 1:15-16), our dignity as men lies in the dignity of the Man God; and our greatness as children lies in the greatness of God the Son.

Should there be someone who fears because of his sin, know that nothing can impede Christ from embracing you if you truly desire His embrace! Surrender yourself unto Him, and He will come to you and remain with you, here and now in the Kingdom which God is building, and for eternity in His Paradise (Lk 23:42-43).

To those of you who journey up the way of the cross in your suffering and illness, Christ says to complete in your body and in your soul what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (Col 1:24), and you will encounter Him on your Calvary. There He'll wipe your sweaty and bloodied face on the same linen which wiped His, and in this fusion, sustain your human frailty.

May God's Will be done in me, in you, and in every man and woman, and then the world will surely change. We, God's children, need each other's prayerful support: letting yourself rise in Christ, enables me to rise too. Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary! Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message of 25 April 2003:

Dear Children, I call you also today to open yourselves to prayer. During this past Lent you realized how little you were and how little your faith was. My Children, decide also today for God, that in you and through you He may change the hearts of people, and also your own. Be joyful bearers of the Risen Jesus in this restless world, which yearns for God and for all that comes from God. I am with you, my Children, and I love you with a special love. Thank you for responding to my call.

Joyful bearers of the Risen Jesus

Lent is a particularly favourable time for considering the mystery of the forty days which Jesus spent in the desert (Lk 4:1-13), to ponder on our own choice of life and life-style, and on our relationship with God and with fellow men. It is a time when the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus is proposed to us anew in all its shattering reality.

Commemoration isn't enough; for we must let ourselves be pierced by His act of love. Remembering isn't enough, for we must also change. Just watching isn't enough either, without letting ourselves be involved. We must immerse ourselves in the event we celebrate, that is to say, to die with Christ so that we can live with Him (Rm 6:8).

Easter isn't the commemoration of a by-gone event, but is constantly re-enacted. In Christ

man is no longer separated from God: the veil of the Temple was torn in two (Mk 15:38). Christ bursts into the realm of the dead; He throws open our tombs (Mt 27:52). In Christ things of the past exist again; things of the future exist already, because in Him both past and future are part of eternity which is present within the Father. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity (Col 1:17) and in him everything is brought together, everything in the heavens and everything on earth (Eph 1:10).

To celebrate Easter is to penetrate and experience this reality, and to let it touch us and unveil our limits. "During this past Lent you realized how little you were and how little your faith was." The statement shows all Mary's motherly concern. "My Children, decide also today for God." Mary has pleaded with us before, but this doesn't remove the urgency of her call. Rather, that "today" seems to make them all the more urgent. There is need to decide "today" and not tomorrow. There is need to open ourselves up to prayer today. We must open our hearts so that the Holy Spirit might help us in our weakness; for when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly He expresses our plea for us (Rm 8:26). Our decision for God, ardently desired by Mary, is necessary so that "in you and through you He may change the hearts of people, and also your own hearts." This is conversion. It is complete acceptance of Christ; with our very lives and not just with words. It is allowing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that Christ might live in us and that we might live in Him, and that together we might live in the Father (Jn 17:21).

This is eternal life. Christ is with us always, till the end of time (Mt 28:20). "If he is with us, why should we fear? No matter how dark the horizon of humanity may appear" said the Holy Father in his Easter message, "today we are here to celebrate the brilliant triumph of Easter joy. If a head wind should impede the people's journey; if the sea of history should become stormy; may no one give way to dismay or lose confidence. Christ is risen: Christ is alive amongst us, truly present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist."

"Be joyful bearers of the Risen Christ in this restless world which yearns for God and all that comes from God." This is the most beautiful wish that one could make for Easter. Let's bear Jesus first within ourselves, then to our brothers and sisters. He is the peace which the world seeks; He is the life which the world yearns after; He is the freedom which the world is unable to give; He is the truth which the world does not know. Mary loves us with a special love; if we accept her love we will not fail.

Peace and joy in the Risen Jesus and in Mary our Beloved Mother! N.Q.

Central African Republic: Missionaries escape

Alarming news reaches us from Missionaries in Central African Republic. A growing number of them are forced to escape, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries or return to their homelands.

After a failed attempt to overthrow the government by former Chief of Staff, now a rebel leader, the rebels began to raid villages and destroy, in particular, Catholic Missions. On a social level, the country is very tense, and in a recent statement, the nation's Bishops

spoke out against the small minority which enjoys all the nation's wealth while the rest live in dire poverty.

The Bishops' Conference of the Central African Republic, in a message to the political leaders, blamed the country's constant state of crisis for the lack of social wellbeing. The population is denied practically everything; with no medical assistance, proper nourishment, or schooling for the children. Teachers and other government workers have not received regular pay for several years.

Armed military - both regular military and rebels - violently attack town after town, entirely undisturbed. Capuchin friars from Bassangoa described the situation after the arrival of troops in town. They said that several men went to the Mission and confiscated the car and the little money they had, then after firing some shots they escaped.

In the meantime other rebels had gone to the Bishop's residence and destroyed newly-built offices, and set a dispensary on fire. Several days later the rebels came back armed with Kalash-nikov; they rounded up all the friars into a room and, threatening them, asked for money. They were either on drugs or were drunk; they wore turbans which hid their faces, and their eyes burned with hatred. Of course, they took away all that they could find: food, cars, money and electric battery chargers

The "visits" continued, each time with outbursts of violence. The raids were almost exclusively within the Catholic environment.

Many priests and nuns left the city when a Libyan aeroplane began to bomb the rebels. Following this episode a "witch-hunt" broke out to find the "informant." Consequently, a Frenchman (who worked in the orphanage) was killed, a local journalist who worked with the diocesan radio, and eight other people; all of them, of course, were innocent.

All the time, the radio was transmitting news of similar violence to other missionaries. A French priest, Jean Claude, was killed near the Cathedral and no one was able to attend to the funeral. Thankfully a rebel leader took compassion on the religious and told them to prepare to leave with the Red Cross. Hence, six nuns from Madagascar and one from France, plus two priests with thirty seminarians were to leave with them.

Bags were packed and unpacked several times, and the fathers felt bitter over having to leave behind the fruit of years of hard work. In the end the group left, escorted by some rebels, while others raided what was left of the mission. During the journey they were joined by other religious who had to abandon workshops and farms - the efforts of thirty years' work which had brought so much hope to the population.

Past abandoned villages and burnt homes, the group finally reached the Chad border and was welcomed by the Bishop and the local Church. From here they were taken to Ndjamena, then each of them went home, called back by their superiors. One of the nuns from Madagascar said: "I must return because my mission has not yet been fulfilled." And each of them felt the same, ready to go back to work, not at all disheartened by the weeks of fatigue, hardships and apprehension.

Sabina Rosciano

Church draws life from Eucharist

The Holy Father chose Holy Thursday - day of commemoration of the Institution of the Eucharist (at Last Supper) - to sign his 14th encyclical: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church).

Traditionally on this day JPII has written a Letter to Priests; this year he has wanted to involve the whole Church more fully in this Eucharistic reflection. In this, the 25th year of his Petrine ministry, the Pope desired donating to the community of Catholic faithful a document on the indisputable centrality of the Eucharist in the Church of Christ. The opening sentence is a wonderful synthesis: The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. going on to say: This truth is the heart of the mystery of the Church.

An extraordinarily profound document, it was written by the Holy Father to "rekindle Eucharistic amazement and gratitude." And given that in this historical moment - with all its "new tendencies" - the celebration of and devotion to the Eucharist is marked also by some shadows ("abuses, abandonment of Eucharistic adoration, confusion"), and that at times it has been stripped of its sacrificial meaning, and is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet; the document also intends to "help banish the dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice, so that the Eucharist will continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery." (10)

"The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation," stresses the Holy Father. "The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever anew, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister." (12)

The document, too rich in reflections to synthesize in this brief article, ought to be read in its entirety, for it would help us comprehend how each of us are called to unite ourselves personally to Christ's sacrifice and thereby contribute to the salvation of this ailing humanity. "The Church is called to offer herself in union with Christ's sacrifice. Taking part in the Eucharist .. the faithful offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves with it." (13)

We have just celebrated Christ's passover, which includes not only His Passion and Death, but also His Resurrection - which crowned His sacrifice. It is nice to know then, that with the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the secret of the Resurrection. "Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last hour' (Jn 6:54)." (18)

A deeper knowledge and awareness of the Eucharistic Mystery - to be gained from reading the document in full - would only help us to live it with greater responsibility and conviction. Understanding its immense value would only help us understand the importance of participating at the Eucharistic Celebration with greater fervour: "In

celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly 'liturgy' and become part of that great multitude which cries out: 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' (Rev 7:10). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth." (19)

Now, more than ever, our sense of responsibility as Christians in a world whose horizons are darkened by problems, is increased, not lessened. "It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth!" stresses the Pope. "For this reason, too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist."

It is natural, then, to accept the Lord's invitation to become a sacrament ourselves for humanity's sake: "Proclaiming the death of the Lord 'until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26) entails that all who take part in the Eucharist be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain way completely 'Eucharistic,' explains John Paul II. (20)

"By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant, far from closing in upon itself, becomes a 'sacrament' for humanity, a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ for the redemption of all." (22)

Might the testimony of faith in the Most Holy Eucharist by our beloved Pope accompany and strengthen our own faith! "When I think of the Eucharist, and look at my life as a priest, as Bishop and as the Successor of Peter, I naturally recall the many times and places in which I was able to celebrate it. I have been able to celebrate Holy Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares. This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly, this is the *mysterium fidei* which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to him redeemed by Christ." (8)

Redaz.

IN YEAR OF ROSARY: Accept John Paul II's challenge!

What is this challenge? It is believing that God truly loves us and that He wants to save us ("God loves His creatures, and He wants to save you, one by one" - message 25 March 2003). It is believing that prayer is our invincible weapon; that prayer accompanied by penance is stronger than today's nuclear and chemical weapons ("I repeat also today that only with prayer and fasting can wars, too, be stopped" - message 25 Feb. 2003). Again, it is believing that God Himself will fight for us and will defeat the enemy for us: "God's

name is great. He broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. The men of war were unable to use their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned" (cf. Ps 76:1-6).

What is the reason for this challenge? The Pope says it himself: "Today, as never before, mankind is at a crossroads. It possesses instruments which can make of this world a garden, or reduce it to a heap of wreckage. Once again, O Blessed Virgin, salvation is entirely in the hands of your Son Jesus." (From the Act of Entrustment to the BVM, Holy Year 2000)

If the Pope's many appeals are accompanied by a great trust in the promise made by Our Lady at Fatima ("In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"), and in the great message of mercy given by Our Lord to St. Faustina Kowalska; it is also true that we, as children of God, have to do our part, which is to live according to God's will and commandments. Mankind will not find peace until it turns with trust to my Mercy (message to St. Faustina); If my conditions are accepted there will be peace (Fatima). Msgr. Paul Hnilica, who fervently works for the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart, said recently: "God gave us two powerful means of protection for our time. One is the Immaculate Heart of His Mother, and the other is the Merciful Heart of His Son. In 1984 John Paul II consecrated the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart, and we've all seen the effects. Then, during his last trip to Poland in 2002, he consecrated mankind to the Divine Mercy. Our commitment to follow the Pope's example, however, is indispensable."

On every possible occasion, the Pope not only reminds us of our duty as Christians, but he offers us the means with which to move God's Heart to compassion. He recently asked us to pray and fast for peace (it was Ash Wednesday), and he has asked us to pray the Rosary for peace for a whole year (Oct. 2002 - Oct. 2003). At the same time, he never fails to remind us that "faith is not sufficient unless accompanied by love .. and the practice of the virtues.." (see his most recent encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 35, 36)

So in a word, it takes "conversion;" and here it is easy to see how the Pope echoes the voice of Mary (after all, his motto is: *Totus Tuus*). But whose voice does Mary echo when she asks us to pray the Rosary and to fast for peace - something she's been doing for nearly 22 years? Mary is the Lord's most humble Handmaid, and as such, she continues to promote the Father's will, and to us she continues to repeat: Do as my Son tells you! (Jn 2:5).

Therefore, it is God Himself Who asks of us this commitment. As a loving Father, it makes us think of parents asking their little child to take his first steps, their arms outstretched, practically surrounding him to make sure he doesn't fall, but letting him make as many little steps as possible. And when he falls, they pick him up and smother him in kisses and words of encouragement, contented with his efforts!

So let's accept this challenge! What have we to fear? We need only look at the Old Testament to see how God's People defeated their enemies with the weapons of trust in God and prayer! We immediately think of David and Goliath; and that other wonderful episode of the young Israelites who were thrown into the furnace but remained unharmed because an Angel of the Lord was with them, and with his breath kept the flames afar (Dt 3:24-50).

Msgr. Hnilica compares the Pope to Moses who kept his arms stretched upwards to guarantee victory for the Israelites. But Moses needed someone to hold his arms up, because when he got too tired his arms would fall back down, and the Israelites would lose. (cr. Ex 17:8-12). Also our Pope, John Paul II, needs us to help him "hold his arms up." We can help him by accepting the challenge; and we can defeat the enemy armed with great trust and fidelity, and with the daily recitation of the Rosary.

At Medjugorje, the Queen of Peace invited us to don the armour for battle. Our invincible armour; our five powerful pebbles, are: prayer with the heart, the Rosary, the Word of God, the Eucharist (daily if possible), and frequent confession (at least monthly).

To conclude, the Word of God teaches us to bless our enemies, and at Medjugorje Our Lady invites us to "pray for those who haven't yet known God's love." Msgr. Hnilica suggests that each Christian could "spiritually adopt ten Muslims" who suffer because of the war - they accuse Christians of their suffering; and they don't know forgiveness, but if we pray for them with all our faith and trust they will come to "know His love"!

Together, then, we can do it! We, Christ's soldiers, with John Paul II our captain, and as General our loving Mother! God will be with us; He won't take his gaze off us for an instant, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph! B.K.Drabsch

The Saint of the Paschal Mystery

By worldly standards she is little, one whom the world can't understand, whom the world calls foolish because they don't try to emerge above others, are scoffed at because of religious devotions, looked down upon because of dependency on others and because they are content with so little. The self-sufficient glance of the world, intoxicated by hedonism and social climbing, is in no way similar to that of God's, Who instead has always shown a preference for the simple, the humble and the least.

Saint GEMMA GALGANI was visited by Jesus, Mary, the Saints and the Angels; for such was the disarming humility and purity of this young Italian woman; of whom this year is the 100th anniversary (of her death which occurred on 11 April 1903).

An impressive list of extraordinary phenomena surrounded Gemma. Though not unlike those granted to other mystics, it is also true that not many are given to experience the Passion of Christ so intensely; and what else if not the Paschal Mystery is more central to Christianity? Gemma had conformed her life totally to that of Christ's, and was transformed completely in Him. The Lord Himself gave her an appointment on Calvary; yet for Gemma the Passion she experienced on her flesh was natural.

DAUGHTER OF A PHARMACIST - Born in 1878 in Tuscany, Italy, Gemma was one of eight children. Well loved by her father, a pharmacist, she was also carefully educated in the Christian faith by her mother who died when Gemma was only eight. This marked the beginning of a series of sorrowful events which were but the first steps along Gemma's

way of the cross. The death of her father and of her favourite brother, and the dire financial straits in which they found themselves were but indications of her future existence.

CHILD OF PRAYER - At a very early age Gemma loved to pray and meditate; "to be with God." This inner life gave her the strength to overcome all her sufferings, and it prepared her to become a "lightning conductor" for the suffering of others.

When she became severely ill and was paralyzed, and the doctors excluded all hope of a cure, Heaven made itself even closer. When a friend suggested she pray to a young Passionist who had died not long before and would soon be canonized; a certain "Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows," she replied: "No thank you, Jesus is all I need." But upon reading the life of Gabriel, Gemma was fascinated and chose him as her patron. She was not even terribly surprised when in a moment of particular spiritual torpor, he appeared to her and with a gesture of tenderness called her "my sister." He became her faithful friend; he helped her pray a novena which would obtain for Gemma a miraculous healing; he prayed the Divine Office with her, and awoke in her the desire to become a Passionist Nun, though this dream of hers would be fulfilled only at her death.

This was the beginning of a wonderful adventure in which Gemma would become more familiar with the citizens of Heaven than with human beings; a friendship which she considered completely normal and ordinary, and was surprised at the amazement of others. Such is the might of humble souls!

ANGEL DELIVERED MAIL - Another of Gemma's daily companions was her guardian angel, who was friend, brother and confidant to Gemma. Not only did Gemma entrust to him her prayers, but also the letters she wrote to her spiritual director. Moreover, her angel never failed to deliver them. "As soon as I finish the letter," Gemma wrote, "I entrust it to my angel. He is here next to me, waiting." And quite mysteriously the letters would be delivered. "Don't be angered if I use my guardian angel as a postman, but I don't have the money to buy stamps," she once justified herself with incredible innocence when the priest had appeared perplexed.

"I WILL BE YOUR MOTHER." - Saints know only too well that having recourse to Mary is the best and quickest way of getting to Jesus ' Heart. Gemma was devoted to Our Lady of Sorrows who would appear to her each Saturday, full of motherly concern, and would caress her and kiss her, and in difficult moments would console her by covering her with her mantle. Mary once asked: "I will be your mother; and will you be a true daughter of mine?."

MAGISTERIUM OF SORROW - Love in its deepest form, that which enflames souls, was how Gemma loved Jesus who first showed Himself to her on Holy Thursday in 1899 with open and bleeding wounds. The vision caused her to experience a piercing sorrow for her sins which, she was certain, were the cause of her Lord's wounds. "Look, my daughter," Jesus told her, "and learn how to love. First learn to suffer; for suffering will

teach you how to love." Gemma understood that the "cross is the throne for those who truly love," and from then on all that counted was (to console) Jesus crucified.

HER ONLY TEACHER - Gemma felt very much at ease with Jesus and loved to engage in lengthy conversation with Him, addressing Him in loving and confidential tones. When her confessor warned her against being too confidential with Him, Jesus replied to Gemma: "I am saddened, for I wish that people would use more confidence with me." Gemma turned her heart into a little cloister and would seek refuge there. Her inner life was so intense that to outsiders she may have seemed absent, but Gemma was so consumed by love for the divine Spouse that her only desire was to stay with Him and contemplate Him. Though she received visits from the Lord (Who would appear to Gemma physically), her great desire was to receive Him in the Eucharist. It is then that "Jesus possesses me and I possess Him," she wrote.

Like other mystics, Gemma understood that the abyss of her misery called upon the abyss of God's mercy. Through daily Communion, in the Eucharist, this encounter was a wonderful reality.

"AN APPOINTMENT ON CALVARY" which neither of them failed to keep! On the eve of the feast of the Sacred Heart the Lord impressed on her flesh the signs of His Passion. Not the only mystic to receive the stigmata, Gemma wasn't a doctor of the Church (as in the case of St. Teresa of Avila), she didn't found an order (St. Francis of Assisi); she wasn't known to Popes (St. Catherine of Siena), and she didn't enjoy the protection of convent walls (St. Veronica Giuliani). Gemma was but a young girl; so simple, honest, modest and reserved that she appeared to be ignorant. Her hidden life was sanctified by her readiness to serve and her ability to forget herself. Her stigmata would begin to bleed Thursday evenings till Friday at 3 pm when they would close. Extremely naïve, Gemma thought that everyone who took vows received these wounds (she took private vows with her Bishop's permission).

NO ONE IS A PROPHET IN HIS HOMETOWN. Taken in as a daughter by the devout and well-to-do Giannini family - benefactors of the Passionists - she spent her days in prayer at home or at church, but walls could not contain the supernatural events which surrounded her: conversions, foretelling of events, ecstasies, while praying she would sweat droplets of blood, and besides the signs of the nails, also the wounds of the scourging and the coronation of thorns would appear on her flesh.

Scientists were embarrassed; and some spiritual directors judged her wrongly, suspecting she suffered from auto-suggestion or hysteria, and demanded proof and obedience. Only Gemma, amid physical suffering and moral trials, always remained silent; or rather, always said "yes." Gemma never asked for anything; she would turn only to Jesus and ask to be given more sorrow and more pain, that others might convert and be saved.

HOUR OF DARKNESS - Satanic attacks can be particularly violent upon those who offer themselves for the salvation of others. Gemma was not spared of terrible, violent diabolic

oppression - both physical and spiritual. Satan once warned her: "as long as what you do is for yourself, do as you wish; but woe to you if you do anything for the sake of sinners!" If God, however, allows Satan to act for the benefit of souls, it is so that they are able to mature. Likewise, He also allows a person to suffer from spiritual aridity (the "dark night"), incomprehension, and total abandonment. The soul is thus offered the chance to become ever more detached from self and from the things of the world so that God alone can dwell in it. And this is the case of Gemma; but what was it that sustained her in her suffering? Of course, it was solely her love for Jesus; for if love is sustenance in suffering, it is also true that suffering strengthens one's love.

"I NEED SOULS who will offer themselves" - This request is not surprising. Many times, through the Saints, and through His Mother, Jesus has asked those who love Him to offer, sacrifice, make atonement, make amends.

At Fatima Mary asked the three shepherd children: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

At Medjugorje, the Queen of Peace said: "Satan is strong. It is for this that I ask for your prayers, and that you offer them to me for those who are under his influence, that they might be saved. Witness with your lives, and sacrifice your lives for the salvation of the world" (25 Feb. 1988).

Mary Immaculate is asking us to respond generously; and she desires for us to be more deeply united to her deeds as Co-Redemptrix.

Gemma and others like her - with special calls - responded by consuming themselves totally; theirs was a radical sacrifice. We are being asked to make an offering of our daily lives, and to imitate the saints in their humbleness, their inner silence, and their capacity to empty themselves so that Jesus can fill them; for He desires offering Himself in us so He can climb back onto the cross and save His children.

ALL IS ACCOMPLISHED! - Gemma had ardently desired entering a monastery to live her life of sacrifice hidden from the world. It was God's will that she would always have come across refusal, and thus be exposed to the world, to those for whom she suffered (in particular, Jesus asked her to offer herself for the sake of priests: "Oh how many there are that I would strike down at the altar; if it weren't for these Angels who surround me!"). Due to her illness, Gemma had been isolated, thus suffering abandonment, both in the interior and exterior sense - to the very last, similar to the Lord. It was on HOLY SATURDAY of 1903 the day of rest prior to the Resurrection when Gemma was definitely united to the glory of her celestial Spouse!

Stefania Consoli

They said of Gemma.

PIO XII (Pope) - "Gemma Galgani was so consumed by the fire of divine love that not

only did she offer herself to God in atonement for the sins of men, but she tried to communicate to as many as possible the holy flame which burned within her." (From the homily at her canonization.)

ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, in a letter to his mother said: "I have Gemma's biography. This is the third time I've read it. The good I get from reading it is more beneficial than attending spiritual exercises." The holiness of Gemma and her zeal to console Jesus is perfectly befitting Kolbe's own desire and aspirations. "Love without limits!" he read in Gemma's diary. If both of them understood the language of the cross it is because both were attentive to the desires of their Queen, Mary Immaculate.

Fr. DIVO BARSOTTI (theologian) - The doctrinal message behind Gemma's holiness is as high and solemn and universal as that of St. Therese of Lisieux. If this hasn't yet been recognized it is only for the lack of good theologians able to express it. In the history of Christian spirituality St. Gemma is almost unique. Her naivety is so incredible it's puzzling. The extraordinary phenomena which marked her life take on a degree of normality in this atmosphere of innocence.

A NEED FOR TENDERNESS

"When you love don't say 'I have God in my heart,' but rather: 'I am in God's heart.' These words by Gibran help us reflect more deeply on man's need for tenderness in a time when man of the modern western world prefers to reason with his head, despite the evident fruits of violence. To learn how to give one must first learn how to receive.

The desire to be the absolute protagonist leaves no space for anyone else, and this gives way to the justification of violence in all its physical and psychological forms. Instead, when hearts are receptive and open to God's gift - in the imitation of the Trinitarian God - one discovers that also receiving is divine; and that divine is not only to love, but to let oneself be loved. In eternity, the Son, the Beloved Son, eternally receives the Father's love; while in history, He is "the one who is received." In turn He receives everything from God Who sent Him and Who hands Him over to death for our sake.

This primacy of receiving is the basis for giving - of a giving which is not totalitarian or violent. Without gratitude, even gratuity might appear to intrude, or worse, to want to eliminate. So tenderness is letting oneself be loved; to be "receptive" so that the gift received (which comes from a contagious love) is able to bud within, and bring peace. Tenderness is saying thank you with one's life. To thank is joyous because it humbly acknowledges that you are loved. We see then that tenderness turns over the logic of an era dominated by the triumphalism of ideologies, the potential violence of which is intrinsic. Tenderness prepares the life styles of the new millennium to receptiveness, to reciprocity, to appreciation of what is different - no longer seen as competition or a threat, but as a promise or gift. So when the ego is freed of its absolute pretences, tenderness plays its part, making it weaker, poorer, more in need of love; and this makes it more hospitable, more able to build bridges of peace and itineraries of friendly and brotherly communion.

Tenderness for self is acknowledging oneself as a gift of God; and acting accordingly: one

who has received gratuitously desires donating himself gratuitously.

Tenderness for one's neighbour is opening oneself up to the advent of the Other who visits us (God present in others) to fulfil our solitude, while inviting us to come out of ourselves forever; which is charitable love.

Tenderness for creation is seeing everything as a gift to be respected and promoted, and repaying with praise and service for all that is given us as nourishment, enrichment and protection by God's creatures.

Tenderness for people is discovering that we are a human family and our house is the world, and that we are called to share the earth's resources equally amongst us. The evil system of dependence whereby the rich get richer and the poor poorer must be crushed.

These varied faces of tenderness are rooted in faith. God's tender loving care is for all living creatures. Similar to a mother's womb, the world lives within the night of divine mystery. The Trinity - the holy Mother of all that exists - bears us within herself.

Enveloped in this love which the Son revealed to us - to the point of giving up for us His life and His Spirit of resurrection - we experience the divine tenderness in which everything is transfigured and through which even the impossible is made possible with the audacity of love. Bruno Forte

One Palm Sunday...

We were at the gates of Jerusalem - the Divine Teacher was about to cross through them, and we, his disciples, were called to follow him.

Christ was riding a donkey. Also the day he entered Bethlehem he was on donkey back, only then he wasn't alone, for he was with Mary, or rather, in Mary's womb. In search of lodgings he was refused by all; born into the world he was acknowledged and adored.

The Sunday prior to Easter, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, mantels were laid before him, but then, no longer acknowledged, he was nailed to a cross. Still, on donkey back was he riding. Happy beast! Humble, simple, considered stupid, yet so close to his Creator in the important moments of His existence: when Jesus was about to enter the world and when he was about to leave it.

Unaware was the beast, but not his rider whose choice of animal is significant. It shows the Lord's preference for the least, the humble, the marginalized, for those who willingly lend their backs to carry the burdens of others, just as the donkey did for Jesus.

The gentle animal doesn't even demand reward for his work, but is happy to breathe warm air over the newborn babe, or to return from where he came - as on the day at Bethany. No one, however, can remove the fact that he served the Lord.

Which category do we belong to, we who call ourselves Christians? To the "donkeys" or the "masters"? What do we boast? To have laid down our mantels or to have borne the weight of the Messiah already laden with the sins of the world? Who do we choose to be, we who are called to walk along the path of the beatitudes and are so tempted by human honours?

Shall we remain faithful, as the donkey did, or will we follow after an inconsistent heart that first embraces then scourges?

Let's stop a moment and think. Is it really convenient to pretend we are wise, whilst ignoring the truth; or should we risk looking like donkeys in the name of He who died for us to uphold the Truth?

Stefania Consoli

News from the Blessed Land

Medjugorje, a new Pentecost Holy Spirit grants Church whole truth on God

Even everyday things at Medjugorje have an inner side. All Medjugorje's events are rooted in the Holy Spirit - He invigorates the Church, giving her God's life. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church during her pilgrimage to the Father. With His help, the Church - body of Christ - is able to grow to fullness. In the body of Christ the Holy Spirit faces the hatred of the world (Jn 17:14).

At Medjugorje the Church is founded on the Holy Spirit in a more evident, more credible, more complete and more successful way. The Holy Spirit provides the Church with the complete truth about God, about herself and about the world where she is present. The so-called new world order is evident for all to see. This order is not dominated by God, but by a pseudo-religious syncretism. In this syncretism the errors which were once considered heretic have now become a dogma; not even the Church is immune. Today, Christians and Christianity are not the same. In many traditionally-Christian European nations, Christianity has become a minority. For some time Europe has been torn apart by completely different ideologies which have dominated over the faith with fanaticism and have shoved the Church to the margins.

Conversion

The only cure for the heresies within the Church is conversion. Our Lady's requests at Medjugorje; those things which she has emphasized, cannot be held up as reason to doubt the apparitions. I have yet to hear a converted person deny the apparitions. Only those who haven't converted deny; and these no doubt find that also the Gospel is too demanding. Conversion, both within the Church and without, is the essential condition whereby everything can improve. Conversion puts man on the right starting place, a place which he lost because of his sin.

The answer to today's calamities is in Our Lady's messages. Those who still have doubts about the apparitions, have no reason whatsoever to refuse the messages/teachings which accompany the apparitions, because they are perfectly evangelical. The most important thing isn't the flow of pilgrims, nor the elevated number of confirmed miracles; but that millions of people have felt obliged to deepen their faith and turn to God whom they had abandoned and wronged.

Place of love and accord

The basis for those who gain spiritual formation at Medjugorje is the Gospel acclaimed by

the very lips of "the Mother of all men and in particular of all believers" (Vatican Council II). It truly is an extraordinary miracle that so many people, from so many different parts of the world and of different cultural and civil extract, of different ages and races, are able to be so strongly and so sincerely united in the same sentiment and conviction as brothers and sisters. Here, no one is a stranger for anyone; no one is offended by anyone.

Reciprocally given and received, love and respect are a fount of strength which enables pilgrims to overcome all social, civil and linguistic obstacles, and to create fraternal relationships which would otherwise be difficult to establish.

In the encounter with another person, both are enriched, particularly thanks to the religious experience (of Medjugorje). This experience widens people's horizons and destroys the barriers of narrow-mindedness and egoism. In general, people become more sensitive to the misfortunes and needs of others.

Many, despite the distance, return again and again to Medjugorje (some as many as 50 times). They wouldn't do this if it weren't because tis here that they've found what had so far eluded them.

The Holy Spirit

A profound analysis of all that happens at Medjugorje brings one back to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. His work consists in the consecration and salvation of mankind. Through the Spirit, God comes into contact with the world, and people turn more closely to the Father.

Medjugorje is the Pentecost of today; and the same Holy Spirit makes us see this. This is the place in which Jesus' disciples gathered together with Our Lady after Jesus' Ascension into Heaven.

Gathered round Mary, the Church prays. The Holy Spirit comes and pours out His grace (faith, conversion, prophecy) and from Him come the gifts of healing and miracles. He changes people and the face of the earth, He urges pilgrims, from all over the world, to gather round the Blessed Virgin, who wants to speak to them.

All those who come to Medjugorje and who convert here, have done it thanks to the help of the Holy Spirit. Not a single grace is given if not through Him. The millions of people who here have confessed, abandoned sin and changed their precedent behaviour, have done it thanks to the collaboration and grace of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who granted them the strength to overcome their sin and to break their sinful habits.

Conditions for real peace

Renewed relationship with God, faith, conversion, and love of God and of neighbour become normal things, and relations with other elements, including nature, are corrected. These are the conditions for true peace. The greatest obstacle for true peace is man. When man is not orderly from within, the world cannot be orderly either. Man is transformed thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit; He makes man a worthy participant in the world's nature, He helps him build peace and to spread it throughout the world. Fra Ljudevit Rupcic'

(Liberally reduced from "Medjugorje, Gate to Heaven and Beginning of a Better World")

Medjugorje Today: Who.. what.. when..

With the arrival of spring Medjugorje appears to have awoken from its winter sleep. The change is visible not only in the surrounding nature - with the first snowdrops, cyclamens and narcissi shooting up from the ground, and the chirping of the first swallows who've come back to their nests - but the awakening of Medjugorje is seen above all in the vivacity, the number and the variety of pilgrims who make the Shrine of the Queen of Peace a world centre of Catholic spirituality.

THE PARISH PROGRAMME

During the evening programme of prayer organized by the Parish of St. James, the church fills to capacity with faithful both from neighbouring and faraway lands, so that often it is very difficult to get in at all. This and other difficulties - such as language problems and different cultures - are easily overcome thanks precisely to the presence of Mary: a presence which is strongly perceived. An atmosphere of communion and unity is quickly established and pilgrims have no difficulty at all in seeing each other as brothers and sisters; all children of the same Mother, all belonging to the same family called the Church.

The evening prayer programme consists in the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary prior to Mass, the 7 Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's after Mass, then the Glorious mysteries. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, after Mass, there is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; and Adoration of the Cross on Fridays. The various moments of prayer are accompanied by reflections and intercessory prayers by the Franciscan Priests which are translated simultaneously into five languages.

THE COMMUNITIES

The Parish activities are also animated by the various Communities present at Medjugorje, such as the musical support at evening Adoration. Choir members, in fact, are from these Communities.

Last year this involvement of the Communities to help animate the Parish activities blossomed into a new idea, which was to call them to help animate the programme of Christmas festivities. No sooner said than done! The Liturgy was splendid, thanks also to the presence of the large polyphonic choir accompanied by violin, flute and other instruments.

Besides the commitment to living their personal call and charisma, it turned out to be the occasion for the Communities to find new stimulus for common service. From this came the need for further occasions in which they could pray together and share experiences. One of these was held on the feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, a feast which the Church celebrates as a "Day of the Consecrated." Nearly all the members of the Communities present in Medjugorje gathered at the House of Prayer at the "Kraljice Mira" Community.

After common prayer a representative of each Community presented his own spiritual family, with its history, activities and charisma. The refreshment that followed gave the

members the opportunity to know each other better and to celebrate with songs and dances. The encounter was a very joyous one and everyone hoped that it could be repeated.

THE VOLUNTEERS

Another fruit, it seems, is budding in Medjugorje. It is the association of volunteers. Many pilgrims, once they've been to Medjugorje and have converted, feel the need to help in some way; to give some of their time to Mary. Besides those who've become priests or religious, and those who organize pilgrimages or join prayer groups, there are also those who remain in Medjugorje, not because they couldn't accept life elsewhere, and not even because they were running away from reality; but because they found their place as lay people in the parish as volunteers.

It is true that many nourish the desire of remaining at least several months at the Shrine and to thank the Blessed Virgin in this way for the graces received.

It is our hope that the association of volunteers might promptly find a precise allocation within the parish of St. James and thus be of help to all those who would like to place their own knowledge and abilities at the disposal of the Shrine, for the greater glory of the Queen of Peace.

With this we have expressed but a minor part of the good being offered by people at Medjugorje. One thing is certain, at the Shrine of the Queen of Peace the world and the Church are reborn!

Nenad Palic

Mirjana's Yearly Message

As usual, on the 18th March, visionary Mirjana Soldo received her annual apparition by Our Lady. Numerous pilgrims were present for the occasion to receive the message which Mary would have granted to the world through Mirjana - a message which would lead us ever more profoundly towards a radical response to her calls:

"Dear Children, particularly now in this holy time of penance and prayer, I call you to make a choice. God granted you the free will to choose between life and death. Listen to my messages with the heart and discern what you should do and how to find the journey that leads to life. My Children, without God you can do nothing! Remember this always! For what are you and what do you think you can become if you are to end up underground anyway? Do not anger God, but follow me to life. Thank you for being here."

The Prayer Group: birthplace for Trinitarian life

In previous articles and editions we've said that Padre TOMISLAV VLASIC was the spiritual director of the prayer group which Mary led in Medjugorje through messages given to Jelena and Marjana Vasilj. We asked Fr. Tomislav to tell us - in the light of this experience - how best to form a prayer group according to Mary's guidelines.

"I receive numerous requests from people who desire knowing how to pray. They ask this after having been on pilgrimages to various Marian Shrines, including Medjugorje. Some are leaders of prayer groups; and since it is not always easy for some to continue along the spiritual journey undertaken, they ask how the group in Medjugorje prays. I shall therefore attempt to trace out a path.

First of all, it should be said that "by praying one learns to pray." The important thing is not the method of prayer, but rather, a sincere desire to find God and to live in communion with Him. This is the basis for the formation of a group: it is important that group members seek God. A group needs a leader, and where possible a priest to accompany the group. In any case, a group must be able to refer to a priest, and through him, to the Church.

Members should also have a clear idea of what type of group they wish to form. A serious group which desires journeying towards Christian maturity and holiness requires a solid base. Hence, members must be serious, mature, and decisive, to allow God's communion to develop amongst them. Small groups are better than big groups.

Prayer groups in Medjugorje enjoy an atmosphere of special grace, so they can serve as models for others, and their experience can be useful for others. Hence, considering the grace of Medjugorje and the events of Medjugorje as guide-lines, I have drawn up two prayer schemes as indications.

First and fundamental prayer scheme

In the parish of Medjugorje the events which have been unfolding over the years can be grouped into a "triangle." Seeing this will help us comprehend and accept the spiritual dynamics of these events.

The vertexes of this triangle are three very precise places. One is Podbrdo where Our Lady first appeared on the 25th June 1981. Another is Krizevac, the mountain of the Cross which was erected in the Jubilee year of 1933. The third one is the parish church where God's people gather together. These three vertexes are part of an unending vortex of grace. Whatever happens in one recalls what is happening in the other two.

Podbrdo, place of apparitions by Queen of Peace

The Most Holy Virgin attracts us to Herself. She is our Mother, the Mother of Christ's Church, the Mother of God. Mary is the dawn of salvation, the Immaculata, the redeemed creature. Mary is God's grace for us. Each person's life begins in his mother's womb, so also in our spiritual life we turn first of all to the Mother, entrusting ourselves to her Immaculate Heart, so she can lead us to God. It is a step everyone should take, independent of whether there is a special Marian presence or not at a particular place.

At **Biakovici** (in the parish of Medjugorje) six visionaries received the special grace of seeing Our Lady and receiving messages from Her. The essence of these messages is to entrust ourselves to Our Lady, and to journey alongside Her so we can reach our destination which is life with God. I cite the following very eloquent message; the others

are similar: "Dear Children, also today I invite you to complete conversion, which is difficult for all those who have not chosen God. I invite you, dear Children, to turn completely to God. (...) I pray for you every day, and I desire bringing you ever closer to God, but I cannot unless you also desire it. Thus, my dear Children, place your lives in the hands of God. I bless you.." (25 Jan. 1988).

So to begin a journey of prayer, one must decide for God above all else. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). A person's soul can thus journey towards God and his glory without worrying about immediate needs. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well" (Mt 6:33). When our yes to God and to His plan of salvation is sincere, complete and entrusted to Mary, she will protect and guide it with motherly care. When truly open to Mary one perceives Her protective and guiding hand.

Krizevac

There is no need to look for crosses, as life presents us with plenty. Christian wisdom is knowing how to face them, and trying to overcome them without losing peace of mind. When tried, a Christian turns his gaze to Jesus nailed to the cross. To look at Him helps to understand the mystery of life. Those who are united to Him are lifted up and brought to enter the full life (Phil 2:5-11).

Mary walks alongside us as we journey up the way of the cross. She unites herself to Christ's sacrifice and she entrusts us to Him, so that together we might reach the Father. Our life reaches maturity, and it enters the fullness of life when we are able to offer ourselves and others, and when we unite all our sacrifices to Christ's sacrifice, and become a part of His prayer. Through this we are lifted up to the Father, and Satan's power is annulled. "My Children, also today I desire inviting you to pray and to surrender yourselves totally to God. You know that I love you, and out of love I come here to show you the way of peace and of salvation for your souls. I want you to obey me, and not to let Satan seduce you. ..Satan is strong, hence I ask for your prayers ..offer them to me for those under his influence, that they might be saved. Witness with your lives; sacrifice your lives for the salvation of the world. (..) Don't be worried; if you pray Satan cannot hinder you in the slightest, for you are God's children and He keeps watch over you. Pray! May the rosary beads be always in your hands, as a sign to Satan that you belong to me.." (25 Feb. 1988).

Everything in us and through us, in union with Jesus Christ, is thus raised up to the Father." (to be continued)

Readers will recall the interview with Jelena Vasilj in which she shared reflections on her imminent marriage. After several months of married life Jelena now compares her experience as bride with that of Mary's, trying to draw example and inspiration, particularly now that she is expecting a child.

In a message for the prayer group, Our Lady once told her: "I desire that you go, together with me, always towards the Lord Who is calling you. You will find Him in all the

persons who need you. Give yourselves to God in them. Each day consecrate yourselves to me."

Mary, model for spouses

by Jelena Vasilj

There is little written about Mary's married life; certainly far fewer pages than those written on her life as mother. Yet it is in her life as a bride that we have a key of comprehension not only of the history of salvation, but also of the story behind every vocation, which is founded on her example.

Mary fulfilled God's eternal plan. He - Who makes communion within Himself - came to mankind as its spouse, and also to prepare His own bride. His bride is the new Jerusalem. Mary generously accepts to be a part of this plan - which is incarnated in her own womb. While living at Nazareth, she is both Joseph's bride, and bride of the Holy Spirit. Mary's role as bride and her role as mother of the Word makes her a model for all those who are united in matrimony or who, as consecrated religious, have given themselves totally to God. So to understand what happens in us it is helpful to contemplate what happens in Mary, who is "full of the Holy Spirit."

Also for us, marriage is a continuous down-pouring of Grace; fruit of the Sacrament; fruit of the initial spark which kindled the fire of the Holy Spirit and which pervades our beings. It is a true and proper consecration, a case of really belonging, of a constant transformation had through continuous prayer. When God unites us in marriage, His Grace sanctifies soul and body. United in matrimony our body becomes a vehicle of holiness so that we too might be profoundly associated with His creative action, as Mary was.

What happens within us is holy; it is an immense gift through which we are able to participate in God's action. It is an icon of His, but also ours; it bears His mark, but also ours, because it expresses the dignity God granted to man through allowing him to participate in the creation of a person - and it will endure for ever. We are at His service not only through our actions, but also with our beings, because the love which invests us is of the same tissue which makes up our union.

With this awareness we have understood that Mary's state of matrimony is her fecundity; it is her Christ. We, then, opened ourselves up to life; we opened ourselves up to her Christ Who comes to us in the form of a child. This child is already alive within me and will be born in June. The life of this little babe doesn't finish with the act of procreation, but continually affirms the other spouse, as a gift of God. To keep this life going it is necessary that we stay beneath Mary's mantle, in her home, in her Nazareth. So just the way she did, we also place Jesus at the centre of our lives so we can remain in her home. We do this, first of all, with the Rosary, then by reading the Holy Scripture. Of course, the television must be off, and there must be a great deal of interest in each other.

The greatest risk for a couple, in fact, is not realizing that Christ is in your other half. It is not noticing the "naked person in need of clothing," "the hungry person in need of food,"

"the weary person sitting at the well waiting to be given a drink." But through Mary's holy intercession, our every deed can acquire a supernatural level, so that even in the little things and our humble service, we know that we are earning our piece of heaven. However, Mary is not just a model for married life, for both as individuals and as couples we are called to live our union together with her, and especially in the Eucharist since the Body we receive is also hers. Jesus' humanity, which comes from Mary's, is the instrument of our salvation. Therefore, our humanity united to His is the new humanity unknown to Eve. It is through our baptism that we are given to experience this new humanity; and again through the sacrament of marriage. If it weren't for this new bond, all human love would surely fail. It is Mary who intercedes on our behalf and acts as mediatrix of grace for our marriage. We entrust ourselves to her, Queen of the Families, so that in us and in our family that which began with Her might be completed in us. Mary, Queen of the Families, pray for us.

Mail from readers

Francis M. Okere, Nigeria: Thanks to God for your wonderful publication which lifts our heart up to God. May He reward you now and always as you work in His vine-yard, through the intercession of Our Lady.

Sr. Teresa, Song-Hi, S. Korea: You are in my heart. Please be assured of my prayers for you all.

Margaret Scrogings, Australia: Heartfelt thanks for the Echo. It renews, invigorates and informs us.

Fr. Mario, Assam, India: I've been in India for 64 years, and I wish to thank you for the Echo which brings us news of Mary's messages. It arrives regularly, and brings a breath of Marian spirituality with it.

Gambino, Saronno, Italy: Thank you for the precious publication which brings joy, serenity and desire to pray, and much peace.

Alfiero Dinello, Vicenza, Italy: God grant you joy and peace, and reward your efforts with each passing day. Your publication fortifies me; just as food strengthens our bodies, so does the good contained in Echo strengthen our souls.

Silvana, Pordenone, Italy: What immense joy each time I receive Echo. It is a Christian guide for my everyday life. Thank you for the happiness it brings me. For those who've been to Medjugorje, Echo is a continuation of Mary's protection. To read it is to experience Her motherly love.

Gay Russell, Malawi, Africa: Thank you for your marvellous, tireless work in continuing the wonderful newsletter begun by dear Fr. Angelo.

Pope's Silver Jubilee - To show our love to JP2, why not mark the occasion of his silver jubilee on 16th October with Holy Mass being celebrated for his intentions in as many parts of the world as possible? See your parish priest and ask for a mass for the Pope's intentions on 16th October. If possible, log on to www.jp2-jubilee.org to record the Mass. (Pat Ryan, Surrey)

Request for Rosary beads, medals, holy pictures, etc. Fr. S. John Joseph, Carmel Church, Kakkavery, 637 415, Namakkal, Dt. T.N. India.
ALSO: Sr. Teresa Theruvamkunnel FMA, Auxilium Convent School, Bandel Hooghly P. O., West Bengal 712 103, India.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life.."

"Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluja;

For He Whom you merited to bear, alleluja,

Has risen as He said, allelujah,

Pray for us to God, alleluja."

May the blessing of the Risen One reach your hearts and remain with you always!

Villanova M. 8 May 2003

* To submit your donations (personal cheques payable to "Echo of Mary Association" are accepted) and for any other correspondence write to:

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Our Prayers for you! Please join in our prayers which we offer up to God on the first Saturday of each month. On this day we shall pray for the intentions of readers (these may

be expressed within the silence of your hearts and offered up in prayer; it is not necessary that they be written down and forwarded to us). Once a month Fr. Alberto will also celebrate a Holy Mass for the same intentions.

Echo is a free publication. Donations are gratefully accepted; without them we cannot continue to spread the Message to Mary's little children around the world.