



ECHO OF MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE No. 173

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Our Lady's message, 25 November 2003:

“Dear Children, I would like this time to be even greater incentive for you to pray. In this time, my Children, pray that Jesus may be born in all hearts, especially in the hearts of those who do not know Him.

Be love, joy and peace in this world without peace. I am with you and I intercede before God for each of you. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Be love, joy and peace

This time in which Mary visits, instructs and guides us is a very special time of grace. “May this time be even greater incentive for you to pray,” she says in her message. “This time” is Advent which is about to begin, and also the time of Her visits to Medjugorje. The duration of this event (the first apparition was on 24 June 1981), and the frequency of Her visits make Mary's presence in Medjugorje an ordinary presence. This is the surprising novelty when compared to Lourdes and Fatima. The ordinary aspect of these apparitions could generate habit in those who are only interested in being informed on the facts. On the other hand, it is a divine school of life for those who strive to live Her messages day by day.

Surrender, prayer and fasts make our relationship with God more authentic. The surrender of self to God is to always accept His will, in the certainty that it coincides with His mercy (which Jesus taught to St. Faustina Kowalska). Prayer is communion with God, the acceptance of His Word, the veneration of His Presence; it is elevation to the Father in Jesus. It is useless to utter barren, empty words (Is 1:11-17; Mt 7:21). Fasting is practising sobriety in life, such as abstaining from food, renouncing whatever is superfluous, abusive or oppressive. Fasting is to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke; fasting is to share your bread with the hungry, bring the homeless poor into your house, and to clothe the naked (Is 58:6-7).

“Pray that Jesus may be born in all hearts, especially in the hearts of those who do not know Him.” This is an invitation to prepare for Christmas; to prepare ourselves so we can receive Jesus, but we must accept Him in all His truth, not as we imagine Him to be. Let us accept Him so that our suffering might complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions (Col 1:24), and so that as we pass with Him through the valley of tears it might become a place of springs (cf. Ps 84:7). Let us accept Him so that everything in us: joys and sorrows, health and illness, might be offered to the Father in Jesus; and we shall become “love, joy and peace in this world without peace.”

Be love, be joy, be peace. Just talking about love, joy and peace isn’t enough. The world is full of these words; but in the world it is rare to find people who are themselves love, joy and peace. It is possible, however, and within our reach, and today more so than ever, because it is for this that Mary comes to us at Medjugorje; for also today she ensures us that she is “with us and intercedes before God for each of us.”

Let us, then, allow God’s Spirit to penetrate us - He already intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words (Rom 8:26) – and we will become witnesses and bearers of Jesus’ love and peace (Lk 2:14; Jn 14:27) and of His joy (Lk 2:10).

If only we should desire this with all our heart, our mind and our strength; oh how we would change and become new and beautiful and how everything else around us would also change! May this be our Christmas gift for our dear ones, for those who are close to us, and those who are far and hostile to us, for our neighbours who are sick and suffering.. Mary will also take this gift to those we don’t know but who anxiously await the revealing of the sons of God (Rom 8:19).

Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary!

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady’s message of 25 December 2003:

”Dear Children! Also today I bless you all with my Son Jesus in my arms and I bring Him, the King of Peace, to you that He might grant you His peace. I am with you and I love you all, my Children. Thank you for responding to my call.”

KING OF PEACE

“The loving kindness of the heart of our God visits us like the dawn from on high. He will give light to those in darkness, those who dwell in the shadow of death, and guide us into

the way of peace” (Lk 1:78-79) proclaims Zechariah in the Cantic of the Benedictus. The way is long: it was opened 2000 years ago; and yet it is brief: no longer than a man’s life-span. The way is difficult and hard, but it is the way inaugurated by the Son of God, and it leads to God.

How much light in the world since His birth! Yet if darkness persists, do not fear, but accept the prophet’s call: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” (Is 60:1). Let there be no fear, no doubt, for the world is in God’s hands: “I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war” (Hos 2:18); the wound inflicted upon nature with the first sin will be healed: “the wolf will dwell with the lamb” (Is 11:6). Rise, put on the “true light, that enlightens every man” (Jn 1:9).

Whether you are full of energy or bedridden, pious and devout or rebellious and drowning in sin: accept His light, open yourself up to His love, and the Lord’s glory will shine in you and above you. Do not fear, God is with you. From the holy night of Christmas He is eternally present in man. Welcome Him into your life; accept Him so He can become a gift for those near you and for the whole world.

The Kingdom moves through you; it needs your faith, your readiness, and your fiat offered to the Father – in the imitation of Jesus’ offering (Heb 10:7-9; Mk 14:36) and of Mary’s offering (Lk 1:38).

Accept Jesus, and the way of peace will be brief for you and made briefer for mankind. He is the Child King brought to you by Mary: “Today I bless you all with my Son Jesus in my arms and I bring Him, the King of Peace, to you that He might grant you His peace.” The peace which the world seeks, but doesn’t know and cannot give itself, is there, within everyone’s reach. It is in the Child in Mary’s arms which she offers for us. He is our peace. You don’t need to be powerful to receive it; but rather, it is more easily acknowledged and received by those without power, by those who live on the margins of society, like the shepherds of long ago. All it takes is good will open to His Will (Lk 2:14). You cannot accept peace unless you accept Jesus. That is why peace still today is so difficult and uncertain. It takes the courage to make decisive choices, in the knowledge that the peace which He offers is not the pacific coexistence of peoples which the world seeks, but a sword that sets man against his father, daughter against her mother... (Mt 10:34-39). Yet, peace is possible and dutiful, points out the Pope. “The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light” (Rm 13:12).

May we be converted by the Child God which Mary holds in her arms! Each child is new life, and Jesus brings to us God’s Life. Man’s greatness melts before a baby; everything becomes little and immediate. Before the Child Jesus our eyes and hearts contemplate God’s Love: totally beyond all human comprehension and wisdom.

Christmas isn’t the consumeristic feast of the wealthy countries where people have everything but God; it isn’t the religious fervour of a day or the feelings of goodness summoned up by tradition. Christmas is letting Jesus grow in us as we practise the beatitudes (Mt 5). N.Q.

John Paul II: To reach peace, teach peace

“I address my words to all... Hear this humble appeal of the Successor of Peter who cries out: peace remains possible. And if peace is possible, it is also a duty!”

John Paul II has continued with even greater conviction the noble tradition first begun by Paul VI to dedicate the first day of the civil year to reflection and to prayer for peace in the world.

“Once more this year I feel bound to invite all men and women, on every continent, to celebrate a new World Day of Peace. Humanity needs now more than ever to rediscover the path of concord, overwhelmed as it is by selfishness and hatred, by the thirst for power and the lust for vengeance.”

As resolute as ever, John Paul is ever on his guard as he guides mankind towards a new time of peace, of that peace which God continues to promise us through the words of His Mother at Medjugorje, of a peace, however, that seems ever more distant, and ever less possible.

It doesn't depend on God; it depends on us. Yes, because the path has been marked out. But why is it so difficult to follow this path if we all desire peace so ardently? “At the dawn of each new year I have invited people of good will to reflect, in the light of reason and of faith, on different aspects of an orderly coexistence. The result has been a synthesis of teaching about peace which is a kind of primer..” Continues the Holy Father: “For Christians, to proclaim peace is to announce Christ who is our peace; it is to announce His Gospel, which is a Gospel of peace; it is to call all people to the beatitude of being peacemakers.”

There are no doubts that if the world wants peace it must live peace. Together with Jesus it must proclaim His Word which generates peace. Governments and politicians which are moved by thirst for power and wealth can't be peacemakers. Only those able to love without interest and secondary scopes can create the right conditions for true and enduring peace.

Says the Pope: “The Church has always taught and continues to teach that peace is possible... the Church does not tire of repeating that peace is a duty.. and must be built on the four pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom.”

“For a long time international law has been a law of war and peace. I believe that it is called more and more to become exclusively a law of peace, conceived in justice and solidarity.”.. “By itself justice is not enough. Justice must find its fulfilment in charity”.. but: “There is no peace without forgiveness! A solution to the continuing crisis in Palestine and the Middle East will not be found until a decision is made to transcend the logic of simple justice and to be open also to the logic of forgiveness.”

The Pope concludes: “Christians know that love is the reason for God's entering into relationship with man. And it is love which he awaits as man's response. Consequently, love is also the loftiest and most noble form of relationship possible between human

beings. Love must therefore enliven every sector of human life and extend to the international order.

At the beginning of a new year I wish to repeat to women and men of every language, religion and culture the ancient maxim: Omnia vincit amor (love conquers all). Yes, in the end love will be victorious! Let everyone be committed to hastening this victory.” s.c.

ECHO TURNS 20!

To those who repeatedly asked him to write about the events of Medjugorje, Fr. Angelo Mutti, parish priest of Villanova Maiardina (in the province of Mantua, Italy) and future founder of the Echo, would reply that he couldn't because of his many duties as pastor. However, he was keenly interested in the events, and in the end he gave in to those who insisted and to his own deep desire.

It was the summer of 1984. Fr. Angelo had himself experienced the spirituality of Medjugorje some months previously in one of his many pilgrimages to the blessed land with others who shared his same interest. Grace was so abundantly sent down to them that Fr. Angelo had no doubts about the veracity of the apparitions. He began to write to inform not only the parish, but he also published articles for the local paper as he wanted to set a few things straight with regards to false news published by the Press. The first leaflets produced for the parish were to be the first issues of Echo, and were to mark the beginning of a new faith journey for so many people.

Illumination had been given, and Echo was born to keep it alive. It was fruit of the extraordinary grace of divine mercy and it had to be kept with care, so that Our Lady could help her children in need. At the beginning it was handed out to a few faithful. Fr. Angelo never advertised his leaflet, but simply gave it to those who asked. Despite this, requests just grew and grew, as did the list of places that it was being sent to. It was surprising how quickly it spread to even far-away places.

It was amazing how this extremely humble paper created communion among so many people and from so many countries, when you think that it started in a tiny country parish with extremely modest means (at the beginning an old typewriter and an obsolete duplicating machine). With time it became necessary to add a secretary, a printer, columnists, a group of workers for the despatch, the many volunteers for distribution, and various translators. These were all elements necessary for the production of Echo which were, and remain, fruit of providential intervention.

Fr. Angelo loved to say how prayer and faith were the powerful source of sustenance for this paper, and he didn't mean this only for himself and his collaborators, but for all the readers of Echo who, as such, were part of a big family that prayed.

Fr. Angelo dedicated himself to the paper till the very eve of his departure for heaven (it was the Jubilee year of 2000). During his last period of earthly life - when he had become

gravely ill and his gaze was constantly held upwards – he thought that the paper should not finish with him, but that it could continue with the help of those who shared his own spirituality. In particular, he entrusted it to the Kraljice Mira Community which he would oft say was “the family appointed for the safekeeping and continuation of this work of Mary.”

Thus, after the death of its founder, Echo continues to be regularly distributed, and receives numerous and continuous new requests. We thus consider that Fr. Angelo’s words were true when he would say that it wasn’t he, but Our Lady, to suggest the contents of the paper and to provide for its sustenance and distribution. We are thus convinced that Mary, as the “inspirer of Echo,” accomplishes her work also through the humble service of this paper which for twenty years has wanted to contribute to the realization of her plan of salvation.

Let us be vigilant in prayer, for it is thus that Echo becomes a live instrument in Our Lady’s hands. Fr. Angelo certainly blesses and intercedes for us all from his place in heaven. We thank the Lord for this priest who was so open to the action of grace, and for all those who offer prayers and their own lives for this paper.

Pietro Squassabia

Fr. Jean-Marie CABES, Mariologist and professor at Tarbes Catholic Seminary, and for many years the director of the “School of the Gospel” at Lourdes, is also the founder of the mixed Community “Notre Dame de l’Aurore” (an apostolic branch of the Monastic Community of Jerusalem) in Ossun just a few km from Lourdes.

IF ONLY WE WOULD LISTEN TO MARY...

Thanks to the recent letter by John Paul II on the Rosary (RVM) this devotion is put under proper light and we are given to understand its true meaning, which is to say that it is oriented towards Christ and is a prayer of the Church. It isn’t a prayer which makes of Mary God’s substitute to compensate with her motherly closeness the sternness of a distant God. The Rosary isn’t even a prayer for certain individuals or reserved groups particularly devoted to Our Lady. Instead, it must be integrated into the prayer of the Church which is accompanied and sustained by the Rosary.

What is the urgency of wanting to involve the entire Christian community in the re-discovery of the Rosary? Bishops, priests and deacons, pastoral workers, consecrated men and women, families, the sick, the elderly and young people... the Pope addresses everyone, and he says: May this appeal of mine not go unheard! (nr. 43).

The Pope sees in the year which he consecrated to the Rosary (Oct. 2002 - Oct. 2003) the occasion to strengthen the lines he traced out in his document *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: “It

is not my intention to encumber but rather to complete and consolidate pastoral programmes of the Particular Churches. The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization.”

Three prospects:

START AFRESH FROM CHRIST WITH MARY

If we begin by contemplating; if we begin by listening.. It's not a matter of practising mental concentration to be more present at a meeting or at work or during prayer. In our Christian life we have to rather remove ourselves from the centre and replace ourselves with the One in Whom all things find their beginning and their end, including perhaps even our pastoral plans. Christian prayer and Christian living are simply the unfolding of the word and deeds of Jesus in our 'today'. It is with Him that we must be in permanent contact. Human reality must be incorporated into His divine love.

This is where Mary helps us. Our Lady represents the small portion of humanity which is totally offered to God in which God alone operates: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word. Therefore, She can say to the servants at the wedding feast: you, also, act according to His word; do what He tells you. Mary contemplates; Mary heeds; Mary adores. Mary provokes us so that we might fulfil within ourselves a quality inner presence which is attentive to the desires of God's work.

When we begin our day, when we are at work, or when we meet others, are we able to know how to open our hearts before the presence of God Who is already there waiting for us?

The prayer of the Rosary induces us to offer time and attention to the contemplation of the mysteries of Christ, and to heeding His divine breath. How can we apply our energy the most effectively? How much dispersion could be avoided! and we'd get used to drinking at the one and only Spring, and we'd allow Him to irrigate the land of our hearts which are so often arid.

“JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM, STATURE AND GRACE” (cf. Lk 2:52)

The second prospect - the formation of God's people - is opened before us thanks to the prayer of the Rosary. We go to great efforts so that all Christians might make the riches of the Bible, of Tradition and of Christian research their own. But all of this doesn't necessarily touch the soul. We know very much, but our knowledge isn't alive; we aren't 'in love'. I know a priest who had specialized in Sacred Scripture and who abandoned his ministry as priest and teacher after ten or so years because he thought he had repaid the Church for the service received. In truth he never 'believed' what he was taught and what he was teaching.

In the house of Nazareth, Mary is busy watching over the human growth of Christ. This enables her to train us and to mould us with the same care, until Christ is “fully formed” in us (cf. Gal 4:19). The Apostle’s great desire was to generate Christians, so that in a certain way he ‘gave birth’ to the new communities. If he was able to give birth to them, it was because he was completely pervaded – interiorly - by the Marian spirit. All of those who Jesus says are His brother, sister and mother should be pervaded by this Marian spirit. This isn’t a figure of speech; it is how the faith is really transmitted.

The prayer of the Rosary places us in a condition to commune with Jesus’ life, with that same life we wish would grow in ourselves and others. “Just as two friends, frequently in each other’s company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them” (RVM 15).

ANNOUNCING CHRIST WITH MARY

The prayer of the Rosary is particularly fertile for the new evangelization. The apostolate is the ‘delivery.’ Without this Marian prospect it would be very difficult for us not to make of Christ a mere message, or of evangelization a mere form of indoctrination. The Pope says just this: “No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a “new programme”, for it already exists: it is the same as ever, and it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated” (NMI, 29).

Mary impedes us from turning Christianity into abstraction. “Abstraction doesn’t need a mother,” said theologian Karl Rahner to Card. Suenens. We, in fact, proclaim “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands: that is, the word of life” (1 Jn 1:1-2). The Word of God is silent when in the crib and on the cross. It is completely surrendered to the docile faith of a woman who is the Mother of the Church. The Word of God: that newly born baby, and the Crucified Christ is nothing but love.

We have to let ourselves be regenerated by the Spirit in Mary’s same faith and become “Good News” for the world. It is the only way for our preaching to make sense, and for our announcement to be truly Christian. The Holy Spirit isn’t an abstraction either. When breathing over Lourdes, or over the Upper Room at Jerusalem - like the rush of a mighty wind - He makes a light appear in the depths of our darkness and fears; He generates tongues of fire.

A Marian Church, a Church formed by trust in Mary, will be a Church of poor and little people; her heart will be inflamed by the fire of Love; this Church will transmit only that which she freely received which is the Gift of God.

Fr. Jean-Marie Cebes

In the mystery of an embrace

“In the first joyful mystery we contemplate...”

These are the opening lines of the “book” which tells of Jesus’ life; a book made up of a series of beads to recount the fundamental phases of the Son of God’s earthly existence. Each time we pray it is a new adventure; the Holy Spirit reveals new details to us. One Hail Mary after another the story becomes alive; suddenly we feel transported, experiencing sentiments and feelings as though we were present.

“In the first joyful mystery we contemplate the embrace of Mary and Jesus...”

In the first mystery (which I know, is the Annunciation and Mary’s virginal conception) the Mother embraces the Son for the first time by accepting Him into Her womb. She embraces Him with her will which desires only God’s will; she embraces Him with her heart flooded with Love which has become flesh in her; she embraces Him with her body which has accepted the divine seed.

With this embrace of cosmic dimensions Mary embraces all creation and all creatures of all times who, in the end, will be recapitulated in that baby.

The story, of course, goes on and the embrace stretches out to another mother and child. Through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth and John are unexpectedly drawn into this tender effusion of love, and the two mothers and their children are united in the same plan of salvation.

Love is a gift and as such cannot remain closed within itself. It is pure ecstasy and its nature demands that it be communicated to others. It generates joy in those who receive it. In this embrace is born the exultant song which will be repeated from age to age by those who fear him (cf. Lk 1:50).

In the third mystery, however, the embrace becomes even more tangible.

During the cold night in Bethlehem Jesus is born; Mary takes the Babe into her arms. How sweet the vision as we imagine the exchange of loving glances and soft murmurs: you are the Wedded land, the non-Forsaken (cf. Is 62:4) to which the Father sends me that it might be germinated, whispers the son to the woman. “You are the shoot springing from the stock of Jesse which we children of Israel have been expecting (cf. Is 11:1), responds the mother to the child.

Mary doesn’t keep Him for herself. In the fourth mystery of joy, she places Him in the arms of the priest, in keeping with the laws of Moses.

Thus, Jesus embraces not only the institutional church, but also the Church made up of people unknown to the world, of people who live their faith hidden from the world. In the

arms of old Simeon, the Messiah grants His embrace to the Church of the lowly, of the nameless, of those who know how to bless God because their eyes have seen the salvation prepared by God prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to Israel, his people (cf. Lk 2:28-32).

This brings us to the last decade of the Rosary, just in time to see the embrace of Mary and Jesus when on the third day He is found in the temple. It is an embrace of relief and consolation, for having found him whom her soul loves (cf. Song 3:2). Jesus also embraces Mary enthusiastically in the desire to share the joy of His first public mission. He had just preached to the doctors of the Temple; He was able to speak of the true face of God, so men could know that God is a merciful Father, and that His face is impressed in the souls of every man. Jesus was anxious to bring to the world God's embrace of peace.

Stefania Consoli

Become little with the Child God

We have all recently visited the Holy Land, and more precisely Bethlehem in Palestine. We went to the crib of Jesus, the Child God, born again for each of us. It is a mystery which is faithfully renewed; it is the memory which becomes life through the power of Grace and of faith. Thus, even though we remain seated in our living rooms we have travelled, contemplated and adored the Emmanuel represented in the nativity scenes or in the small gestures of love which accompany the Christmas festivities.

To look at Him in the eyes, however, we have most likely had to bend over or crouch down because the most characteristic thing about the newborn King is that He is little...

The following excerpts have been liberally taken from a book by Luigi Pozzoli (*Elogio della piccolezza*, Ed. Paoline) to help us reflect why God, the great Jahvé whom the Israelites dared not even mention, decided to make Himself little amongst the little.

The gospel of lowliness

In the Gospel there is clearly a preference for everything that is little. The little and the weak receive a great deal of attention from Jesus; He showers affection upon the children and the poor. Through His parables about little seeds, including the tiny mustard seed, we learn that in apparently insignificant beings is hidden virtue and promise. It brings to mind an expression by Tagore: "God grows tired of great kingdoms, but never of little flowers." It is wonderfully surprising when you think how this Gospel preference goes against the common mentality which rewards only whatever is great and showy, and where one might even be induced to feel shame for being so "little" or inept.

In a world which is ever more governed by the logic of consumerism, there isn't much space for anything symbolic or sentimental. The Gospel, instead, turns this criteria of evaluation completely upside down.

That which is small is great.

That which is weak is strong.

That which is without splendour is beautiful because true beauty comes only from love.

The temple of Jerusalem must have been a wonderful building for its majesty and size, but for Jesus the only thing that deserved His attention was the humble gesture of a poor widow whose offering was so tiny to be almost worthless, but instead was great because it was everything she had. Her offering was certainly far more beautiful than the offerings of those who flaunted their wealth and their rich donations.

Lowliness and God's Incarnation

One usually attributes to God qualities of greatness. When we speak of power, God is omnipotent: the almighty. When we speak of wisdom, God is omniscient: infinitely knowledgeable. In the mind of man God is always greater than the greatest measure. Christmas, however, shows us how God has lowered Himself so much as to become a defenceless new-born babe.

"Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself.." (Phil 2:4-7). God, in the person of Jesus, emptied Himself and deprived Himself of His greatness; He made Himself poor.

It is this Incarnation of God in a child, of a child who will grow up to become a servant, that speaks deeply to every generation. God came to be one with all the little ones on the earth: with the children, the sick, the marginalized, the impure such as "tax collectors," the heretics such as the "Samaritans," and those without a home, without a name, and without a voice.

In Matthew this solidarity is so great that it is precisely to these little ones that Jesus says the Father reveals His secrets; and His loving concern for them is so evident that it is deeply moving: "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (Mt 11:25-30).

To be little is to be light

God shows privilege for lowliness because being little is also being light. At Christmas God revealed Himself as a God of lightness... whereas man belongs rather to a category of weightiness. Wouldn't you say that possessing and collecting, and on the plane of sentiments that arrogance and presumption bring to mind the idea of oppressive burden? In particular, burdensome is a man who incarnates a bourgeois narrow-minded spirit. A Christian's concern is to be, whereas the concern of the bourgeois is to have. When the bourgeois say: my wife, my car, my land, what counts for them isn't the object, but rather the possessive adjective "my."

On the other hand, Jesus taught His disciples and the crowds of people not to worry over

things. Therefore, the lowly and the poor journey lightly, armed with trust and a sense of the temporary, and with the certainty of eternity.

Editorial staff

“Return to your initial zeal”

Importance of the heart in Mary’s messages

The Queen of Peace, in the greater part of Her messages, calls us with a special, almost hammering insistence to make the radical renewal of our heart the central part of our journey of conversion. “Go inwards, to the heart. Words aren’t sufficient. Go inwards, to the heart” (message 25.XII.1983); “My Children, I desire operating great works for you, but the door of your heart is rusty and doesn’t open anymore. Throw down the old door of your heart, and through conversion, build a new one. That way, Jesus will enter into your hearts” (m. 9.VI.1984).

The reason why the “heart” is such a decisive place for the salvation of her children and for the entire universe in this time when rationalism has taken such a strong hold on people’s consciences is revealed by Mary herself in many of her messages which are permeated with motherly concern which in turn reflects the sentiments of the Father’s Heart. “I desire that your hearts be united to mine, just as mine is united to the Heart of Jesus”(1.IX.1984). “I desire that my heart, Jesus’ Heart and your heart be fused into a single heart of love and peace” (25.VII.1999).

This is, in fact, the real work of salvation that God wants to fulfil in each of us, and through us in a multitude of souls and created reality which He has linked to our response to the call which He in this time is addressing to us through the Queen of Peace.

What is this response of love which Mary wants of us? What is the key that is able to introduce us so efficaciously into the treasures of grace in the Father’s Heart? What is the spiritual way – perhaps so simple that it seems scandalous – to which Mary calls us so insistently?

The answer surely lies in the decision to “give up our hearts to God, to be thus filled with His love” (see m. 25.V.1999). God’s love is immolated love! It is that special quality of love which He fully revealed through the total offering of His Son for the world’s salvation. Thus, the golden key which Mary holds out for us - so that our hearts might be united in fullness to the burning vortex of the Trinitarian love, and so “a spring of life might flow from our hearts” (m. 21.X.1983), and so our lives might be completely regenerated and transfigured in the light of the ‘new heavens and new earth’ – is nothing more than our free decision to offer up our lives to God without condition, and that this offering be made through Mary’s hands and her Immaculate Heart, for the salvation of our brethren and of the entire universe.

In many messages Our Lady urges us to place our prayer and our exterior and interior devotional deeds into her Immaculate Heart, so that they may be purified from ritualistic

devotionalism, and so that in them might be impressed “the seal of God’s love” (m. 6. I.1984). Through this they can become a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rm 12:1).

Mary also calls us in a special way to search our hearts and to find the indelible image of the Son which God impressed deep in them before the creation of the world, and in particular to open them so we can accept His grace and light. That image becomes vividly active and efficacious in our hearts thanks to Christ’s Paschal mystery. Through it, our prayers and sacrifices, our liturgical actions lead us to an authentic, and joyously nuptial encounter with the mystery of God’s living presence in us. “Today I urge you to open your hearts to God, just as flowers seek the sun in spring. I am your Mother and desire for you to be ever closer to the Father so that He can pour gifts into to your hearts abundantly” (31.I.1985). That is why it presses Mary for us to respond. “Pray with the heart, and in prayer offer yourselves to Jesus” (11.VIII.1984). “Don’t pray only with your lips. You must pray with the heart! You have to go down very deep and be completely in your heart...” (23.IX.1984). “All prayers are good and pleasing to God if said with the heart” (3.IX.1984). “Today I invite you to begin fasting with your heart” (20.IX.1984). “Song, too, is prayer (if you) put your heart into each song” (10.XI.1984).

Our Lady even offers practical advice to sweep out the obstacles from our hearts: “Consciously put your stress into God’s hands. Nothing must disturb you. Offer also your worries and distractions to Jesus, and hide nothing from Him. This is true prayer of the heart” (10.XI.1984).

Giuseppe Ferraro (to be continued)

News from the blessed land

Priest and pilgrim of Medjugorje

Many are the priests who receive new Grace at Medjugorje to help them deepen the spiritual aspect of their priestly ministry and to rediscover certain other aspects of it which are perhaps overlooked.

This testimony is by a priest who was recently born into eternal life.

Fr. Mario Cortellezzi, Rector of the Shrine of Sacro Monte in Varese (Italy), died on 24 November last which also happens to be Fr. Slavko’s anniversary. He tells: “I went to Medjugorje because Medjugorje had come to me for first. The visionaries Marija, Mirjiana and Jakov had, in fact, been several times to Sacro Monte. I took these visits as a personal call, in a certain sense, to go to that “blessed land.”

Once in Medjugorje I found what I had been expecting,: an atmosphere of intense prayer; of prayer expressed more with silence than with song; a silence that speaks; a profound

silence that means that people are captured by the event which they cannot see but of which they feel the presence.

I was positively impressed by the natural way the visionaries expressed themselves, particularly Marija. Once, after an apparition, while talking with her I had the clear impression that she had just spoken with someone. Her face was radiant; it 'spoke' of its own accord and it was saying that something had just happened. She told me about what she saw and what she felt, and the natural way she expressed herself was guarantee enough for me. I was afraid of finding artificial persons, affected by 'mysticism', who 'behaved' like visionaries. This would have sent me running.

The fruits I found at Medjugorje are multiple. That fruit plants can grow, there must be the right environment. The most extraordinary atmosphere I found was at evening adoration. The silence and the captivating songs and the care by each person not to disturb indicated to me that the faithful were truly taken up by the Presence and that though they couldn't see It, they were aware of It. If only our moments of prayer were always like that!

A second, very precious fruit came from my experience in the confessional. That's the real test. The guarantee comes from it, because when a religious experience passes through the confessional it means it is real. All other experiences, of the self-confessed type, seeking self-absolution as if everyone were good, already bear the mark of falseness. In the confessional I noticed a certain readiness and sense of disarmament by the people. That is, they were disarmed by the Lord's mercy. It's nice to be in front of people who admit their errors; it makes the ministry of confessor more beautiful as it gives you the sensation of being a father rejoicing over his children; and you experience the bounty and joy of the Lord in granting forgiveness. You don't experience this anywhere else, not even at Mass.

The fruits, however, aren't restricted to Medjugorje. At Sacro Monte people who've found the way to God in that blessed land come here of a Saturday morning. They don't wear labels (saying they're Medjugorje 'fans'), but you can tell by the way they pray and confess that their experience of conversion was an authentic one.

One particular fruit I've experienced personally gives me further confirmation. It is the relationship between the Rosary and the Eucharist; Our Lady and the Eucharist. I began noticing as far back as ten years ago that the best Masses at the Shrine (of Sacro Monte) are the Saturday morning Masses, and I wondered why till at last I found the answer. The reason is that they are preceded by three chaplets of the Rosary.

That is how I understood that where there is Mary there is also the Eucharist. You cannot celebrate Mass without Our Lady. There is nothing special about the Saturday morning Mass, but it is made more complete, with a fuller participation that I've never found elsewhere. To celebrate Mass with Mary, with the Heart of Mary (is what makes it special). Our Lady is not a priest, but she has a priestly heart. This is the certainty that I carry in my heart."

(from a recording)

Filipino Bishop: “I’m happy in Medjugorje”

Msgr. Jesus a Cabrera, bishop of Alaminos (Philippines) came on a private visit to Medjugorje in October 2003.

“I knew about Medjugorje through others who had come here. Let me tell you an interesting story. I think it was in 1990. A group of Filipinos came here. Only the rich (Filipinos) can come here, but accompanying priests aren’t asked to pay. The priest accompanying that particular group in 1990 went to the mountain, and said to the Blessed Mother: “Only those who are rich are able to come here. What about the poor?” And loud and clear he heard her response: “I am going to them, I am with them.” I was very happy when I heard this! Our Lady goes to them! There is a grace for those who come, but Our Lady herself goes to the poor!

The official thinking of the Church in the Philippines is the same as the position of Rome. The Church does not forbid anybody from coming here, and many Filipinos come. We can see the good fruits, the effects on those who come. There is not an official position - as long as our devotion is in reasonable limits. I’m very happy to see my people pray more, go to Mass and receive Holy Communion more frequently, go to confession and become better. This makes me think that it is the work of the Blessed Mother. This is what counts. We have to wait maybe for a spectacular miracle before the Church will recognise Medjugorje, but there are already many, many miracles of grace that happen in the lives of people. The fact that they come closer to God I think is a sign.

As a priest and bishop, I always consider myself as a priest of Mary. I do the work of Mary which is to bring people to Jesus and Jesus to the people. So, the more I myself have the spirit of Mary, the more I am able to fulfil my mission as a priest and bishop.

Personally, I am very happy here. Early this morning I went to the Hill of Apparitions by myself. It was very cold, I didn’t know the way, but I prayed and Mary showed me the way. On the way I lost my handkerchief, but I found a flower. It was the only flower around, I picked it, and when I reached the statue I was as excited as a child, and I said: “Blessed Mother, I have a flower for you!” I was so much at peace as I prayed, and she made me feel that she was very happy for me to be there. I was praying for everyone, especially the group members. They are also very happy here. It was so beautiful when we climbed the Hill together in prayer. The young were helping the elderly to climb... It was the picture of our life here on earth: we have to help one another. It was truly beautiful when we came up and saw Mary’s statue.

The messages are very timely and are meant for us all. I always see Our Lady as a special messenger of Jesus. She wants us all to be saints. This is why she makes extra efforts to reach us, to help us and remind us what to do and how to reach the Kingdom. This is a sign of a great love by Our Lady for us all. It is also proof that she is actively concerned for our well-being. She wants us all to be really happy and to have real peace. All we have to do is listen to the messages, read them, and put them into practice. In today’s Psalm it says: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts!” That means to make sure your

heart is receptive to the messages, and then put them into practice!

I act as an instrument of Mary. Her messages come from God Himself. She tells us to pray and to put God first in our lives. That is why we must convert and make sure that our heart, mind and whole life are turned to God. Often, our heart is fixed on material things like money and power. Our Lady tells us to pay more attention to what her Son is telling us: Holy Mass, Holy Communion, Confession... to be more concerned about other people, to make sacrifices, and do works of love for others.

I believe that if we listen more to the message of the Blessed Mother, and if we love God and each other, we shall experience real peace among ourselves, no matter where we come from, because our hearts will be disposed to accept and help one another. This would make us realise that, after all, we are one big family: brothers and sisters. We are one family and we have only one Father. How wonderful it is when we pray in all sincerity: "Our Father"! We realise that every person is a brother and sister to love. This is our Blessed Mother's desire... The fruit of Our Lady's mission is that we become one family, one Church. I feel very much at home here. It is as if Our Lady were telling me, "This is your home!"

(From the Press Bulletin)

The gift of her presence

"Mary's presence is a great grace," said Fr. GABRIEL AMORTH in his comment to Mary's monthly message at the big monthly prayer meeting in Rome.

"Mary is mother, teacher and queen. Hers is a model to imitate. We ought to imitate Mary if we wish to comprehend this great gift of her presence in the world. It is such a great gift that I would say it even stirs up crisis amongst Church authorities.

How can one approve such a long series of apparitions that are without precedence? It is understandable that whilst Marian apparitions are in course the Church authorities cannot give judgement. The Church has, however, passed judgement on the fact that so many pilgrims go to Medjugorje, by declaring it a real shrine and that the pilgrims who go there have the right to receive religious assistance, according to their needs, which is to say: confession, sermons, conferences, spiritual exercises, meetings, etc. For the past five years, in fact, Medjugorje has also held an annual meeting for priests which was initiated by Fr. Slavko.

With her presence, Mary desires leading us to Jesus. How lovely this is: per Mariam ad Jesum... through Mary one finds Jesus, because wherever Mary is, there is certainly also Jesus. Through seeking Mary we find Jesus.

The beginning of the second chapter of John's Gospel is also very nice. It is where John tells us about the wedding of Cana. He says that Mary was there with Jesus, and that Jesus was there with His apostles. It is as if Mary were like a magnet that attracts Jesus. And Jesus uses Mary to draw souls to Himself."

(From a recording)

Gospa and Jakov's Christmas Encounter

At his last daily apparition on 12 September 1998, Our Lady told Jakov Colo that henceforth he would have one apparition a year on 25th December. Also this Christmas Jakov received Our Lady's apparition which began at 3:15 pm and lasted 8 minutes. Our Lady gave the following message:

Dear Children! Today, when in a special way Jesus desires giving you His peace, I call you to pray for peace in your hearts. My Children, without peace in your hearts you cannot feel the love and joy of the birth of Jesus. Thus, my Children, today in a special way open your hearts and begin to pray. Only through prayer and complete surrender, will your heart be filled with the love and peace of Jesus. I bless you with my motherly blessing.

Christmas at Medjugorje

At Medjugorje, parishioners and pilgrims prepared themselves for Christmas through a Rosary Novena at Apparition Hill. The Christmas Vigil began as usual with Eucharistic Adoration prior to Midnight Mass.

During Advent two seminars of fasting and prayer were held in the Domus Pacis retreat house which were attended by approximately 100 pilgrims from Croatia and Austria.

During the Christmas festivities an atmosphere of peace, prayer and communion reigned throughout the shrine of the Queen of Peace. Thousands of faithful participated in the vigil mass on Christmas eve. The church was crowded at 10 pm when the celebrations began.

On Christmas day parishioners and pilgrims experienced a wonderful peace and Christmas joy.

On Sunday December 21, the church of Medjugorje rang with the joyful sounds of a Christmas concert performed by two children's choirs, the "Little Singers from Dubrovnik", and the "Little Doves of Peace" from Medjugorje.

As every year, Sr. Elvira's Cenacolo Community presented a representation of the Living Manger on three separate occasions. With their original music and recitals they demonstrated to the faithful present that it is possible to find a way out from the dark tunnel of drugs and addiction.

(from the Press Bulletin)

“Dear Children, you must consecrate your hearts to Jesus. May He abide in them, and may you dedicate your every attention to Him. May Jesus be your peace. May He guide you on the way of salvation, onto His way. May your life be filled with serenity and peace, with grace and happiness. Allow your every difficulty lead you to Jesus. Wherever you may be, always endeavour to keep hope and love in your heart; Jesus will take care of the rest.”

The above message was given by Our Lady to Jelena on 21 March 1987, while the following one was given by Jesus Himself to Jelena on 31 May of the same year: “... Begin your day with Mary, on your knees in front of the cross, and pray for grace and light. Every day you battle with suffering because you still haven’t understood how much wisdom there is in suffering. From the cross comes light. Therefore, accept it and carry it.”

Beauty comes from the heart

by Jelena Vasilj

For man it is impossible to live without beauty, because beauty is an integral part of what his soul is nourished with. The antique Greeks had intuited that beautiful, with true and good, was one of the three fundamental categories which because they were absolute could only be attributed to God.

During history the concept of beautiful has undergone many changes. In ancient times people sought a beauty which was rather objective, that is to say, the perfect form, such as in Greek art and then in Roman art (from which the themes of various successive eras was drawn; e.g. the Renaissance). The Church responded by endeavouring to give to beauty a Christian or vertical sense which would in a certain way unite men spiritually to the beauty of God. Thus, the East produced icons and the West the vast patrimony of Christian art.

At the moment, despite sporadic sparks here and there, beauty seems to have undergone a complete change, since we are very far from the objectiveness of beauty. These days beauty is subject to the spectator’s likes. This seems to be so not only for art but also for the entire sphere of harmony in the life of today’s man. In fact, today’s man seems to have lost every point of reference, and he refuses to be conformed to God who alone is absolute beauty.

A consideration on the positive reality of absolute beauty isn’t that easy. John the apostle says that no one has ever seen God. The Old Testament doesn’t help us a great deal. The Hebrew text speaks of the Lord’s beauty in two psalms (90:17 and 27:4). The concept of God’s beauty is often tied to other concepts such as goodness, grace and sweetness. St. Augustine, in his comment to St. John’s Gospel, helps us see how God’s beauty which the psalmist contemplated in the sanctuary is a true delight. Contrary to incidental delights, the former doesn’t burden man’s spirit. St. Augustine writes: Do not fear of getting tired. The pleasure of that beauty which will always be before you will never tire you. Or better, I could say that you will always feel satisfied, but you will never be satiated. In saying that you will never be satiated, it might make you think that you will

suffer hunger; but if I say that you will be satiated you might think you'll end up being annoyed. I don't know how best to say it, but there will never be boredom and there will never be hunger.(Io.eu.tr.3.21).

We get a real help, however, if we look upon the Old Testament from a messianic point of view, and in particular Isaiah says: "Your eyes will see the King in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches afar" (Is 33:17).

The veil fell with Jesus and He allowed us to see - as St. John said - His glory. It is, however, a vision not of the bodily eyes but of the spiritual eyes, or of a humble heart - points out St. Augustine in the same treatise. This ecstasy of the heart which takes pleasure in God's beauty is in a certain way shaken by a profound truth expressed by the prophet Isaiah who introduces us to a shocking paradox of our faith. He who is beautiful and resplendent is also the man of the cross: "He grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is 53:2-3).

I think the prophet this times really does reveal the mystery of the beauty in suffering, in the cross. Who could ever deny the beauty of a martyr or of Mother Teresa, whose martyrdom is less apparent? Those faces which fast, in fact, are beautiful because Christ who gave up His life for us on the cross shines through them. Perhaps is it precisely this refusal of suffering that makes modern artists unable to produce works still able to speak of the beauty of man, of that beauty which isn't just research of innovation according to one's likings, but which is profoundly tied to the cross.

We turn our hearts and gaze to the most beautiful of women and ask Her to shine on us for a long time still with the beauty of God.

* * *

The Rosary of Jesus

The Rosary of Jesus consists mainly in 33 Our Father's and the Creed and is recited in remembrance of the 33 years of Jesus' life. In Herzegovina this Rosary was often recited, especially during Lent. In 1983 Our Lady suggested to Jelena Vasilj how to best recite it; which is to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus' Life helped by a brief introduction. Our Lady urges us to pause in silence and to meditate on every single mystery. The mystery of the Life of Jesus must speak to the heart..

How to recite the Rosary of Jesus

It is necessary to express a special intention for each mystery. After expressing the intention, Our Lady recommends us to open our hearts together in spontaneous prayer during the contemplation. For each mystery, after spontaneous prayer, choose a suitable hymn. After the hymn, recite the five Our Father's (except for the 7th mystery which ends

with 3 Our Father's). Then exclaim: "O Jesus, be strength and protection for us!" Our Blessed Mother told Jelena not to add or take away from the mysteries, but it must all remain as explained by Her. The following is the complete text:

Begin with the CREED.

1st Mystery: Let us contemplate the Birth of Jesus (we must speak about the birth of Jesus). Intention: let us pray for peace. Spontaneous prayers. Hymn. 5 Our Father's.

Exclamation: "O Jesus, be strength and protection for us!"

2nd Mystery: Let us contemplate: "Jesus helped and gave all to the poor". Intention: Let us pray for the Holy Father and for the Bishops. Spontaneous prayer, etc.

3rd Mystery: Let us contemplate: "Jesus trusted in His Father completely and carried out His Will." Intention: Let us pray for priests and for all those who serve God in a particular way. Spontaneous prayer, etc.

4th Mystery: Let us contemplate: "Jesus knew He had to give up His Life for us and He did so without regrets because He loved us." Intention: Let us pray for families.

Spontaneous prayer, etc.

5th Mystery: Let us contemplate: "Jesus made His Life into a sacrifice for us." Intention: let us pray so that we, too, may be capable of offering our life for the sake of our neighbour. Spontaneous prayer, etc.

6th Mystery: Let us contemplate: "The victory of Jesus: He has overcome Satan. He is arisen." Intention: let us pray that all sins may be eliminated so Jesus may live again in our hearts. Spontaneous prayer, etc.

7th Mystery: Let us contemplate: "The Ascension of Jesus to Heaven." Intention: let us pray that the Will of God may triumph, that His Will may be done. Spontaneous prayer. Hymn. 3 Our Father's. Exclamation.

To conclude, let us contemplate how "Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit." Intention: let us pray that the Holy Spirit may descend upon us.

7 Glory Be's to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

I was in prison and you came to me

How eloquent these words of Jesus (cf. Mt 25:31-40). He continually takes upon Himself every situation of sorrow and pain to share the burden; and He becomes for us consolation and comfort.

Christ is close to all those who suffer: I was hungry and thirsty.. I was a stranger.. I was naked.. I was sick.. I was in prison.. the list of the Gospel continues. It is a list of sad situations where Jesus makes Himself present. In visiting these "the least of His and our brethren", we visit the Lord: "As you did it to one of these, you did it to me" (ibid.).

When Love enters the wounds of the suffering man, he is transformed, redeemed and turned into a fount of light for this world darkened by egoism. It is thus that seemingly

penalizing situations turn into living witnesses of salvation. In the previous edition of Echo we published a letter from a group of inmates from the prison of Benevento (Italy). We continue to give them voice to learn how the love of God and Mary has visited them also through the pages of our little paper.

“Dear Echo,

On behalf of everyone I wish to thank you for responding to our letter and for sending us the pictures of Mary Immaculate. I gave out one for each cell and everyone was happy with the message which consoles us and gives us much hope.

I rejoice in your efforts and in the tenacity with which you work to produce Echo. I came to know your paper by chance. I was cleaning the sacristy and tidying up some magazines when I noticed a copy. I felt drawn by it and had to read it. The guard was calling me back to my cell, so I folded it and took it with me. After reading it I passed it on to my brothers who also found it interesting.

That’s why I’m writing to you. I address this letter to all the readers, and I write whilst looking at the Queen of Peace. It’s almost as if I could see you all reflected in the Mother’s gaze. How nice it is to think that Mary’s icon binds so many people around the world. Not even the greatest distance can separate us, for through prayer we are - with our hearts - all at her feet. With her messages Mary continues to call us to pay heed to her. But it takes faith: that flower that lives in our hearts and which needs to be constantly nourished. Faith is also a source of bounty which needs cultivating so it can take root. I consider myself extremely lucky to have received the grace of understanding this immense gift.

We feel Our Lady’s closeness through our brethren, through the attention we receive from them. Through them She speaks to us and smiles at us. If I am alone, it means that I can offer my solitude to the Lord who will make a treasure of it for those who suffer. The Lord asks me to be patient; perhaps to save many unbelieving souls. Blessed be the Lord! Life is hoping always, hoping against all odds. It is throwing our wretchedness behind us and not looking upon the wretchedness of others. It is believing that God exists and that He is a God of Love. Love frees man from everything that enslaves him. Only love can make him breathe, grow and flourish. It is then that our life becomes joy even amid sufferings, because we live in our flesh the beauty of living and dying.

Of course, there is a lot of weed to be removed, but there are practical methods, there are ways, there are clear indications, there is Mary in the “cell” of our souls who calls us. But Hers is a little silent voice.

In my lifetime I’ve known many dangers, I’ve risked my life many times. I experienced in the flesh of my loved ones - thus of my own - the evil of man, his perversity, his cruelty and his wickedness. I came out of it thoroughly convinced that the only thing that matters is to love.

Only one thing is sad, and that is that I didn’t cultivate saintliness, but I strongly feel that with Jesus’ Merciful Love all is possible, for we are all called to become saints.

I greet you with the pen and with the heart. Be serene! Don’t lose the way of faith and of hope. Speak to yourselves and to others; give strength and spiritual vigour to the weak.

You yourselves will gain from it.

With her smile, may Mary light up your homes, and may the Lord bless you. I wish peace and joy to you all.”

Ciro Antonio Bozzetti

(from the prison of Benevento)

Our Readers Write...

Fr. Domenico Dezzutto, Israel: I am very grateful to you for sending me the various language editions of Echo of Mary so regularly. There are many migrant workers here in Israel. The workers from Rumania are very happy to receive Echo in their language. There is a great need for ECHO in RUSSIAN. Over the past ten years more than a million workers from the former USSR have come here looking for work. Of these 300,000 are Christian, but they are spiritually abandoned and in danger of losing their faith. I ask you to please pray for them...

Rev. George Cardona, USA: Thanks for sending me the Echo. It is a refreshing bimonthly message from Our Lady's heart. May our Gospa bless you all.

Sr. B. Callaghan, Plymouth, England: I was so delighted to receive the Echo this morning.. I can't wait to read it and "pray" it. I so love Fr. Tomislav's sermons...

Sr. Seraphine, France: I thank you so much for the wonderful news which your paper contains. God bless you!

Vincenza Manea, Milan, Italy: When I receive Echo my heart swells, as if a ray of the Holy Spirit has filled it and my home. You can't imagine how much joy your Echo brings me. I wish I could give more, but I trust that the Lord will multiply this my "widow's coin."

Paul and Dorothy Biggelaar, NZ: You do a fantastic job with the Echo of Mary. We always have enjoyed this letter and will always cherish it tremendously. Thank you for sending it to us all these years.

Sr. M. Consolata, Japan: As a lay sister in Japan I've been receiving your Echo for 15 years. I thank you so much for sending it to me so regularly. Please pray for us that the Lord might send workers to his vineyard..

M.C. Zaffi, Argentina: For God nothing happens by chance. Out of His love I had the grace of being able to read your paper. How much spiritual wealth it contains! Our prayer group would love to receive the Echo regularly. God bless you abundantly!

Jenny Fish, Australia: Many thanks for sending the Echo. I'm always delighted to see it arrive! It's a great source of spiritual nourishment.

Mary Murton, Scotland: We all love receiving the "wee paper." I send copies to priests in Sierra Leone and Tanzania who greatly appreciate it. For some, it is one of the few spiritual papers they receive. Some use material from Echo for sermons. God bless you all and your work.

Lorraine Shonaman, Canada: Together with my donation I wish to send you words of gratitude for sending me the Echo. I read it prayerfully and our Blessed Mother touches my heart often through her words. My spiritual life is enriched by this publication.

Phyllis Grimshaw, S. Australia: Thanks for the Echo. I enclose a donation out of "love and thanksgiving" for all the graces and blessings I receive from the Queen of Peace.

Manuel Ruiz Martin, Spain: Many thanks for the Echo. May the Queen of Peace obtain peace for your hearts and for the entire world which needs it so much.

Sr. Marie Blandine, France: I desire thanking you most earnestly for the Echo which I receive regularly.

Teresa Fazu Soldevilla, Spain: I am so grateful for the Echo of Mary, and for the good it brings into my home. It is so helpful in the steep climb of life.

A.M. Roman, Romania: I'm 35 years old and I've been sick for the past 7. I have three children and many difficulties. I can't go to Church unless my husband is available to help me. Please continue to send me the Echo, because it is like medicine for me.

I.S. Borod, Romania: I thank the Blessed Virgin and also you of the Echo. I need your paper so much. It brings me great joy. Last year I managed to go to Medjugorje and it was so beneficial to me (I suffer a handicap).

** Request for Rosary beads, medals, holy images: St. Joseph Catholic Church, Box ry 96, Railway-Komasi, Ghana-Africa

** Community Retreat: "St. Joseph: The Interior Life", 26-28 March 2004. Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Scotland. Info: 01838 200 216

God have mercy on us and bless us, and may His face shine upon us, that His life might be known throughout the earth, and his salvation amongst all peoples.

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.

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Our Prayers for you! - Please join in our prayers on the first Saturday of each month for the intentions of readers (these may be expressed within the silence of your hearts; it is not necessary to write them and forward to us). Once a month Fr. Alberto will also celebrate a Holy Mass for the same intentions.