

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message of 25 March 2004:

"Dear Children, also today I call you to open yourselves up to prayer. Especially now in this time of grace, open your hearts, my Children, and express your love to the Crucified One. Only in this way will you discover peace, and prayer will begin to flow out from your hearts onto the world. Be an example, my Children, and an incentive to the good. I am close to you and I love you all. Thank you for responding to my call."

Love for Crucified Jesus

When a soul yearns for its Lord it opens out like a flower, and prayer thus blossoms. Prayer is the perfume of the soul exposed to Love, and it is also a channel for this Love. So while the lips pronounce *Hail Mary*, the soul is placed before the presence of our Blessed Mother and is enraptured in her. All that remains is to get up and run along the way of return to the *Father* and He will embrace us even before we say a word. This embrace is the instant fusion of prayer and forgiveness, or rather, first there is forgiveness then prayer (cf. Lk 15:20-21).

The power of prayer isn't in the word, but in the spirit. **"Dear Children, also today I call you to open yourselves up to prayer."** One can say beautiful words, but it's not these that open up hearts. One can be silent, and not even think, and all the same be channels of Love.

"Especially now in this time of grace, open your hearts my Children, and express your love to the Crucified One." It is clear that we aren't being called to fulfil an act of piety which doesn't touch the depth of the soul. Jesus doesn't seek commiseration. He, Who took on a body, isn't pleased by disembodied forms of piety: *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children"* (Lk 23:28).

Look at the Crucified One; or better: remain before Him and let Him look at you till He draws you to Himself (cf. Jn 12:32). The signs of hatred and violent ferocity on Him will act like balsamic ointment for your wounds, and the bite of the old serpent will be deprived of its venom (cf. Num 21:9; Jn 3:14). Then it will be easy for you to recognize Jesus agonizing amid wrongdoers, derelicts, the marginalized and those who suffer and die at the margins of your ways and your life; and it will be easy for you to love the victim and at the same time his assassin; and you will understand how He is in your own suffering, in your own illness and solitude, and you will understand how everything



"I prayed that viewers would see Jesus when they looked at me"
(Jim Caviezel in the film "The Passion")

that you considered insignificant and meaningless can instead become deeply meaningful and invaluable. In you, then, is spontaneously born a love that corresponds to His: a concrete, embodied love, similar to His because it comes from Him.

"Only in this way will you discover peace, and prayer will begin to flow out from your hearts onto the world" and you will discover *not the peace that the world gives* (cf. Jn 14:27), but the peace that comes from the Crucified One. It is His exclusive gift and no one or nothing can take it from you. It is then that prayer will grow, and it will flow out from your heart onto the whole world. This makes us think of the life-restoring water that flows from the Temple (Ez 47:1-12), or the water that gushes forth from Jesus' side (Jn 19:34). **"Be an example, my Children, and an incentive to good"**: only Jesus is the true good, and through your prayer *It* can be given to the world.

"As I offered Myself willingly to God the Father for your sins with hands outstretched and body naked on the cross, so that nothing remained in Me that had not become a complete sacrifice to appease the divine wrath, so ought you to be willing to offer yourself to Me day by day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation, together with all your faculties and affections, with as much inward devotion as you can." (The Imitation of Christ, Book IV, Chapt. VIII.)

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's Message of 25 April 2004:

"Dear Children, also today I invite you to live my messages even more intensely in humility and love so that the Holy Spirit may fill you with His grace and power. Only in this way will you be witnesses of peace and forgiveness. Thank you for responding to my call."

Witnesses of Peace and Forgiveness

God is Love. One can know God in the measure that he knows His Love. *"If you only knew what God is offering..."* (Jn 4:10) Jesus says to the Samaritan woman. God's gift is Jesus. The water drawn from Him quenches every thirst, and within us His *"water is turned into a spring, welling up to eternal life"* (Jn 4:14). That which happened to the Samaritan woman is happening to us today. Each of us can re-live in first person this episode which radically changes one's life.

One often complains of life's difficulties and misfortunes, but rarely does one acknowledge that the greatest misfortune is *not knowing* God's Love (where *know* means to experience) It isn't a matter of knowing that God exists, and it isn't enough to know that our God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Instead, we are called to accept God into our life, to lose ourselves in Him, to savour His Love, His peace, His mercy, and thus to know Him. *"No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him"* (Mt 11:27). It is Jesus who reveals the Father to us, and it is in Jesus that we can know Him.

God likes to call Himself *"I am"* (Ex 3:14). Only He can say *"I am"*, and each of us can say it in the measure that Christ lives in us. This means we need to be born again; something which Nicodemus said was impossible (Jn 3:4), but which is made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:6), however, it still isn't possible without our *yes*. It isn't a question of choosing one way of life over another, but of choosing between life and death.

Hence, Mary comes to encourage us to open and surrender ourselves to the salvific action of the Spirit, and she does so with unceasing motherly concern. Just as a mother patiently feeds her little baby who can't feed himself, so does Mary patiently repeat these things to us to teach us to surrender ourselves to God.

"Also today I invite you to live my messages even more intensely in humility and love so that the Holy Spirit may fill you with His grace and strength." We cannot deceive ourselves, let alone deceive others about the salvific

value of Mary's messages. It is closely connected to the acceptance of her calls within our lives. She doesn't call us to read or to listen, but to **live** her messages; and today to **live them even more intensely**, that is, with greater seriousness, determination and commitment. Not only, but we should do all this in **humility and love**, which is to say, in the same style that is consonant to Mary; in the only style which would allow us to be in tune with her and with the Lord Jesus. By putting ourselves in the conditions which she suggests (this won't be difficult if Mary is asking it of us), the **Holy Spirit will fill us with His grace and power**.

This Holy Spirit's action enables us to grow in Christ and at the same time it enables Christ to grow in us. It is in this reciprocal pervasion that man assumes the divine aspect, and Christ's features emerge ever more clearly on our own human aspect. This is how we can advance on the way of holiness and it is how we can become "**witnesses of peace and forgiveness**." It is the "**only way**," says Mary. By letting ourselves be **filled with the grace and power of the Spirit** we can become **witnesses of peace and forgiveness**, of the peace and forgiveness that comes from God. N.Q.

Alexandrina da Costa Blessed

She lived the Passion in her body

Amongst the six blessed added to the list composed by John Paul II (it is almost as if he were in a hurry to bring his sheep into the fold), on the 25th April there was a Portuguese woman who interests us for the way she responded to God's call.

Alexandrina Maria da Costa (1904-1955) was born at Balasar. She lived in a place called "Calvary" and received a solid Christian education. When she was 14 something happened that left a permanent imprint on her, both physically and spiritually. On Holy Saturday of 1918, three men violently entered her home and attempted to sexually violate her (and her sister and an apprentice). To preserve her purity, Alexandrina jumped from a window... Her paralysis and pain worsened and for approximately 30 years she remained bedridden, completely paralyzed.

Alexandrina continued to ask the Blessed Mother for the grace of a miraculous healing, but little by little God helped her to see that **suffering was her vocation** and that she had a special call to be the Lord's **victim**. The more she understood that this was her mission, the more willingly she embraced it.

From 3 October 1938 until 24 March 1942, Alexandrina lived the three-hour "passion" of Jesus every Friday. During these three hours, her paralysis was "overcome", and she would relive the Stations of the Cross, her movements and gestures accompanied by excruciating physical and spiritual pain. "**Love, suffer, repair**" was the programme indicated to her by the Lord.

In 1942 a new phase began for Alexandrina which continued for 13 years and 7 months until her death. She received **no nourishment of any kind except the Holy Eucharist**.

Alexandrina died on 13 October 1955. Her last words were: "I am happy, because I am going to Heaven".

"I lent my face to Jesus Christ"

Last summer in Medjugorje, for the Youth Festival, the actor who lent his person to Jesus Christ for a film that would be seen by millions of people round the world, was there to tell the young people about his incredible adventure.

Nobody knew that the film would have been such an extraordinary event as to make the whole world talk about it. And there, in the *blessed land*, **Jim Caviezel** told the crowds all that the mass media, theologians, common people, believers and agnostics, Christians and Hebrews and many others would later have written, spoken, discussed and debated... some in favour, some against, some out of admiration, others out of disgust, some confirmed in the faith, others disturbed by a truth which revealed their deceit. **The Passion of Christ** was and continues to be much talked about.

"It was through Medjugorje, and Our Lady, that I got this part. In preparation, I used all that Medjugorje taught me," said the actor. "The Director, Mel Gibson, and I were going every day to Mass together. Some days I couldn't go to Mass, but I was receiving the Eucharist. Somewhere along the line, I heard that the Pope went to confession every day, so I thought (it would be good if) I went to confession as often as possible. I didn't want Lucifer to have any control over the performance. For this I also fasted..."

He worked with "**the rosary in his hands everyday**," he drew strength from daily **Eucharist**, and carried relics of saints and of the Cross on himself: "Ivan Dragicevic and his wife Lorraine gave me a piece of the true cross. I kept this on me all the time in a special pocket in my clothes. I also had relics of Padre Pio, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Maria Goretti, and St. Denisius, the Patron saint of Actors."

These were the instruments with which Jim Caviezel faced the difficult role of Christ's last moments on the earth, the hours of His Passion. "I think this film was my *passion* too," continues the American actor. "I had to fight against the cold, cramps, a headache caused by the crown of thorns; I doubted my own faith... but then I understood that I couldn't act out pain without truly suffering..."

A great deal has already been said about this film, and we don't want to be repetitive, but we think it important to underline the faith that was behind this film and which supported it all the way through. The crew and the cast were from various places, they had various convictions: "The film is an ode to love, and to tolerance," continues Caviezel. "I didn't have a moment's hesitation. Gibson told me a number of times that I risked being rejected by Hollywood; that no one would give me a job after this film. I replied that I was a believer and that everyone has to carry a cross... I didn't realize how much I'd have to pray during the film to manage to keep the right perspective... I also prayed that behind the make-up viewers would see the

face of the Messiah, of Jesus Christ."

That Jesus is fascinating can't be denied. For the past two thousand years nearly everyone, one way or another, has been attracted by Him, even though man continues in his arrogance to want to determine how and where God should be. This time, too, Christ has proved to be a "*stumbling block*" as we are provoked to respond to the evidence that the Son of God became flesh and humbly offered Himself to the cruelty of man so as to consume to the very end the Sacrifice offered up to the Father.

Too much violence, too much blood, too much of everything, it has been said. The fact is that once again the Truth has caused a division - in man's heart more than in his mind. Before this extreme act of love, man has to ask himself whether to accept a "failure," destroyed in His body and "*numbered amongst criminals*", or to desire an idealized god, a miracle worker, someone ready to cure all our ills and answer all our requests.

The fear of being caught up is enough to make us back out, and prefer sublimating the idea of redemption to avoid the danger of being called to participate and shed our own blood "*to make up, in our own body, all that has still to be undergone by Christ*" (Col 1:24).

So accusations fly: the film isn't faithful to the Gospel, it doesn't respect the Hebrews, and so on. But the film has the merit of showing the whole world, in a very powerful way, Christ's love for us. He resisted to His last breath against the attacks of the Evil One and refused to use evil to defend Himself: "*Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers never opening its mouth*" (Is 53:7). So He did what we, too, should do: "*Resist evil and conquer it with good*" says St. Paul (Rm 12:21).

It isn't a film to watch, but a living experience that makes you contemplate; it makes your mouth shut and makes you go into yourself, and as you gradually re-emerge you go over the film, searching deeper... "One of the things that I hope the most," said the director, "is that the public, once it's out of the cinema, will feel the need to ask questions." An interesting detail is that the hand that hammered the nail into Jesus' palm was Gibson's. It was a way for Gibson to say: I crucified Him too.

For various reasons this film is a masterwork: its fidelity to the Gospels, enriched by elements taken from the mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich's vision; the atmosphere created by lights and colours, inspired by Caravaggio's paintings; the use of the original languages (Aramaic and Latin) which made the film more realistic and intense; and the ability of the actors who were caught up in a role which surprised even them.

Well-known Italian writer and journalist, Vittorio Messori, wrote: "So much happened on the set [in Italy] that is not known and will probably remain in people's consciences: such as conversions,

liberation from drugs, enemies being reconciled, the abandonment of adulterous relationships, the apparition of mysterious personages, and two lightning bolts, one of which struck the cross.”

The film wasn't made to reap success; it was made to shake consciences. They tried to stop it with criticism and controversies, but perhaps within the silence of hearts new men of faith are being born. Andrea Morigi wrote: “Each viewer is free to see the film how he best likes. Scene after scene, as Christ is turned into the man of the Shroud, you can see him as Judas, who despairs for having betrayed Him; or as a madman, who may or may not have deserved the scourging and crucifixion; or you can suffer with Him. A wide range of attitudes and possible reactions is amply covered by the various characters in the film.”

On this note, Caviezel's wife, Kerrie, a frequent pilgrim to Medjugorje said: “When I first saw him on the cross, with his make-up on, it didn't look like Jim. It was so realistic that it really was like looking at Christ... and on the set some were reverent, others indifferent and some made fun of him. So this made us understand a little of how it must have truly been.”

Whatever the critics and comments, we see how the Crucified Lord still today doesn't “leave us in peace.” And just as well, because by overturning our schemes and expectations He can create in us the space for true peace; the peace that is born from Truth and Love and not from ideas.

Stefania Consoli

In Czechoslovakia, God wasn't in our vocabulary

Most people in the Czech Republic (up to 1993 it was part of Czechoslovakia) do not confess any type of faith. The reasons are various and we may never truly comprehend them in full.

Said this, one needs to go back to the IX century to the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius. To these two brothers from Salonika is attributed the merit of taking the Gospel message to the region and of translating the liturgy into Slavonic.

This also meant being given a certain degree of autonomy with respect to the great Germanic peoples (an autonomy which, alas, lasted briefly). Perhaps for this reason, starting from that period, in the consciences of most of the people any initiative which aimed at obtaining national autonomy made the Catholic Church look like the religion which sought to exercise power in the relatively small Czech nation.

This phenomenon was particularly evident in 1918, the year that the Republic of Czechoslovakia finally obtained its long-awaited autonomy. It was also when priests of the modern Czech Catholic Church gave way to a new Church which

contained various Protestant elements. Thus, in 1948 when the Communist Party came into power, the faith of the people was already very weakened.

About 1950 various monasteries and convents were transformed into concentration camps for priests. Only the state-run schools which followed the Communist ideology were kept open. Very few children attended Catechism classes. Those who came were children of the bravest parents who weren't afraid of losing their jobs or of having to suffer various other disadvantages.

Thus, the tradition of the Catholic faith disappeared almost completely, or at least, the type of tradition present in countries which have not suffered Communism, where people often don't accept God, but where a constant reference to Him is ever-present; for instance where the Church might be greatly criticized, but even though, it is still an authority, something that plays a part in the life also of those who don't practise the faith.

Instead, in Czechoslovakia, God wasn't even in our vocabulary; the Church even less. God was never spoken of, and we lived in a kind of artificial reality. In fact, after the revolution of 1989, one would hear certain phrases, such as “the wheel of history has begun to turn here too,” as if to say that at long last we too were taking part in reality, that life wasn't a game. It must be said, however, that in certain parts of the Czech Republic - such as some southern parts of Moravia - Christians remained faithful even during the harshest times.

The article that follows is by someone who had never heard of God, or at least in the first part of his life. It doesn't intend to evaluate or interpret, only invite you to see how it is to live in such a situation, in a world where apparently there are no supports but in which you continually and intensely seek “something”, and then **when you find it at long last, you feel “at home”**: a place where you recognize yourself and where you find rest.

Viteslav Starostik

Back Home!

From the time I was very little, even before I started school, there were certain questions which worried me. Amongst these there was one in particular: “*What happens to us when we die?*” I remember it as if it were now, and I tried to slow down my breathing rate so that I wouldn't “wear myself out” as quickly. But I didn't ever speak to anyone about it; I don't think I would have been able.

Later, when I was a school kid and life's rhythms began to flow more quickly, these questions sank back into my conscience; though every now and again, deep down, I was aware of a profound sense of insecurity. My companions didn't talk about similar things, and I thought that perhaps I was the only one in the world to do so!

When I was about 15 the old questions

started re-emerging. But more than thoughts about death, I was more worried about whether I truly existed or not, and if there was any meaning to my life. But I also discovered that I wasn't the only one to query over these matters, and this was confirmation that there really was life within me and that I had to face it. A period of research began which didn't lack confusion and despair. Later, during military service, I befriended a young man who believed. Though that period of our lives wasn't abounding in virtue (or perhaps it was all the more reason why it seemed to me that) my friend hoped where I wasn't able to hope.

After military service I continued seeking for various years, and this time the direction was clearer. I tried reading the Holy Scriptures, and I felt ever more attracted to the Church. I later decided to go regularly to Church. I went every Sunday, alone, without understanding what it was about, however, intuition told me that it was something important, and I felt good (there). So one day I asked the Dominican Fathers if I could be baptised, which I was at Easter, 1992. I chose as my sponsor the friend from the military days. My brother was present too. I didn't know that he should find my baptism so interesting.

Despite the fact that I read many books, I realized that I wasn't advancing but that I was turning around in circles. So I tried praying, but my prayer was superficial. In that state, I found help in my brother. His influence was positive and he made me consider praying more seriously.

His visit to Medjugorje became a determining factor. Back home he told me that it would be good for me to go too and that I'd surely like it. So I accepted his advice and shortly after went on pilgrimage too. I had heard that the presence of Our Lady is at times accompanied by extraordinary phenomena, and for this reason I departed full of expectation.

Truly, the surprise was there waiting for me, but it was of a different type. It was the **feeling of having come back home after having been away for a very long time.** It was as if something in me had finally awoken after having slept a very deep sleep. I clearly experienced that God can be much closer than what I had ever imagined.

When I returned back home I was sad, nonetheless I knew that it was up to me to accept this gift and make it yield fruit. I began to discover prayer and my life took on a new rhythm. It became fuller, though not simpler, and I was able to face those things that I previously shunned.

Then something very important happened: my brother decided to enter the *Kraljice Mira* Community – an association born of the Medjugorje experience which lives out the call by Our Lady to place God first in one's life. This testimony (of his) was and is for me an immense support for the journey.

Radomir Starostik



Within the limits, without limitations

by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic

Man swells with pride, and gives himself airs to increase the space within his limits. He is bothered by others when they get too close because his interests are at stake. Each person tends to defend his limits, to hide them as though they were faults. Externally he behaves as if he didn't have them, but within he is narrow, under a protection of spikes that make him touchy and he justifies himself with logics, rights, responsibility.

The same thing happens in our spiritual life. In this field false devotion and false spirituality defend an ailing state of the soul where devotions become "holy" means of defence. That is why it is important to consider the behaviour of the soul, to deliver it from its ailments and whatever covers up its limits, and from the tendency to make war.

Human limits are normal. It is what makes man a creature. They are a shell, and they express our outer image. Limits are part of our individual selves. Without them we would be arrogant and our personality would break up. When we ignore them we walk up in the clouds, without a conscience, and our spiritual ideas are blown up out of proportion.

Thus, limits are gifts from God. It's what makes us individuals, and through them we relate with others. They express our need for others, and they open up the way for us to God the Almighty, and through them we are able to partake of God's infinite life.

When God develops life within man, He does it within man's limits. It is natural to think that God plans our life and He places it within limits so as to generate something better (cf. Jn 15). In His goodness, He knows how to keep a soul within boundaries so that it won't wake up before its time. God awaits the right moment for the growth of the soul and for its mission.

From the lives of the great saints we know that God allowed them to experience the dark night, in situations with no way out. Also Jesus became man, with human limits, and offered His life for our sake (cf. Phil 2) so that in Him the true life would be revealed.

Jesus' sacrifice was an offering of praise to the Father. Becoming aware of God's omnipotence and goodness incites a man to surrender himself to God; and he'll do this with and through his limits. This will make him humble, grateful, joyful; and he won't create defences around himself because he will have within him the Defender Who knows him and his mission perfectly. The Holy Spirit works day and night in a docile soul.

Man's model is the Most Holy Mother of God; he only needs to imitate the humble servant that she is, and like her, to surrender himself totally to God. If he does, the Holy Spirit will develop a protection within the soul whilst urging it to reach out to his neighbour. So man's limits become a door which enables him to encounter others. The Holy Spirit stirs up within man the desire to be united to God and to enter into communion with others in Him. We see then that God transfigures man, and he becomes a new creature; God fills him

with a completeness that is not surrounded by his limits, and He makes him partake of the infinite life.

So what should one do? Some hints:

One must surrender up one's life completely to the authority of Jesus Christ, without reserve, with complete trust and love. Then, all fear, susceptibility and negative feelings disappear from the soul. No one, ever, can steal a soul like this from God's hands (cf. Jn 10:25-30).

One must live for Jesus, announce Him and bear witness to Him even when one's life is at risk, when you risk losing everything. St. Peter left us a beautiful testimony: *"Obedience to God comes before obedience to men... We are witness to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him"* (Acts 5:29-32).

This attitude in a believer puts his enemies in a position where they are relating with the One for whom the soul lives: that is, Jesus Christ. *"If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; but if it comes from God you will not only be unable to destroy them, but you might find yourselves fighting against God"* (Acts 5:38-39). He who is with God is protected; he who is against Him has already lost.

We can always count on Jesus, but we can't exploit Him (cf. Jn 6:1-5). Jesus knew the limits and needs of the people; he took the initiative and fed them in a miraculous way. He always reacts this way in all situations and needs, but He never lets Himself be exploited. St. John writes: *"The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, 'This really is the prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself"* (Jn 6:14-15). If man tries to exploit Him, Jesus retires, leaving man alone, in a void. This can also happen in our spiritual life, in our thoughts, feelings and deeds.

Within our limits, we must be active in God. This is a very important rule. Being active in God is the true spirit of prayer. With prayer, believers *"awaken"* God *"who sleeps"*, so that He will act in them. He reacts, and they are no longer weak, but are powerful in God. A beautiful example of the Church which prays and of God's action is found in the Acts of the Apostles (12:1-17).

Love Jesus infinitely, without worrying about being limited, and if someone should *"put a belt round you"* know that this corresponds to the "perfect happiness" preached by St. Francis.

After the Resurrection Jesus gave Peter, head of the apostles, a rule: *"I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go"* (Jn 21:18). This rule is valid for all believers, but not that we should have the sensation of being tied up, but of being free. **On the wings of love the soul soars beyond all limits** because it is planted in the life of God which is limitless. It is here that the soul experiences its originality and fullness, and is not beset by worries or feelings of "tightness" even if it remains within its own limits; for in the believer all is reconciled and constantly transfigured. ***

Vehicles of Redemption

He entered earthly life through a virginal womb: a pure body, it had not borne life before. On the eve of Passover He went to Jerusalem on the back of a colt *"that no one had yet ridden"* (Lk 19:30). Triumphant He entered the Temple after having slipped away many a time from those who tried to capture Him so that yet more could hear His word. And when His time had come He handed Himself over of His own accord and allowed the events to speak.

Then He entered the kingdom of the dead: He was placed in a tomb *"in which no one had ever been laid"* (Lk 23:53). God who had become man finally returned to the Father so He could prepare the way for man who was still imprisoned in time.

These are three **fundamental steps in the earthly life of the Son of God** as He is continuously raised up to heaven. He, the Holy and Pure One, did not disdain to take upon Himself the grime of our sins, the wounds of mankind's infidelity, the putrefaction of our betrayal. Yet only **humble and pure instruments were worthy of being vehicles** for the Redeemer: an immaculate woman, an animal which had never been ridden, a tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

Are we being too forceful in linking these events? I don't know, but the heart desires a response, and the reply comes from the Lord Himself. **It is certain that the Lord hasn't completed His work,** as He promised to come back to us, definitely, and in all His glory. We don't know when or how, and it is good that the mystery should remain so God can continue to surprise us. However, we do know that the Lord asks us to follow the way of purification, that is, the journey of faith. He gives us instruments to help us on the way and these are the Holy Spirit and the sacraments. He also gives us a Mother: His very own Mother. All this makes us think that the glorious Lord wants to make His definitive return by passing once again through someone. And maybe that someone is us, and for this He predisposes us with His word: *"Wash, make yourselves clean. Take your wrongdoing out of my sight. Cease to do evil; learn to do good,"* prophesies Isaiah (Is 1:16).

At Medjugorje Mary has been preparing us for many years; the times are pregnant, and with untiring concern she urges us to become docile and pure instruments: *"Dear Children, also today I call you to prepare your hearts for these days in which the Lord particularly desires purifying you of all your sins of the past. My children, you can't do it on your own; that is why I am here to help you..."*

When her Son will return our hearts shall have to be immaculate so they may be worthy to generate the Messiah once again for the world: *"... pray so that from your hearts a spring of love may gush forth upon every person, and upon those who hate you and despise you. With Jesus' love you will be able to win over every wretchedness in that sorrowful world which holds no hope for those who don't know Jesus."*

The donkey of Betania was asked to carry Christ's body which was about to be nailed to a cross. Jesus' proposal to us today is to bear His cross so we can be freed of the burden of sin: "... *Decide, today too, for God, so that in you and through you He can change the hearts of men and also yours. Be joyous bearers of the risen Jesus in this restless world which yearns for God and for everything that comes from God.*"

Thus, there is no time to dally. With profound and authentic prayer, let us clean up our deepest selves from all the waste products of our egoism. By dying to ourselves we will open the door to God so He can come into our "inner tombs" and transform all that is dead into life. By welcoming Mary into our lives, we allow her Immaculate Heart to beat within our chests so that we, too, may become spotless; and we will come to realize that our entire beings have been transformed and have become a wide way, free of obstacles, enabling Jesus to journey along them when the time for His return shall be ripe: "*My Children,*" continues Mary in a message at Medjugorje, "*I want you to understand that God has chosen each of you for His plan of salvation for mankind. You cannot understand how great your person is for this divine plan...*" So what are we waiting for?
Stefania Consoli

IN THE MONTH OF MAY

God's Greetings

"Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee!" (Lk 1:28). We repeat this greeting to the Blessed Virgin many times when we pray the Rosary and when we think of Our Lady during the day. Each time we repeat this phrase we repeat God's greeting entrusted to the Angel Gabriel for Mary. She was chosen by God to co-operate in the most sublime of ways in His great plan of salvation.

The moment of the Annunciation was for the most holy Virgin a most privileged moment of encounter with God. It had been prepared from the very beginning of time, waiting for her "yes." The God of Israel Whom Mary loved profoundly and served faithfully, responded with all the force of His love. From that encounter between God and the Virgin blossomed the Grace of which Mary was filled since her conception and which was waiting to become operative for the good of all mankind.

Mary Most Holy isn't only a model for us. She is the prefiguration of what we all are called to be; she is the new humanity, where God's resting place will be. Mary lived in God and God in Mary; one with the Other, and One for the other, to the point that the Angel says: "*The Lord is with thee.*" It is in this donation that the Son of God descends

to become man. In Mary He found the immaculate space, the living temple of His presence. In Mary's humble acceptance, the Father generated the Shoot of salvation, Jesus Christ our hope and our peace.

I think it right to reflect on this greeting, because in Mary, the new humanity, this greeting is addressed to each of us. We are all called by God to a mission; to collaborate with Him for the salvation of mankind; no one is excluded, no one is exempt. God tirelessly seeks workers for His harvest: unpretentious people of good will.

By means of baptism we too become "full of grace," and we must put to interest the talents of grace received at baptism. How? It is God who shows us how in our encounters with Him. When He is part of our life as He was with Mary's, to us He reveals our destiny - if we agree to it. Each person experiences this encounter in a different manner, because God manifests Himself to each of us according to His multiform wisdom; each of us experiences in his own life God's greeting. In truth, the entire life of a Christian should be a joyous encounter with the Lord Who speaks to our most inner self, responds to questions, shows the way.

So why does it take so much effort to meet God; why so much resistance? The reason is that He doesn't force anyone to meet Him. He manifests Himself and awaits the response. "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him...*" (Rev 3:20). The fullness of our life and the blossoming of Grace in us depends on God's call and on our response. There can't be one without the other. God needs our unconditioned *yes* to fulfil His work, and we need to say that *yes* to God to be happy and to become instruments of salvation. Unless we say that *yes* to Him, we aren't able to fulfil our lives, nor can we help others: Jesus said clearly that without Him we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15:5).

Happiness, which is the fullness of life, isn't had through tricks and magic formulae, but through humbly journeying towards Him, through trusting expectation of His coming, through donation of self, the loving search of His presence and the willingness to go through life's trials with Him and for Him. Mary did all this; her life was a total *yes* to God, all the way from the Annunciation to the Cross, and her *yes* continues to echo in the glory of Paradise, it continues to open the way for all who want to follow her example.

We owe so much to the Mother of God and our Mother, for her courageous and humble *yes*. The way is open before us, and it is a way full of light. God waits for us to make us His people, just as the prophet announced: "*I will make a covenant of peace with them... I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore*" (Ezek 37:26-28).

Stefania Caterina

'Return to your initial fervour'

Universality of the message of the Queen of Peace

At a time when the demon of hatred and division seems to reign uncontested the world wide; and whilst he is spreading far and wide the very essence of the satanic poison distilled in his perverse heart, we have before us the images of those who deal out detestable violence to others and fight so-called "holy wars" of every kind. Inevitably, it is accompanied by mourning, tears, and the suffering of innocents, because such hatred is dealt out even more cruelly to the weak and the defenceless. It recalls - not that unrealistically - the frightful scenes of catastrophic combat between civilizations able to involve and convulse great multitudes of peoples divided solely by different religious creeds. Incredibly, this not only happens amongst the "children of Abraham" (Christians, Hebrews and Muslims who profess faith in the same God, and Father of all) but even amongst the baptised of various confessions who become the protagonists of ferocious fratricidal fights which continue to stain entire regions of the planet with the spilling of (very often innocent) blood.

The temptation to use religion to turn it into an undue instrument of assertion by a particular community or ethnic group becomes more acute and evident in areas where cultures and religions clash, where the confusion between faith and ethnic-national identity has century-long roots.

I see a profound connection between this "structure of collective sin" and the fact that Mary chose to appear now as the Queen of Peace precisely at Medjugorje, in the heart of a region historically at the centre of violent battles between peoples of different religious confessions.

At Medjugorje Our Lady strongly reaffirms the universal character of the free gift of salvation and of God's paternity, and thereby unmasks every ruinous ambiguity born solely in man's perverted hearts: "*There is only one God, and in God there exists no division. It is you in the world who have created religious division*" (23.II.1982). With equal strength, and in radical opposition to any ambiguous syncretistic drift, Our Lady reminds us that it is only from the Paschal Mystery of her Son, who died and rose from death, that the grace of salvation for all mankind is poured forth: "*Between God and man there is only one mediator: Jesus Christ. Have faith in Him*" (ibidem).

In another fundamental message which is perfectly concordant with the magisterial contents of the solemn Declaration "*Dominus Jesus*" (which not by chance raised furious and incomprehensible controversies also within ecclesial environments) Our Lady reaffirms with luminous simplicity the basic and eternal truths revealed by God to men, but which are often obscured within the hearts of many faithful: "***On the earth you are divided, but you are all my children! This doesn't mean that all religions are the same before God, but that men are, yes. It is not enough to belong to the Catholic Church to***



News from the blessed land

Conversing with Sr. Emmanuel

The Living Bread, Centre of our Life

You asked me what I would like to share with the readers of *Echo*..

After praying I got an idea which I hope is an illumination by God. For many years the Blessed Virgin has been calling us to things which are very clear, simple and concrete. The problem is that we tend to make a habit of things and so we don't take seriously the fact that if Our Lady has come down from heaven to speak to us it must be for a very important reason. I am thinking in particular of the way she insists that we place the Eucharist, that is, Jesus who is alive in His Body and Blood, at the centre of our lives.

The Gospel passage that says "*Mary pondered all these things in her heart*" says a lot to us; but what were "*all these things*"? Clearly, Mary contemplated the living Jesus when she had Him before her eyes, and later when she could no longer see Him physically, her Son continued to live in the heart of the Mother. He continued to be at the centre of her life and thus of her ideas, thoughts, feelings, reactions, words, and everything.

Instead, we are decentred

In our society it is difficult to find time to pray, because society runs on the principle that God doesn't exist – He just isn't taken into consideration. Everything is organized without God, and since we've filled our time with a great number of other occupations it isn't easy to see and want to seek God.

The Holy Virgin came to offer us a counterculture...

...or I should say the true culture, the one based on love; and she came to invite us to counteract the modern-day mentality by placing the living Jesus at the centre of our lives. This is the way to find true joy, true peace and that security that we desperately seek but which we've replaced with a thousand other things to deceive ourselves on security.

The *Gospa* came to give us real security

If only we would listen to her, we would realize that Jesus is the true centre of our lives, and that it's not our work or family, our health, body, sexuality, fun, hobbies and so on. Till we decide to reposition our entire life around Jesus - the only Centre - we won't begin to live Mary's messages. She continues to appear to remind us with great humility, patience, sweetness and perseverance, that Jesus is the centre and that there aren't any others.

A look at fasting will help us comprehend better

Not everyone has understood that the Mother of God speaks about fasting in relationship to the Eucharist. It is known that at Medjugorje (according to the

be saved: **one must respect God's will.** Also non-Catholics are creatures made in God's similarity and destined to one day reach salvation if they follow with righteousness the voice of their consciences. **Salvation is offered to all without exception.** Only those who deliberately refuse God are damned. To those who have been given little, little will be asked. To those who have been given much, much will be asked. Only God knows the degree of responsibility of each man and (He) pronounces the final judgement." (Message 20.V.1982)

As with the prophetic word, and also in these fundamental messages of Mary, there are different levels to read into. The most immediate one regards the local reality of the Parish of Medjugorje, then there are others with a much wider and universal character. Our Lady's words, in fact, deal with a theme of extraordinary actuality: what should be the **relationship between the baptized and those who profess a religion different to Christianity**, according to the Heart of God?

It is evident from Mary's words that the only privilege that the baptized - in particular Catholics - can legitimately boast about is that they are called in a special way to render "*the true spiritual worship*" (Rm 12:1), by "*offering their own bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God*" (idem). **The true spiritual ecumenism that Mary calls us to** is precisely to offer one's life so it is perfectly united to the Lamb's, that He, through each of us, may fulfil that prophetic, priestly, and regal service which the Father entrusted to Him for the benefit of all our brethren, without distinction of creed, culture or nationality, so that all men and the entire universe may in the end be "*recapitulated in Christ*," Lord of the new creation, for the greater glory of God the Father.

The words of the Queen of Peace nonetheless contain a serious warning: "*To those who have been given much, much will be asked!*" **We have been given everything, so we must be ready to give everything;** to give ourselves completely to God, Who through the Queen of Peace is pressing us to take a concrete step: of offering Him our lives without reserve through the Heart of His Mother for the world's salvation!

We are called to do the Father's will by carrying out the "*new commandment*" (Jn 15:12) of Love sacrificed. Again Jesus entrusts it to His Church through Mary! Woe betide those who betray their mission which has always been written in God's Heart! Woe betide those who fail to heed the voice of the Most High and of His Mother! Woe betide those who slander the works of God and are scandalized by His merciful Love and the maternal love of Mary!

In this perspective it is easy to see how the presence in the world of the Queen of Peace is an extraordinary gift offered not only to Christians, but to all men of good will, no matter what their religion or culture, so that everyone may at the end be joyously associated with that "*huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language*" which was "*standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb*" (Rev 7:9), so that "*the Lamb will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes*" (Rev 7:17). Giuseppe Ferraro

visionaries) Mary has never connected the practice of fasting twice a week to the idea of penance and sacrifice, but that she asked for fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays for a very simple reason: Wednesday precedes Thursday and Friday follows Thursday.

It is as if she has wanted to surround Thursday with a protective shield of grace. Mary, in fact, desires that every Thursday be for us a celebration of the Bread of Life, in memory of the Last Supper which was held on a Thursday in Jerusalem (the Hebrew Passover meal).

Thus, the most important reason that Mary asks us to fast on Wednesdays is to prepare for Thursday, and also to forget the distractions of food, so that we are freer to contemplate bread to better comprehend the Bread of Life.

Why bread?

There is a common love for bread that has nothing to do with the day of fast. The Blessed Virgin particularly loves bread because it is the substance chosen by Jesus to become His Body. I think that Mary, like every other woman, would have made bread and I imagine that it must have been very special bread! In the life of St. Catherine of Siena it is said that one day the young woman wanted to make bread but she realized that she didn't have enough flour. So she prayed to Our Lady for help. Mary promptly multiplied the flour and helped Catherine knead the dough. Those who ate it exclaimed: "What heavenly bread you've made; how extraordinary! Which recipe is this?"

Mary asks us to eat bread on Wednesdays to induce us to contemplate a food made with flour

Flour is made from the wheat grain. In the Gospel Jesus often refers to grain when speaking of His own life. To be able to make bread, in fact, the grain must first fall onto the earth and die. This makes us think of Christ who suffered His Passion, died and was placed in the tomb.

When the seed is dead, it reproduces and supplies many seeds, and this is symbolic of the resurrection of life multiplied and of Jesus' Resurrection, with all the fruits that follow. When the ear is mature, the reaper comes to harvest; then the grain is crushed to make something that belongs to the life of Jesus. For He was crushed for our sake - as Isaiah says in the beautiful song of the suffering servant (52:13) - that we might have life. So we see how grain tells the life of our Saviour!

So Wednesday is a day to stop...

You don't do the shopping, you don't fill the house with the good aroma of food. Instead, you concentrate on bread, to turn inwards into Mary's heart and with her into the life of her Son Jesus, and to contemplate the love He had for us by making Himself Bread. For many years the Hebrew people were fed by God with the bread that came from heaven called *manna* and this was to prepare the hearts of men to later receive Jesus, the Bread of Life.

So Thursday is a day of celebration!

We are given the true Bread of Life in the celebration of Thursday. This means

our hearts are festive, and in particular we try to go to church to participate in the mystery of the Eucharist. Thursday is also the day we are called to pray for priests, for those who make the Bread of Life descend onto the earth: through the Words of Jesus which they pronounce the host becomes the living Bread.

Then comes Friday, another day of fast

This means that we've so loved this Bread of Life that the Holy Virgin wants to leave us another day with the flavour of bread. We are asked to "linger over the bread" so that we don't go back too quickly to the distractions of doing the shopping, cooking and housekeeping. We are asked to prolong for as much as possible the flavour of this simple food so that we don't fall back too quickly into the system; into obsession with food.

The Hebrews don't have this faith in the Bread of Life, in the Eucharist.

They celebrate the *Shabbat* on Friday evening through to Saturday at dusk. They take this rest till the moment in which the new day of the week begins. They celebrate the *Shabbat* with all their heart, and when it is about to end they recite prayers as if to impede it from ending as they know that the Messiah will come on the *Shabbat*. It is as if they would like to hold it back to create the opportunity for Him to come before the new week begins.

I have the impression that Mary has this same spirit. On Friday - and even more on Thursday with the celebration - we hold back the flavour of bread, to prolong it as much as possible for love of the Bread of Life, out of desire to remain as long as possible with the Eucharist. This is the fast Mary asks of us, and when we understand this we experience the joy of the encounter with the living Jesus and you lose the idea of penance.

The Queen of Peace accompanies us...

... and she desires that we enter more profoundly into the mystery of her Son Who is Bread of Life, and a very good bread because it is nourishment for our life. Bread enters our bodies and reaches all our cells, even those we aren't aware of. This is the image Jesus chose when He became nourishment for us. He so desires reaching the innermost part of our soul, and He doesn't want that any part of our soul should be closed for Him. For this He became food, so that every single corner of our soul can be touched by Him, and receive light, resurrection and health so it can be freed from evil, so it can desire yearning after the Kingdom, and so it can communicate with Love which calls it.

Jesus communicates Himself to us.

Happy is the soul which accepts Him with an open heart, without doubt, without fear, and especially without distraction! I think that the Lord will be manifested in a more evident way through His Eucharistic Body, because Mary has always desired giving us Jesus and helping us to welcome Him into our lives. For this same reason she comes still today, after all these years of apparitions. We today have Him already, and let us not forget to draw near Him always with immense love.

(A registration translated from French)

Annual apparition to Mirjana

Visionary Mirjana Dragicjevic-Soldo had daily apparitions from 24 June 1981 to 25 December 1982. During the last daily apparition, Our Lady gave her the 10th secret, and told her that she would appear to her once a year, on the **18th of March**.

This year several thousand pilgrims gathered to pray the Rosary at the Cenacolo Community in Medjugorje. Our Lady gave the following message:

"Dear Children! Also today, as I watch you with a heart full of love, I desire telling you that what you persistently seek, what you long for, my dear children, is before you. It is sufficient that, in a purified heart, you place my Son first, and then you will see. Listen to me and allow me to lead you to this in a motherly way."

International Meeting for Priests

Medjugorje, **5 - 10 July 2004**. This year's theme is: **The Identity of the Priest**. Reservations: at the information office personally, by phone 00387 36 651 988; fax 36 651 999; email: seminar.marija@medjugorje.hr

We ask all priests who have arranged their own accommodation with a family in Medjugorje to note in their application the name and phone number of the family where they will be staying. We will arrange accommodation for all the priests who have no direct contacts and have not arranged their own accommodation. (Please note in your application if you wish us to arrange accommodation for you.)

Instead of a monetary payment, we ask you to kindly celebrate five Mass intentions.

It is necessary to bring with you: your celebret given by your superior, an alb and stole, a Bible, a small FM radio with headphones (for simultaneous translation).

We kindly ask all Organisers of pilgrimages, Prayer Groups and Centres for Peace to **publish this information as widely as possible**, so that as many priests as possible may participate. In as much as it is possible, we also kindly ask you to **financially assist the priests** who would like to come but do not have the necessary funds for such a journey. We thank you in advance and pray for God's blessing and the blessing of the Queen of Peace upon you and your work.

Summer Schedule at Shrine -

Starting the 1st May, prayer of the Rosary in the parish church will begin at 6pm; Holy Mass at 7pm, followed by the blessings and the third part of the Rosary. Eucharistic adoration on Thursdays will be after the evening Mass and on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10-11 pm. Veneration of the cross will be on Fridays after the evening Mass. Rosary on Apparition Hill and Way of the Cross on Krizevac will begin at 4pm. Confessions: every evening during the evening prayer programme.

15th International Youth Festival

Mladifest, as it is called in Medjugorje, will be held from **1-6 August 2004**

Bring with you: small FM radio with headphones, a Bible and umbrella.

Groups participating in the Festival should not make plans for any other

programme during this week. The evening prayer programme for all begins with the Rosary at 6 pm followed by Mass at 7 pm. On arrival in Medjugorje, please register at a registration table set up from 9 am to 6 pm every day; registration will take place throughout the entire week.

Simultaneous translations are provided.
(From the Press Bulletin)

Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti in England

At a recent gathering in Manchester, England, Marija spoke of Our Lady's call at Medjugorje. The following is an excerpt. "Through my testimony tonight I hope to make each of you fall in love with Our Lady..."

Mary asks us to be instruments in Her hands; instruments of Her peace. It is the Peace that comes from God. She began by saying: **Pray the Rosary**. Then she asked us to put the **Holy Bible** in a visible place in our homes and to read it every day.

She invited us to create **prayer groups** in our parishes. I remember once when Our Lady said this we complained about already being too busy, and she smiled beautifully and reminded us that when a dear friend comes to visit, we don't think how much time we spend with him, but we are happy for him to stay as long as possible. Thus, Jesus must become our best friend. So we started praying more and more, and prayer became a joy for us.

We also learned with Our Lady to **fast** because She said through **prayer and fasting we can keep wars far from us**. I remember the Bishop of Split, a friend of Medjugorje, when war began in Croatia he said, 'I invited all the people to fast and pray'. His city was protected. They started Perpetual Adoration, 24 hours, in their Chapel. Many people were sick, and they prayed and were healed.

There are wars also in our hearts and in our families. If we don't have prayer, we don't have God with us. So Our Lady began inviting us to fast. She said the best fast is bread and water. Those who cannot fast if they are sick, can offer their sickness, with love. Even a child can make little sacrifices by offering up sweets or TV. We can do the same with the things we're attached to (cigarettes, TV or alcohol...). I think we also really need to fast particularly with our eyes, because our eyes can see a lot of impurity.

Our Lady invites us to **confession**, saying that a good rule is to confess at least once a month. But in particular, through all these things, Our Lady is inviting us to **live holiness in a very practical and concrete way**. She stresses that the most important thing is Holy Mass and that we ought to place it at the centre of our lives. She also teaches us of the importance of Jesus' Eucharistic Presence, by asking us to create **groups for adoration** of Jesus who is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Our Lady allowed us to fall in love with Her, and when we did, we started living all that she asked of us. When She saw that we had fallen in love with Her, She led us to Jesus, saying: 'I am not important.' So we have fallen in love with Jesus."

God sent His Mother to us to tell us that He loves us. Our Blessed Mother wants us to cherish these words: **God loves me!** #

Our Readers Write...

Edna Hart, England: The various medicines I take have long complicated names, but the best medicine I know has a short and simple name: Echo. Echo gives me spiritual health and joy. I hope that my donation will help to spread your wonderful paper throughout the world.

Muramira M. Nobert, Rwanda: Thanks a lot for the copies of Echo you send to us, we are very grateful and my fellow students enjoy reading it too. Our Mother's messages have really changed our lives. May the almighty Lord bless you.

Maria Vazelis, S.Australia: I love you all for the copies of Echo that you've been sending me for years. Thank you so much! I always find consolation and peace in Our Lady's words.

Mary Veale, Ireland: Thank you so much for bringing us to the Mother of God. I enclose my contribution.

Awazie Emmanuel, Nigeria: Indeed I am very grateful for your publication; each time I receive the packet loaded with the voice, the advice, the vision, the words of my beloved MOTHER 'maria di nso' blessed virgin Mary, I cannot help saying 'Thy Kingdom Come!' I pray that the good Lord may bless you all.

M. Simpkins SFO, Australia: Thank you so much for all you do in spreading Our Lady's messages to us all. You and all at the Echo are in my prayers. Please include my intentions in your Masses and prayers! God bless you abundantly!

M. Dingli, Malta: We wish to thank you for the dedication you show towards the Blessed Mother. Echo is an inspiration to us all; it helps us lead a better life.

M. Stewart, England: I found an old issue of Echo, dated December 2000, in a church in London. I would now like to subscribe to your excellent paper. God bless you and your noble work.

J. Gaydecki, UK: Thank you for your publication. I have benefited from it spiritually. God bless you.

M Malikite, Ethiopia: Thank you for sending us the Echo over the years. We (the recipients of Echo) have formed a prayer group. I ensure you that Echo is well received.

Sr. Evangelina, S. America: Dear Brethren, I should have written long ago, and I apologize for not having thanked you enough for the Echo that you've been sending me over the years in such a faithful and disinterested way. May God reward you with a great blessing. For us Echo is the word of God Who speaks through Our Lady's messages, and thanks to you it reaches us.

B. Scarpinella, Rome Italy: Your Echo means a lot to me and I just wanted to thank you for sending it to me.

St. Clare Sisters, Assisi: Thank you for regularly sending us the much-awaited and highly appreciated Echo. May the

Crucified and Risen Lord bless you through the intercession of the B.V. Mary.

Luiz Garelos: Your publication brings me hope, consolation and spiritual help. When I opened it I experienced a wonderful sensation, and reading it makes me rejoice and exult. Thank you for everything you write, and for the love you transmit.

Sr. Edesia, Ecuador: Sincere and profound thanks for this precious work of yours, divine and Marian. Like a net cast into the stormy sea of this world, it is gathering up a great number of fish. Also here in Ecuador it is penetrating and conquering hearts and souls.

Brigitte Kratz, France: How much love in these eight little pages! When I read it the love of our Blessed Mother fills me, and like a good breath of fresh air for the lungs one never tires of it... Thank you for the way you know how to transmit to us Mary's cry of love for us, and her advice which comes from God. Your Echo brings us Medjugorje, where year after year, bit by bit, the Gospa transforms us. Thank you for this gift of love and peace.

Spiritual Bouquet for Our Lady: ask 10 friends to offer a rosary any time between now and 25 June (23rd anniversary of the apparitions in Medjugorje). Together it will become a beautiful bouquet for Our Lady's intentions. (Electa, London - fax 020 8947 0310)

Dear Echo,

From the first word to the last my soul finds nourishment, and my spirit is strengthened. You bring me God's word which He speaks for me through our Blessed Mother, through the Holy Father, through those whom the Spirit inspires. How beautiful, how consoling, that God, King and Lord, should concern Himself so much as to talk to me, to tell me that He loves me. Me! And with what patience! What joy to learn (through reading "Fr. Angelo's little instrument") that our God isn't a dark, incomprehensible, and mysterious God, but a loving and consoling God, and that He watches over me and is attentive to my actions.

The Pope, a true father, in the image of Abba, papa - brings me words of great hope. When I feel discouraged and fearful and powerless by the "evil that irrupts, when the pillars of a just social order seem shaken, and the very foundations of human society undermined" he is there to encourage me not "flee 'to the mountain like a bird' far from the vortex of evil, and from the onslaught of the wicked," but to look up to the Lord with trust, for He is a strong God and is not indifferent to my pleas of help. "The Lord is not a distant king, closed in his gilded world, but rather is a watchful Presence who sides with goodness and justice. He sees and provides, intervening with His word and action."

Thank you for bringing me these Words! Thank you for transmitting Our Lady's call!

The triumph of evil is only apparent. Our Lady is preparing her army; she's preparing us. She has armed us with "our

five pebbles" to defeat our Goliath, but thanks to you I've also learnt to recognize and name the "goliaths" that are in me. For that's where the battle begins: on home ground. But we aren't alone; Mary is with us, and together we're with Mary! God bless you.
Milly M.G.

*** Marian Conferences Scotland:**
Forty-eight hours of thanksgiving with Milona von Habsburg for the 23 years with Our Lady, 9-11 July 2004.

Youth Festival Scotland: 1-4 July 2004.
Contact Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll, Scotland. 01838 200216

**** Request for Rosary beads, medals, holy images:** 1. Norman Edi Marker, plot no: 1/B; H.A.L Society, Old-Bowenpally, Secunderabad 500011, A.P., INDIA.; 2. Emile Tognizin, Mission Catholique, Agamey-Mono, BP 357, Lokossa, Benin, Africa

Free copies of Echo of Mary available in **Medjugorje** at **Phoenix Catholic Books** in main street next to pharmacy.

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.

How to donate:

1. PERSONAL CHEQUES payable to "Echo of Mary Association" - mail to same at: **Casella Postale 27, I-31030 Bessica Treviso, Italy.**

2. If convenient, pay into one of our **bank accounts**, specifying payment for "Echo of Mary Association": - **Italy:** Banca Agricola Mantovana (BAM), Agenzia Belfiore, Mantova, Italy. Acc. no. 4754018 - CAB 11506, ABI 05024; - **UK:** Royal Bank of Scotland, 26 George St., Oban, Argyll, PA34 5SA. Acc. no. 8326 0400 154351

* **In the USA,** cheques payable to "Echo of Mary Association" can be mailed to C/o R/F Venditti, P.O. Box 646, Pacifica, CA 94044.

!! Australia / Oceania. Please write to us to keep your subscriptions up to date, to submit your donations (personal cheques accepted: see above).

OUR ADDRESS: Echo of Mary Assoc., Casella Postale 27, I-31030 Bessica Treviso, Italy.

Internet: www.ecodimaria.net // **NEW EMAIL: info@ecodimaria.net**

Our Prayers for you! On the **first Saturday of each month** we offer up to God in prayer, through Mary's Immaculate Heart, readers' **intentions.** Once a month Fr. Alberto celebrates a Holy Mass for the same intentions.

As we await the arrival of the Paraclete, may the Risen Lord impress His blessing in your hearts and your families!

don Alberto

Villanova, 11 May 2004