

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 January 2005:

“Dear Children, In this time of grace I call you anew to prayer. Pray, my Children, for the unity of Christians, that you all may be one heart. Unity will be a reality in your midst inasmuch as you will pray and forgive. Do not forget: love will conquer only if you pray, and if your hearts open. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Pray for Unity of Christians

“Holy Father, in thy name, keep them which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn 17:11). Thus prayed Jesus at the hour of His sacrifice. *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn 17:20-21).*

A prayer by Jesus could not go unheeded by the Father, yet still today Christians are not *one*. After a happy start when *the whole group of believers was united heart and soul* (Acts 4:32), the first quarrels began quickly creeping in (1 Co 1:11-12) and still today the division amongst Christians is cause for scandal.

The Lord's great prayer is still suspended before the Father, and perhaps it is waiting for *the revealing of the sons of God* (Rm 8:19) and the return of the *Son of man* to be fully and universally satisfied. In fact, *the last enemy to be destroyed is death* (1Co 15:26) and since he who separates sows death, perhaps it will be at the last battle that we will finally become united Christians. This should not induce us to remain passive. We are rather called to mobilize everyone and implore from God the great miracle which will make us one child in His Son Jesus.

The prayer for the unity of Christians does not end with the closing of the week-long prayer said annually for this purpose. In fact, Mary urges us: **“Pray, my Children, for the unity of Christians, that you all may be one heart”** - one heart in the Heart of Jesus, with our words, deeds, and life. May there be no more division between creatures and the Creator, amongst people, in the family, in society, in the world. May he who divides be thrust into hell, and may Jesus reign!

“Unity will be a reality in your midst inasmuch as you will pray and forgive.” Without prayer and communion with God,



My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work (Jn 4:34)

we cannot truly forgive. May we grow in prayer and forgiveness so reconciliation is made possible, so that unity becomes a reality. As great an objective it may seem it is at everyone's reach, and we are all responsible for it. All it takes to pray and forgive is an open heart, and all of us can ask God for this grace and obtain it. One doesn't need any particular gift such as wisdom or intelligence; rather, these talents can impede grace, for the Father *“hides these things from the wise and understanding, and reveals them to babes”* (cf. Mt 11:25).

“Do not forget: love will conquer only if you pray, and if your hearts open.” Simple yet extremely important and deeply meaningful words! Our salvation, won by Christ, awaits our acceptance to become universal and manifest for the world; hence we must pray and offer everything to God (an open heart), so that *in my flesh I may complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions* (cf. Col 1:24). Don't read this as being condemned to suffer; as it is further proof of God's great Love for us who wants to lift us up to the Son. May Thy kingdom come, oh Father. Yours is a kingdom of peace and love. May the *civilization of Love* triumph in the world! We believe in You. We surrender ourselves to You!

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 February 2005:

“Dear children, Today I call you to be my extended hands in this world that gives God last place. You, my Children, give God first place in your lives! God will bless you and give you the strength to bear witness to Him, the God of love and peace. I am with you and intercede for all of you. My Children, do not forget that I love you tenderly. Thank you for responding to my call.”

God in first place

“Today I call you to be my extended hands in this world that gives God last place.” Last November Mary gave us a similar invitation, and the call to be her extended hands roused sincere emotion in hearts which are open to the calls and suggestions of our heavenly Mother. Today she has repeated the call, though this time it seems more pressing and seems to cover greater radius. Today the call involves the whole world. We are called to be her **extended hands** before the entire world; the reason being that the **world places God last**. We are called, therefore, to turn the situation around, to re-establish the primacy of God in the world. How? By becoming Mary's **extended hands**; that is, allowing her to use our hands to offer assistance, to sustain, to lift back up, to feed, to heal, to serve, to caress, to welcome, to bless.

We are called to be Mary's **extended hands** so that God can be put back in the place which is His - first, not last - and to do it not so much with words, but, rather, with our lives. **“You, my Children, give God first place in your lives!”** *Saying* isn't enough; it must be evident with our *doing*, in our deeds. Our God isn't a concept to be expressed, but a living Presence to be shown; not an idea to be communicated, but the Living One to witness; not something fleeting or elusive, but the Creator and Giver of life. In fact, *it is in Him that we live, move, and exist* (Acts 17:28). We are created in the *image of God* (Gen 1:27), and man finds his true life in God alone. *“When I shall with my whole self cleave to Thee, I shall no where have sorrow or labour; and my life shall wholly live, as wholly full of Thee”* (St. Augustine, *Confessions*: 10.28.39).

If life is not oriented towards God, man is necessarily disoriented, and worldly seductions and the illusions of power and wealth cannot suffice to cancel the need for God, for just *as the deer longs for running water, so does my soul long for You, o God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God* (Ps 41 [42]). There's no compromising, for if God is not given first place, He will sooner or later slip back into

last; for *we cannot serve both God and mammon* (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13).

Put God first, as Jesus did, as Mary did, as the saints do! It's not as difficult as the tempter would have us believe. All we need do is say "Yes" to the Father - said with all our heart and being; said with joy, faith and love! that our heart lift up to God like that of a child, and open up to Him so His holy love might remain in us; that our souls open up to Him and be touched by His holy mercy.

"O God, we want to be Your children, humble and devout, to the point of becoming Your cherished and sincere children, such as only the Father would desire us to be. Help us Jesus, our Brother, so that Your Father might be benevolent to us, and that we might be benevolent to Him." (Excerpt: *Petition to God*, prayer given by Our Lady to Jelena, Medjugorje, 1985).

May our entire being praise the Father and surrender to His will, and witness that He, our God, is **God of love and peace**. With His blessing He will give us the **strength** to follow Jesus in joy and in sorrow, on Tabor as on Calvary. Mary loves us **tenderly**, and like a **tender** bud in her hands we will blossom and become her **extended hands**. So why wait any longer?
N.Q.

Sr. Lucia born into heaven!

She would have desired going to heaven after having encountered the "white lady" at Cova di Iria close to Fatima in Portugal back in 1917. Lucia was only 10 years old when Our Lady visited her and her two little cousins. The events of Fatima are well enough known not to be repeated here, but one of the facts is worth our consideration. In one of their encounters, Our Lady said she'd soon take Francisco and Jacinta into heaven, but that Lucia would remain in the world as: **"Jesus wants to use you to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart."**

The young girl didn't like the idea at first, as she would have preferred going to heaven with her two little cousins, but Lucia nonetheless understood the greatness of serenely accepting God's will. She lived to a great age and she consecrated herself entirely to God - in prayer and in the silence of the cloistered convent - to promote devotion to Mary and her Immaculate Heart,

"Sister Lucia inspired confidence because of the peace in which she lived," said Bishop João Alves, retired head of the Coimbra Diocese, "a peace that resided in faith and a constant union with God." And she communicated this peace to all those

around her or who simply came into contact with her, or wrote to her (she, in fact, loved writing and even learnt to use a computer in recent years). She communicated this peace to the simple folk, and to the "great" figures such as the Popes who met her and saw reflections of heaven in her, in particular John Paul II - a protagonist of the secrets of Fatima of which Lucia was faithful custodian.

There existed a profound friendship between John Paul II and Lucia. Just hours before the elderly Carmelite died she received his personal message, in which he said that on hearing of her illness, he prayed to God that the religious would be able to **live the moment of pain and suffering with a paschal spirit**, and he imparted his blessing to her. Bishop Albino Cleto of Coimbra confirmed that Sr Lucia heard the reading of the papal message on Sunday and, being 'very affected' by it, asked if she could personally read the text of the fax." Lucia, too, was concerned over the health of the Pontiff and spent her last days in prayer for him.

She died on the 13th February. The 13th was also the day Our Lady chose to visit Fatima from May to October. Lucia would have soon turned 98: a long life spent in doing God's will for the salvation of souls.
Editor

JP II: Icon of suffering Servant

Speaking of the Pope especially now that his health is seriously threatened, immediately causes prayer to rise to God to grace us with his presence yet more.

It has been a trying moment, and the whole world has been on the alert out of concern for him, also due to the invasive action of the media which captures his every laborious movement and exhibits the humiliating signs of his sickness without regard. If the close ups of the Pope's suffering taste rather of subtle cynicism for the sake of sensationalism, they have also served to show up a most noble and precious side of his lengthy pontificate: **preaching combined with suffering**. "The Pope, too, must suffer," he said in 1994, "so the world can see that there is a Gospel which I would say is even greater, called the Gospel of suffering."

It is a paradox for our days with the great quest for well-being, the illusion of eternal youth, and the tendency to pretend that death doesn't exist, while exploiting every instant of life for one's own enjoyment.

That is why **God chose as His guide for the Church** of these times **a man who is not ashamed to show his weakness**. Instead, it is seen as a sign of strength; it has become an example for his flock. "I continue to serve the Church and the whole of humanity, even here in the hospital among other sick persons, of whom I am thinking with affection," he declared during recent hospitalization. It's a theme that returns frequently in his homilies; it counter attacks the ever so invasive culture of death, for indeed, suffering is the core of the Christian message; an essential element. "If growing

old, with its inevitable conditions, is accepted serenely in the light of faith, it can become an **invaluable opportunity for better comprehending the Mystery of the Cross, which gives full sense to human existence...**" (JP II's 2005 Lenten Message).

The Holy Father's witness is strong! Both when as a young pontiff he flew from one country to another, and the world loved this "athlete of God" who wasn't afraid to thunder out the Truth to one and to all, and also now that he is disable and lets himself be transported and in his meekness he lets himself be caressed, disarmed he continues to fight for peace. Yes, his witness is even stronger, and the world cannot but stand back in admiration.

Of course, this penalizing condition of his - a "loser" quality from a human point of view - has not removed an ounce of that steely determination of his with which he has always worked. John Paul II has always been impatient to return to work each time he has been immobilized by his infirmity. Far from being ostentation, exhibitionism or heroic protagonism, our beloved Pope is moved by a profound sense of responsibility towards a humanity which he received in custody from God: "I always feel in need of your help before the Lord in order to carry out the mission that Jesus has entrusted to me," he humbly exclaimed in the Angelus of 13 February. And on the first "note" written after the tracheotomy he was given on Thursday 24 Feb. the Pope said: **"Ever wholly Thine,"** thus newly entrusting himself and his Petrine Mission into the hands of the Mother.

So we see that he never fails to attend to his commitments, even when he experiences difficulty at lifting his hand or at speaking. And he will continue to attend to them, to the very end! despite the shrewd attempts by "some" who advise him to retire, as "the

Church needs a leader with good health," to which the Pope rebuts: **"Did Jesus perhaps come down from the cross?"**

He continues his pilgrimage on the earth with tenacity and faithfulness, overthrowing the idea of "powerful" with his behaviour. It is time we all understood that the strength of the Church is born from the little ones, the last ones, from those who courageously offer their sufferings for the good of all. **"Dear sick people, if you join your suffering to the suffering of Christ, you will be his privileged co-operators in the salvation of souls. This is your task in the Church... Thus, your suffering is never wasted! Indeed, it is valuable for it is a mysterious but real sharing in the saving mission of the Son of God."** (Papal Message 11/2/2005)

This his preaching. This his example. This his life, till death. A true icon of Isaiah's **suffering Servant** (cf. Is 53:3) today incarnated in the successor of Peter.

John Paul II is a great Pope because he is not afraid to humble himself: "... I set great store by the value of your prayers and suffering: **offer them up for the Church and for the world; offer them for me, too, and for my mission as universal Pastor of the Christian people.**" (ibidem)

The *Osservatore Romano* commented during his hospitalization: "The Pope is showing the world the true meaning of the salvific value of Christian suffering which he himself is totally embracing. What is happening in this hospital is so encouraging, even spiritually convulsive, for it is overthrowing the mentality that sees pain and sorrow as a mortifying experience, as something to be hidden or removed, to be distanced with disgust. Instead, the Pope is saying that the Mystery of the Redemption of the world is surprisingly rooted in suffering." (our translation).
S.C.

YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST
17 Oct. 2004 – 29 Oct. 2005

A play of lights...

"Behold the Lamb of God..." said the priest as he lifted the broken host after having received in his hands the sacrifice of Christ. A light, coming from who knows where, reflected off the gold paten onto the Host, making it exceptionally luminous. It was almost as if the light were from within, it was so intense and clear.

It was then that I experienced more fully that "Jesus is light, pure light, uncreated light, and this light will enter into me when I open my lips to receive the Eucharist..." This is what I was thinking when a beam of enthusiasm began to penetrate my mind and heart at the idea that my being – internally dark, obscured by the shadow of sin: mine and of the world – would soon change. "If I let the Light enter the darkness within me everything will change," I told myself. "The more I open up, the more it will invade me. The more I empty myself, the more I can be filled..."

And with these feelings I prepared myself to "take Communion." I returned to my place, and a new awareness was present in my soul. That thin wafer that I received on my tongue contained the same Light that had defeated the Darkness once and for all, one day in the sepulchre. To be precise, it was the **third day after Easter**. The lifeless body of our Lord Jesus was there on the stone slab. The tomb was dark, just like any other tomb, because the dark is typically associated – in an imposing way – with death.

But that day something new happened, and it changed our destiny. On that day it was darkness that ran up against its own death. There was no escaping; it had been defeated, cleaved by a powerful light that radiated from the body which had died on the cross, it was a light that passed through every fibre of the Body, bringing It back to life. Unheard of event! Incredible event! Salvific event! On that day corruption was rooted up from human existence. Once and for all. It had to make way for a new process which would change our destiny: **resurrection**. *"This is the night of which it is written: And the night shall be as clear as the day, and the night is my light in my pleasures,"* chants the *Easter Exultet*. *"Let the earth rejoice, made radiant by such splendour; and, enlightened with the brightness of the eternal King, let it know that the darkness of the whole world is scattered."*

This light is in each host that becomes Eucharist, and each Eucharist radiates this light in us. It is a light able to burst into the sepulchres of our death/sin and gives us life: risen life; redeemed life.

It comes from the Father, and through the Spirit becomes the Body of the Son so that we may be its dwelling place. *"You are the light of the world,"* says the Teacher, who then goes on to add: *"A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light*

a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men..." (Mt 5:14).

The call is eloquent; we cannot ignore it and hide in the shadows of our egoism, or of individual devotionalism, to exploit the gift for ourselves alone. Rather, with audacity we ought to proclaim the Mystery which unhinged the bolts of death and made us immortal – without fear of showing the world what we're called to be. And we are called to be *salt*, to be men and women modelled with the only Light that can call everything back to existence.

As I remain seated on the pew, immersed in my reflection, I became aware that the light was gradually changing, or rather, transfiguring me, since everything that was steeped in shadow just minutes before was now resplendent with light.

I had the clear sensation that I was that lantern which is to be placed on the hilltop without any type of cover, so that the luminous fount now in me could reach distance horizons. **But there was something I had to do while I shone with a light that was not mine:** I had to protect it so it wouldn't die out. To protect it from the winds and bad weather, from all the bad spirits that hate the light. I had to be its custodian, as a tabernacle protects the Blessed Sacrament. This was the response I had to give to so much grace. Simple and decisive. When a response is repeated every day it awakens awareness, responsibility, and thus mission.

Stefania Consoli

Bread for the body and spirit

When we eat we nourish our body. Also the communion between those sharing the meal is nourished and strengthened. To take food together is a gesture that expresses esteem, openness to dialogue, acceptance, encouragement, forgiveness, festivity... for this reason life's important events are celebrated by sharing a meal.

Jesus teaches us to ask for our "daily" bread, not only for ourselves, but for all. He thus prepares us to perceive every man's hunger, not to forget the many who hunger. Through asking for daily bread we ask God that we might not remain closed up in egoism or in sterile resignation before the hunger of others, but also to learn to share our bread and be servers and witnesses of His love.

But man does not live on bread alone: he hungers for values, for clearness of mind, for hope, for faith, for freedom, for peace, for the infinite, for eternity, for victory over death. Man needs to be nourished also by the God Who enters into him, Who gives meaning to his day, Who understands his tears, Who makes him able to love, Who forgives, Who helps him so he doesn't fall under his own burden, and makes him able to carry the burdens of others. Towards this God we are drawn by a vital desire, as with hunger and thirst. Father God nourishes our spiritual hunger above all with the bread of His word.

In the Bible bread is also a sign that prefigures the joyous destination of all: a banquet at which each of us will be face to

face with the Lord Who will satiate every hunger. To ask for our daily bread is to ask to not end up in oblivion, but to be accepted by God the Father in His house and to become part of His family for ever. Our daily bread reminds us also of that bread that Jesus left for us at the Last Supper: the Eucharist.

To the Father we ask that our family meals may prepare us to gather with the Church for the Eucharistic meal, or rather, that they may be a continuation of the Eucharistic that we have celebrated. Through giving us that bread, Jesus places within us the strength of the Holy Spirit Who communicates divine life to us, that is to say the full and definitive life. We should remember that the Eucharist is nourishment that allows us to live down here as children of God and as brothers and sisters of each other; it is sustenance for a life which finds its fulfilment in our resurrection.

Lorenzo Zani (from a Pastoral Letter)

Lent and the wilderness: school of love and intimacy

If the exodus symbolizes man's journey towards perfection, the wilderness is its vital space. **It is in the wilderness that man learns to know himself, and to choose:** *"I place two ways before you: good and evil. Choose"* (cf. Dt 30:15-19). **Here, man's prayer matures into a lengthened and vital prayer.** Here, he gets accustomed to the effort of walking, he learns to know his own limits, egoism, laziness, jealousy, and above all the hidden things. *"I brought you into the wilderness to see what was in your heart"* (cf. Exodus).

But there is more. **The desert is the school of divine intimacy;** the silent, boundless space where man encounters God Absolute. In the wilderness law becomes Love and man discovers that God is Person. It was in the wilderness that the Prophets helped God's people reach this matured relationship with Jahvè, and it became friendship, covenant, conversation, knowledge, life. Hosea tells the story of this encounter which becomes conjugal love, where the nuptial ceremony represents the fullness of God's gift to man, and adultery represents the very nature of sin: *"Come, my people, come. Come to me there in the desert, heart to heart, and I will speak to you of love."*

The God-man relationship is all about solitude. Prayer, true prayer, crucified prayer, will lead you there and there it will be consumed – like a flame of love.

The wilderness truly is the place of God, and it is the place where man learns to become God; son of God, of course, but of the same nature as God. It is love that makes the transformation, and when love will reign there will no longer be need for faith or hope, for they will have run their course.

Hence, the wilderness is man's march towards the promised Land; the place where God as Absolute is made evident, and where man learns to stay with Him, and to speak and pray with Him and to know the mercy and heart of the Father, which is love, only love, all love.

One comes out of the wilderness with the certainty that God walks with man, that God seeks man; that God is man's Everything and that there is no God other than Him. (excerpt *Journey Without End*, Carlo Carretto)

Not this way had God thought of woman

God created woman in His own image, just as He did with man. It was a **single image**, though there is a **clear distinction**. "**Male and female he created them**," says the book of Genesis. In the woman God put those parts of Himself which he drew from the deepest layers of His divine being: sensitivity, intuition, tenderness, the capacity to donate self in an unconditioned way without seeking advantage, fortitude and the wonder of a body able to lovingly receive and give life.

Yet the woman has always suffered due to a different mentality which would atavistically place her on a plane of inferiority, submission and marginalization. But none of this was in God's plans. So we must be honest and admit that it is merely a human product.

I know, we're not saying anything new. For decades it has been the subject of debates and discussions. Yet, **has anything really changed?** Has all that has been written, said and discussed served to change the destiny of millions of women who still today live in conditions of slavery, exploitation and ignorance?

We don't intend giving an answer here, each of us has a conscience, and statistics abound. There are various courageous organizations which denounce the plagues afflicting the feminine universe, starting with the vile market of prostitution which goes to swell the pockets of men of bad faith who exploit the good faith of many women who lack means, culture, and future and are robbed of their dignity, often trapped while oh so young and made to feel unworthy of a better destiny. There are so many minors! so many who despair! all deceived! and often kidnapped then sold – to satisfy the insatiable masculine egoism.

And what of the terrible mutilation inflicted on millions of African girls, impeding them from joyously participating in love in all its expressions – physical and emotional; making of her man's exclusive possession!

And again: the patriarchal status in many countries or religions which is imposed as law, and woman are de-classed as inferiors, of little worth, and therefore unsuitable for public office or similar responsibilities. In many of these, women don't even have the right to show their faces...

The list is long and sorrowful, but we'll stop here. The **8th MARCH is the day dedicated to women**, not only to celebrate the feminine genius and beauty, but a chance for the world to show its concern and interest in a scenario that throws sinister shadows on mankind for the better part of the year.

We don't want to judge anyone. All we want to say is this: **God had not thought of her in this way...** We only need to look at the way Jesus – the *God-with-us* – had so much concern and esteem for women who took an active part in His life and mission; beginning from His Mother, the little woman from Nazareth, and Mary of Magdala, the woman who followed Him during the horror of His Passion and had the privilege of being the first to announce His resurrection. But there were many other women who

accompanied the Lord and helped to make the public mission of the Messiah more fertile.

This glance at the Gospel would make us think that the Church, beloved bride of Christ, holds the same respect for those (consecrated and lay) women who make up the finest threads in the thick weavings of her fabric, but sadly this is not always so, even though her Pastor and our beloved Pope, has repeatedly and loudly praised the feminine genius as an indispensable element in the life of the world and the Church.

The fact is that a **strong clerical and masculine vision** often confines the woman to servile and secondary roles. But this misinterprets the Heart of God who instead looks upon the woman with tender love and admiration, thankful for her capacity to love even when she is not loved in return, and to generate even when others would want her sterile. Who knows why she is so "feared"? Perhaps because she is unable to remain silent before hypocrisy and deceit? Or perhaps because her innate sense of gratuity is so much in contrast with the widespread quest for power?

Obviously, much has been done over the past years, and numerous are the women which are given voice in the Church today with authority and approval. Yet, still much has to be done to restore to women that which has been subtracted from them over centuries and passed down through too many generations.

It isn't difficult. All one needs to do is imitate God. For many years **He has made Himself present in Medjugorje through a woman** – His Mother. He trusts her and her capacity to be always and in any case Queen of Peace.

Sr. Stefania Consoli

"...be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears. The woman came out of a man's rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior. But from the side to be equal.

Under the arm to be protected, and next to the heart to be loved..."

From the Hebrew Talmud



What did She want to tell us 10 years ago?

Why those tears of blood that ran down her face? Ten years have passed since the little statue wept blood. It was a **statue of Our Lady** bought at **Medjugorje** for a family in Civitavecchia (Rome, Italy), and it first **wept blood** in front of their 5 year old daughter.

This isn't the first time something like this happens, but on this occasion the statue also lachrymated whilst in the hands of the bishop who was at first sceptical and contrary. **Mons. Grillo** wrote in his memorial: "I was forced to give in and accept this mystery. And I became all the more convinced as **I witnessed the good fruits this tree was producing**. The Gospel provides a criterion for judging: *by the fruits of the tree*. Here, the spiritual fruits

Her tears...

A child asked his mother: "Mummy, why are you crying?"

She replied: "Because I'm a woman..."

"I don't understand..." said the child.

His mother bent over and embraced him, and said: "Honey, you wouldn't understand. I'm just crying, that's all."

Later, the child asked his father: "Pa, why does Mummy sometimes cry without reason?"

"Oh, women cry a lot, I guess they know why," was all he could say.

The child grew up and became a man... and that old but meaningful question often came to mind. So one day the man went down on his knees and asked God: "Lord, enlighten me. Why do women cry so easily?"

God replied: "When I created the woman, I wanted something very special. I made her shoulders strong, able to support great burdens... but also tender so she could offer great comfort. I gave her immense inner strength so she could support the sorrows of motherhood and also the disdain she would oft times receive from her own offspring. I gave her the strength to enable her to assist her family, without falling into self-pity, despite her own illness and tiredness, and even when others throw in the rag.

I made her particularly sensitive so she could love her children in whatever circumstances, even when they offend her profoundly. This sensitivity allows her to keep at bay the sadness, tears and suffering of children, and to share in the anxiety, doubts and fears of teenagers.

Nonetheless my son, to sustain all this I gave her tears – to use whenever she desires. Tears make her more sensitive, enriching her with good sentiments; and her every tear is enriched with a little bit of love. These drops evaporate into the air and save humanity..."

And that child - now grown up – replied with a sigh: "Now I understand the deep sentiment of my mother, wife, sister..." and he thanked the Lord for having created such a wonderful creature - the WOMAN - each time unique and irreplaceable.

Anonymous

are extraordinary... People are moved by a great need for conversion. About **one thousand broken families** – through divorce or separation – have been **brought back together**. Many women have obtained a much sought pregnancy... and many have come to ask for baptism..."

The various experts who were given to study the case expressed their positive opinion. Everything - they say unanimously - indicates that in that corner of the Earth, **at the gates of Rome**, an event took place that has no human explanation and points at the mystery of the supernatural.

Now it is up to the Church to give her final opinion. Stefano De Fiores, one of the greatest living specialists in studies on the Blessed Virgin, said: "At Civitavecchia there is no logical or sustainable explanation other than to accept divine intervention," adding: "The finger of God has been at work here."

Philomena and Pauline: feminine holiness

Martyred possibly under the cruel persecution of Christians led by Diocletian, **St. Philomena** was unknown till the beginning of the 19th century when her tomb was uncovered in the ancient Catacombs of St. Priscilla in Rome. Even then, all that was discovered was that it was the body of a young girl about 12-13 years old, most likely called *Filumena*, and that the manner and symbols of her internment indicated martyrdom.

No record existed of a virgin martyr by this name, but perhaps Jesus – “*who keeps the good wine till now*” (Jn 2:10) – had wanted to keep her hidden till our times, for once she was “uncovered” He began immediately working a remarkable quantity of miracles through Philomena’s intercession. **Of course, she very quickly became loved and known, by the people, by popes and by saints.**

Pope Gregory XVI was so impressed by the favours God granted through her intercession that he called her the “great wonder-worker of the XIX century.” In fact, it was on the basis of her powerful intercession alone that she gained official recognition by the Church, being elevated to sainthood only 35 years after the discovery of her tomb, and subsequently being extraordinarily privileged with a mass and proper office in her honour.

Her precious relic is enshrined in the church at Mugnano del Cardinale (Avellino), not far from Naples in Italy, and her principal feast day is 11th August. This year celebrations are underway for the bicentenary of her translation; hence a year of special graces for those who turn to this saint for intercession. “St. Philomena is dearly loved by the Queen of Martyrs. Her intercession is still today very powerful,” assures Msgr. Braschi from the St. Philomena shrine. (www.philomena.it)

Among the many popes who venerated her, Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) proclaimed her ‘**Patroness of the Children of Mary,**’ and amongst the numerous saints St. John Vianney held a special devotion for her; giving all the credit for the many miracles documented at Ars and for his own cure to Philomena’s intercession, and recommending to one and all to entrust their entreaties to Philomena. He also spread devotion to Philomena as the **Supporter of Missionary Priests.**

Foundress of “*Living Rosary*” healed

Another special devotee was the extraordinary woman **Venerable Pauline Marie Jaricot**, Tertiary Dominican, whose spiritual guide was St. John Vianney. Though she was near death she desired all the same visiting Philomena’s sanctuary where she was miraculously and almost instantly cured. She promptly returned to the Pope, from whence she had come, to put forth her miracle as proof that God also desired that the cult of Philomena receive full authorization.



A woman of immense talent, Pauline’s ambition was to help relieve the misery of the poor, and to spread love of Christ. At an early age, with simple and practical insight, she started a work which has continued to grow throughout the world. With a collection for the Church’s missionary work, she founded the *Society for the Propagation of the Faith in France*.

A few years earlier she started what is known as the “*Living Rosary*” with her usual system of asking friends and friends of friends willing to pray at least part of the Rosary. The *Living Rosary* was placed under the **protection of St. Philomena** by Pope Gregory XVI who told Pauline: “Pray to St. Philomena, whatever you ask from her she will obtain for you.”

With foresight Pauline also sought to organize a social project based on Christian values to establish justice in the world of work. Though her project failed, “it mysteriously prepared for a renewal of the Church’s social involvement which would be developed in Leo XIII’s Encyclical *Rerum novarum*,” said John Paul II who also praised Pauline for her “unprecedented spirit of initiative,” and for **her great love of the Eucharist** and of the Virgin Mary.

On the occasion of the bicentenary of her birth the Holy Father said: “**Pauline’s daily life was illumined by the Eucharist and by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.** She very soon expressed her desire to become a *living Eucharist*, to be filled with Christ’s life and to unite herself deeply with his sacrifice, thus living two inseparable dimensions of the **Eucharistic mystery: thanksgiving and reparation.** This is what prompted the Curé of Ars to say: ‘I know someone who has many very heavy crosses and carries them with great love; it is Miss Jaricot.’ Her spirituality was marked by her longing to imitate Christ in all things..”

A true daughter of the Church, she dedicated her whole life to the missionary growth of the entire Church. As Pope Leo XIII wrote, “by her faith, her trust, the force of her mind, her gentleness and her serene acceptance of all crosses”, Pauline showed herself a true disciple of Christ.

Born in Lyons on 22 July 1799, she suffered humiliation and poverty in the latter years of her life which concluded on 9 January 1862. The cause of her beatification and canonization is underway. The Church awaits confirmation, as it were, from God that it is also His will that the Church should beatify and canonize the person in question. God’s consent is seen through the miracles wrought through the intercession of the would-be blessed/saint.

Therefore, let us turn with great fervour and trust also to the intercession of Venerable Pauline Jaricot to draw down these miracles so the Church may declare her first blessed, then saint, for the greater glory of God, and for the good of the Church of which we are members, that we too may be – as she liked to say – “matches that light the fire.”

BKDrebsch

News of the blessed land

Mary provides our nourishment

At the moment of conception, mother and child are closely united in an intimate relationship, and an adventure begins. When he is born she nourishes him with her own milk, gradually adding more solid foods as he grows and teethes. She’s there to help him grow up, gradually stepping back to allow him to develop and become autonomous, able one day to become a parent in turn. She stands back so his person is strengthened, but without ever forgetting him before God, and always ready, with her discreet presence, to be there during fundamental moments, always careful to listen to the Spirit’s promptings for that creature she has been entrusted with.

Mary, our Mother, does the same for us at Medjugorje. She receives a multitude of children - who hadn’t known God’s love or who had forgotten Him - giving birth to them so they can enter divine life. Her first concern is to clean them up of sin; then she intercedes and obtains for them the fruits of the Holy Spirit: enthusiasm and bubbling joy. She nourishes them, first with sweetened milk then with more solid food. She accompanies them along the way, warning them of Satan’s malefic action, giving them the weapons they need for the battle, so they can defeat the world with Christ.

This is what has been happening in the nearly 24 years of apparitions. Mary continues to give milk to her newborns, and solids to those who’ve chosen to grow. For this purpose she gave life to various realities which serve to **distribute nourishment according to the many needs of Her children.** As a mother of a numerous family, she is attentive to the needs of the littlest, of those who study, those who work, those who are sick...

At Medjugorje we find many such “instruments,” starting with the Parish, the various Communities of consecrated religious, and the charitable organizations which live and work around the Shrine of the Queen of Peace.

Personally, I felt drawn by a community which strives to live the suggestions given by the Blessed Virgin to the Prayer Group of Medjugorje through Jelena and Marijana. Our Lady leads us along a path of self-offering. She encourages us to offer our lives to the Lord through her Immaculate Heart, first as individuals, then in little groups called “fraternities.” In a message of 25 February 1988 she said: “*Witness with your lives, and sacrifice your lives for the salvation of the world.*”

And this is what we strive to do. We come from various backgrounds, nations, cultures and social classes. Mary called us to Medjugorje; each from his own environment where he works and lives and experiences small and big problems. And at this place of grace, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to encounter the

living God, and Our Lady. Through communion with God we are able to face and defeat the Evil One precisely there where, in our own lives, we experience our every day trials and tribulations.

Through living our *totus tuus*, and united to Christ and to His cross, death and resurrection, we are able to continually experience being elevated to the Father. The Holy Mass – experienced and lived – is the focal point of this journey.

On this road many battles, often difficult ones, are won. It isn't always easy, but the example of the others is incitement to go ahead, and helps us to keep the peace which springs forth from the bottom of our hearts, and our faith, hope and love during all life's trials.

As we journey, the adversities that life presents disturb us less, and instead of judging, condemning or despairing, the offering that we make "for Christ, with Christ, and in Christ" help us to turn them into "new life," becoming occasions of salvation for us and for others. And in all this Mary continues to walk beside us.

Elena Ricci

Mary invited me into her home...

I still remember the first time I found a copy of *Echo of Mary* in the underground chapel of a Greek Orthodox church in my town. It was in 1997, in a **little town in north-central Romania** and I still hadn't turned 17. I hungered for the living word and I needed to meet people who experience my same thirst; and this little publication was an immense gift. I immediately felt that Our Lady's messages were nourishing me, freeing me, and immersing me in a Light which filled everything in me. Also the articles based on the witness of others and news within the Church gave me great joy for it made me understand that I wasn't the only one to experience this intense desire for God, for holiness, and to surrender my own life totally to Him. It made me see how **I was part of a body**, of the ***Body of Christ*** which tended with all its energy to the Father.

Therefore I wrote to the nun who translates the *Echo* from the Italian original (Sr. Anka, *editor's note*) to ask if I could receive it regularly. She later also sent me a booklet containing the Medjugorje messages.

My sister and I began immediately to read them and to pray the complete Rosary every day, to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, and to go to Mass as often as possible. We learnt to **consecrate** ourselves to **Mary's Immaculate Heart** and to the **Heart of Jesus** with the **prayers suggested by Our Lady** through Jelena. At the beginning these prayers seemed much like any other prayer, but I soon learnt that through my consecration my life was being changed, even on a day-to-day dimension. It is a total offering, a surrender to God through which He guides our life, He brings it to accomplishment and He fills it with Himself. In short, it was a totally different Life!

Thus, through living the messages we felt the desire to go to Medjugorje and to encounter more profoundly Mary who had changed our lives and had united us in her love. But some time had to pass before this was realized. Our parents opposed, for various reasons: Medjugorje was in a war zone and the fighting had still not completely ceased; it was too far (a full day and a half away)... and then they didn't understand our desire since they didn't live the faith and never went to church; and there was one last obstacle: it required the money that a large family couldn't easily find.

To their repeated refusals I would say to my sister – who I thought was more afflicted than me for not being able to go – that we could continue to live Medjugorje at home, that our Medjugorje was there, on the altar when we went to Mass, that in the Eucharist there is everything: Jesus and Mary together with all of heaven.

I know that I earnestly felt that this was true; when I lived Mary's message I felt her in my heart ever more present, and nothing could remove that joy from me, not even the fact that I could not go to see her at her house. And in fact, isn't this what the Queen of Peace was teaching us? To live every day with her, to give Christ first place in our lives, to have Jesus as our greatest joy and our everything...

So I first came to Medjugorje in the year 2000, together with a group of young people. It was for the Youth Festival in the Jubilee year; and I felt immediately at home: **the silence, the messages, the complete Rosary, the daily Liturgy, and adoration** were all things I was already doing, but at Medjugorje I was able to live them more profoundly; I could dedicate myself to them entirely. Many sought signs, wanting to see Our Lady, and went from one visionary to the other; but I perceived Our Lady's presence in the very air, and my desire to pray grew ever stronger: all I wanted to do was *pray, pray, pray*; to stay with Mary and to listen and imitate her.

Back home I joined a Medjugorje prayer group and together we went to Eucharistic adoration and prayed. I was in my third year of University studies; I had a lot to study and many were the possible openings for work, but I felt that my life was there - **in prayer, and the total offering of self** – just as our Blessed Mother had said at Medjugorje. I felt that *it was there that I could give more to mankind*: at adoration, in prayer and contemplation where I would encounter the living God, where my heart would be purified and where I could **give the greatest love to the world**. I felt how Mary was drawing me ever more closely to Christ. The words: "*Thank you for responding to my call*," echoed in my heart, and I felt that I still had not fully responded to her call. I still had not given *everything*.

The following two years I returned to Medjugorje six times to ask for light and to understand how I could surrender everything into her hands. **Each time it was Mary who took care of the money, the trip, the lodgings** – at times in ways beyond comprehension and very surprisingly - all to get me there, in the place where Father God had sent her to

remind His children how to find "the way of peace" and to help them journey along it, in "holiness and righteousness" towards the fullness of life. For she knew that if I had encountered and touched the infinite love of the Living God I would not have desired anything else on this earth but to surrender myself totally to Him and place myself at His service.

Today I am a consecrated religious in a contemplative community that I met at Medjugorje, and in the silence of prayer, through the Immaculate Heart of *Mary Wholly Pure*, I offer my life for the salvation of the world, that God's plans for mankind may be fulfilled. I pray that every person may accept the call by the Queen of Peace which is one of prayer and conversion of heart and thereby discover God's infinite goodness and wonderful beauty, and the immense joy of living in Him, for Him, with Him, *as Him*, with at our side an Immaculate Mother.

Cristina Palici

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary *

O Immaculate Heart of Mary,
ardent with goodness,
show us your love.

May the flame of your Heart, O Mary,
descend upon all mankind.

We love you so.

Impress in our hearts true love
that we may yearn for you continuously.

Oh Mary, sweet and humble of heart,
remember us when we sin.

You know that all men are sinners.

Grant us, that through your Immaculate Heart,

we might be given spiritual health.

May we always see the goodness
of your motherly heart;

and may we be converted
by the flame of your Heart.

Amen

Consecration to the Heart of Jesus *

O Jesus, we know that You are merciful
and that You have given Your Heart for us.

It is crowned with thorns and with our sins.

We know that You implore us constantly
so we do not go astray.

Jesus, remember us when we sin.

Through Your Heart make us love one another.

May hatred disappear from among men!

Show us Your Love.

We all love You; and want You to protect us
with Your Good Shepherd's Heart

and to deliver us from every sin.

Enter into each heart Lord Jesus!

Knock, knock at the door of our hearts;
be patient and never desist.

We are still closed up within ourselves
because we haven't understood Your Love.

Knock continuously!

O Good Jesus, make us open our hearts
up to You at least in the moment

when we remember Your Passion
suffered for us.

Amen

* told by Our Lady to Jelena, Medjugorje 1983

“To love is to give everything, to give all oneself...”

These are the words of a song inspired by St. Paul's famous *ode to Love* in Corinthians (cf. 1 Co 13:1). At times I use it to accompany prayer during Eucharistic Adoration; and while the soul praises God during the song, at the same time the soul is immersed in the mystical love and total donation of Christ Who gave Himself entirely for our salvation.

This may prompt us to ask: **how can we follow Him? Can we, too, live love as He lived it? Must we, too, die on the cross out of love?** The Gospel is clear about this. In the Gospel according to John, especially at chapters 13-17, Jesus leaves for the Apostles and for us His spiritual testament where He sums up the meaning of His mission as Son Who was sent by the Father to the earth, and He calls us all to follow in His example.

Father God loved us from the moment of conception; and at every moment He gives us His blessing and He protects us from evil, entrusting us to the protection of our Blessed Mother, the angels and the saints. He is in our midst with the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit Who renews everything, Who every day offers us the Son in the Eucharist,

and gives us the chance to place on the altar our own offering joined to that of the Son. **Would you consider this slight?**

We can receive and give love; we can use God's gifts which are given to us without charge for the good of our brethren. We can face suffering in the peace and trustful surrender to the Father's will, in the certainty that nothing is lost, because He wants our good and He accompanies us at every step.

It all depends on our response of love, on our inner decision to let ourselves be guided by God, to let ourselves be transformed and all that still ails or is dark within us to be healed and illumined by His light.

It is a life journey built on the little and big “yes's” of every day, on the concrete choices which bring us ever closer to the Lord. He doesn't want us to be crushed by life's difficulties and problems; therefore He never entrusts us with a cross that would be too big or too heavy for us to bear; but He does leave us free to choose: whether to refuse and flee from it, or to embrace it with courage and trust which is to respond “yes” and to allow oneself be guided by Jesus - Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life - in

an attitude of profound humility.

Very often we are full of our own ideas, programmes, desires and thoughts, and we turn circles around ourselves; and we don't enter profoundly into the secret chamber in our heart where the Lord wants to speak to the soul and communicate His divine life to us.

To place oneself in God's presence in prayer and with deep sincerity and humility always opens up something new. We can become docile instruments in His hands and be ready to depart and fully participate in His plan of love, enabling it to be realized in us and around us.

So let us begin to open ourselves up like a flower soaking up the rays of the sun, and our entire being will blossom. Egoism and individual interests will make ever more way for pure love. The more we surrender ourselves unconditionally, without pretending anything in return, the more it will be pure. But for the **love in us to be purified it must pass through the cross and become a living offering, broken bread, so that other souls may receive the life.** Then, together, we shall rejoice when the Father will call us next to Himself to delight in the good promised for those who've loved.

Chiara Piccinotti

Return to your initial fervour

Mother of Light

In her messages the Queen of Peace calls us with impassioned insistence and in perfect harmony with the Gospel to be “*light for all*” (message 5 June 1986) and “*to witness to the Light*” (ibidem), or “*to spread the Light of God everywhere*” (2 June 1987). Mary asks us in particular to become “*her Light*” (18 March 1988), to “*light up all those who live in the darkness*” (ibidem).

With an expression typical of the Gospel of St. John (the Apostle which Tradition and Scripture indicate as being the closest to Mary) “*Light*” is identified in the unending current of God's sacrificed Life and Love which now gushes forth for ever from the transfixed Heart of the Imolated Lamb, Who alone is the true fount of Life for souls and for the entire universe. He is the “*luminous cloud*” (Ex 13:21) that guides the new people of the covenant towards the embrace of the Father (cf. Jn 19:35). This is the light that lights up the New Jerusalem: “*And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it... and its lamp is the Lamb*” (Rev. 21).

This is the uncreated and life-giving light that Mary calls us to carry to the multitude of brothers and sisters who are immersed in the laden darkness of this time, inviting us “*to be the reflection of Jesus who will light up this unfaithful world which walks in the darkness*” (message 5 June 1986). In fact, she who over 2000 years ago generated the Word of God - Who alone is “*Light of the world*” (Jn 8:12) - is today sent by the Father to regenerate the ineffable Light of the Son, true “*Light of men*” (Jn 1:4), in hearts and in all creation.

Nonetheless, we know that Mary's childbirth is not without pain. Mary is the Woman of the “*great sign*” (Rev 12:9): the

“*Woman adorned with the sun... she was with child, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth*” (ibidem) and she is sent by the Father to guide the ranks of the children of the Light in the final battle against the children of the “*dragon ... that deceives the whole world*” (Rev 12:9). “*Dear Children, I desire for you to be children of the light and not of darkness. Therefore, live what I tell you.*” (message 25 August 1993) “*I invite you my Children, to become peace where there is no peace and light where there is darkness so every heart might accept the light and the way of salvation*” (message 25 February 1995).

The presence of the Queen of Peace at Medjugorje is a sign of the **decisive spiritual confrontation with the multiform powers and principalities of darkness** that today keep the hearts of men tightly chained down because they firmly oppose the projects of Life of the Mother, prophetically announced in Revelation: “*The dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth*” (Rev 12:4). But Mary comes to encourage us: “*I am with you... though Satan desires destroying my plans and stopping the plans that the heavenly Father desires realizing here*” (message 25 Sept. 1990).

It is thus that the “Father of the Light” desires that the ranks of children chosen from eternity should be intimately associated with the Mother's mission and especially participate in the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, so they may generate the Light of God in souls and in the entire universe. In a certain way they will be a continuation of Mary's presence amongst men of this time: “*Go and give to people the light of my divine Son. Together with His light give also me, with prayer and love. Through you I desire touching all souls to give light to the most hardened ones*” (18 June 1987).

That the gift of this lofty call be operative, **there must be an unconditional response of love.** This is the precious key that opens the senses of the soul so it can experience and receive the river of Light and heavenly Life that gushes forth unceasingly from the Heart of the Most High. It is also the decisive condition which makes of us authentic bearers for our brethren! “*My Children, if you do not experience this light or if you cannot see it then neither can you give it to others, while God is calling you to do precisely this*” (18 June 1987).

In fact, it is our unconditioned “*yes*” in response to the Queen of Peace, who calls us to unite our life to the Paschal offering of the Lamb that was slain, that makes God's paternity in us shine anew, and we reflect the true “*light*” that “*lights up the New Jerusalem*” (Rev 21:21), the “*holy city coming down from God out of heaven radiant with God's glory*” (Rev 21:10) already shining in its fullness in the Immaculate Heart of the Mother who is present in the world. She desires that this light should spread out to the world through the humble response of her “*dear Children.*” It is for this that she calls us to become the “*flame in the night which will show the true light to others*” (14 Jan. 1989), so that it might shine in all souls. This way, all creation will be completely enveloped in the glorious light of the Risen One, and in Him be raised to the eternal embrace of the Father: “*Therefore, make it so your surrender is complete to become truly able to donate light to those around you*” (message 18 June 1987).

Giuseppe Ferraro

Our Lady's message to Mirjana, 2/3/2005:
“Dear Children, do as I do: come, offer love, and with your own example give my Son to all.”

Our readers write...

"How beautiful are the feet..."

Sr. Mary Elizabeth ocd, Kenya: Receive my gratitude for regularly sending me Echo of Mary. I make sure that this inspiring newsletter reaches as many as possible. May Mary in her own motherly way drag along her heavenly way the feet that go astray and make steady the knees that loath to pray.

B. Capulong, Philippines: I receive your magazine and am very grateful for it. Truly, it helps me deepen my faith and devotion to Mama Mary. I read it from page to page and really it is full of inspiring messages. I hope that the Echo of Mary will touch more people like me. Truly, it is a gift from our Bl. Mother.

Hector Tissera, Argentina: Warm greetings from Rio Tercera. We wish you all peace and every good. Echo is formidable; it enriches my spiritual life very much, just as it does for all those with whom I share it. May the Blessed Mother and Our Lord shower you with every blessing.

M. Fogarty, Ireland: Many thanks for your Echo which I receive through an Irish distributor. I look forward to receiving it. I hope that you can always produce and send it.

F. Carlani, Canada: Thank you very much for sending me regularly the Echo of Mary: a gift so precious and so important!

Thadius Lingei, Kimbe, PNG: Thank you, thank you, thank you for the Echo of our Blessed Mother Publication. I read it very attentively; it helps me spiritually. If anyone has the possibility of sending us **Rosary Beads** we'll be very grateful and prayerful in our St. Michael's Catholic Parish. (see below)

Peter Luk, Malaysia: May God continue to bless you and your team for the wonderful work that you are doing.

Sr. B. Callaghan, England: I enclose a donation for my treasured Echo safely received! God bless you; keep going, I beg you!

Mr. S. Scally, Ireland: Echo is wonderful. It is a fruit of Medjugorje; a spiritual weapon in today's secular world. May Jesus and Our Lady always bless your wonderful work.

We dedicate these letters of appreciation to FR. ANGELO who continues to assist and bless us from heaven. Let us pray to him and with him, as we remember him on the anniversary of his birth into eternity, 3 March 2000.

* **Request for Rosary beads 1)** Thadius Lingei, Vitu Elementary School, Dpt. Education, P.O.Box 426, Kimbe, WNBP, Papua New Guinea. **2)** Br. Ephraim M. Chimutu, Box 275, Tembisa 1628, Rep.South Africa

EVENTS - Light to the Nations, AUSTRALIA Easter retreat for YOUTH, 24-27 March 2005. Enquiries: 0427-277072 info@ltnn.org.au

Mirjana & Jakov in LONDON on Sunday 17 April 2005 - at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Quex Road, Kilburn, London

Annual Marian Conference SCOTLAND, Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll - **3-5 June 2005** with presence of Milona von Hapsburg and Kathleen Martin. Info: 01838 200216

A word for distributors of ECHO

This biblical phrase from Isaiah (52:7) is not merely an expression of appreciation from those who receive good news and hence praise the journey of its bearer, but expresses the explosion of joy we feel when the Word of God reaches us and brings about a change in our daily lives.

But this good news reaches us by way of a person who acts as its instrument; and this is how I think of the collaborators of Echo who carry it to many brothers and sisters. They are men and woman of all ages and conditions who for a little while (but often with great sacrifice) become instruments of this life-giving communication, and I imagine that they do not do this service in a state of anxiety, but with the trepidation of one who knows he is carrying something precious.

The word of God is precious

I am convinced that whoever proclaims the Gospel must start from this. I remember very well the amount of time our Fr. Angelo would spend reading Holy Scripture and how years of familiarity with the inspired word prepared him – in silence – to generate the Echo. But I'm also ever more aware of how efficacious it is – when preaching – to cite concrete examples, of people who trust in God and in His calls and see the change in their lives. God's plan for them is realized. They become a living and visible word; a humble word, still journeying of course, but living and able to communicate this presence.

When we read the Echo we not only receive messages and reflections, but an experience. Writers of the articles know that this is true; also the printer. And when the secretary calls me she manages to transmit this wealth. To say nothing of those who work with despatch and in touch with its basic problems. It is there that the Word mediated by the experience of a Mother takes flesh

today. And we who read the Echo receive all this.

Come out into the open

There is a link in this chain worth special attention: distributors. The word distributor doesn't pay credit to what they really do, as we know that there is much more to it than just distributing. Some are affectionately called "Our Lady's posties" by those who receive Our Lady's message.

Accepting to be carriers of the Echo is a further step in this journey of grace I dare to call "apostolic."

A distributor knows he is doing a service because he or she is the first to benefit from it. Hence the need to read Echo before distributing it, to find "a word for me," and if necessary, to pray to God and His Mother to obtain the right disposition for this apostolate. I'm not saying you've got to be angels, but in the awareness of one's own limits, instruments yes.

And just as every instrument must be used well if we want it to work well, we too must let ourselves be "used well" by Him Who has called us.

Armoured with God's wisdom

When distributing the Echo we must have the good sense to avoid delivering it in a clumsy way, for example as with the various publicity leaflets we find in our mail boxes. This would be a waste of means. On the other hand, a direct contact with those who receive from us enables one to check that the quantity delivered is correct and has not undergone variation; it enables one to come to know of any problems tied to the service. Showing our faces to readers opens the way to communication.

It does me good to know that there are people who believe in what they are doing, and thus I trust that these reflections of mine will help us all feel that we truly do belong to one big family! Thank you, dear distributors of Echo of Mary.

Fr. Alberto Bertozzi

Donations needed and gratefully accepted

PERSONAL CHEQUES payable to "**Echo of Mary Association**" - mail to same at: **P.O. Box 27, I-31030 Bessica TV, Italy.**

Bank accounts (specify payment for "Echo of Mary Association")

Italy: Banca Agricola Mantovana (BAM), Ag.Belfiore, Mantova. Int'l Bank co-ord's: **IT 02 Z 05024 11506 000004754018**

Britain: Royal Bank of Scotland, 26 George St., Oban, Argyll, PA34 5SA. Acc. no. 8326 0400 154351

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

* **ECHO OF MARY on audio CASSETTE** (English / French): Send requests to:

Echo of Mary Association,
POB 27, 31030 Bessica (TV), Italy
Ph/fax: Italy +39 (0)423.470331

www.ecodimaria.net - info@ecodimaria.net

Again we renew **our appeal to readers** of good will to help us keep on producing the Echo. As we have already said, there is the risk that growing costs may not be met by donations. At the same time we are grateful for the generosity of all those who have so far responded by accepting to be the open hands of Providence.

We feel certain that with help of God and yours we will be able to continue our work.

The Staff of Echo of Mary

"Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained..."
(JPII *Dies Domini* 1998)

In the desert Mary follows us with her gaze.

Let us remain firm in the certainty that even from afar Mary never abandons us, but intercedes always. And the Lord will bless us.

don Alberto

8 March 2005