

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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188



Our Lady's message, 25 May 2006:

“Dear Children, Also today I call you to put into practice and to live the messages I give you. Decide for holiness, my Children, and think of heaven. Only in this way will you have peace in your hearts that no one will be able to destroy.

Peace is a gift that God gives to you in prayer. My Children, seek and work with all your strength for peace to win in your hearts and in the world. Thank you for responding to my call.”

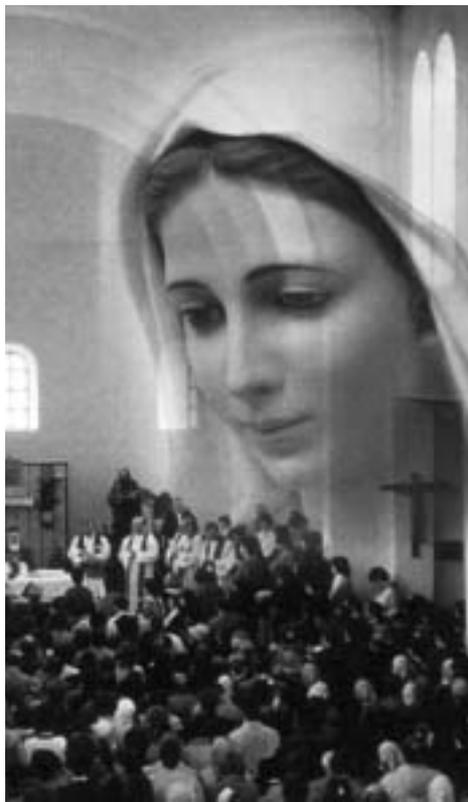
That Peace May Win

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, forgiveness. Thus begins the *simple prayer* attributed to St. Francis. Peace is a rare and precious good, not easily found in the world, and even when it is found it is very fragile. Such are the relations which govern peoples, nations, cultures; and also cities and families. Even within a person there is often division. *If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand* (Mk 3:24-25).

From division comes ruin. The enemy which divides cannot be defeated with sole human strength. Similarly, peace - true peace - cannot be conquered through sole human effort. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you* (Jn 14:27) says Jesus. *His* peace, the peace that He gives, has nothing to do with *our* peace, which is fruit of human negotiations and worldly relations.

How can this peace be attained? Mary gives us the answer: **“Decide for holiness, my Children, and think of Paradise. Only this way will you have peace in your heart that no one can destroy.”** It is the only way, Mary stresses. To decide for holiness means to decide to reserve oneself entirely for God, to be wholly His. It means to ardently desire to live in His Presence. It means to orient all our faculties to Him. It means to be no longer scattered in the thoughts of our hearts (cf. Lk 1:51), but to already hold our gaze on Paradise: *all things under Him, in Christ Jesus, that God may be everything to everyone* (1 Co 15:28). Thus, peace is a product of this unity of Love, and is indestructible.

“Peace is a gift that God gives in prayer,” says Our Lady. Last month she said. *“You do not see God, but if you pray*



MARY'S GRAND JUBILEE

you will feel His closeness.” It is precisely this closeness, this Presence, that produces this peace. Prayer is necessary so we can relate with God, commune with Him, be assimilated into the Son. Prayer is indispensable because it is the space where the Spirit acts, it is where He *intercedes for us, with sighs too deep for words* (cf. Rom 8:26). Prayer is listening and accepting the Word. In the silence of a heart in prayer, His presence is perceived. Through surrendering ourselves and our lives to God, we can walk on the waters (cf. Mt 14:29). Peace, however, is a gift of God, and as such must be cultivated.

“My Children, seek and work with all your strength, that peace might win in your hearts and in the world,” concludes Our Lady in a call we must take seriously and responsibly. Each of us must examine his own conscience to understand which peace he believes in, hopes in and bears to others. Each must ask himself if he is **putting into practice and living Mary's messages.**

This is the key that allows us to open our hearts to Love raised up on the wood of the Cross, whilst abstaining from behaviour that causes division and spiritual death that would mortify the Presence of the Spirit in others, such as judging, or condemning. Before the great banner of crucified Love, we must withdraw every other banner, and bury our humanity so we can rise with our Lord Jesus.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

25th anniversary message, 25 June 2006:

“Dear Children, With great joy in my heart I thank you for all the prayers that in these days you have offered up for my intentions. Know, my Children, that neither you nor your children will regret it. God will reward you with great graces and you will earn eternal life.

I am close to you and I thank all those who over these years have accepted my messages, have turned them into life and have decided for holiness and peace. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Thank you!

On the 25th anniversary of the apparitions at Medjugorje our Blessed Mother has given a message of thanksgiving and great hope for those who have **responded to her call**. Could it be a message of farewell? The message doesn't contain indications to this, and it seems more of a report - and a positive one I would say - of this long time during which the skies have remained open over Medjugorje and the entire world.

Above all, Mary has **great joy in her heart for all the prayers that were offered up for her intentions**. This first “thank you” by Mary embraces all without distinction: those who prayed at the first hour and at the last (cf. Mt 20:8-10). It is gratitude for the rosaries offered up for her intentions especially for the 25th anniversary. To pray for her **intentions** should not scandalize anyone, for her intentions are those of the Divine Will. She watched her Son agonize on the Cross without ever doubting the Father's Love; she felt the chill of death race through her veins and never opened her mouth to try to condition Divine Will. This wonderful, unattainable woman is the perfect Guide on the way of surrender to God's Will. It is this surrender that we must ask for in our prayers and teach to our children.

“Know, my Children, that neither you nor your children will regret it,” says Mary. *Steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord* (Ps 32). *Those who trust in the Lord are like mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever* (Ps 125). *He who trusts the Lord will not suffer loss* (Sir 32), *is safe* (Prov 29), and *happy* (Prov 16). **“God will reward you with great graces and you will earn eternal life”** continues Mary. *This is eternal life: that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (Jn 17:3), where *know* is much more than knowing that God exists, and that our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, even though this is already much. Not even knowing that our God revealed Himself in Jesus is

sufficient. To know God one must know Jesus (cf. Jn 14:7), and we can know Jesus if we stay with Him, live with Him: *Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me, Philip?* (Jn 14:9).

And us? For how long have we been communing with Him? Can we say we know Him? What do we do with His Body and His Blood? Do we let ourselves be regenerated and assimilated into Him, or do we commit sacrilegious Communion?

The second "thank you" of Mary is for **all those who over these years have accepted her messages, have turned them into life and have decided for holiness and peace.** These are as the *good soil*, able to bring forth grain (cf. Mt 13). The fruit is **holiness**, and **peace**: God has the seeds, but the soil is our heart. Is it good soil? With the help of Mary we must plough and till it and keep it such. Is it a bad soil? Then let us pray to God with all our might to make it become good; if Mary intercedes for us it will be easily gained if it is what we truly desire.

Mary's presence at Medjugorje over these 25 years has wrought a profound change in many souls, and "the more the Holy Spirit finds Mary in a soul, the more active and mighty He becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul, and that soul in Jesus Christ" (Montfort, *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, #20).

Thank you Mary for your presence at Medjugorje, thank you for your patience; thank you because your intercession brings down upon us the Holy Spirit who helps us become true children of God.

N.Q.

Gathered Round Vicar of Christ Ecclesial movements and new Communities

Approximately 400,000 faithful from around the world gathered in St. Peter's on the **Pentecost vigil** (3 June) to be confirmed and sent to the fields of the Lord by his Vicar. This 2nd world congress was summoned by Benedict XVI, who followed in the footsteps of John Paul II who for first had summoned the ecclesial communities and new movements eight years ago on the eve of Pentecost.

When the great flourishing of movements and communities came as a fruit of Vatican Council II, the then Cardinal Ratzinger acknowledged them as a sign of the Spirit who works unceasingly within the Church to make her rich with life and youthfulness. He sustained those new forms of lay aggregation which at the time "weren't to the liking" of many, and he called them "**hope of the Church.**" Already as a cardinal he saw in them a silent efficacious renewal: a surprise of the Spirit who overrides human planning to realize God's promises in wonderful ways.

Card. Ratzinger felt the need to open the door and prepare a suitable place for this **newness of the Spirit that works "unexpectedly, in unexpected places and in previous unimagined forms."** This congress is a sign of progress towards the

goal of full "ecclesial maturity" hoped for by John Paul II.

Prior to the solemn liturgy of Vespers, Benedict XVI travelled in the midst of the crowd, greeting and blessing them all as he went; and was received with great enthusiasm. The immense crowd of participants represented a **sign of diversity in unity**: committed, each in his own way, to the building up of one Body, and desirous of being well integrated in the communion with the entire Church, at the service of her growth.

During the Vigil, the Holy Father listened to representatives of the ecclesial movements before addressing the crowd: "*The world does not exist of itself, it comes from the creative Spirit of God. Pentecost is not only the origin of the Church and, therefore, in a special way, her feast; Pentecost is also the feast of the creation,*" began the Pope as he recalled the first pages of the Bible that recounts how the Spirit of God moved above the waters of the abyss. In this context, he spoke of man's responsibility towards creation which must be respected.

In his message the Pontiff stressed three elements which can be considered both as gifts and the "effect" of the Holy Spirit. These gifts, *for which we all yearn*, are **inseparable from one another.** They are **LIFE, FREEDOM and UNITY.**

"It is only in giving life that it is found; life is not found by seeking to possess it. This is what we must learn from Christ; and the Holy Spirit teaches us that it is a pure gift; that it is God's gift of Himself. The more one gives one's life for others, for goodness itself, the more abundantly the river of life flows. The Movements were born precisely of the thirst for true life; they are Movements for life in every sense," the successor of Peter clearly affirmed, contradicting the dominant logic of the world.

"True freedom is demonstrated in responsibility, in a way of behaving in which one takes upon oneself a shared responsibility for the world, for oneself and for others. We do not do good as slaves who are not free to act otherwise, but we do it because we are personally responsible for the world; because we love truth and goodness, because we love God himself and therefore, also his creatures," and he highlighted: "**The Ecclesial Movements want to and must be schools of freedom, of this true freedom,**" also to warn Christians against the "false freedom" offered by the world.

On the theme of unity the Holy Father said: "**Multiplicity and unity go hand in hand,**" twice underlining that "*the Spirit breathes where He wills... but His will is unity. His unity encounters the world and transforms it.*" He then called upon those present to "**take part in the edification of the one body!**" and inviting Pastors to ensure that the Spirit is not extinguished. "*Dear Friends, I ask you to collaborate even more, very much more, in the Pope's universal apostolic ministry, opening doors to Christ,*" which is the best service of the Church to mankind - said Benedict XVI - for the building up of the civilization of love.

Ana Simic

The case of the *Da Vinci Code* Seek truth in God!

by Stefania Caterina

Catholics, and not only Catholics are asking themselves about Dan Brown's book, "The Da Vinci Code" the film version of which was recently shown at cinemas the world round. The book sold more than 20 m. copies around the world, and was the number one seller in some countries.

The book, riddled with gross inconsistencies and outright calumny, has put in the mouths of its various characters lies about Jesus, the Catholic church, *Opus Dei*, and the history of Christianity. Many illustrious experts in the fields of history, religion, and literature have entirely confuted these, and thanks to this, there has been a renewed interest in Christianity and its message of salvation.

Of course this isn't the first time that the figure of Jesus Christ and Christianity in general have become objects of slander and attacks of every type. Jesus Christ is and will remain a sign of contradiction for men of all times (cf. Lk 2:3-35). It is not even surprising that the mass media should give so much attention to the book/film, because we live in a time dominated by an aggressively exertive media which plays on seducing us, and the game seems to be: "let's see how far we can get," as they manipulate minds to create desires and fears, idealizing and demonizing at pleasure.

What does strike you is the fact that so many of the faithful should come out so confused and doubtful after reading/watching the book/film. Readers/viewers are confounded by the author's claims that he has based his revelations on historical documents - but in reality they are not.

We ask ourselves, then, what attitude a Christian should assume in the face of such events, so as not to be troubled by them. What do we do in the face of evil, of scandal, of deceit? How can we resist against the attacks of the evil one?

In his letter to the Ephesians St. Paul says that the battle against dark forces is a real part of the life of Christians, and he points out the weapons we need for the fight (Eph 6:10-20). Also at Medjugorje Our Lady has taught us that a Christian can and must fight against the evil with the help of the powerful weapons of prayer, fasting, and partaking of the sacraments. She has never hidden from us that we must be real Christians, which means above all to witness through a simple and virtuous life(style) that we belong to Jesus, even when this means going against the mentality of the world. Also the Church reminds us of this necessity constantly, and Holy Scripture introduces us into divine life which must be alive in us, and that does not fear trials but is rather strengthened in these.

Without listening to the word of God, without prayer, we cannot attain knowledge of God or the life which He revealed to us in Jesus Christ. God is

found in silence, humility, and sincerity of heart, which is what our Blessed Mother teaches us. When we love the Lord with all our being, He communicates Himself to each of us in many and diverse ways, according to one's individuality and circumstances, without preference. He makes Himself present in our lives, tangibly and unequivocally.

I think each of us has experienced in prayer the consoling closeness of God, and His concrete help. To seek God in profound and humble prayer means to find Him. In difficult situations we are given to experience the goodness and mercy of God which are able to overcome every obstacle, even that of our own poverty. If we desire knowing Him (where "know" is to "love") the Father will reveal Himself in full to us through Jesus Christ: Way, Truth and Life. We will recognize His voice; discover Him in our brethren, and follow Him, our sole Shepherd who neither deceives nor allows others to deceive us (Jn 10:4-5). Having experienced God as such, one could not believe the lies that are said about Him.

Jesus had foretold to his apostles the persecutions and the hatred of the world (Jn 15:18-21), and at the same time He invited them not to be scandalized (Jn 16:2-3), or perturbed, but to keep the faith and remain open to God (Jn 14:1). I think this is the true and only defence against the attacks of the evil one who tries to make us doubt the power of God and the love He has for us. **We are called to remain faithful to the eternal truth that lives in us**, according to what the Church teaches us, and this is our daily task and commitment.

No man can ever show us who Jesus Christ is or not is, or what He has or has not done. There are no codes to decipher to enable man to know God and His salvific truth. Only the Holy Spirit can guide us to the truth of God (Jn 16:13-14), who is eternal and unchanging, and that has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. His truth elevates us and purifies us from evil. It is through the Holy Spirit that we can comprehend that Jesus is Lord and Saviour, who died to snatch us from death, and rose to give us new life. **We need only make the decision and change life to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Our faith will then grow and along with it, our security, and we shall no longer be tossed around by the fantasies of the world.

To conclude I think it necessary, in this case, that we reaffirm the authenticity of the Christian message which has been handed down to us by the Apostles, and taught to us by the Catholic Church. Not only, but the opportunity to read what the various experts have written in defence of Christianity can become for us all a chance to deepen our knowledge of our Christian roots, and thus turn bad into good.

I personally believe it is also our duty to live out the truths which Christianity teaches, and to witness them. The truth of God, when truly lived by the faithful, will lead us to reject every lie – without any particular effort – by virtue of the power of this truth. It is a power that unmasks evil and defeats even death. #

"JESUS, YOU RESOLVE IT!"

by B.K. Drabsch

"Don't worry too much over your problems: let God solve them. Surrender yourselves to Him!" (Medjugorje, message of 4 Jan. 1982)

"Worry, agitation and thinking about the consequences of a fact are counter-productive to surrender" (the Servant of God, Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo, 1882–1970)

Do you complicate your life? Do you worry, and fear? Well, our Blessed Mother at Medjugorje has been teaching us for 25 years how to be happy. In 1982 she gave us a recipe for happiness: *"live a simple and humble life... pray much"* (4 Jan. 1982), and added a piece of advice that appears in many of her messages: **"surrender yourselves to God."**

We must have the courage to let go of our bundle of preoccupation and problems. I say let go because we may have the tendency to hold onto it tightly, even when we think we've entrusted things over to Him, because deep in our conscience we don't really trust that anyone else could solve it. Therefore, it takes an act of trust on our part to let go of that bundle and to deposit it in front of Jesus, and allow Him to take it up into His hands - knowing that He will take care of it.

Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo, a holy priest from Naples, had an admirer in Padre Pio who would sometimes hide his visitors from Naples: "You have Fr. Dolindo; why come to me!" Like Padre Pio, also Fr. Dolindo quickly understood the **great value of suffering**, and would ask for more from the Lord for the salvation of souls. However, here in these lines we are concerned with trying to understand what it means to surrender, and we shall find help precisely in the inspired writings of Fr. Dolindo, who teaches that:

*surrender is
changing agitation into prayer*

"Jesus to the soul: **Surrendering yourself to me** doesn't mean to rack your brains, to fret, and despair, then pray to me with agitation, asking Me to follow you. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, turn away from thoughts of tribulation, and entrust yourself to Me so that I alone can work, saying (to Me): **You resolve it.** I can do so much when the soul - in its spiritual and temporal needs - turns to Me, and says: **You see to it...**"

At Medjugorje we know that Our Lady speaks on behalf of her Son: *"You want to change persons and situations so you rapidly attain your purpose. Don't fret, but let yourselves be guided by me and you'll see how all will go well"* (4 July 1983). Instead, when we want at all costs to deal personally with what afflicts us we end up harming ourselves: "You want to evaluate, inquire into, reason out everything, and you give in to human strength.. **It is this that hinders my words and ways...** Do not act this way, but pray as I have taught you in the Our Father; and if you tell me sincerely: **Thy will be done** – which is the same as saying: **You resolve it** – I will intervene with all my omnipotence and resolve the most difficult situations." (Fr. Dolindo)

This requires on our part a continuous act of faith and great trust. From the pages of the Gospel we learn that the Lord cannot do miracles when faith in Him is lacking. Do we really believe? Do we believe that He is really God, that He is almighty? Do we believe that He loves us madly, and that He works miracles also for us, especially for us? John says that the world could not hold all the books if all His works were written down. Well, Jesus works miracles today too, but He needs our trust and our faith in Him. With the writings of Fr. Dolindo, Jesus speaks to you: "How I desire this surrender from you, for your own good, and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! **Satan wants precisely this: to upset you and remove you from my action** and throw you into the jaws of human initiative. Thus, trust in Me alone; rest in Me; surrender yourself up to Me in everything. **I work miracles in the measure that you surrender to Me.**"

Also at Medjugorje Our Lady warns us against Satan's evil action: *"Be prudent because Satan particularly tries those who have decided to surrender themselves to God"* (24 June 1983). The Lord, however, says to you: "Do you see that calamity increases instead of declining? Do not be upset. Close your eyes and tell Me with trust: **Jesus, You resolve it!** And I say to you that I do indeed see to it, and I intervene and work miracles when required." (Fr. Dolindo).

Pray for us Dolindo, that we may obtain in this jubilee year (of the 25th anniversary of Medjugorje) the grace of faith and conversion, and true surrender to God!

* The Eucharist is the life of souls and of societies, just as the sun is the life of the body and of the earth. Without the sun, the earth would be sterile, it is the sun which makes it fertile, renders it beautiful and rich; it is the sun which provides agility, strength and beauty to the body. Hence, it is not astonishing that the pagans should have adored it as the god of the world. In fact, the sun obeys a supreme Sun, the divine Word, Jesus Christ, who illumines everyone coming into this world and who, through the Eucharist, Sacrament of life, acts in person in the very depths of souls in order to form Christian families and peoples. Oh a thousand times happy is the faithful soul who has found this hidden treasure, who goes to drink at this fountain of living water, who eats often this Bread of eternal life! (St. Peter Julian Eymard)

News from the Blessed Land

The Grand Jubilee of Mary

25 June... 25 years!

by *Stefania Consoli*

The air of Medjugorje is bubbling with joy, faces are radiant, everyone is grateful for being here for this important and long awaited occasion: the **25th Anniversary of Mary's apparitions at Medjugorje.**

Everyone feels grateful, even privileged, as though each had received a personal invitation. Everyone certainly feels loved. It is as though the *Gospa* had "arranged things" in the life of each person to make it possible for him or her to be here. It hasn't got to do with favouritism, but of being called. We are all called to become apostles, mediators of a grace that is too big to be contained. It is a gratuitous call by God that ought not make us feel better than others, but only responsible administrators of a good destined for all.

So, on this solemn day each person has become a vehicle of blessing for those he has carried in his heart and prayer. **Tens of thousands** of people are present in Medjugorje, but many more are those present in spirit, who cannot be seen but by Our Lady alone – and she knows how to reach out to each of her children to bring them the grace and blessing of this special occasion.

Mary was here, waiting for us. No doubt, she too was anxious for the arrival of those who desired embracing their Mother and receiving her embrace in exchange. People came to renew their "yes" and to ask for the strength to remain faithful. Our Lady's welcome, is as usual, warm and generous. For each person She has a caress, a word, a piece of advice, a confirmation or a correction useful for the journey ahead. Mary's presence – silent and eloquent – reaches out to every corner of the earth.

Whole groups started to arrive here days ago from all over the planet to live with enthusiasm this event of grace. Prayers in various languages can be heard along the streets, in the houses, in front of the statue and along the stations of the Way of the Cross.

In the days coming up to the anniversary the hill of apparitions was crowded with people. In the early hours of the morning people could be seen climbing up, or sitting down to meditate on the rocks made smooth by the thousands of pilgrims who've been coming here for the last 25 years. The Blessed Virgin chose this inaccessible place to be in our midst. It is a place which lacks commodities and attractions but which makes us feel well, with ourselves and with the world – a kind of *Mount Tabor* where one would like to put up a tent and remain.

The descent, however, is necessary

because the seed of conversion received demands a response on our part so it can become mission. And the best place to verify one's commitment is down in the church in a heart-to-heart encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist. Every day Mass in the various languages is celebrated in the morning. In the evening, before an enormous Host exposed on the external altar, amid thousands of silent hearts, the common language of Love unites all.

The parish teems with people despite the intense heat. Long lines in front of the confessionals tell of the desire for reconciliation which serves to create within souls the space to receive the peace of the Queen of Peace. She asks us to entrust to her Son every sin, concern and burden, for it is the only way space is made for Jesus.

In the air there's a certain feeling, everything seems simplified, though pilgrim guides at times arrange days filled with a hundred things to do which aren't always necessary. For really, the only thing that matters is meeting Her, and for this one needs time and rest.

At 6 pm the esplanade behind the Church is already full. The Rosary begins with the joyful and glorious mysteries. The *Hail Marys* ring throughout the air, and at the moment of the apparition every voice suddenly stops, and hearts open to receive the Mother. Moments of eternity dilate the soul and allow God to enter.

On the altar there are hundreds of priests from all over the world, together with the friars of the Parish who animate the services, beginning with Fr. Jozo Zovko who was parish priest when the apparitions first began, up to the present parish priest, Fr. Ivan Sesar. And of course, it is the Eucharistic celebration – thanksgiving par excellence – that crowns this day of celebration. Here, everything becomes clear, and the response is given to those who still ask the reason for Our Lady's apparitions: it is to take us to Jesus... in Him alone is our salvation!

Then, at the end of Mass, the visionaries lead the prayer of the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's. This is followed by the third part of the Rosary. One of the visionaries, Ivanka, received her annual apparition today. In 1985 she received the 10th secret and stopped having daily apparitions. The emotion of the encounter could still be perceived in her voice as she transmitted Our Lady's message: **"Dear Children, thank you for responding to my call. Pray, pray, pray."**

What we have lived today we will discover with time. Grace was very intense and penetrated deeply into each of us. Which fruits come of this depends on the measure of our own response.



The sensation is that a phase has come to a conclusion: a preparatory phase. Now begins the time of action, which isn't activism, but full participation in the movements of the Spirit to prepare for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart. It will be a silent, yet convinced, courageous and radical participation. It is time for summing up and drawing up balance sheets: what has Mary told us so far, against what have we done so far. What awaits us in the future, and what can already be seen on the horizon?

After all this there remains profound silence in the soul, an absence of words that "obliges" us to plunge ourselves into the mystery and contemplate, without trying to direct it according to personal tastes and expectations. A way has been surely opened: the way that leads to GOD, to the Father, to union with Him, to the fullness of the Trinitarian life where everything is made clear and comprehensible. As we journey along it, we will understand that we do not need to *do* anything, but simply *be* in God and allow Him to *be* in us. We must go *beyond* all visions, desires and programmes, even beyond the messages, because it is only this way that He will be able to live in and become life in us.

A new space will open up, in and around us, where Mary will be alive and visible to our inner gaze and will live in our heart. Then, her face will emerge on our own and the world will be able to see Her.

So we do not ask how long this will last; how long will the Virgin continue to appear. We do not fear the end of the apparitions because we shall be Medjugorje. The Mother will be in us; we shall offer up our own lives, and through us Mary will be given as a gift to the world.

I WAS THERE TOO!

From amongst the thousands of persons present at Medjugorje we asked a handful to tell us about their experience of Medjugorje and the grace of the anniversary. We asked them:

“Medjugorje 25 years later: What does it mean to you?”

One of the doctors who examined the visionaries

Dr. Giancarlo

“Twenty-five years later... I asked myself the meaning of Medjugorje, as perhaps we all do, and I think that today’s liturgy gives us an answer. St. Paul says: “You must become new creatures.” Behind all the Blessed Virgin’s messages we see how a new generation is emerging, but it depends on our response to Christ, who is alive in history. The Emmanuel, God-with-us, is the answer to man’s endless searching. Our Lady, after all, in one of her earliest apparitions at Medjugorje revealed the meaning of her earthly visits when she said: “I have come to tell the world that God exists. He exists. To encounter God is to encounter life, and joy.”



A distributor of Echo:

Romano

“To be here in Medjugorje today makes me think of the first time I came with my wife and 7 children. It was in 1984 and it was an experience not without difficulties. We didn’t even have anything to eat, as we hadn’t brought anything with us, and there was no where we could buy anything. We thought we would have been able to buy whatever we needed... and Our Lady left us without food! However, she did not leave us alone. On the evening of the 4th August during the Mass my wife took ill and we had to take her outside. The efforts of three doctors could not make her come back round. The children were under an awning near the church. It was then that Our Lady spoke to my heart. I didn’t go to Medju of my own accord, but to keep Dada happy. She had been once and wanted us to go too. I remember that we used to make fun of all her praying and fasting, but in the end she got us to come, and it was there that my conversion began. I don’t know about the children; they were respectful and observed. Inside of me, however, was born the desire to know why Our Lady had called me in that way; and what she wanted to tell me.

My interest in Medjugorje continued and I tried to follow the messages and put them into practice – as much as I could – and then one day there was another

encounter. It was with Fr. Tomislav Vlasic. I had heard him speak in 1984 and on that occasion I told my wife that I thought his words corresponded to what I thought Our Lady was trying to tell us. So from that day I sought out his news and publications. I kept them as I would a treasure, and when he began holding public meetings I attended, and it was from him that I heard the echo of Mary’s call: to offer one’s life as a sacrifice for the whole world. Since then I have felt new life blossom within me. The fatigue and danger of sin continue to follow me like a shadow, but this spirituality has dilated my heart and soul. It is truly wonderful.”

A Family:

Davide

“Today, for me, is a departure. I discovered Medjugorje 10 years ago, and in the beginning I thought it was all crazy. I thought it would have been my one and only time here, but this is now my fifth time. I’ve discovered that Mary and the Lord transmit above all a message of love, and that love bears everything, and opens doors. That is what I’m seeking to fulfil in my life, even though it isn’t always easy, especially within the family, with children... There’s always need of a word of love, but it doesn’t always come easy.

Every time I have come here I have left with a new heart; with a more serene, joyous and happy disposition, but unfortunately this fades after a while of being back in the world that tends to “kill” what we bring back from Medjugorje. That’s why I think it important to come here every now and again.

Here I feel the presence of Mary at my side. I’ve never felt this anywhere else. I feel myself under her mantle. I think that in these 25 years Our Lady has shown her firm will to save us, because in our time the values of man are decidedly impoverished. We’ve become ever more materialistic, we judge others by their importance, we’re full of personal ambition, pride, etc. And all this makes us think we’re happy, but it is quite to the contrary. After these 25 years, I hope that Mary’s visits continue into time, even though it would be a sign that we still haven’t understood, but it would be nice to hear Our Lady one day say that we have listened, that all mankind has listened, and that her presence could therefore be less frequent.”

Dedi

“At the strike of the clock which marked this 25th anniversary my heart sang its gratitude. All that has happened in these last ten years prepared me to face a harsh trial. Our Lady has been close to me and has helped me to overcome it. Mary helped me find my way to God who doesn’t abandon us. He made me meet the right people and at the right moment they gave

me a hand. Gradually, I made my way back to the top.

Today I feel Mary urging me to continue, and especially to be a good mother, because in the meantime I’ve had four children. Then, I was helping out with bringing aid during the war years, but now I have to be a good example for my children. When they were born I consecrated them to Mary, and now I have to help them grow up for her.”

M. Chiara

“I’m 14, and the second child. This is my third time at Medju, but this time I’m a bit older and better able to understand the importance of this place, and of what happens here. I look in awe at the number of people present here, and if they’ve come it means there is a lot of faith!”

Marco

“I’m 9, and the thing I’ve liked best is Sr. Elvira because she’s so nice. But it’s really neat everywhere here because of Our Lady’s presence. Things are peaceful here, not like other parts of the world where there is conflict.”

Benefactors, promoters of the message...

Giancarlo

“When we first came there was nothing here. We stayed in the families and were happy with little. I see that today pilgrims seek comfort, and perhaps miss out on the essence...”

Luigina

“Here at Medjugorje there’s nothing pretty that could be considered an attraction. It is only the presence of Mary that makes this place attractive and that fills your heart with love and peace. All pilgrims that come here feel good, and would like to stay. When you go back home you can’t wait to come back. Here I am extremely happy!”

Michela

“I first came in 1988. I’ve been several times here as a volunteer, and so I’ve spent quite some time all round. Each time has been a step ahead in the journey. Today I feel it is useless to seek what I wanted the first times, such as meeting the visionaries, and listening to the witness of the friars. I prefer to experience the presence of Mary and encounter her in my heart. I also realize that many new-comers necessarily seek out those same experiences we’ve all lived as first-timers, and it makes me realize how Mary continues to call her children, and how she is here for everyone, and how the grace of Medjugorje continues to flow for all.”



Luisa

"With Our Lady there is so much to meditate. I feel we have reached a peak. I came for the first time 20 years ago, and today I feel truly grateful for the time spent here. At first I was curious about what was going on; today I feel the joy and concern of Our Lady who wants to nourish me. I thank her because she has helped me change. Over these years I have become less controversial, less aggressive, and less critical, and I more easily accept adversity because I have seen that the only thing that counts is love.

I've understood that Our Lady works a lot in people's hearts. She calls each person individually, even silently, without others knowing - not everything can be shared with others. Many people remain on the superficial level, especially those who don't want to change, that don't open the door of their heart to allow Jesus in.

My husband and I began this journey together; which is a good thing, as life as a couple isn't always that easy. When I invoke Mary in moments of trial, she comes and changes my husband's heart, making it more docile. I have practically become a different person - and also my husband. God is now of utmost importance for us both.

I would like to thank Our Lady today for everything that she has given us. I have understood how she calls us personally to become strong, and to become light for the others. At least I hope."

For the first time...**Silvie**

"It has been very moving; a moment of grace that I hope to take back home, together with the peace. I was moved especially by the people, their faith, by the emotions."

A pilgrimage leader:**Gigi**

"I've been organizing pilgrimages to Medjugorje for years, and I've noticed that today's youth - those who think they've found paradise of one sort or another, but which turn out to be false - are in search of the truth. Many young people come to us and ask to be accompanied, so the buses I bring here contain many young people. So this is our scope. Together with other people we have offered up our free time to Our Lady, asking her to use it. The day we will not be of any more use, she will make us understand. At the moment I am at the disposal of people that want to come here. Some are quite confused because there is some negative propaganda going around. However, those who come are always happy. The young people, in particular, respond marvellously."

The Youth:**Matteo**

It is an immense gift to be here. It's a call, and I even feel a bit privileged, in the

sense that I've done nothing extra to have been called here, and besides, one receives much more here than one gives (such as the sacrifice of the voyage).

Personally, my wife and I felt we had to come here for this occasion to offer up our gratitude, because you see, we met at a Medjugorje prayer group, and we experience how Our Lady continues to help us in our married life.

There's a thing I've noticed. A lot of people arrive, and they come with - shall we say: worldly faces, but whilst here they acquire new ones, with a special light in their eyes.

For the future I see shall try to keep my resolutions. I also see how Our Lady is preparing a people to bring peace to this world that does not have peace. When a family doesn't pray it doesn't have peace."

Simon

"I have felt such a special peace whilst here; and new vigour penetrating and accompanying me. I usually come to Medju by car, but this time I came on foot, in the style of true pilgrims. It was certainly hard with the heat, but I felt Jesus' constant presence, walking beside me."

A Priest:**Fr. Andrea, Pompei**

"I need to come to Medjugorje because it allows me to make contact anew with God, to "tune in" to Him, and my soul finds comfort and consolation. There are no human factors that create this atmosphere, not even the witness of the visionaries, or the messages in themselves. It is the encounter with Our Lady truly alive and present, that opens the way for the soul to enter this dimension. In this encounter Mary continues to repeat the words she pronounced at Cana of Galilee: "Do what He tells you..." There's always the risk that our ardour is quashed once we go back home. This is why I come here often!"

And:**Anna**

"I felt a very strong call to come here and give thanks to Our Lady, also for all those who perhaps didn't give thanks."

**Giuseppe Ferraro Interviewed****Medjugorje for me!**

Giuseppe Ferraro normally writes for us in his column entitled "Return to your initial fervour" to help us understand the themes contained in the messages of the Queen of Peace. On this 25th anniversary we asked him to tell us about the importance of Medjugorje in his life.

Beppe, what does this anniversary mean to you?

This has definitely been a moment of extraordinary grace that has brought great transformation to the way one relates not only with others but also with God. The grace of Medjugorje has brought about a great transformation to life in its deepest level. It has been a new birth.

When did you first come?

It was 1st June 1986. Medjugorje was still at its beginning then. There was such a powerful Grace that it practically knocked you over, almost with violence, and was impossible not to receive. I recall that two things were made clear to me. The first was that I had come home, the home my soul was searching for and had not found till that moment. I clearly remember the feeling of "having come home." The second was that the Grace of Medjugorje would defeat the world and its logic, and all the demons that roam the world trying to destroy us.

Was your response immediate?

Yes, but the "incarnation" of this response has been taking years of purification - a process that is still underway. Time plays an important role in this process.

So was there a spring cleaning?

There was a stripping away in different moments - not without suffering - of a series of false idols and false security. Even external circumstances converged to help this stripping away of everything that wasn't pivoted in God, who alone is our security and foundation on which to build one's life.

Who is Our Lady of Medju for you?

She is a mother who accompanies you, at times urges you on, as she drives you towards that Easter passover that opens up into the risen life, the new life. We do not see the passover because it is as if it were veiled; veiled by the original sin and the logic of the world that darken our vision. Ever so delicately, but resolutely, she helps you to break the veil, to help you see that it is only through love offered up that you are able to find the way for the fullness of life, of that life that your soul yearns for so ardently. She wants us to understand that it is only through that passover that we can come into contact with this life and be fulfilled.

At Medjugorje much good is done; what about wasted occasions?

For me Medjugorje is a place of intense spiritual battle between the powers of darkness and the action of Grace which is expressed particularly through Mary's presence. The senses of the heart and soul must be extremely attentive at Medjugorje, and if they aren't you can end up being dispersed. This is not a place where you find pious satisfaction for devotions. The danger is that this powerful Grace in many (even those behind the organization are at risk) can get buried in the logic of the Shrine, while its true purpose is to activate a response in the many souls that Our Lady has chosen so they can become yeast and a vehicle for God's love in the world. The danger is in getting caught up in devotionism, and of not accepting the dynamic of Medjugorje from which all things are made fertile, and which gives true meaning to Our Lady's presence.

Do you see these 25 years as an arrival, a stopover, or a departure?

A very important moment: an arrival in the sense that Our Lady has lit up the way, has given the grace, but it is also a moment in which we are urged to become missionaries and to understand that we have been chosen by Mary for this purpose. Hence, it is a moment of departure, of a new mission, for the Church and the world... in simplicity and humility, but with a level of new awareness that will be urged on also by facts at the end when we'll all have to take a stand.

You mean the sign that Our Lady has promised to leave?

Yes, but also external events. Mary speaks of secrets: an apocalyptic chapter, we would say, of the message – a chapter that is often shelved, but in reality is an integral part of the message of the Queen of Peace. It will be a time of unequivocal witness, where there'll be no space for compromise.

You collaborate with the publication of Echo. How do you see this instrument, and its purpose?

I am convinced that Echo is one of the instruments that Our Lady has chosen in our time to bring to others not only the message but also the grace, the living water, that is flowing forth from her Immaculate Heart. We need to be its vehicles so it can reach the whole world, and the Echo is one of the medias that Mary uses to communicate the grace of Medjugorje, not so much the news of Medjugorje.

Do you have a word for readers today?

To open the senses of the soul and recognize that Mary is calling each of you, and to respond with all the generosity of your heart. Her plans are plans of life, and joy, and heavenly peace for each of her children; all the more for those who place themselves more directly at the service of her plans. *

The Call and the Response for the Transformation of Life

by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic

Man is offered two fundamental prospects: one is that of human science, and the other is that of the faith. One should not exclude the other, but it is up to man to orient himself and become an instrument of orientation for mankind.

Human science offers ample views on the future of the human body. A magazine, *Focus Extra* (24/'06) suggests man will live to be over 100, maybe 200. What will he be like? The article suggests he will have: "...artificial hands, legs, knees... also his heart, eyes and bladder will be produced in the lab, where technology will supply 'spare parts' for future generatons."

(Leaving aside the question of ethics) **the prospect of the faith goes way beyond,** and opens up for man a space which is completely new, where life does not end, where there is no death. Through His Resurrection, Jesus speaks and witnesses to us about man's own rebirth and resurrection (Mt 22:30-31). This is amply developed by St. Paul (1Cor:15), and by St. John the apostle who announces something completely new: "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Rev 21:5).

The best example of the prospect for man-created-by-God is Mary Most Holy, who was assumed into heaven, soul and body according to God's plan. Mary has appeared to mankind various times, and she has allowed herself to be seen, touched, and felt. She calls each of us to convert and to enter into the prospect of the full life. Mary has thus appeared in the parish of Medjugorje, according to testimonies by the visionaries and many others.

It is not enough, however, that Our Lady should have appeared. One must hear the call, and respond to the call to attain its purpose. God grants the grace and leaves man free to choose. Man must develop and mature till he can take his future into his hands according to the prospect of God. This way, man puts himself at the service of the transformation of mankind. The renewal of humanity has always passed through courageous people; those who knew how to detach themselves from the spirit of the world, choose the narrow way, go upstream - thus opening the way for the transformation of mankind. After the courageous few came the people, *en masse*.

It is always in the faith that the passover is made. Neither power nor wisdom can be of help here. The way for the soul is not opened for those who fool around in city squares immersed in the spirit of the world, but for those who sincerely seek in prayer God's plan and the grace to live according to His will.

God is above everything and everyone. He is the fullness and perfection. In each step towards the participation in His fullness and glory, man will burn with only one desire: to know the will of God and to put it into practice. But this implies that he has decided to strip away his old self and has chosen God above everything and everyone else. The truth of God is thus clearly revealed, and from the soul all shadows, darkness, fears, and weaknesses flee; and Satan, unable to find anything in it to cling to, becomes irate and

also flees.

In the soul, space is thus dilated, to receive light, joy, security and strength. Once the decision is made to follow God above and beyond all else, a new step is asked of us. It is the same already taken by those whom God called to open the way of salvation: Abraham... Moses... the prophet Elias... Mary Most Holy who was asked to pass over from the impossible to the possible, and she experienced first hand God's omnipotence. Her unreserved "yes" to God (to receive the Son of God) ushered in the Saviour of mankind into history in a definite manner. In this passover every soul blossoms in the omnipotence of God and is fulfilled.

Not making this passover means to close oneself up in what is human, in oneself, in the egocentrism that takes on various hues, and that can break out into satanic egotism. This was the mistake of the young rich man who desired "*having eternal life*" but who was not ready to renounce the wealth he possessed, so the "*young man went away sad*" (Mt 19:16-22). Why sad? He was sad because grace had opened the passage-way in his soul but he resisted. Grace withdrew because he clashed with it and was left with suffering and inner struggles and sadness. He returned to his daily routine with a feeling of defeat. Likewise, each soul, if it is not ready to receive the call of God, closes itself up in the darkness and in suffering. In the same way also humanity, after having rejected great graces, goes back on its steps to its condition of slavery and becomes even worse, and thus prepares for God's judgement, which man in his ignorance, calls God's chastisement.

He who desires following Our Lady's call must be ready to take continual leaps ahead in the faith. These leaps or steps are the passover towards newness in God, towards the entrance to man's transformation into the image of God. In the person who makes this passover God manifests Himself and gives testimony to Himself, just as He has done in the apparitions of Our Lady.

Do you have the courage to make this passover? Take the first step, then the second... learn to walk in the faith. Lift yourself up out of the spirit of the world where there is always someone wanting to pull you down. This person might be your father, mother, boy/girlfriend, friend... Place yourself amongst those who make the faith journey together, where there will be someone to help and accompany you, and sustain you in your call... You need the support of the Communion of the Church.

To give everything to God means wanting to multiply one's own good, to allow God to transform everything and be completely fulfilled. So there is no deception, but only reward.

Renouncing self is the first step towards the newness of life in God, who never disappears. Choosing the Cross is to renounce the bitterness of the crosses that make up our corruptible life; this choice of the Cross defeats death. Thus, one

Loving Countenance

(simple thoughts)

by *Pietro Squassabia*

The love of Jesus is merciful; it abounds in mercy; it overflows with mercy. If you meet Him you realize it because He emanates mercy. Without mercy, it could not be Jesus, but another. With mercy, Jesus loves all creation, each person, and also His Father. Also the Father loves with mercy, and the Holy Spirit is merciful love. If it weren't so, Love could not reach us, and we would not be able to feel, know or accept God's love.

And if we want to love with true love, we also must use mercy.

Without mercy would be to demand that God were different to what He is; to demand that others be different. It would mean that we did not agree with the way God expresses Himself in us and in others.

Without mercy we would not be able to accept Jesus who comes to visit us, we would not be able to accept Him as He is, it would never be the right moment for His visit, He would never be able to present Himself in a way pleasing to us. Or rather, without mercy we would not be able to recognize Jesus who comes to us to give us His love, but we would exchange Him for a stranger, as an unwelcome visitor.

Without mercy, we would not be able to recognize the face of the Father when we meet Him in heaven, or that of the saints, and we would thus be unable to take part in the joy of heaven, as we would not be attracted by that place of delights.

Mercy loves everything and everyone, without distinction. Mercy, which is the same as love, never ends, just as love never ends (1 Co 13:8). Mercy is an indicator of love: only if we are merciful are we able to love. If we are not merciful then we surely don't love. Our love, in this case, is apparent, fruit of arrogance, and probably comes from the evil one.

Only if we use mercy are we able to love God and our brethren; only if we use mercy with others, and with God, can we truly love. Just as on the face of a person his personality shines through, hence does mercy make Love shine through. **So we can say that the face of Love is merciful.** If we see mercy, then behind mercy is Love. If we see a merciful person, then surely that person loves: a merciful person cannot but love, and one who loves cannot but be merciful. Thus, in heaven, place of Love, I think we shall see merciful faces everywhere, but we would never see merciful faces in hell. If we truly realized that mercy is synonymous with paradise, and that lack of mercy is synonymous with hell, how we would seek it out, how we would like its company, how we would prefer it to malicious judgement and contempt of others!

Thank you Jesus because with your example you showed us mercy. Thank you for becoming similar to us and close to us, even though you are God. Thank you because with mercy you showed us Love. Thank you because you placed in

progressively enters into the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and hastens the coming of Christ who will renew the universe.

Mary, at the foot of the cross, is completely united to the offering of the Son and thus makes the definitive passover to enter into the glory – soul and body – and become an instrument: Mother of the Church and of new humanity.

To offer God everything through Mary's Immaculate Heart means to give to God the possibility of governing perfectly. Then, neither sorrow nor humiliation nor death will leave their bitter taste in you, but they will serve for your transformation. Satan will not be able to use you, nor hurl his hatred against you; and God, through you, will speak to the world, and open the way for mankind.

Queen of Peace, wholly Thine, to Jesus through Mary!

Living Jubilee

We are celebrating the jubilee of the Queen of Peace. It has not been officially proclaimed, but I – along with many others I think – strongly feel in my heart that it is so. Twenty-five years ago Our Lady appeared to six visionaries, but then – to use St. Paul's language – “She appeared to many! She appeared also to you!” I hope that each of you saw her within yourselves, and that you recognized and welcomed her.

But today's celebration is not only to recall what happened 25 years ago, as that was just the beginning. Today we are more mature than 25 years ago, and in us there should be only one desire: to want Our Lady to be alive in our midst; that she not be present just through visions, but that she live here! We have to desire this, however, and thus we must offer up our “yes.”

With her spirituality Mary brings about a radical change in mankind. It was for this that she appeared and said that these were the last apparitions. This does not exclude that one day there may be others, but includes them. In substance, Mary has opened up a new way for mankind.

But what is revealed Marian spirituality? In brief it is essentially the living relationship with the living God without the use of methods or philosophies – and it is for this that the simple motherly message awakens receptive souls. Instead, for those who have built castles within their heads, this message is a scandal. That's how it was in the Gospels, and in the lives of the saints.

The Mother of God is in our midst! What does this mean? It means that the Triumphant Church descends from heaven; that to us is manifested the life of a wholly fulfilled creature; that our Mother desires generating mankind.

The Militant Church (on earth) looks up at the Triumphant Church, and in particular looks up to Mary Most Holy as her model. The Mother of God, who is fully united to the Most Holy Trinity in soul and body, comes to us, and wants to abide in us as Mother - Mother of the Church - and we desire through her intercession being received into the glory of heaven. We want to be instruments of her Love to spread the kingdom of God which in her is fulfilled.

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic

us the seed of mercy, and you make us able to put it into practice. Thank you because you taught us that Love is nourished with mercy rather than sacrifice when you said: “*Learn what this means: 'I want mercy, not sacrifice'*” (Mt 9:13).

May Mary, Mother of Mercy, help us to understand how to put into practice Jesus' words: “*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful*” (Lk 6:36). May she obtain for us the merciful love of the Son. Then, we would understand that even the best of our deeds has no value, and may even be harmful, if it is not nourished by mercy; and we would also understand that every person, no matter how negative or irritating, deserves above all to be treated with mercy. And we will find that mercy has granted us a heart capable of accepting and keeping peace, so we can transmit it to others, and to all.

My thought is that Medjugorje is the greatest manifestation of God's mercy since the coming of Jesus on the earth. Then, the Father sent to the earth for thirty-three years the humble Son in the most humble of conditions. Now, for the past twenty-five years He has been sending in our midst the Mother, the most humble of creatures, the Little One. I can imagine the glory the Father had in reserve for the Son, and for the Mother, for that coming; I can imagine the glory He has in reserve for the Mother, for the Son and for the sons and daughters for this coming.

So let us hurry to draw abundantly from this fount of grace, and let us ask that many people, that everyone, may enjoy this fruit, even those who do not know from whence it comes.

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May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you! and Our Lady keep you!

don Alberto

9 July 2006