



Our Lady's message, 25 July 2008:

“Dear children! At this time when you are thinking of physical rest, I call you to conversion. Pray and work so that your heart yearns for God the Creator who is the true rest of your soul and your body. May He reveal His face to you and may He give you His peace. I am with you and intercede before God for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

May your heart yearn for God the creator

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Is 55, 10-11). This is how Isaiah expresses the creating and saving work of the Word of God and what he says doesn't even fully grasp the extent of what it reveals. The Word that returns to the Father after having wholly fulfilled His wish is Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate. “Blessed be the God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1, 3-6)

In Him he summed up *all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth* (Eph 1, 10b). Jesus Christ is not only the marker of our reconciliation with the Father; in Jesus a new and absolutely unforeseeable life opens up for men, for every man, which still remains surprising today. Man is no longer what he used to be. Now every man can become *a dwelling place for God in the Spirit* (Eph 2, 22), *to do the works that Jesus did* (John 14, 12), to be similar to Him (John 14, 20-21). This pathway of assimilation is called conversion. **At this time in which you are thinking of the rest of the body, I invite you to convert.** Mary's invitation is not contradictory, given that the pathway of conversion is not in contrast with the need for rest, actually, it leads to it. And it is **true rest** already in this life because it satisfies the thirst of the soul and the yearning of the flesh (Psalm 62(63),2).

Pray and work so that your heart might yearn for God the creator who is the true rest of your soul and your body. Everything finds rest in God alone because only in Him



The statue of the Queen of Peace profaned on Apparition Hill in Medjugorje.

“We are that missing hand, detached from the Mother to reach out to all those who are far away and to give them the gift of her carress...”

does love fulfil the miracle of the co-existence of opposites, without contradiction. All of this is not according to logic, it is the object of daily experience: the little “miracles” of abnegation and love that still exist and still cause wonder and admiration.

Let Him reveal his face to you and grant you His peace. Let us learn to discover the face of God in the small things of every day and sooner or later the Light of this Face will illuminate our minds and warm our hearts. Let us try to be operators of peace in the little situations that we experience on a daily basis and sooner or later His Peace will flood our soul. **I am with you and I intercede before God for each one of you.** Nothing, apart from our own will, prevents us from experiencing this presence and this intercession. Why not try? “He who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 102 (103), 3-5).

“Lord Jesus Christ, take away my freedom, my memory, my understanding, and my will. All that I have and cherish you have given me. I surrender it all to be guided by your will. Your love and your grace are wealth enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, and I ask for nothing more. Amen.” (St. Ignatius of Loyola)

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 August 2008:

“Dear children! Also today I call you to personal conversion. You be those who will convert and, with your life, will witness, love, forgive and bring the joy of the Risen One into this world, where my Son died and where people do not feel a need to seek Him and to discover Him in their lives. You adore Him, and may your hope be hope to those hearts who do not have Jesus. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Let you be the ones to convert

Everything is ready. Everything has been prepared for us. Now it is up to us to participate in the wedding feast of the king's son (ref. Matthew 22, 1-14) or in the great supper prepared for us (ref. Luke 14, 16-24). We are all invited, we are expected. Taking action to honour this invitation means setting out on the pathway of **conversion**; and given that the invitation is personal, so is the answer: **personal conversion**. Each of us is called personally. We may attempt to excuse our refusal of the invitation but no excuse is credible. God's calling is so strong, so clear and so great that it cannot be compared to any of our activities, no human duty, nothing that the world normally judges as important or right or dutiful. Nothing in the world, or outside of the world, can prevail over the call to *become a dwelling place of God in the Spirit* (Eph 2, 22b).

Dear children, today also I invite you towards personal conversion. We cannot convert keeping our old habits, aspirations, and plans. We need to decentralise ourselves from ourselves to center ourselves on God and everything will change; much of what we believed to be important will seem insignificant, and vice-versa, much of what we previously considered to be non-essential will be necessary. *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ* (Phil 3, 7-8). Only in Him *everything grows in an orderly fashion* because everything grows in compliance with the Will of the Father, who gave us his Son to be also in us, in Him, Children. Personal conversion is a gift of divine grace but it requires our *yes*, our opening, and our willingness to welcome it: **let you be the ones to convert**

But do we truly want to convert? And what do we say about believing in Mary's messages, are we ready to be surprised when we meet those who openly or silently show that they do not believe, are we really willing to undergo personal conversion? **Let you be the ones to convert and, with your lives, to bear witness, to love, to forgive and to bring the joy of the Risen Christ to this world in which my Son died and in which men do not feel the need to seek Him and discover Him as part of their own lives.** The invitation is clear: not words, not de-

Why are we fascinated by the East?

It is interesting to stop for a moment to think about the beauty and charm of the East and the way it transmits this ancient presence to the various levels of Western culture, it is meditative, veiled in mystery and archaic knowledge about the interiority of man.

I'd like to focus on this charm and come to some understanding of how, when it reaches Europe, this influence doesn't merely stop at presenting the characteristics of tradition and culture that single it out, but it passes on the spiritual-religious element as a silent proposal.

In particular, among these "winds of the East" it is worth considering the call that Buddhist spirituality presents in terms of ideals of peace, non-violence, well-being, meditation, harmony, contact with the "spiritual" and an abstraction from reality towards the so-called state of "illumination". These ideals are all attractive in themselves, and in a certain sense they are quick proposals for that need for spirituality and evasion that western man is experiencing nowadays. But why do they also take root in Christians?

To find an answer to this question we need to leave man in general aside, who harbours an underlying existential need regarding a "tendency towards Otherness", to focus our attention on Christians in general, those to whom everything was revealed in the full knowledge of God, and who have full, vital access to God which is permitted "by the only Mediator between God and men", Jesus Christ. From this knowledge, which is therefore life experience, Christians should look around, with their gaze becoming discernment in the Spirit that breathes within them, housing them in the unity of the Father and the Son.

To shed some even more objective light on this reality, I shall draw some inspiration from Teachings, where the Church's assessment regarding the presence of Buddhism in Europe is expressed with extreme clarity. In the document entitled "*Domus Aurea*" a group of bishops and theologians who are specialists in inter-religious dialogue affirm in point two that: "The main worry refers to the growing number of European Christians

tely 35 bishops from the clandestine Catholic Church in prison, under house arrest or in hiding and hundreds of missionaries were expelled from China.

This "façade" was studied in such a way as to ensure that everything would appear to be free and lawful. In fact, inside the Olympic village, athletes were able to avail of places of worship and they also had the possibility of meeting with priests, but outside of the gates, all of this was prohibited.

As we were also saying, human rights were infringed extensively through an intensification of repressive action. According to Zenit, the Games also led to the expropriation of over one million homes in order to allow for the provision of new services. Among other things, before the beginning of the Olympic Games, the authorities sent immigrant workers away from Beijing, along with beggars and other "undesirables". The authorities then took the appropriate measures to avoid the risk of all protests during the

attracted by Buddhist thoughts and practices (...). For many people in Europe, Buddhism represents an ancient tradition of spiritual wisdom, which constitutes an alternative to their original religious education and their cultural background.

The intention, which starts out as a proposal and an intervention by the Church, is that of welcoming, in the sense of a renewed evangelical responsibility towards all those who, for any reason, are seeking a spiritual light outside of the visible confines of the Church itself. The document expresses the following in point six: "They affirm that they are seeking an alternative to what they experience as sterile dogmatism. They often perceive the Church as excessively "institutionalised" and they sustain that it expresses itself with an obsolete and incomprehensible language. Many complain about the lack of adequate initiation to personal prayer, meditation, the experience of full salvation".

To study the phenomenon of the spread of Buddhism in Europe and to help those Christians who would like to experience religious life on a deeper level, in two symposia organised a few years ago, the emphasis was placed on the identity and the nature of the Christian in particular: "Dealing with these themes requires Christians entering into dialogue with Buddhists to develop their own faith, to clarify it and express it in a language that is comprehensible for their interlocutors. This process may also help Christians to discover certain aspects of their faith that would remain hidden if they were not stimulated by this experience of dialogue" (7).

The invitation for us is therefore to seek the deep-rooted reasons for our choice to be Christians within ourselves, through continuous communion with the Source, which is Christ, the light of life, to experience all situations of dialogue and confrontation through Him, even when we do not feel directly provoked. In fact, I believe that unity with Christ has to do with a universal form of behaviour, because all things refer to Him and are "summarized" in Him; for us, it is therefore a question of remaining stable in this unity that the Apostle Paul speaks of (Eph 1,3-14), to be members of His body, in the Father's plan and in active service.

Daniele Benatelli

clarations of principle but life testimonies. To desire with all our strength, with all our heart, our mind and our soul to be pervaded by the divine Spirit, assimilated by Him to Christ Jesus so that He might live in us. To implore this from the Father, through the intercession of Mary, so as to be witnesses to the Risen Christ. He is not lying dead in this world, like the world would like Him to be; He is ready to rise up in every man who accepts Him and welcomes Him into his own soul. **Adore Him and let your hope be hope for those hearts that do not have Jesus.** Let our eyes, our mind and our hearts stare at Jesus in fervid adoration to allow ourselves to be like Him and, despite our shortcomings and our sin, this shall come about in us and in others because this is the Will of the Father; we just need to believe in it with an ardent faith and allow ourselves to be dragged into the vortex of Trinitarian love, to be enflamed by the Fire of the Spirit. This is our hope and it is *hope that does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us* (Rm 5, 5). Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary.

N.Q.

The other face of the Olympics

Along with several billion people, with great interest we watched the Olympic Games that took place in China last August. We were captivated by the customary charm of such high level sporting competitions, especially when the participants are not highly paid professionals, but athletes committed to reaching an ever better result through significant sacrifices and dedicated commitment to training. Those of you who are not so passionate about sport may perhaps only have admired the inauguration ceremony and the pomp and splendour that Beijing created around the Olympic event. But as the proverb says "all that glitters isn't gold". This is the case for the Chinese population, which has found itself involved in a careful *cover-up* operation for a few years, an operation that has been studied attentively to show the world that visited it an impeccable exterior appearance, to the fore front, an appearance on a par with the great western super powers that are actually only promoting "the Chinese phenomenon" for shallow political, financial and social interests of a worrying capacity. As usual, those who pay the price are the small timers, along with those who serve them, such as the representatives of Christian Churches. Essentially, the most elementary human rights and religious freedoms had the worst of it.

Already a few months ago, the violent repression of the Tibetan opposition gave the world an insight into the position of the Beijing authorities as regards any type of dissent relating to their work. At the end of July it was officially prohibited for priests and bishops not affiliated with the official Catholic Church to administer the sacraments or carry out pastoral activities. The "surveillance" operation then came about in a more silent and often more brutal manner. According to certain information obtained from activists within the clandestine Church, the majority of priests operating in the capital were forced to leave until the end of the Olympics. The assessments of the Zenit information agency calculate that there are currently approxima-

events.

In itself, sport should be inspired by healthy principles of growth, the desire to surpass our own limits in order to improve ourselves, friendly meetings with those who share our same passion, healthy competition that doesn't presuppose rivalry but rather, expresses normal confrontation in diversity. Today unfortunately we are seeing the exploitation of all of this in order to affirm power, an arrogant supremacy over others, without taking anyone else into consideration. The case of the "China phenomenon" is extreme in everything, but let's ask ourselves: who studied it in the tiniest details in order to destabilize worldwide balances? Who strengthens it? For what ends? The answers to these questions would certainly not lead to an evangelical spirit of justice, equality, truth and freedom. Christians then should do their best to help those who are paying a very high price in the East, solely due to the fact that they belong to Christ. □

THE STATUE OF MARY PROFANED ON PODBRDO

During a June afternoon of the year 1981 the Virgin Mary appeared for the first time there, in a corner of what is now known in Medjugorje as “apparition hill”, Podbrdo. For a long time a slender cross marked the exact site of the apparition, around which the pilgrims would meet to pray in silent recollection and therefore to spiritually encounter Mary and allow their hearts to be “touched” by Her.

A few years ago, in place of the cross, a marble statue was erected, a statue of the Queen of Peace who is much loved by all those who faithfully and lovingly climb up the hill. Yet in the darkness of the night between the 28th and 29th of August, someone

attacked that statue with a hammer, disfiguring its face and knocking off one of its hands. A true profanation.

What caused such a gesture remains a secret in the undoubtedly restless heart of the person who carried it out. We can be sure of one thing however: the tender and provident love that Our Lady continues to give her children, has had no effect on this person; or rather, this person has not allowed themselves to be grasped by that hand that its aggression wanted to make useless.

Seeing the statue mutilated in this way is quite a disturbing site, it is without that hand with which it seemed to point out to the needs of the children to the Father; She is our advocate. But if we wish, in the light of this incomprehensible fact, we can see the realisation of a spiritual reality that Mary had already heralded: “*You who live my messa-*

ges, be the light and extended hands to this faithless world, that all may come to know the God of love” (message 25.11.2001).

We are that missing hand, detached from the Mother to reach out all those who are far away and to give them its caress, its comfort, its consolation and its exhortation, but also to point out the pathway of true holiness: conversion, prayer, sacrifice, offering... We must be Mary's outstretched hand which brings many gifts of grace to all men from Medjugorje. Or better, we could be the fingers, each of which is articulated in an original manner, but that only function if they move in harmony and in communion with the others. This can be our way of “making up” for the profaning insult not of a simple statue, but of a living presence, that of Mary, Queen and Mother of the whole universe.

Editorial staff

Your majesty

Your majesty Mary is imprinted on that womb that welcomed the King, the Word that transferred the immensity of the kingdom into your little body. You fearlessly and boundlessly welcomed that grace that invaded you completely, transforming you into a temple, a tabernacle and a monstrosity.

Your majesty Mary is made of brief words, uttered in secret to that seed that filled you wholly with its growth, the seed of a new creature and of God himself. And it filled you with grace, you blessed one, and it filled you with sense, that which every man seeks within himself and that Jesus finds in you alone.

Your majesty Mary is made of land, moulded with the water of love, to forge everyday things and make them shine with regal splendours; you Sovereign of our modest, discrete, occasionally invisible yet extremely precious existence, because it is a gift from Above.

Your majesty Mary colours every gaze, every gesture and word that you addressed to your Joseph, your beloved spouse of every day. And to your neighbours, your family, to everyone, also to all those torturers who stripped the last breath from your son, on the cross.

Your majesty Mary, comes into our hearts, like that milk that the baby Jesus drew from your generous and pure breast. Our mouth must always be directed towards you, to your immaculate heart, which is brimming with virtues, so that they might pour forth abundantly in us and transform us. We your children, Queen because you are a mother. Our Queen because you lead us to the King.

Your crown oh mother is not made of gems or gold, which will pass; but of prayer beads, minute and almost crumbling, yet powerful because continuous and intense.

That crown that flows between the fingers of the simple, of the true and that creates prayer: invocation, intercession, praise... It is a crown that generates life continuously, for those who use it and for those who benefit from it.

With this crown we too want to be crowned, so that passing through our lives, prayer might enrich the world with goodness, kindness and peace. May the prized pearls that fall from our lips go to rest on the quenched lives of those who feel discouraged and think that they can't go on. And let them crown Him, king by inheritance, because Son of the Queen. The most beautiful one.

Stefania Consoli

SIMPLE THOUGHTS *by Pietro Squassabia*

Always joyfully

The Holy Spirit is undoubtedly a cheerful and tranquil person, a young man brimming with joy; for this reason, when he enters a soul, he brings it a sense of joy that the person in question immediately perceives. People are under the impression that if they have joy alone, they can do good, if joy is all people possess, they are capable of grasping life's happy and sad situations, only if people have joy can they live life fully. The Spirit speaks and always acts joyfully because he is Love, and Love is Joy. It would appear that this is the only way he can succeed in communicating with man, who is constantly seeking joy, after that day in which, due to sin, he lost it with so much nostalgia.

Yes, God gave man the desire for joy in order to make him understand where he can find it. But man tends to seek it in creatures and he fails to find it there, because he seeks it where it is nowhere to be found. After sin, man is no longer capable of distinguishing true joy from apparent joy, the joy that originates from Good and that which is not Good. Only the Spirit can point out the pathway on which to find it. And so man is given the ability to live. It is true: man has life in the measure in which, with the help of the Spirit, he makes that seed of joy that God planted in his heart grow. It seems almost as though joy is the indicator of man's state of “health”: if joy dwells within him, his spiritual life is fed and becomes stronger, otherwise it becomes weak and it may even die.

Jesus' teachings always lead us to joy and they never allow us to wander from it, even when life becomes difficult. It is no coincidence that Mary often invites us to experience joy with her messages: “Be joyous bearers of peace and love...”. If they are carried out with joy, all of our actions, even the tiniest ones, are certainly pleasing to God, because in them He sees *His Face*. And so let us ask Mary, Mother of Joy, to preserve the joy that was given to us as a gift from above, so that we might become bearers of it, as She continues to ask us. And so, perhaps we will bring the love that joy is the expression of, to others.

Small, yet crowned with glory

If you contemplate the sky on starry nights, you will get the impression that man is a truly tiny being. Then perhaps you will come to a better understanding of what is said in psalm 8: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of Him, and the son of man that Thou dost visit him?”. Man therefore appears to be an almost insignificant reality. But, despite this, God has made him great: “For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour”, continues the psalm. And so God has not only made man a little less than angels but he has actually crowned him with glory and honour. We know that glory, true glory, belongs to God alone, as is the case for true honour. For this reason, by giving men his glory and his honour, God has made them similar to himself, almost like gods: “I have said it: you are gods” (psalm 81), and therefore no longer insignificant, but *gods*, that is, people made capable of welcoming the glory of God and preserving it.

It would appear that God takes unreserved pleasure in giving his greatness to men, especially those who welcome it, like his saints. If we look at Mary then, the human creature that God filled so much with grace, to the point of making her His Mother, how can we fail to be surprised before such a generous God! But what he fulfilled in Her, he wishes to fulfil in us also: God wants to pour his glory over us also, along with his unreserved honour, to make us all precious and beautiful in his eyes. And so let us hunt away all fear and apprehension! And when we realise that the worries and anxieties of life are taking hold of us, let us throw everything into the furnace of His Love: here all of our impurities are purified, here we find pure gold, given to us as a gift with Jesus. Let us ask the Woman who reflects God's glory marvellously, to help us to look more and more like Her, especially during these times when She is entrusted with an entirely special mission. In this way, perhaps, we will allow God's glory to shine upon us as it shines on Mary, even if we are small, so that everyone can see it, for the joy of many. In this way perhaps, we will come to a better understanding of the immense gift of love that God has given us and continues to give us.

It's happening in Medjugorje...

...let's hear what young people have to say!

This year's festival saw the participation of young people from sixty countries; 310 priests co-celebrated the first Mass and 440 of them co-celebrated the last one. How can we count the number of people present? Some estimates speak of twenty thousand communions distributed at each Mass, but there were certainly many, many more people than this present.

These numbers say nothing in the end. What counts are the miracles that came about in the hearts of each of them, the vocations that bloomed, and all those small yet crucial "YESES" that matured within the souls of young people during those moments of special silence, when the crowd around you disappears and you find yourself alone before the divine, with your young life finally gathered entirely in your hands; and before you, Love, the true God, your God, the Father who gives himself fully and asks you for everything.

And so this year let's hear what these young people have to say. We interviewed some young men and women of different ages, with different experiences and backgrounds, in order to be able to build a true image of what invisibly came about within souls over this stupendous five-day period, which some describe as a period of enormous confusion or empty elation, but that in reality remain days of extraordinary grace.

From Romania

Felician, 28 years old

It is difficult to find the words to describe the youth festival here in Medjugorje. I come here for one simple reason: it helps me to grow on a spiritual level. This place has taught me what love is, what goodness is and it helps me to experience them at home. Each time I come here it is as though someone inspired me to carry out a mission that I then feel as though I must fulfil during the year. I am also given the strength to fulfil it. There are things that I would never have dreamed of being able to do: forgiving, receiving the malice of others with a sense of peace in my heart....This place has changed my life. I became like a sponge that absorbs many good things in Medjugorje.

From Libya

Lama, 21 years old

I'm in Medjugorje for the thirteenth time. I come here because this place is like the fuel that you put into the car of your faith...only that this car has petrol and it goes and we can be happy! Everyone needs joy in order to be able to live, and I have experienced that when we announce the word of Christ we are constantly joyous.

The festival is a fantastic event and I wish it could last longer; it is phenomenal to see thousands of people seeking God and finding Him, they never stop looking for Him and seeking Him out all the more.

From the Czech Republic

Ludmila, 25 years old

I came here to give thanks to Mary for all the gifts I received and also to ask for the strength to continue to experience faith. I pray

for my family, so that they too, currently non-believers, might welcome God into their lives. During these days I feel as though I am nearer to God and to Mary; here I have the possibility of withdrawing into silence and consecrating my time to the Lord. Only in Medjugorje I understood what prayer is and how important it is in my life. The youth festival is a special moment because we can feel happy within the depths of ourselves, because we can "be fulfilled in joy" so to speak. When I see so many young people I feel strengthened in faith because I understand that I am not alone.

...and *Venceslav, 19 years old*

For me Medjugorje is a special place because Mary is present here. Every year I say to myself that I don't want to go back, but then my Mother calls me and each time she prepares something special for me. In a few weeks time I'm going to enter a convent of premonstratensian monks, and it was in Medjugorje that my vocation matured: something special happened that attracted me to the Eucharist, strengthening my faith in this sacrament.

From Poland

Krystyna, 15 years old

I came to Medjugorje for the first time because I wanted to experience God and to be new. I want to come back next year too because I felt God here in my heart and my heart was filled!

I never in my life saw people singing, dancing and smiling like this...when I go back to Poland I want to speak to my friends about Medjugorje.

I was also on Krizevac at five in the morning, when I got to the foot of the cross I started crying because I felt so happy, so full, so grateful to God...I cannot describe it, but I think that that was the most significant moment of this experience.

From Belgium

Jean Bruno, 17 years old

Here I understood how important it is to knowingly choose joy...I decided that from today onwards I will dedicate more time to prayer. The people you meet here are so beautiful because they are constantly smiling.

From Spain

Jose Maria, 37 years old

Here you breathe in peace, you feel an air that is brimming with spirituality. The festival only lasts a few days but the Virgin changes you on the inside in an inexplicable way. Here many "coincidences" occur to many people: it is the Virgin who manages all of this, there is no other explanation for it!

From Hungary

Kludia, 30 years old

For me faith is something important, here in Medjugorje I feel that God and Our Lady love me, they are present. At the moment I still haven't fully understood what this meeting means for me, as is often the case, I think that later on I will come to a deeper understanding of what I experienced during these days.

From Austria

Conny, 28 years old

This is the fourth time I've come here, the first time I came here I was 8 years old. I really love the youth festival, despite the heat; I particularly appreciate the testimonies, because they talk about real life and they are a help for each one of us who find it difficult to return to daily life after this experience.

I came here with a special question in my heart regarding my life and I hope that I have been given an answer...and so I occasionally withdraw to reflect and pray. When I return home I want to be more diligent in prayer and I also want to start fasting, because up to now fasting hasn't been easy for me.

From Brazil

Jonas, 23 years old

This is a wonderful experience, here faith is alive and you can feel Mary's presence! What happened during these days is truly a miracle: many young people from several countries who experience the beauty of the faith that makes us all brothers, all sons of one Father and one Mother, Mary!

The testimonies help us to see how Jesus can act in everyone's life, but in particular, I experienced the Mass like never before, you can see and feel a living Church that loves and that goes forward, that goes in the same direction, towards Christ.

What I will take away from Medjugorje with me is the presence of Mary who accompanies me and helps me to grow and to transmit my faith.

From Slovakia

Michaela, 28 years old.

This is the fourth time that I've come to Medjugorje. When leaving here I always carry a great feeling of peace with me. I hope that this peace might remain in me, in such a way as to allow me to see all the problems that I've had and that I will have in the future in a different light...

From Ireland

Francis, 20 years old

It's fantastic to see so many young people coming together from different parts of the world! Among the numerous priests that are here there are also several young ones. Here everyone has the possibility of reflecting on their own vocation.

It is beautiful to be able to smile freely at everyone. From today onwards I'll make the effort to really improve my life, I'll try to have more respect for everyone, to be more present for my family and also to consume less alcohol. Among the most beautiful things that I'll remember about this experience there is the adoration and the Mass, but also the Family into which I was welcomed: they were so kind...in their simplicity they gave me so much!

From Croatia

Natalia, 22 years old

I came here because each time I feel greatly touched upon seeing young people together and upon feeling this communion. The most beautiful thing here is meeting other people. For the moment I'm studying theology and working for a Catholic newspaper, in the future I'd like to work as a journalist.

From Germany

Anne, 21 years old

The festival is simply wonderful, there's an indescribable atmosphere here! You experience so many moving moments here, and there are many things that urge you to reflect. There is an incredible sense of peace, which words cannot describe!

I'm sure that I'll take away many things from here with me, and I also want to share them with my friends, specially this atmosphere, this love, and this sense of security...

From Lithuania

Rev. Zydrunas, 33 years old

I came here to accompany my group of pilgrims and I've had a wonderful experience. This is a marvellous and holy place! I feel that from today I'll love Mary much more than I did in the past!

From the Islands of Reunion

Severine, 21 years old

I actually didn't want to come here, but then my friends insisted... Mary is wonderful! Our Lady has done many things for me and for my family.

To see all these young people is extraordinary and exciting, it has transformed my life. I believe that each one of us experiences particularly black periods in our faith and in our relationship with God... Coming here I feel as though my faith is growing. In Medjugorje I tried to pray the rosary and I discovered it's immense value... Yes, from now on I'll recite it every day, I'm so happy to have discovered it!

From Italy

Andrea, 22 years old

I came to know about Medjugorje through a friend, I already knew what had happened and I felt that all the people who came here came back changed and said that only coming here in person you can understand what Medjugorje is.

Everything that I had heard about this place has been confirmed fully and even exceeded; here nothing is tiring, not even spending four hours praying is tiring, you breathe in a sense of joy. For we young people who often complain about the superficiality of people our age, here we can find all the answers and a sense of encouragement that exceeds all expectations. I hope that this type of church might come about in my country, with strong consecrated people who truly live for God.

and Brother Francesco, 25 years old

Here I received my call to consecrated life, during a youth festival that took place many years ago. For me this event is a very important occasion for grace. Being among many people my age brings about an indescribable sense of gratitude within me towards God, along with the desire to offer up my whole life so that God might act within other young people as he did in me. When I said my yes within my heart, when I agreed to be entirely His for my whole life, I experienced his infinite love like never before, my heart was filled with a sense of joy that I had never ever experienced before.

The programme was more or less the same as it always is, with testimonies during the day, then a crescendo of grace with the rosary and the customary pause in silence at six forty p.m. – the moment of the apparition of Mary – then mass and adoration of the Eucharist.

At dawn on the sixth of August each year, mass is celebrated on the summit of Krizevac meaning that the festival doesn't end with us all going to bed happy and satisfied in the evening, but rather, coming down from the mountain at dawn with Jesus in our hearts, ready to leave and to bring him to all the countries throughout the world.

F.C.



The pathway of joy

You might notice that young people are constantly seeking it, but they usually make huge blunders, mistaking fun, euphoria and unfortunately very often "the buzz", for what starts out as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, that is, a sense of deep and peaceful joy, capable of appeasing the blows of life and transforming the inevitable bitter pills that our daily life serves us up, into sweets.

In his letters, **Romano Guardini**, one of the 20th century's most important representatives of Catholic philosophy and theology, (especially as far as pedagogy is concerned), pointed out the need for young people to have self-control and a good balance between authority and freedom in a creative obedience of the conscience. The common denominators of his writings are meditation on the Mystery of God and the figure of Jesus Christ as the true and unique essence of Christianity.

In one of his books, "*Lettere sull'autoformazione*", he speaks directly to young people in order to help them to distinguish joy, a vital feeling for man, from the tangle of countless other sensations produced by fleeting pleasures. Let's hear what he has to say:

"Dear young people, we want to ensure that our heart becomes happy. Not cheerful, which is something completely different. Being cheerful is an external, noisy fact and it soon disappears. Joy on the other hand is experienced within the soul, it is silent and deeply rooted. It is the sister of seriousness; where there is one there is also the other.

I'd like to talk to you about the happy joy towards which it is possible to open up a pathway...

Everyone can possess it in the same way, whatever their nature. It must also be independent from good or bad hours, from vigorous or worn-out days.

This joy does not come from money, from a comfortable lifestyle, or from being worshipped by people, although it can be influenced by all of these things. It comes from noble things: from intense work; from a kind word that you felt or that you were able to say; from courageously opposing someone's mistake, or from having a clear vision of an important issue.

And this too is not yet the true source of joy, which is rooted even more deeply, that is, in the heart itself, in its most remote intimacy. God dwells there and **God himself is the source of true joy**. It makes us entirely open and clear. It makes us rich, strong, independent from exterior events. What happens outside can no longer touch us, if we are happy on the inside. He who is happy puts everything in the right place.

What is beautiful, he alone sees it in its true splendour. He recognises difficulties and obstacles as trials meant to measure his strength, he faces into them courageously and conquers them. He can give generously to other men and will not be impoverished due to this. But he also has purity of heart, in order to be able to receive in the right way.

Now, if joy comes from God and God dwells in our hearts, why don't we feel it? Why are we so often sad, discouraged, in bad form? Why is the source from which it flows forth not clear?

How do we open up the pathway to joy? Every time that we say sincerely to the Lord: "Lord, I want what you want" the pathway towards God's joy is open. And once we are willing to think constantly in this manner, if our most intimate desire is sincere and continuously aimed at God, then we will feel happy, whatever is happening in the outside world. Of course, this consecration to God must already have something within it, which is united with joy: it cannot be forced, distressed or mistrustful. It must be free and courageous. Full of happy faith, we must say: "Almighty God, whatever you want, I want too". **It is therefore a question of struggling to assimilate ourselves totally with God's will.**

But we also have a body. We cannot forget this. When man is feeling down what does the body do? It falls down. But if man is happy, the body rises. This is the joy of the body: an energetic form of behaviour. This must be the exercise: to remain upright. With our head held high, our face fully visible, our shoulders back. Nimble in our gait and when we sit down, not resting unnecessarily. But we must be upright on the inside, not only on the outside. The body always wants to let itself go; and it pushes down on itself and everything becomes obtuse and burdensome. And so we must be upright within also. And when we are feeling down, it is then that we must keep ourselves upright. Strongly upright on the inside and on the outside: therefore also within our souls".

Editorial staff

GRACE, a continuous becoming...

Let us try, if we can, to trap the wind. If we can, let us try to block the flow of a river along the banks or let us prevent the sea from creating waves...

It is impossible! And so why does man often try to put limits on grace, given that in its intimate essence, it is the creating force of constantly new things?

Grace flows forth from God's breast incessantly, involving all things that it meets in a continuous process of *becoming*. During these twenty-seven years, Medjugorje has also found itself involved in a pathway of spiritual growth that requires the continuous capacity on our part to allow ourselves to be surprised. In fact, those who attempt to immobilise the grace that flows forth from the Immaculate Heart of Mary in that place, even only through a definition, a way of doing something, a "*that's always been the way things were*" or "*that's the way things should be*".....is making a mistake, because they will only be pushed by the need to possess grace for their own interest, to use it to their own advantage, certainly not to respect it.

There is always the danger of seizing God's "things" and keeping them in our ideas, as though in beautiful little glass containers that are nice to look at. In this way we risk transforming what is living into objects to be purchased, like those lined up in countless souvenir shops "they have a mouth and they don't speak, they have ears and they don't hear, they have nostrils and they don't smell..." (psalm 113b).

Some time ago Pope Benedict said that "man knows that he is made for an infinite destination and due to this he feels a sense of anxiety to embark on a continuous search, which constantly goes further way, beyond what has already been reached". Let us leave the Virgin free then to express the plan that God outlined in Medjugorje and that greatly surpasses our knowledge or expectations. She will only be able to do this if we open ourselves up to new things, without being afraid to leave old pathways that have led us to understand up to a certain point.

Let us open ourselves up in order to proceed; only in the measure of our trusting opening and willingness, will God be able to point new steps out to us and reveal to us the greatness of the plan that his Mother is implementing.

S.C.

*If you keep silent,
keep silent by love:
if you speak,
speak by love;
if you correct,
correct by love;
if you pardon,
pardon by love;
let love be rooted in you,
and from the root nothing
but good can grow*

SAINT AUGUSTINE

"I lift my eyes up to the hills, from whence comes my help?"

(psalm 121)

by Stefania Consoli

You arrive in Medjugorje passing through a constantly growing number of buildings amassed along the main road and the surrounding areas, they risk suffocating that church that has been loved throughout the world since it became the "Gospa's parish". Despite the concrete agglomerates that offend the warm, rocky tones of Herzegovina with their shrill colours, your gaze feels drawn like a magnet upwards, towards the mountain, which carries a large white cross on its summit like a hoisted flag. In the sunshine it even seems bright, but in the light of faith it is resplendent, brilliant. That standard up there on the summit speaks to us about Him, about the Crucifix, the only true source of salvation.

There is no use in seeking out others. For this reason our blessed Mother never stops pointing it out. Mary knows that this is the right road that leads us to God, to the complete fulfilment of his promises: only the love that was crucified and offered up to the Father can lift up our life, not only our gaze.

Attracted by that high ground above Medjugorje, we immediately realise that in order to reach it we need to climb. We need to leave the comfortable roads and accept the challenge, moved only by the desire to arrive. *Krizevac*, which gets its name from the cross, proposes this itinerary every day, to tell us that along with our feet, our soul too must be willing to embark on that uphill road and to accept the sacrifice of the bristly and impassable road, leaving the flat, well known things in the valley.

Those who are used to climbing mountains know that the destination is not always visible, it is often obscured by spurs of rock that jut out all of a sudden. And so we need to embark on this journey with a sense of blind trust, knowing that sooner or later the view will open up. And while the body challenges the climb, you might feel that you are floating, suspended in the emptiness that threatens you from underneath: you are no longer on the ground nor are you at the summit. The risk of dizziness is always lying in wait, only a firm grip of the rope reassures you and keeps panic at bay.

This is what happens to the soul that sets out on the mountain of divine Goodness, on the summit of which stands an empty cross, because the Lord is risen and He walks alongside you; He guides you along the pathway. But that's not all. He is also the rope that keeps our step steady when the emptiness of faith threatens



us, when we feel that we have left certainty for uncertainty, when trials come like storms and try to see us lose our way and give up on our intention.

He is the destination that is sometimes hidden from view; but not to the tenacious and persevering soul who discovers Him in the smallest things, in life's tiniest events, beyond the veil of difficulties.

High ground like altars

He once pointed out a mountain in Galilee to the disciples that he was going to use as a "trampoline" for the Heavens, the day of his Ascension to the Father. A mountain that like an altar, elevated the Mystery revealed; then with the body, today in the Eucharist.

On a mountain he said blessed to those who were living the gospel; thousands of people were listening to him on that natural ambo that re-echoed the Word. On a mountain once again, all alone, Jesus went to pray, and then on Mount Tabor he revealed himself transfigured to the wonder-struck eyes of the apostles, as in a monstrosity that invited them to adore him. Lastly, on a mountain he committed the most extreme deed: on Calvary, the paten and chalice of his loving sacrifice.

Areas of high ground like altars, strips of land that rise up out of the flatland, as though attracted by a mysterious force that brings them close to the Heavens. Lungs dilated in the calm breath of the land. These are the areas of high ground where the Lord calls us to walk to "bring happy annunciations" (Is 52, 7-10); he invites us to have the legs of the gazelle that climb over clefts in an agile manner and clamber up on a high to have an overview of the reality of daily life: only in this way are the details that appear gigantic and that frighten us reduced in size.

Jesus attracts us to the high rocks of his Heart; He himself is an obstacle for hypocrites and he is the builder of his own Church on Simon, who became *Peter*.

"Look at him and you will be radiant, your faces shall not be confused" (psalm 33). The psalm says it and Mary repeats it in Medjugorje. Every invitation of hers, every word, shows this pathway: the pathway of Easter, an unconditional delivery to Jesus, the infallible guide who leads us to the Father, through the trials of the offertory and of mortification, he gives us a taste of the inebriation of a splendid altitude, that of the Resurrection. We must not be afraid of climbing up. □

THE OFFERING AS A MISSION

All that Christian life gives us and asks us for is to stay where God puts us, so that our life might be a gift. For this reason, not remaining in our place and choosing a place that we decide for ourselves, always with excellent and noble justifications, is not so much a lack of discipline: it is a shortcoming as regards the gift of life, a lack of love, a shortcoming as regards “the greatest love” (John 15, 13). How often do we favour independent generosity over the humble place of the greatest love!

This is the conscience that Claudel expresses in the Annunciation to Mary: “Holiness is not being lapidated in Paganism or kissing a leper on the mouth, but doing the will of God, with readiness, it is about remaining in our place, or climbing higher and higher” (Prologue).

A life truly offered is always taken from God, even when it is left in its place, in its not very splendid place. A life offered totally is always found in the place that God chooses for it, even if it does not “move”. In fact, the fullness of our life, holiness, comes about when God takes us, no matter how He does so. If God leaves us in a situation that we would prefer to flee from, this means that He has put us in this situation, that this situation is the place chosen by God for us. If the heart remains open in offering itself, all the circumstances of daily life become the place towards which we are sent, they become the land of our mission, especially if we would prefer to flee from these circumstances.

The Virgin Mary always remained where God put her, without ever expressing her preferences. I have no doubt that Mary would have preferred to follow Jesus up close during the years of his public life. But Jesus did not take her with Him. Only on Calvary, Mary found her place near Jesus. Following this, she had a place at the Last Supper with the Apostles to wait for and experience the Pentecost. But it was never she who decided it. Her constant decision, her free choice was to offer her life. She made her life available to God, in a constant gift of her life to God’s freedom. I think of St. Paul when he exclaims: “I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9, 22): this is a formula of offering of life. God gives us this freedom, this possibility of wanting the gift of our life, this choice to make our whole life available to the salvation of others. Because it is this sacrifice that fulfils the sense of our life, and therefore its fullness. Christ has shown us that God is made in this way, that God is this, and we cannot imagine and find another fullness of life that is not the gift of life, the sacrifice of our life for everyone. It is a paradox: what my life fulfils, what makes my life truly alive, is the sacrifice of life, the loss of my life for everything, for everyone.

The law of the fullness of life, is to love by offering yourself, to give life by offering it. It is our fullness because this is how God is, because Christ experienced this alone, always and constantly, in Bethlehem,

in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, in the manger, at home, on the streets and in the public squares, on the Cross. This is the secret of his Beauty, of his attraction to everyone, his “sweet smell”: the gift of his life through offering himself to the Father for us. This is the beauty of Christ that attracts us, not with an aesthetic attractiveness but because in Him we perceive the full realisation of our humanity, the living model of the fullness of our human life.

When Jesus says: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself” (John 12, 32), he speaks of this beauty of the gift of his life. What attracts all men to Christ is the Cross, his life which is given completely, the supreme realisation of our humanity. Abandoning ourselves to this lure of Christ, to this total beauty of Christ, is our mission in the world.

The beauty that attracts us to Christ is the Eucharist, because it is there that Jesus constantly “loves us and gives himself for us, offering himself to God in sacrifice of sweet scent”. And what is our place in this eucharistic beauty of Christ? It is the offering of ourselves with Him, it is the offertory of the bread and wine that we are, of the earth and the work that we are, therefore of our real, human existence, as it is. It is through the offering of life that we recall this beauty, that we immortalize it and irradiate it in and with our lives.

“Do this in memory of me”: recalling Christ who was given up for us means offering; it means keeping the presence of Christ in our lives, which attracts the whole of Humanity to Him, who saves the whole universe. We become instruments of Christ, who attracts all men to Himself to save them, to give them the fullness of life.

We must not fear the persecution of the world, because it is not persecution that eliminates Christianity. But rather, we must fear losing this memory, we must be afraid of forgetting to offer our lives. It is the oblivion of Christ’s offertory, therefore in its attractive beauty, that must instil fear in us, not persecution, nor the fact that it is or it becomes a little flock. Forgetting to offer life as Christ did, is much more serious, much more dangerous. In fact, this means that our freedom is no longer attracted by the true beauty of the Lord and therefore no longer allows the work of God’s freedom in the world, which is the work of Salvation.

There is an expression in St. Luke’s gospel, where Jesus sends the disciples out into the world, that we should feel as our mission before the whole of our existence, and before the world that does not love the Church: “Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10,3).

Being lambs among wolves does not mean being weak, naive, candid, remissive. Being lambs means being offered, being an offertory to God in the world. And this means that, whatever happens, even when the wolf wounds and devours us, our freedom always allows God’s freedom to implement his plan through our life and our death, as it did through the life and death of Jesus. And so, it is once again Easter, the Resurrection and Salvation that have the last word on the world and on history.

But there is a danger when we speak about offertories: that of conceiving the

offertory of our life as a form of piety. The offertory of life is not only a form of piety. It is a gift of our whole being, a form of “being there” of our whole person. In the measure in which it takes us completely, the offertory is not only a form of piety, but a whole life, a whole pathway, a whole story. To experience the offertory of life like Christ, I need my whole life and not only certain times or “religious” and “spiritual” aspects of my life.

Now there is an objective manner of the total offertory of life, an objective measure of the totality with which we offer ourselves to Christ as He to whom we are attracted towards our fullness: it is the manner in which we belong to the community, to the Church, to others. Belonging is the fire that consumes the offertory of our whole person through the fertility of the gift of our life. When Paul says that he became “everything for all men”, he is talking about this sense of belonging: “to belong wholly” to all others

Belonging to others prevents the offertory, the gift of life, from being our own project, that is, a way of fulfilling ourselves, rather than allowing ourselves to be fulfilled by Christ who attracts us to Him.

The company of the Church that God gives us, if it loves the fertility and freedom of our life, must help us, provoke us and accompany us in this, with all its mercy, without being afraid of our weaknesses, our meanness and our sins, because all of our misery is also part of the “whole” that Christ gives us to offer up for everyone, of the “whole” to which Christ wants to give fulfilment “to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1,6).

Taken from the report by *Fr. Mauro-G. Lepori*
Cistercian Abbot of Hautrive

Benedickt XVI

from *Angelus* - 31 august 2008

If, to save us, the Son of God had to suffer and die on the Cross, it was certainly not by a cruel design of the heavenly Father. The reason is the gravity of the illness from which he came to heal us: it was such a serious, mortal disease that it required all his Blood. Indeed, it was with his death and Resurrection that Jesus defeated sin and death and re-established God’s lordship. Yet the battle is not over. Evil exists and resists in every generation, as we know, in our day too (...).

In order to bring the work of salvation fully to completion, the Redeemer continues to associate to himself and his mission men and women who are prepared to take up their cross and follow him. Consequently, just as for Christ carrying the cross was not an option but a mission to be embraced for love, so it is for Christians too. In our world today, where the forces that divide and destroy seem to dominate, Christ does not cease to offer to all his clear invitation: anyone who wants to be my disciple must renounce his own selfishness and carry the cross with me.

Let us invoke the help of the Blessed Virgin who followed Jesus first and to the very end on the way of the Cross. May she help us to walk in the Lord’s footsteps with determination, to experience from this moment, even in trial, the glory of the Resurrection.

The pathway of Echo

The managers of Echo of Mary and the various translators met up at the end of August, as usual in Medjugorje, to live an experience of communion and revision, with the intention of also verifying the editorial and spiritual slant of Echo.

After prayer meetings, sharing and reflection in the light of the Queen of Peace, the conclusion that was reached touched on the following points:

1. Above all, Echo is called to be used at the service of the profound truth of the grace of Medjugorje. From this comes the need to avoid letting ourselves be influenced by fear, insecurities and personal opinions that may risk compromising the identity of the message itself.
2. The foundation of the grace of Medjugorje lies in offering life through the Immaculate Heart of Mary to whom we are called to answer with unconditional willingness.
3. Echo of Mary cannot fail to support this spirit and its mission cannot but be at the service of such grace, by means of the faithful translation, in each of our lives, of the spirit of Medjugorje, beyond all possible conditioning and prejudice.

For these reasons, as a conclusion to these days of communion, spent in the joy and peace that we believe flow forth from the light of Mary, we wish to proceed in free and faithful service to the Church and in the plans of grace that the Holy Virgin grants to this time.

The managers of Echo

Echo fully relies on readers' donations.

To all who have been instruments of Providence for Echo, enabling us to continue to help Mary reach her children, goes our heartfelt thanks, whom we remember especially in prayer and at Holy Mass.

If you desire a written response for your donation, please kindly request it. May God reward you and your loved ones onehundredfold!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HELLO! My name is Davide, I'm 24 years old and I live in the province of Treviso. I am a former drug addict and during the last year I had started to take drugs again... I felt a strong calling within myself that was urging me to go to Medjugorje although nobody had ever spoken to me about it! I left for the youth festival from the 1st to the 6th of August, with my faith quenched and there I was struck by what Medjugorje is and therefore what Our Lady is!

I wasn't aware of "Echo of Mary" and I

found it by chance during a moment of spiritual dejection – but I wouldn't call it "by chance" – I came across the July-August edition and upon reading the first page I cried because it was as though it was addressed to me and to the sensations that I felt and that I still feel now. I'd like to thank all those who work on the publication of Echo of Mary and I'd invite you to read my testimony on Medjugorje also because I wrote it and up to a short time ago I had little or nothing to do with Our Lady or Christ! Your commitment regarding the distribution of this publication must be difficult at times, but your work is not in vain!! Thank you.

Davide's testimony occupies no less than ten pages of burning enthusiasm and love, which it would be impossible to relate here in full. We'll get back to it in the next issue, but in the meantime we'll dedicate some space to his initial considerations, that bear witness to how young people know perfectly well how to distinguish between what is false and illusory and what really gives them true happiness.

Narcotics are not a drug, MARY is!

"I'd like to bring my testimony to as many Christians as possible because it is not only mine, but it is the testimony of Our Lady of Medjugorje who acted in me! I feel the need to do this so that people might come to know that Mary loves us all equally and that she truly exists! She is not a myth of the church: She is our Mother!

First of all I'd like to say that I left without anyone having invited me or having referred to me how beautiful that place was. All I knew was that there were visionaries there who see Our Lady and that's it. I can clearly say that the Queen of Peace called me! I actually didn't even know who I was going with and I wasn't aware of the programme. I threw myself into it without asking myself too many questions because I felt that I needed to go there. There can be no other explanation...it was a calling!

I am not a "holy" young man and in my life I've tried everything that the world offers, and unfortunately every type of drug... Given that by now I've tried everything I must say that today's society wants to fill in the emptiness in ourselves with ridiculous and senseless things! Even if they do give us joy, this is momentary, if not instantaneous happiness! The happiness that is given to us by God is durable and it is repeated day after day. To ensure that this happiness lasts, we must cultivate faith in Christ and never tire of praying and living as He wishes us to. If we let go even a little we can very easily lose our way and it is not easy to believe in God: it is easier not to believe, in this way we free ourselves of all responsibility and we live as we wish, perhaps happy but free of all obligations. I am saying this because I have experienced it on my own skin and I have to thank the Lord if on more than one occasion he gave me his hand to lift myself up!

In the times we live in the Devil has never had such devastating power: divorces, abortions, drugs, crimes of all kinds. He

wasn't even this powerful during the Nazi-Fascist era! The people who are most affected are young people who are born and grow up with a heart of gold but who then only too often stray far from the right values.... During these times we often hear people saying: There is no God! This is the most terrible thing that a human being can say. And so who created this marvellous world? And who created man? Who gave us love, the sense of forgiveness, compassion, charity towards our weaker neighbour etc...? If we don't ask ourselves these questions then we want to flee from reality!

For our entire existence we cannot run away from reality, we need to ask ourselves some questions: Why do I exist? What am I doing here in this world? If we don't have the anchor that is Christ, then everything is in vain, because life loses all sense of value and is meaningless. If we don't have a relationship with Christ we end up worshipping the money God and satisfying our bad habits. I experienced this personally, satisfying our own bad habits does not lead to a great sense of happiness, but rather, it makes us become more and more eager to possess things and to satisfy our craziest desires! We can only obtain inner peace with God!

When at the age of twenty we feel as though we are seventy then something is not right and we need to give ourselves some time to meditate on what we are doing wrong, or find a solution; but this world turns too fast and therefore we often abandon the idea! I found this time for myself by going to that extraordinary place that is Medjugorje where Our Lady reigns all over!"

(to be continued)

Philip from Mauritius: "We live in a tiny little island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. We are very grateful to receive Echo of Mary, it is very much appreciated by our approximately 750 readers. We love Gospa very much and we try to experience the messages that She gives us in Medjugorje. May the Blessed Virgin bless you!"

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The Lord bless thee and keep thee! May He show His face to thee, and have mercy on thee! And may He give thee peace!

don Alberto

Italy, 8 september 2008