

Our Lady's message of 25 Oct. 1993:

Dear Children, Over these years I have been inviting you to pray and put into practice what I tell you, but you live my messages very little. You talk but you do not put into practice: that is why, my dear children, that this war is lasting so long. I invite you to open yourselves up to God and live with God in your heart, by doing good and bearing witness to my messages.

I love you and wish to protect you from every evil, but you do not want this! Dear children, I cannot help you if you do not live God's Commandments, if you do not live Holy Mass, if you do not reject sin. I invite you to become apostles of love and goodness. In this world without peace, be testimonies of God and His love, and God will bless you and give you what you ask for. Thank you for having responded to my call.

I cannot help you if you do not live my messages!

The message that Mary offers us, gratuitously, should cause feelings of contrition in us, for the mediocrity and hypocrisy of our response are brought to light before the depth of Her love and the seriousness of Her motherly concern.

We correspond to Her love so weakly - and falsely - that the evil gets the better of us in our lives. **Love died out** and hearts turned cold are the **real cause** of all the tragedies and the inconceivable evil of this **monstrous war** (the 1st time She mentions it) **that lasts so long** - a war that we could have stopped, that by now goes practically unobserved by our miserable forgetfulness.

So much deafness makes us think of Mary's first messages: *You have forgotten that with prayer and fasts you can stop wars and suspend natural laws!* He who forgets does not love and does not keep watch. Mary here stresses the superficiality of those who **keep on talking, without living anything of what She has said.**

Not living Her messages: this should make us search our consciences, seriously. It would be a lie to think we're OK or worse, disagree with what She reveals. All these years of patient concern on Her part, and chatter and judgements on our part, tell of the grave consequence of human presumption, that puts us in opposition to God.

Only being open to God's will and profound personal conversion can remove us from all the evil that threatens us. The invitation to be open and **live with God in our heart** shows particular concern: Our Lady would like our love for God to become deeper; that we cultivate this love and protect it so it may become our prime interest, and be light for our lives.

Falling back continuously on our bad habits, our personal opinions and justifications, keeps the door open to the Evil One and his tentacles. Profound attention to every word of God rouses in us continuous conversion that strengthens our weaknesses.

*This is the symbol of protection
with which Mary covers us*

Our Blessed Mother's desire is that we let ourselves be guided by God's love and thus protected from all evil. The love of God is revealed in Jesus, Who gives Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist, in **the Mass**, so that our lives can be conformed to Him, through offering ourselves to Him, offering ourselves like Him. This protects us against all evil and assures we are given all the help of His grace and His Mother.

We can't listen to this message and keep on doing what we want. We can't hear **Mary saying She wants to protect us**, and then throw ourselves into the arms of Satan again through our **personal sin**. We can't pretend that Mary has not spoken for each and every one of us; unless in the deep of our hearts, with all our will, we have already decided to belong to evil and have no wish to leave deceit and falsehoods behind us.

Our Lady calls our world **a world without peace**. Unless we obey **God's Commandments**, humbly, joyfully and thankfully; unless we accept Jesus' merciful offering of becoming a little like Him, then truly, **peace will be far** from our hearts. All we'll have is sin, anxiety, agitation and fear.

When Mary's invitation is liberally accepted, and we let Her guide us, our lives become continual praise, peace and joy and manifest the beauty of living and being with the Lord. Being with Him, and in Him, together with our brothers and sisters, is the greatest blessing one could wish, it's being in possession of the most noble things on this earth.

Niki

MEDJUGORJE IS CHURCH

Our Lady did not come to found an umpteenth movement, but to give new breath to all mankind. Her apparitions are a gift for the entire Church, for they teach us to live our faith in whatever condition and place we are in. In fact, no one thinks of Lourdes or Fatima as being something exclusive. It's the same for Medjugorje.

All ecclesial experiences should be confronted with Mary's presence on the earth, capable of making all things new: life in the parish, in groups, in the liturgy and charitable works. Those who live in the Catholic Church, whatever their charisma may be, need to be in continual filial communion with the Mother of God.

Thus, we do not work for Medj., but under Our Lady's guidance, we work for the Church. Prayer groups are Church who pray for the Church, and nothing else. That is why we do not have our own particular line, only that of the Church. She sets out the rhythm of growth for her children in the liturgy, the feasts, in the imitation of models of Christian people. It is on this line that we try to help our readers.

November: Mary's Feasts

On the **21st** the liturgy celebrates the **Presentation of Mary** to the Temple, when at the age of 3 Her parents offered Her to God and She went up to the Temple where She remained, wholly devoted to the house of God. It is an anticipation of the offering to God of the whole Church, in particular those people who follow in Her steps and consecrate themselves to God. That is why the **consecrated souls** usually profess their vows, or renew them, on this feast day.

We commemorate the **Miraculous Medal** of the Immaculate Conception on the **27th**. Her image appeared to *St Catherine Labouré* in 1830 in Paris, surrounded by symbols which are reproduced on the *Medal*. The medal was coined because it was expressly desired by Our Lady Herself. She promised great graces to those who would wear it and invoke Her with trust. It is an authentic **catechism**, proposed by Her to be known, meditated upon and practised.

The serpent stands for the real presence of Satan, the globe it is wrapped around stands for the world in decline. Mary standing on the globe, and the rays that come from her hands, indicate Her Mediation in the work of salvation. The invocation: *Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us for we turn to you*, is an expression of Her Immaculate Conception.

The "M" interlaced by the cross represents Mary's indispensable role as Mother of Christ in the work of Redemption, to which the two Hearts below are tied. Jesus' Heart is crowned by thorns, Mary's is pierced by a sword. The twelve stars celebrate the Queen of the Apostles and Her twelve glories.

The apparitions of Paris prepared for the great events of **Lourdes**. *St Bernadette*, who wore the medal, said: "Our Lady of the grotto appeared to me the way She is on this medal."

«Every day try to meet with the countenance of the saints to find comfort in their sermons.» (Didachè)

In this issue we have made frequent calls on the need to know how to look with faith and simplicity upon the gifts that the Lord, in His infinite mercy, sends us. For they instil in us strength and courage for the difficult journey of purification. Visible signs for all to see, like luminous wakes of God's goodness and the glory of heaven, are the saints.

If we observe and listen to the Pope we learn of the importance in Christian life of looking upon and invoking all the saints, who were given to us as models. The Pope teaches us that they are **a way to heaven** (cf. Echo 106, page 3). We need to confront ourselves with the virtues of those who, schooled by the Queen of Saints, loved the things of heaven above all else.

11 November: ST. MARTIN

He was born in 316 in Pannonia (what is now Hungary) to pagan parents. His father was a military officer in Pavia where Martin as a boy came to know Christianity. Martin was later enlisted as an imperial guard.

Martin's charity - During a campaign of the Roman army one very cold winter the troops guided by Martin reached the port of Amiens in France. A man, trembling with cold, was begging but nobody was paying him any attention, so Martin went to him. Since he had no money left, he took out his sword and cut his mantle in two and gave one half to the beggar. The Lord was so pleased with Martin's gesture that He appeared to him the night after, clothed in the half of the mantle Martin had given to the beggar. Jesus told the angels who had accompanied Him: *Martin, still a catechumen, covered me with this garment.*

Martin had a slave as his attendant, but he treated him like a brother, he even cleaned his garments. This gesture, more significant than giving up half of his mantle, shows the disposition of the Christians in the IV century.

He renounces military service - During the campaign against the Germans, the emperor Julian had wanted to reward his soldiers prior to the battle. He called them one by one. Martin thought it was a good opportunity to tell of his profound desire to give up the army for religious life. (In those years the Church was not in favour of military life because it exposed Christians to the use of violence, and men who had taken up arms were not allowed to take religious orders). The emperor accused Martin of wanting to desert out of fear and not faith. The servant of God thus replied: "If you think my conduct is due to cowardice, I tell you that I am ready to go to the front tomorrow, disarmed except for the sign of the holy cross, and with my trust in it, face the barbarians."

The Emperor imprisoned him, then sent him, disarmed, to the enemies. One morning a German embassy arrived unexpectedly at the Emperor's camp to ask for peace and subject themselves to the Emperor. This was seen as a sign of God's intervention in defence of Martin.

Martin's spiritual guide - Once he had left military life he returned home and converted his mother. In Milan he fought against the Arians, and for this was sent away. He went to Liguria where he learnt that his teacher, St Hilary of Poitiers, had been exiled. So he went to the island of

Gallinara for Lenten penance to obtain his liberation. Hilary was freed and Martin returned to Poitiers, where under Hilary's guidance, he withdrew from the world to live a contemplative life in what is now the oldest monastery in Europe: Ligugé. Disciples, miracles, conversions multiplied.

Bishop of Tours - 10 years later: the city of Tours is without a bishop. With the excuse that someone needs healing, he is called to Tours, and made bishop. As bishop, together with his monks, he begins the great job of converting the Gauls and evangelizing the rural districts, till then still not evangelized. That is why St Martin became the protector of the countryside.

He was a good battler, untiring missionary and defender of the poor and persecuted. He was despised by the nobles, mocked at by the mundane and was unpopular with some clergymen who found this demanding bishop inconvenient. During his 27 years as Bishop of Tours, he remained serene amid opposition and persecution. He was falsely accused by a priest named Brizio, but said: "If Jesus put up with Judas, why can't I put up with Brizio?"

At the age of 80, sick and exhausted, he underwent a long journey to bring peace to the Church of Candes, torn apart by dissension. With peace restored, he felt his senses leaving him, but the brothers implored: "Why do you leave us, Father? As you depart avid wolves will enter the flock!" He replied: "Lord, if I am still necessary for your people, I will not refuse the effort." *He remained till his last breath with his eyes and hands turned up to heaven, praying unceasingly.* He became the first patron saint of France.

The power of his prayers and fasts - He once asked the emperor, Valentinian I, who did not like Catholics, to grace some prisoners who had been condemned to die, but when the monarch refused to receive him, Martin began offering up prayers, mortifications and fasts. He remained one week dressed in hair-cloth, covered in ash and with nothing to eat. On the 7th day he went to court and found all the doors open right up to the Emperor's room. As soon as the emperor saw Martin he called out to the guards, but then he remained immobile, unable to utter a word. Once he had recovered, he humbled himself, affectionately embraced Martin and conceded everything he asked.

Despite his many occupations, his heart was never distracted; he was always aware of God's presence. He knew how to inspire in his disciples the same feelings that pervaded him so that Jesus Christ would enter their souls, and finding them worthy, would abide in them.

Saba

Sat. 16 October in the Vatican: **The Pope** received in private audience well-known **Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn**. They spoke about the events of the East, in particular Russia. Irina Alberti, a writer, was present and described their meeting as warm and friendly. She noticed a significant difference between them: "Solzhenitsyn tends to be pessimistic about the present-day world situation, whereas the Pope, who does not look through rose-coloured glasses, has the certainty that the Lord saves.

Though Solzhenitsyn has a profound faith, he does not have that same light of the Pope, which I'd call solar. I believe that the writer felt this. The commotion I read on his face when he came out from the meeting was like the reverberation of that light."

The Pope - a master for families

To the youth in Asti:

«BE EVANGELIZERS!»

The following lines, regarding the Pope's recent visit to Asti (northern Italy), were sent in by a young reader from that region.

The two days of his visit were very intense. During Holy Mass on Sunday 26 Sept. Msgr. G. Marelli was beatified (the founder of the Oblates of St Joseph in Asti). During the various meetings (with the religious, families and lastly the youth) the Holy Father repeatedly spoke of the concept of holiness to which each Christian must tend, and took the examples of those saints born in the land of Asti: St John Bosco, St Domenico Savio, Blessed Cottolengo and many other missionaries who left their homes to serve others.

During his meeting with the FAMILIES, he said: "The Church and the world today more than ever need married couples and families who generously let themselves be schooled by Christ. The many sad aspects of our time and the unprecedented forms of violence that mark it are ultimately explained by the closure of hearts to God's love. How urgent then, the task of believers, above all of Christian families, to restore to today's society the much needed anchoring of faith and love in the safe haven of God's word."

Pope assigns married couples with 2 tasks: **"From the Lord draw the right criteria for direction and discernment in every situation. Forcefully resist the divorce mentality that disrupts God's plan for marriage. Do not let into your homes that permissive culture which allows everything, even suppression of life.**

[Secondly] **be evangelizing communities, able to transmit and radiate the Gospel!** (...) The family is the fundamental cell of that larger society, and *its mission is irreplaceable.* We know from experience and tradition how much all of us owe to our family. We are indebted first and foremost to God, but also to our parents who gave us life and raised us. Human life must be reared not only in the physical and biological dimension, but also in *the spiritual dimension.*

This is the irreplaceable evangelization that takes place in the family, and you must be the apostles, evangelizers and missionaries of your own families. **The domestic Church is irreplaceable.**"

On Sunday afternoon the Pope met the YOUTH: "Let us consider an encounter between a young man and Jesus: 2000 years ago a young man asked Him: *What must I do to have eternal life?* You share this young man's question; and I would like his question to be always present in your reflections and your prayers. My wish for you above all is that you never lose your existential perspective, this eternal life. We must measure our earthly, human and temporal affairs against eternal life. Like the young man, we must ask: *what must we do, today?* We must have a plan for this earthly life - and a plan to apply to this present moment. But to be well-founded, fitting, just, Gospel-orientated, it must always be measured against the perspective of eternal life. (...)

If we can bring together these 2 dimensions (eternal life and a programme for >>

So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48).

VERITATIS SPLENDOR

The Pope teaches: moral life in fidelity to God means happiness already here on earth.

Officially presented on the 5th October, the Holy Father's 10th Encyclical Letter is entitled *Veritatis Splendor* (the splendour of truth) and regards "certain fundamental questions of the Church's moral teaching."

Let it be clear that the Encyclical is not a code of laws or a list of precepts. As Card. Ratzinger explained in his presentation to the press: "faith is not mere theory, but a way (Acts 22:4). Faith includes morals, not just general ideals. It gives concrete directives for human life," because the commandment of love requires that we be conformed to Jesus. The Encyclical is ample and treats the question of morality right from its roots. Reading through *Veritatis Splendor* carefully, brings one to a profound reflection of self, almost like searching one's conscience.

In doing so we discover that the Commandments and the divine law are not at all a cage that imprisons freedom, but they become a spontaneous desire, needed to safeguard the gift of life of the Spirit given to us by the Lord. That makes reading this Encyclical important, and also because it is a unique text. In this issue we will consider only one of the themes proposed by the Pope; it is a central theme that helps us comprehend the real significance of moral life in a Christian life.

If you wish to be perfect ...

In Chapter I the Holy Father uses the example of the young rich man who asks Jesus: *Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?* (Mt 19:16) Jesus replied: *If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.* The young man replies that he has always kept them. The Pope continues: *«even though he is able to make this reply, even though he has followed the moral ideal seriously and generously from childhood, the rich young man knows that he is still far from the goal: before the person of Jesus he realizes that he is still lacking something.*

It is his awareness of this insufficiency that Jesus addresses in his final answer. Conscious of the young man's yearning for something greater, which would transcend a legalistic interpretation of the commandments, the Good Teacher invites him to enter upon the path of perfection: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21).

P.1 » temporal life) then undoubtedly your plan of life will be right. **So I hope you never lose the perspective of eternal life.**

In one respect, however, do not follow the young man of the Gospel, because he remained sad after Jesus' advice. Never be sad, but **be joyful!** This means following Jesus, doing what he asks of you. (...)

The Christian, the **young Christian, must love the Gospel challenges.** Before these Gospel challenges one must not be dismayed or overwhelmed by the spirit of this world, by secularism. On your witness, on your youthful evangelization, the future of humanity depends." (Valeria, 4 Oct.)

Obeying the Lord is true freedom

*Jesus' conversation with the young man helps us to grasp the conditions for the moral growth of man, who has been called to perfection: the young man, having observed all the commandments, shows that he is incapable of taking the next step by himself. To do so requires mature human freedom: "If you wish to be perfect;" and God's gift of grace: "Come, follow me." **Perfection demands that maturity in self-giving to which human freedom is called.***

*Jesus points out to the young man that the commandments are the first and indispensable condition for having eternal life; on the other hand, for the young man to give up all he possesses and to follow the Lord is presented as an invitation: "If you wish..." These words of Jesus reveal the particular dynamic of freedom's growth towards maturity, and at the same time they bear witness to the fundamental relationship between freedom and divine law. **Human freedom and God's law are not in opposition; on the contrary, they appeal one to the other. The follower of Christ knows that his vocation is to freedom.** "You were called to freedom," says St Paul, but adds: "only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another." (Gal 5:13)*

Those who live by the Spirit desire God's law

Those who live "by the flesh" experience God's law as a burden, and indeed as a denial or at least a restriction of their own freedom. On the other hand those who are impelled by love and "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), and who desire to serve others, find in God's Law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practise love as something freely chosen and freely lived out. Indeed, they feel an interior urge - a genuine necessity and no longer a form of coercion - not to stop at the minimum demands of the Law, but to live them in their fullness. This is a still uncertain and fragile journey as long as we are on earth, but it is one made possible by grace, which enables us to possess the full freedom of the children of God and thus to live our moral life in a way worthy of our sublime vocation as sons in the Son.»

As we can see, the Pope's discourse is extremely clear, and full of that light proper to what is written in sincerity of faith. From it, emerges a sense of positivity. Basically, the Holy Father is telling us that no effort or act of obedience is too burdensome when it means preserving communion with Christ to enjoy, already in this life, the fruits of redemption. John Paul II, in fact, also proposes **as an example the martyrs: exaltation of universal sanctity of God's law**, for nothing can be compared to fidelity to Jesus when one has understood the truth contained in the Gospel.

Reward of a Christian is eternal life

We wish to say no further. You cannot excessively comment an Encyclical; but just accept it with a sense of gratitude. What we have is a principal that must be our guide in our every choice regarding morality:

A Christian, with the grace of God invoked through prayer, is called to a commitment which at times can be heroic. It needs to be supported by the virtue of strength. As St Gregory the Great says, it is through this strength that a Christian is able to love even the difficulties that the world presents, in view of the eternal reward. M.

Invaded by Charismatic calls How we should react

Many write to Echo saying how they are alarmed by the way sensational messages are spreading, and which by now take up a lot of space even in many Medj. bulletins. Reinaldo Pinheiro, industrious director of the Portuguese Echo in Brasilia, reports of the phenomenon that is "transforming the many Peace Centres into centres where people gather to listen to the new prophets and hear of a great purification due to strike the earth before the end of the year." In Belo Horizonte, he adds, a meeting was recently held for Brazilian visionaries: where opinions clashed. He says what really worries him is that many do not possess cultural or religious instruments to defend themselves from this.

We reply: «Don't be astonished by these phenomena. Jesus had warned us they would multiply (cf. Mt 24). He also taught us how to recognize the true prophets from the false ones: *the fruit they bear will tell you who they are.* These fruits are the ones they bear in themselves and in others; fruits of truth in fidelity to Church doctrine, to the Pope, the Eucharist, to Mary and fruits of a holy life; and fruits of conversion.

We must, however, be cautious about the many sensational messages - all they manage to do is alarm people, not make them convert. Anxiously awaiting these apocalyptic cries distracts us from the real task Our Lady asks of us: **attend to our conversion.** It is Satan who wants to distract us by so many voices. Be wary when people announce dates or an end to time, because though man's corruption is great, we do not know the extent of God's mercy and patience, nor how great an effect the prayers and sufferings of the good have in sending off the punishments, even those ones already announced. Jonah too said in the name of God: *40 more days and Nineveh will be destroyed.* But then the people did penance and Nineveh was saved.

And even in our times, in the last decade, how many times have we heard people announcing catastrophes, yet nothing happened? *For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be* (Mt 24:27) - i.e., without warning. What is needed, is that we convert: *Turn away from sin, be ready always, because the Son of Man will come when lest we expect Him.*

With Our Lady, many prophets and charismatic people are sent out today to awaken people's hearts from the sleep of death. The souls of the simple accept what is good and put it into practice. [Messages] that conform to the Gospel and serve to awakening life, must not be opposed. The Scriptures provide us with a rule: *Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good* (1 Thes 5:19-21).

The real danger is in making a supernatural voice or manifestation absolute, i.e. giving it too much importance, forgetting that the only fount of salvation is the Live Church of God, *pillar and foundation of truth* (1 Tim 3:15). We already spoke lengthily about this in Echo 101.

So do not be alarmed by these voices, rather be alarmed at our lack of conversion! There is still room for penance, so let us do what Our Lady asks; we know this will help us love Jesus and our fellow men more. And don't let your curiosity lead you astray.

Fr.A.

* After just a brief moment, he who is to come shall come; he shall not delay. My just one shall live by faith. (Hb 10:37)

* The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises as others might be called slow, he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his ways (2 Pt 3).

* We are certain that **«Our Lady will bring to fulfilment her plans, when we least expect it, because great things are to be expected from our Mother.»**

Medj. - working from within or just external interest?

Our Lady has touched
on a sore point

It seems that many pilgrims, after having known Medj. for a few years, **frantically start chasing after** news, facts and surprising and supernatural phenomena. Since many pilgrims can no longer go to Medj., they think they can fill the void by wandering after the oddest prophecies and the most unexplainable novelties. This situation comes from having abandoned our fidelity, gratitude and love for the gift each of us received in Medj.

So the reaction to this forced absence from what is our "spiritual home" was not a decision to keep watch over those gifts of light and inner freedom we received from God in Medj., but to search for an alternative, something new to stir up our curiosity.

We have to realize that trying to listen to everything, is like listening to nothing. The people who avidly grab up and spread these "supernatural novelties" are really trying to hide the fact that they don't want to continue with their personal purification and conversion.

With Medj. Our Lady has touched on a sore point. And we have division, a real sign of contradiction between Christians. On one hand we have those **who are willing to change, die to themselves, let themselves be purified.** This costs, because purification either makes you conform to Jesus or it remains just a word on your lips.

On the other hand we have those who (even) **elegantly try to avoid the double-edged sword** that *penetrates to the point of division in your soul and spirit and searches your feelings and thoughts.* These people "organize," "spread," they "keep themselves informed," they "want to know." These are all terms extraneous to true spiritual life that turn the fire of the Spirit into wasteful curiosity. So let us not cheat ourselves. We only need to make our heart more malleable, to let the Lord mould it. This is what Our Lady tries to teach us every day.

How do we know if our hearts are truly open to conversion? The Church has always had a method - it's called **obedience.** Every person should have a spiritual director, to tell of our difficulties and to ask for advice. This is fundamental, because Christ completed His mission by *being obedient,* even to His death. We will talk further about this, however, in a future issue.

We cannot keep on thinking then of when in 1989-90 thousands of pilgrims were going to Medj., and returning home full of love of the Spirit and love for Mary. Talking about Medj. in tones of enthusiasm and triumph is useless now. Anyone can see that there's little to be triumphant about with **Satan so rampant in the world and in us** when spiritual tepidity forms in us from »

The Holy Father on the 15th anniversary of his election: *Address a special prayer to God for me, that I be given the strength to consume myself in the service of the Church.*

MEDJUGORJE DAY BY DAY

End September - * **The large green tents** behind the church have become a welcome haven for **Croatians from Konjic** who arrive by the hundreds, having escaped from the massacres, prisons and camps... All these women have left of their property fits into a little bag, and they give thanks to God that they are still alive. Everyone is anxiously awaiting other convoys that will bring the rest of their families - but will they manage to get past the front?

160,000 Croats are still in central Bosnia, entirely left to themselves. Their only hope is exile. Fr. Svetozar said in America: **"our people are living through a crucifixion and they cannot find anyone to defend them."**

Mid October - The guests crowded into the green tents have left for the coast where they will find better lodgings. Some enquired about buying a plot of land to build here, but the prices are prohibitive. One of the miracles we have seen though is that the refugees here learnt to look upon one another as brothers; and the Gospa has become part of their lives.

* **Family news** - Fr. Slavko was in France early October. Vicka spent a week in Florida (USA) with Sr. Elvira who has established a house there for drug addicts. Ivan has gone to the US, on an apostolic tour, till early Dec. Marija and Paolo honeymooned in France, incognito, for 2 weeks.

* Great joy for the presence of **Father** »

reducing the grace received in Medj. to oral facts. Echo's style has changed a little precisely because of this. It is not possible to produce a paper based on sparkling facts if there aren't any. What there is, however, is the need to let everything we saw, heard and touched (the Word of life that has touched our hearts) enter into us so deeply that it takes root in us.

A paper cannot and must not substitute one's own personal commitment. Some articles are perhaps a little more "meditative" than in the past - that's because we want them to be an invitation to remain in silence and read with a prayerful spirit. All of the Pope's words are fruit of his profound spiritual life. That is why he urges us to pray, to use the sacraments, to be communion - just like Our Lady says.

So why roam around? The joy we felt in Medj. is not a pious memory to tell others about. It was the beginning of our second birth, the opportunity to make our hearts freer day by day, to be in peace with God and our brothers and sisters; as long as we have the humility and sincerity to ask every morning: *Good Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?*

Christ's reply does not change: **the messages, the life of the Church, spiritual direction and that great sign of our times, given for all men of good will: the teachings and example of the Holy Father.**

M

Daniel-Ange (the monk in white who draws so many young people to the Church) who is becoming more and more a burning apostle of Medj. He blessed the child that Mirjana is carrying. He too asked her what Our Lady says about abortion (see Echo 106). She replied: *Our Lady says we are to help these women, by showing them great love, all the love that God and Our Lady have for them. She said abortion was a great sin, as to abort is to kill, but it is certain that God will forgive them as He loves us all. God asks, though, that the parents of the child offer a great penance for their sin.*

(Sr. Emmanuel)

* **In the House of Peace** in Bijakovici, where spiritual exercises and conferences of various types continue to be organized, fra Iko Skoko called together religion teachers, who put forth their positive experiences and their difficulties. The meeting was a very fruitful one.

* Spiritual exercises for the **Franciscan novices** of Humac in their own home, were conducted by fra Mladen Herceg, in preparation of their first vows. The Medj. evening programme, so full of Marian and Franciscan spirit, was included in the exercises.

* **The cure of drug addicts** - a scientific course was organized recently with about 15 participants. The speakers were Dr. Kenneth McKaal, a psychiatrist, and Sr. Elvira, whose community is offering hospitality to an ever increasing number of Croats. In conclusion it was said that **drug addicts are a sign of the times,** and it is the duty of us all, together with their families, to help them. (from *Nasa Ognjista*)

* **Daily bus service to Medjugorje** from Trieste continues. Departure 6 pm Trieste bus station (ph. 040/360300) - adjacent to train station. Return from Medj. same time each day. Return price LIT.86,200 (valid 1 month).

The Message makes its way around the world

"I spent 25 days in **Australia** and New Zealand, and I was surprised by the amount of people who know of the messages of Medjugorje. We spoke to about 150,000 people and we prayed together.

In **New Zealand** they said it was the biggest religious gathering ever. In **Sydney** the Cathedral couldn't accommodate all the people who had come to listen and pray together, so they mounted speakers outside the church, allowing the crowd outside to follow the near 4-hour liturgy!

We spoke to various people; to priests and bishops, and we realize now that for many people Medjugorje is not just a religious phenomenon, for it has awakened in them a great sense of responsibility, which doesn't mean just reciting an extra Rosary, but behaving differently, being more responsible in this world. So they feel ready to help others materially, and to act politically, according to their possibilities.

Many told me how they suffer when they see others acting irresponsibly. Thanks to Medj. we can nourish the hope that men will recognize the human dignity in themselves and others, and thus respect life. This is the first step towards peace."

Fr. Slavko

*Jerusalem, if only you had understood
the message of peace!*

Mons. Franic:

RESPONSIBILITY of the Croatian Church

for not having accepted the
Queen of Peace

On the 7th August 1993 Mons. Franic, archbishop emeritus of Split and well-known theologian of the Council, had a long talk with friends in Austria belonging to the Mary Queen of Peace Group in Vienna. After having spoken about the Youth Festival and the war, he said:

«(...) We Croatians of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have not fully accepted the calls of Our Lady in Medj. Some have even called Medj. the biggest lie in the history of the Church! The Bishop of Mostar, Zanic', was always contrary, and most of the Bishops followed suite, though they tolerated Medj. as a place of prayer. In the last declaration of 25 May'91, one month prior to the war, they said they would help the pilgrims... though they kept saying that till then they had found nothing that was supernatural and that the commission would continue in its research work.

I don't know what the commission expects, when there have already been so many miracles - examined by scientists - and so many conversions all over the world. This was not enough for our Bishops. Had they only encouraged the people to go to Medj., perhaps these would have listened to Our Lady and a movement of conversion could have been born. But to date they have not recognized the voice of the Mother of God, Who offers us peace and says that She too, with our prayers, will fight for peace.

When the first treaty between Muslims and Croats was signed in Medj. I thought it must have been a miracle of the Queen of Peace. But the treaty had no follow up. Medj. though is not finished. Only we Croats have not followed it enough: the Bishops are contrary and no one has ever said: "Let's go, that's the Mother of God calling."

During an audience the Pope even told the Bishops to turn to the Queen of Peace. They said *yes*, but had intended a place close to Zagreb, dedicated to the Queen of Peace, not Medj. Jesus can't be happy when His Mother comes here and none of the Bishops recognize Her; when over these 12 years there have been miracles and they say: *There is nothing.*

He was asked about the recent statement by the Bishop of Mostar, Mons. Ratko Peric (*For me the votes of 20 Bishops is worth more than all the testimonies and enthusiasm of 20 million faithful.*). Mons. Franic replied: «I think he is contrary. People from all over the world, even the Pope, are for Medj. (...) I do not think it is good to oppose the people like that. (The theologians would also argue over the *sensus fidelium*.)

The Bishops have never said that at Medj. the [form of] prayer is not correct or that what they preach does not correspond to the teachings of the Church. In Lourdes, no commission ever declared that Bernadette saw Our Lady. This is not the question that regards the commission and the Bishops. **All the commission has to do is clarify the theological question: i.e. if the**

messages contain anything that is contrary to the official teachings of the Church, to the truth. They do not say this.

A personal memory: my first evening in Medj. (Dec. 1981) I strongly felt something there, yet I needed a year before I could say: yes, I'm convinced. I am convinced that there is a high level of mysticism here. This urges me to fight more energetically against the evil in me, so as not to become tepid.

(...) It is easier for me to believe than not to believe. Not believing would mean saying the visionaries are liars and that the priests are tricksters. I couldn't say that. I have come to know these people, they are honest.»

To the observation that Split has been spared from the bombings, he said: «I am a weak man and a weak testimony. The majority of the priests in my diocese have not followed me. Only the people have accepted Medj. in large numbers. If this city has sinned less than the others, we will only know that in heaven. For me it is a miracle that it has been spared, so far. Every good gift comes from God, this one too.»

In the end Mons. Franic thanked the Austrian friends for all they've done, both on a spiritual and material level, for the Croatian population. He concludes: «Our Lady has been giving us messages for the last 12 years; let us continue living them. I thank you for your testimony of truth and charity that has strengthened our hope...»

We see how the Holy Scripture repeats itself, but don't fear: *I have won the world... My Immaculate Heart will triumph.*

In an open letter to the Bishop of Mostar, with regards to his declaration (see parentheses in previous article), Stefano Kutjesa told of the profound bitterness of the faithful. From Nasa Ognjista:

«During an audience in the Vatican, Fr. Jozo Zovko was told by the Pope: "Save Medjugorje!" And the Pope has spoken in favour of Medj. on many other occasions to the Bishops (always reported by Echo - ed. note). Can this then be so insignificant?

Is this war not a loud enough call for all of us - where your predecessor even lost his curia and cathedral? The Queen of Peace waited 10 years for us, yet Her messages are still despised.

(...) It cannot be without reason that in the many places where Our Lady appears, She asks us to pray for the priests and Bishops, as they are more exposed to the action of the Evil One. To your declaration I would say, like Gamaliel: *If it comes from God you will fight against it in vain! (...)*»

Mirjana has said more than once that she spoke with the Pope in private in 1987, adding that he knew about the 10 secrets [having been given]. She cannot reveal what the Pope said, except for: **«If I were not the Pope I would go to Medj.»**

Keep watch and pray!

It's time we woke up. Now is not the time to look for "sleep-inducing" excuses that take us away from the work of keeping watch! Our Lady beseeches us - let us not disappoint Her.

In Pontmain She said - and repeats to all of us:

«Pray, then, my children. God will not delay in granting [what you ask]. My Son is moved [by your prayers]!»

Return to origins and pureness of messages to defeat divisions

On 15 August, feast of the Assumption, Mons. Hnilica was the main celebrant at Mass in Medjugorje. The following has been taken from his homily:

«Medjugorje is too great a gift, it can never be compromised by personal interests. It seems that we have not learnt the great **Fatima lesson**. In fact, too little attention has been given to Our Lady's words to the three shepherd children. Too few are the true apostles of this prophetic message that should have been transmitted in truth and humility, just the way it was given to us from heaven. I hope the same thing doesn't happen with Medj.! I'm sure I'm not alone in this, that others also feel the **need to return to the origins - what I would call a conversion to unity.**

Sincere love for the Mother of God and Her plan for global peace, for total triumph of Her love over evil, will help us defeat the divisions that the devil has sown. This love will help us walk side by side, as brothers of the same Mother, and no one will think of themselves as being better than others.

Those who have come to Medj must become apostles of the Immaculate Heart, missionaries of reconciliation and unity, at all costs. We must return to the simplicity and transparency of the messages of Medj., the way they are given at the fount, from the Mother of God. Hers is a message that does not need explaining or interpreting, because it is self-explanatory lived out.

Every prayer group must go to the fount, and in prayer and charity, live the messages to the point that they become part of them. With the help of prayer and adoration, let us look back at that part of our spiritual journey so far completed, for which we are grateful, and discover where we have not corresponded [to God's love] and sincerely ask for pardon.

ANGLICAN PASTOR discovers in Medj. that Mary does not steal Jesus' place!

John Peterson, formerly an Anglican pastor, and now a Catholic priest tells of his conversion and how it began under the silent, but real guidance of Our Lady.

Q. *How did you come to be a Catholic priest?*

A. Only the Holy Scriptures are proclaimed in the Anglican Church, but at a certain point I started discovering the value of the sacraments, and in particular the Eucharist. Then I started realizing that the Anglican doctrine on the question of authority was not correct. Furthermore, the discussions on female ordinations made me feel all the more uncomfortable. And so I discovered that we were far from the apostolic truth, and that's why I could not keep on being a pastor of the Anglican Church. But I didn't know what to do, so I asked my spiritual director for advice.

He understood and sent me to do spiritual exercises guided by a Catholic religious.

This encounter really opened my eyes and in 1983 I was accepted as a lay person into the Catholic Church. After a few meetings with the Catholic Bishop he promised to accept me as a Catholic priest

after having done a year's service in a parish dedicated to Our Lady.

Q. *When did you first hear about Medjugorje?*

A. I had read about it in a paper and I immediately felt the desire to go there. Yet, despite this, I was worried about going to Our Lady, because in the Anglican tradition it is feared that She might take away the first place from Jesus.

So finally, in 1985 a friend accompanied me to Medj. where I remained for 15 days. I observed, participated in the various functions and I prayed. Those days went by without any particular experience - neither negative, nor positive. Before I departed, though, a thought came to my heart: "Well, you've been here for 15 days, in a Marian shrine, and you can see that Jesus was always the central part of everything: Holy Mass, adoration, confession, conversion, prayer, fasts. **She takes us to Jesus.**"

From that moment on I stopped being afraid of Our Lady. I felt profound joy, like someone who doesn't know his mother then suddenly sees her before him. My life has taken on a new sense, my proposal to be a priest found confirmation.

Back in Rome I went to [the church of] St Maria Maggiore and I was overjoyed in seeing a picture of Jesus crowning Mary Who was pointing to Her Son. Then I understood!

Q. *What happened after this experience?*

A. From that day Our Lady became an important part of my life, both as mother and teacher. On the 5th July 1987 I was ordained a priest and the day after I left for Medjugorje. While there I offered my life and my priesthood to Our Lady.

In Medjugorje I was born in the Spirit and this place will always be my inspiration. I am unable to think of my priestly life or my work with the people, without being deeply bound by this sanctuary.

Q. *Why do you think many priests and bishops still do not recognize the action of Our Lady here?*

A. I cannot but marvel at this! I am inclined to think that they are afraid of conversion, that they fear the truth. When you encounter Medj. you have to change many things, pray more and truly believe, because Medj. is all Gospel.

(Taken from *Glas Mira*, Sept. 1993)

What the Council says about Mary's function

In no way does the motherly function of Mary towards men obscure or lessen the sole mediation of Christ. On the other hand, it shows its effectiveness. In fact, every saving influence of the Blessed Virgin upon men does not impede the immediate contact of the faithful with Christ, but favours it. (Lumen Gentium 60)

In this sense, the episode of Cana is an announcement of Mary's mediation totally oriented towards Christ and tending towards the revelation of His saving power. (Redemptoris Mater)

«Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world.» (Ph 2:14-15)

Sr. Josipa with refugee children in the school of Listica. These are the fortunate ones!

BOSNIA still no peace and another winter advancing fast

Before the dilemma: "unjust peace or just war," the Muslims failed to sign for the division of Bosnia into three ethnic zones. Europe has allowed a sovereign state, which received full recognition by the international community, to be invaded and now dismembered. She has also accepted the facts and said the aggressor is right. Serbia needs to come to a conclusion because their economy is falling to bits due to the embargo. That's why the Muslims don't agree, or keep on raising the price of peace.

So ethnic cleansing continues amid the indifference and amid international complicity. One strikes out, the other strikes back; revenge begets revenge, massacre begets massacre. Winter will soon be upon us and the previsions are catastrophic. Even trying to help the civilians has become a risk, with so many ambushes, controls and unhuman discrimination. It is the ones who can't defend themselves, like the women, the aged and the children, who pay the consequences.

SOLIDARITY

We are our brothers' keepers!

**SOS from the refugee centres:
aid is diminishing ... need is growing.**

Caritas of **Citluk**, which has to assist thousands and thousands of refugees, has written to express their gratitude for all the truck-loads that arrive. They add: «Do not get tired of us. Winter will soon be upon us again and we're starting to feel powerless. The war continues. We're tired, but we cannot give up now when there are so many miserable souls in need of help.

There is need of everything, in particular food supplies, but lately the aid has started to diminish. That is why we now appeal to the charity of each and every man, especially to the Caritas [centres]...»
(*fra Zeljko Grubisic*, 12 Oct. 1993)

We add that at **Citluk**, 5 km from Medj., the post and vehicles arrive without trouble.

*** Urgent Appeal** from the hospital of Mostar for **medical and sanitary materials.**

Contact your nearest **Medjugorje or Caritas centre** to see how you can best help.

If you wish to send your donations through us, please indicate your intention and make cheques out to: Eco di Medjugorje, and mail to us at: Casella Postale 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy.

In **GB** the **Medjugorje Appeal** accepts donations and material. Contact them at Unit J Lambs Business Park, Tilburstow Hill Road, South Godstone, Surrey RH9 8JZ, England. Ph. 0342 893230

The **Medj. Appeal** organizes weekly voyages to the refugee centres on vehicles bought by them and donated to the Franciscans for distribution of aid to people in need, irrespective of their religion or nationality. They also promote various fund-raising activities, such as the **sale of greeting cards and religious books**. All proceeds go to the Appeal. Contact them for more information.

Mercy Int'l in Croatia have a Children's Aid Programme, with Sister Muriel based in Medjugorje, in "Pansion Martin." For more information contact Adam or Dave in Zagreb: 041-276-776.

The hearts of Croatian soldiers

The Rosary is a symbol for the Croatian soldiers. Every soldier carries rosary beads on them, often around their necks.

I know some who were Communists before the war, and who had to be if they wanted to work and move ahead in their careers, and now they carry rosary beads on them. It is an external symbol; we don't know what goes on in their hearts.

For many soldiers the situation is close to a miracle. They are full of hope and say they can win because God is with them, and Mary is with them. This happens when things are looking desperate. Their courage has the aspect of being a charisma and makes us think of David and Goliath. Most of the soldiers, of course, don't want the war, but they are forced to fight to defend themselves.

A journalist once asked a soldier what he would have done if he came across a Serbian, kill him or take him prisoner. The soldier replied: "You know - I would pray for him to return home and live in peace with his family, so that I too could go home to my family and live in peace." *Fr. Slavko*

*** "True Devotion to Mary"** by St Louis De Montfort. Copies can be obtained from Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, Ill 61105, USA.

Fundamental Steps
in a spiritual journey

Recognize God and accept His life in us

There are some steps which must be taken in a spiritual journey if you wish to advance. Lessons and meetings are useless without these steps that move us from within. St Paul says: *If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved. For scripture says: "no one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Rm 10:9-13).

The first step in our journey is recognizing in our hearts that God is God, Lord and Master of everything. In fact, we have lost the sense of reverential fear in His regards because we are so afraid. We don't understand the positive sense of fearing God. People don't know anymore what the difference is between reverential fear and fear meaning dread.

This confusion spoils the other virtues. For example a humble person can become a wretch instead of becoming similar to Our Lady. The negative side of virtues can make hope suffocate instead of exploding into a joyful attendance of the Lord. On the other hand, **fear of God gives you a sense of responsibility that makes you free before the Lord.** You are able to see His greatness and this attracts you and elevates you.

The second step is recognizing that God is Lord because He is master of every situation. We profess this in the Creed, but when I say that we must go forward with this attitude, I am inviting everyone to understand that you have to become part of it with the help of prayer. This is an inner, concrete act which we must live in a profound sense. It is the same as when we adore: God is God, so what could I suggest to Him? Why should I try to condition Him? God is Lord and everything belongs to Him, He uses all things for our perfect good!

In the life of the great Saints He used them, every bit of them, for their own good, to guide them to holiness. Accepting this attitude and living it means becoming free, where we have no further fear, or worries, or curiosity about what tomorrow will bring. For example, some people are worrying about "when and where it will be when Jesus comes again" - some saying France, Hungary, or Italy, and that only those who go there will be saved! We can't let these things worry us! All that matters is being with Him, that He is my Master, that I have Him in me. Then my heart will open up, it will unblock many situations, and inside of me there will be no more fog and darkness that gets so cloudy with all the problems. We will be in the light and we will walk in the light.

It is important that we allow the Lord to move us forward in every situation. In the Scriptures it is said that the heart of man turned lazy closes up, and does not want to move on. The Prophets came but men did not want to move or listen. Jesus came, but men did not move. And Jesus speaks to us about hardened, loveless hearts: *John came,*

you know the Scriptures, you know my works, but you did not move. The soul of man can tell what God wants, but if the heart is slow, not wanting to move, it cannot be elevated. That is why it is important that we learn to be moved in every prayer.

The Gospel contains a lovely episode, of a young man who approached Jesus to ask how he could have eternal life. Jesus replied: *Keep the commandments,* and the young man replied: *I have kept all these.* Jesus replied: *If you want to be perfect, leave everything and follow me.* But the young man was saddened, he did not move, redemption did not enter him.

What is perfect life? How do we get there? I would like to use this expression: **let your hearts be vivacious,** allow the Lord to keep you vivacious for all His words, that they may become life. **I think that many prayer groups and communities have a problem: spiritual laziness.** The prayers are lazy, ritual. There are so many nice things in the readings and the divine office, but they don't move us because we are not open to being moved, we do not have this vivacity that the Lord would like to see in us. It is through this [vivacity] that we can be moved, the Word of God can transform us and the Lord in us can do miracles.

The Scriptures say: *All those who believe in Him will not be disappointed. And: All those who invoke His name are saved.* See what prayer means: from openness in faith and hope we invoke the Lord and are saved. This is the power of prayer!

Yet todate, we haven't even tasted this power because we are unable even to assume those things that come from knowing: God is God, Lord and Master of all situations. We have not experienced it because we are locked in by our own ways of seeing things, our own ideas, and this impedes us from being free, like the Scriptures teach us.

So, we must reach the stage where our prayer is alive, to what we have called inner vivacity. This cannot be exchanged for a show of affection or an inner explosion. What I am thinking of is an inner vivacity like when our spirit is entirely free and in our soul there is live faith, live hope, live joy and live security. Like that our being will be saved. Let us listen to St Paul again: *If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and in your heart you believe that God raised Him from the dead, then you will be saved.* This openness will allow us to see God as God, Lord and Master.

For the third step we must read what St Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians:

When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love (1 Co 13:11-13).

For our last step, if we wish to see the way open right up to the end, we are left with pure love. Like St Bernard said: *I love for to love* - and it is here that the free man is born.

When we are with God in this manner, we are one, and all the power that is in God, like a live current, passes through us. »

Sixteen year-old after disastrous voyage to Denver:

«I saw the Pope, it was heaven!»

In confirmation of what we said regarding the grace that many young people received during the World Youth Day with Pope John Paul II, we publish a letter from our distributor in the US.

«Our 16 year old son Stephen came back from Denver just radiant. To see the Pope he went from Washington D.C. to Denver by bus with a group of about 40 young people who belong to Opus Dei.

It was a stressful trip. The bus broke down during the night, leaving them out in the cold for hours on end while it was being repaired. By day it was steaming hot, the food was bad and they were short of water. At night they slept on the floor of an old supermarket that had been opened for the occasion, and overcrowded with thousands of teenagers. To get from one place to another they walked mile upon mile.

I asked him if he saw the Pope. He replied: "Mum, there was a tiny white spot right down the end, and I knew that was the Pope."

"Well, could you hear him?" I asked. "I listened over the radio, but they didn't broadcast in English, so I listened to the Italian transmission."

"You look so happy Stephen!" I exclaimed, to which he replied: "Mum, it was like being in heaven! When the Pope goes to Manila in 1995 I want to be there. Mum, I've just got to be there! It was so beautiful, it was just heaven."

"And was everyone else as happy as you?" "We were all happy Mum, we were all with the Pope."»

(Giovanna Ellis, 31 Aug. 1993)

* «An excellent *practice of gentleness* is to never be vexed at ourselves or against our imperfections.

When we are overcome by anger, we are angry at being angry, vexed at being vexed, fretful at being fretful. By this means, we keep our hearts steeped and soaked in anger. (...)

We must have a peaceful, calm and firm displeasure at our faults.»

From "Introduction" by St Francis De Sales

St Paul encourages us:

Who can separate us from God's love? Neither death, nor persecution, nor hunger. Nothing can separate us from God's love; but in all these things we are more than winners by virtue of the One Who loved us.

At the core of all this is our openness to receiving love, an immense love that exists for you, so you can be in the light.

No teacher, meeting or book can help us if we do not put the following things into practice: recognize inside of us that God is God, Lord and Master; be vivacious in our prayer life and in our encounter with Him; and love.

If we knew how to love with a pure heart, there would not be scandals among us. We would not feel offended by humiliations, for these are precious for our purification; **we would not feel burdened when our Lord entrusts us with a cross, for we know that it is for this that we are rewarded.**

Fr. Tomislav Vlastic (21 Aug. 1993)

Should Echo change style? We show our cards!

Amid the chorus of praise and "thank you's" that we receive every day from our many readers in Italy and all over the world (and that we offer up to Mary, for the merit is all Hers), we also receive letters from people who are not so enthusiastic.

A priest, a friend of ours from Verona, wrote to refer the critical remarks he has heard spoken by some of our readers, who would prefer Echo to be «like in the beginning ... with shorter articles ... maybe with less pages - with simpler articles ... it was easier to read, and contained more enthusiasm time back.»

Dear brother,

Above all let it be clear that we are aware of our limits, and we accept the fact that we can't make everybody happy. But we have to respond to the needs of those who await Echo like "manna" to help them live Mary's proposals in this time of aridity, and to those who use Echo for meditation all month long, like in the convents, prayer groups, parishes and missions. Others just look out for newsy articles, and we do report the various news items each month. There is plenty of material for all tastes we feel, but we cannot neglect one type of reader to please only another type.

Echo is not thought out around a table, but it's as if Our Lady prepares it for us through the material that readers send in in abundance: news, discourses, testimonies, queries, problems, particular needs, announcements. That way we get to know what is expected of those who are sincerely interested in Echo.

You say: "once it was easier to read and more enthusiastic," but we point out that times have changed. After 10 years we can't create an artificial repertoire so we can re-experience those emotions we felt in the beginning when coming across the signs, the visionaries, the crowds ... for they're not there anymore. That is why we do not linger over what seems more like star worshipping or folklore.

Looking upon the things of Medj. in the manner of before reflects a situation which is widespread among those who have not fully accepted the message of conversion, or even discovered life. They regret a time of exterior exaltations and glitter that made us all feel good. But should Echo serve and nourish this artificial interest in Medjugorje?

The reason for Echo's being is to assist the work of the Holy Spirit Who wants to move people's souls, to save the world. So there's no room for anything extraneous to this work.

The events of the last 2 years have separated us from that blessed land; and now Mary is waiting for us to make progress in our conversion, by living Her messages - not still wanting baby milk, but desiring food for adults (cf. Hb 5:13-14). Echo too, in this time of "good Friday," must satisfy those who wish to nourish their souls more profoundly, for they lack someone who nourishes them (see Echo 94, 100).

We cannot sacrifice the essence for the sake of making it shorter, less committing or easier to accept. Taking Fr. Tomislav's meditations for example, yes, they are long, but they are also eagerly awaited for, going by what our translators say too. Of course, those **without the spirit**, must find them and other meditations a bore. And the Pope's magisterial discourses, of which we

only report the essential, are awaited anxiously by our brothers and sisters abroad where often they do not otherwise get to hear them. When one wishes to walk with the Church, these give security.

Then what about the number of copies that come off the press each month - and that continues to grow, both in Italy and abroad? Should we then exchange this with something more superficial, more attractive, that whets only skin-deep curiosity?

With regards to the typographical deficiencies: we cannot do otherwise since Echo is free, and the abundant material must be squeezed into 8 pages, and this costs more than 60 million lire each month! Other religious and missionary magazines (illustrated) are financed differently, but Echo is free! We do not ask anyone for money, yet so far the needed sum has not failed to arrive each month. From whom?

This is a sign; a blessing. This, together with the many testimonies from our readers, is enough for us to continue on this way.

Fr.A.

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IMPORTANT - Echo is free

If you would like to make a donation, you may send your cheques to Echo of Medjugorje, at our address in Italy, or if you prefer, through your local distributor who will forward them on to us.

When communicating with us please be sure to **use the same name as on your address label** to avoid confusion on our part. It would be of great help if you could **pop a label into the envelope** when you write. If you want extra copies just let us know. We greatly appreciate your collaboration.

At times we receive requests for material other than Echo. We're sorry to say that we have no other literature besides Echo. Medj. centres often carry other material, or know where to obtain it. Try contacting the one nearest you.

Marija and Paolo on their wedding day

LATEST NEWS (Fr. Slavko on Radio Maria, 25 Oct. 1993) - **The month of October in Medj.** was like the days before the war. Today there are more than 1,000 pilgrims here: from France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, England, Ireland, the US and Colombia. I spoke to more than 300 French pilgrims today, who brought supplies with them. We did a peace march with them from Humac to Medjugorje, and around 3 pm the Parish Priest greeted them.

This evening the church was full. So in spite of the great sufferings near us, Medj. is reborn, and as each day passes, it becomes more obvious that Medj. is work of the Lord.

With regards to the war, this unfortunately continues, and though less intense, towns and villages are still being destroyed and there seems to be no end. **Let us decide to pray the way Mary asks.**

Visionaries Vicka, Mirjana, Ivanka and Jakov are in Medj.

Echo begins its 10th year

On the 21st November, Echo will be 9 years old, and will start its 10th year. Our gratitude goes to God and Mary! As one reader wrote, we are happy to be a little stone in the hands of the Almighty One (new David) to help defeat the new Goliaths.

The message continues making its way around the world. Some fires die out, others light up. Mary's appeal is reaching virgin lands which respond generously - a sign that the tree is fertile.

We thank all those people who help by spreading Mary's messages: a network that reaches out to the whole world. The **Spanish Echo** is being reproduced in Colombia by Fr. Querubin, a Capuchin, in 4,000 copies, and 2,000 copies in Trujillo in Peru and Toluca in Mexico.

We entrust **Elizabeth Varga** from Budapest to the Heart of Our Lady. Despite her illness, she wanted to finish the translation of Echo 106 before going into hospital for an operation on 22 October. She is hoping to translate Echo 107 from her bed in the hospital.

A thank you for all the donations received todate. We are prepared to publish a 4-page Echo to reduce the costs - unless God calls us to live the messages and not just repeat them on paper (cf. new message).

We put God's will to the test then, and also that of the readers.

Together with all the Saints, we bless you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.