

Our Lady's message of 25 July 1995

Dear children, Today too I am calling you to prayer because it is only through prayer that you can understand my coming here. The Holy Spirit will enlighten you in prayer so you will understand that you must convert. My dear children, I wish to make of you a beautiful bouquet prepared for eternity, but you do not want to accept the way of conversion - the way of salvation - that I am offering you through these apparitions. Pray, my children and continue to turn your hearts to God and come to me - that good may exceed bad. I love you and I bless you. Thank you for responding to my call.

You do not accept the way of conversion. Go back to prayer and understand

In the first message after 14 years of apparitions, Mary again tells us the reason for Her coming: that we convert from a way of perversion or one that may seem Christian but does not please God. She has **offered each of us a way of conversion** and opened up a real school for us to go back to living the essential of the Gospel. In fact, in the very beginning She said: *I desire staying with you to convert you and reconcile you with the whole world* (26 June 1981).

She tells us anew that to convert it takes **prayer**; after, we'll understand everything. But it is so easy to forget, to become tired, to weaken before the worldly ways that surround us. Praying is opening ourselves to God and being receptive to His will so that He can transform us the way He wants. Then we can ask for everything and expect everything from Him. **Only in prayer can you understand the reason behind my coming**, which is this radical change in our hearts.

Mary, in all Her femininity, makes use of the lovely image of a **bouquet of flowers** which She desires presenting to Her Son for all eternity, and which She has committed Herself to doing. The flowers are the saints She wants to turn us into to, now in this time of general confusion, together with the souls She will have saved from eternal damnation through our help. Not flowers that wilt the day after, but which remain beautiful forever, for: *the victors will inherit the gifts of God and only holiness shall enter the gates of heaven* (cf. Rev 21:7, 22:4-15).

But: **You do not want to accept the way of conversion which God offers you through my apparitions.** Our Lady is talking to us. Yes, we who listen to Her message each month without making any progress, or even worse, slide back. She refers to the Parish which should have been a bouquet to perfume the world, together with us, the friends of Medjugorje. Yes, we must seriously reflect and change our ways.

All the same, our Blessed Mother silently

St Joseph House, Medjugorje: *The Queen of Peace and the miracle of the sun* (courtesy MIR)

continues to model a wonderful garland in Medjugorje before our very eyes. They are Her children who day by day grow up under Her guidance. They are part of families and communities who live out Her messages. Are we among them?

My children, She says, pray and continue to convert your hearts. She says *continue* so we won't think that we have already converted. Conversion is an ongoing process which lasts all our life. Those who do not move on, move back.

Come close to ME! Our Mother is untiring in Her efforts to save us! Yes, She says, come to me with children's hearts, even when you are unfaithful, when you fall, are tempted, discouraged and even when you have an aversion to all that is good. But how? With sincere repentance, by renewing our consecration, with the Rosary, with a visit to a shrine or chapel in Her honour, with an act of charity. All this will put us back in Her embrace and She will be able to help us start back on our journey: *Help me to help you!*

That good may exceed bad. When we return to our Blessed Mother the grace we receive from God through Her is so beneficial that it exceeds all the bad we have ever done. When we go to Her we find Jesus; He is our forgiveness, our remedy, our healing. He even turns bad into good. He can raise up children to Abraham from stones and give sinners the strength to become saints. And our Mother's unailing **love and blessing** will continue to bear its fruits. Fr.A.

30 April 1984: Mary explains why She did not give a message the previous Thursday: Though I had special messages for the parish to awake the faith of every believer, I do not wish to force anyone to anything he doesn't feel or doesn't want. Only a very small number have accepted the messages. ... And some have been asking recently for the message only out of curiosity, and not out of faith and devotion to my Son and me.

Our Lady's message of 25 August 1995

Dear children, Today I invite you to prayer. May prayer be life for you. A family cannot say it is at peace if it does not pray. So, begin your morning with morning prayer and end your evening with thanksgiving. My children, I am with you and I love you, and I bless you, and I desire that each of you be in my embrace. You cannot be in my embrace if you are not ready to pray every day. Thank you for responding to my call!

No Peace in Family without Prayer

Are we surprised by Our Lady's continual calls to prayer? Do we think other things are more important, more interesting? If so, our prayer is not true prayer. If we truly prayed, we would understand that **prayer is our only necessity** and that the rest comes on its own. We would understand that **without prayer we could not live.** But spiritual things are only understood by those who live a spiritual life or whose hearts are open to a spiritual life.

Some may say: "I always say my prayers," or, "I pray a lot and always go to Mass." Saying prayers and praying is not the same thing. There is a difference between the essence of prayer and the style of the prayer. **Praying** is wanting to meet God, to be in Him with your heart, your mind and your attention so He may transmit to you His life which is love, and his peace and joy. Only He said *I am the life.* The more you pray so, the more you receive the flow of God's life and the more your life takes on a new dimension. Then everything falls back into the correct order established by God.

We shall have no worries, since God sees that we receive all that we need. When we persevere in prayer we discover that God has always done the best thing for us, even when He took something from us or »» page 8

"That they may all be one!"

**Search for unity is not
compromise of truth
but return to the Church
wanted by Christ**

The Pope's inspired encyclical *Ut unum sint* on ecumenical work intends orienting us towards facing the "laborious" ecumenical question in a serious and just manner. That all children be one is the explicit will of Christ (Jn 17:21) and the contents of His prayer to the Father (Ephesians 2:14-16).

For this to be fulfilled, **Christians must be more concrete and profess together the same truth about the Cross**. *The Cross! An anti-Christian outlook seeks to minimize the Cross, to empty it of its meaning, and to deny that in it man has the source of his new life. It pretends that the Cross is unable to provide either vision or hope. Man, it says, is nothing but an earthly being, who must live as if God did not exist* (no. 1). So at stake in the ecumenical question is the credibility of faith in today's world so closed to God. The first thing we must do is to begin listening to God, to give Him credit and our time. This is simply the conversion of hearts.

United in the one and only truth: compromising faith goes against God - The encyclical lists three elements necessary to ecumenical work. The first is conversion (15-17), the second is fundamental importance of doctrine (18-20) and the third is primacy of prayer (21-27).

Conversion is the essential element in accepting the Gospel in every age and place. *It is the fundamental need for evangelization at every stage of the Church's journey of salvation*. This part of the document closely follows the reasoning in the document by the Second Vatican Council: *Unitatis Redintegratio*. We think it important and urgent, though - given the times - to spend time on the question regarding **the doctrine**, the only criterion on which the search for unity can be founded, and the **objective truth** which is universally valid.

Catholics today are quick to judge positive and useful the "aperture" to other Christian faiths which put certain principal elements of the Catholic faith aside, such as the Eucharist, the Immaculate Conception and the Primacy of Peter. But what is left after this theological "pruning"? Only a vague religious socialism where the watchword is "busy oneself." Let's see what the Pope says: *It is not a question of altering the deposit of faith, changing the meaning of dogmas, eliminating essential words from them, accommodating truth to the preferences of a particular age, or suppressing certain articles of the Creed under the false pretext that they are no longer understood today. The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), who could consider legitimate are reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?* (18)

Prayer produces unity - A clear perception of the foundations of our faith is had in prayer which permits us to understand

what being "catholic" is. Prayer is the instrument of communion because it unites hearts around Christ and brings them all close to the one and only Teacher (Mt 23:8). *If Christians meet more often and more regularly before Christ in prayer, they will be able to gain the courage to face all the painful human reality of their divisions, and they will find themselves together once more in that community of the Church which Christ constantly builds up in the Holy Spirit, in spite of all weaknesses and human limitations.* (22)

Ecumenical dialogue - With conversion and prayer as foundation, **dialogue can begin**. The Pope, however, tells us how dialogue - an ambiguous word in the present ecclesial language - must be carried forth as though it were an **examination of conscience**. One of the strong points of John Paul II's magisterium is just that: revising Church history to throw light on arguments which have been placed aside, or on obscure points, to show that the objective truth of the Church/Body of Christ is not at all diminished or altered by errors that some of her members have committed. The launching pad for dialogue must necessarily be the impassioned search for the truth of the Church. In *Ut unum sint* we read: *Truth forms consciences and directs efforts to promote unity. It demands that the consciences and actions of Christians, as brethren divided from one another, should be inspired by and submissive to Christ's prayer for unity.* (33)

The minds and hearts of all need to be much more open if we wish to forget the censures and various moral judgements of Church events. *All the sins of the world were gathered up in the saving sacrifice of Christ, including the sins committed against the Church's unity: the sins of Christians, those of the pastors no less than those of the lay faithful. Even after the many sins which have contributed to our historical divisions, Christian unity is possible, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion. Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say the sinful "structures" themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to divisions and to the reinforcing of division.* (34)

For some time the Pope has been doing all he can to open the way, to restore relations, and the fruits of these efforts are presented in the encyclical from nos. 41-76. The most profitable way, or rather the only way, for a positive outcome is that *Christian Communities examine themselves before the Father and ask themselves whether they have been faithful to his plan for the Church.* (82)

The saints demonstrate with their lives what the meaning is of this search for unity which is trying to be like Christ. *In fact, they have preserved an attachment to Christ and to the Father so radical and absolute as to lead even to the shedding of blood. But is not this same attachment at the heart of what I have called a "dialogue of conversion," which clearly shows the need for an ever more profound experience of the truth if full communion is to be attained?* (83)

The Pope has made the above principle his pastoral method and an example comes from his recent **visit to Slovakia** where after having canonized three Catholic martyrs he

Pope pays homage to Calvinist martyrs - Lutherans moved - In his recent visit to Slovakia the Pope canonized three priests (one Polish, one Hungarian and one Croatian) who had been tortured by the Calvinists in an attempt to make them deny their Catholic faith and then brutally murdered (1619 in Kosice). This decision [to canonize] reignited a 500 year-old conflict. Lutherans and Calvinists of Slovakia asked the Pope to acknowledge also the 24 Calvinist martyrs of Presov killed 60 years later by Catholic princes, defenders of the Papacy. The Catholic Bishops of the Slovak region also thought it apt to give them recognition. In his homily of the Mass of canonization of the three Catholic martyrs the Pope did acknowledge the spiritual grandeur of the 24 faithful belonging to the Evangelical Church who were killed in Presov and "whom the Church praises and admires."

The Pope went beyond this formal act when, five hours later in Presov, he silently prayed, in the rain, in front of the monument erected to honour the 24 Calvinist martyrs. It was the Pope's personal decision to do this. The Lutheran bishop, Jan Midriak, was present. He thanked the Pope and prayed an Our Father with him. He later confessed: "We never thought something like this could happen. We greatly appreciate it."

*** Patriarch of Constantinople in Rome** on feast of Sts Peter and Paul - Orthodox and Catholic Churches symbolically united. The Liturgy of the Word was celebrated together in the hope that soon they will be able to "celebrate that of the common chalice." They both blessed the crowd of pilgrims from the balcony of St Peter's. In his inspired homily the Patriarch, Bartholomew I, called all to "humility and repentance, the prime virtues of Christians," and the Pope spoke of the urgent need to advance together towards the third millennium in prayer, dialogue and collaboration.

Some Sacraments can be given to Catholics by Orthodox Church - At the General Audience of 9 August, the Pope spoke of the great positive values of the Eastern Churches, for which Catholics are their debtors.

The Pope said how the Eastern Churches have real Sacraments, above all Priesthood and the Eucharist. As is written in the recent ecumenical Directory he also confirmed that "when a Catholic is unable to reach a Catholic priest, he may receive the Sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist and Unction of the infirm from a minister of an Eastern Church. Likewise, Catholic ministers may lawfully administer these three Sacraments to Eastern Christians when requested."

250 Anglican pastors ask to become Catholic priests - Besides the considerable number of Anglican faithful who have asked to be received into the Catholic Church, 250

paid homage to the Calvinist martyrs in an act of reconciliation that goes beyond the usual formal talks on aperture and tolerance. At the present moment the only ecumenism possible is in a new form of freedom and charity in relations. A common error is a form of doctrinal ecumenism which obscures the truth of the faith.

(Next month: What *Ut unum sint* says about the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome.)

Pope insists on "Feminine genius" for a more human society

Anglican pastors (the number is growing) have asked to be re-ordained into the Catholic Church as priests. A rapid procedure has been conceded for their passage and three Bishops from the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales have been chosen to examine the requests case by case. Two years of study and doctrinal and theological formation is necessary before re-ordination. Those Anglican pastors who are married will remain married. The two Sacraments, marriage and priesthood, will be united and neither will diminish the other. The married pastors will be entrusted with tasks in the field of education and schooling, or placed to minister in chapels of hospitals or jails, etc., but none will become parish priests.

In a letter read out in all the churches, Cardinal Hume spoke of the reasons behind the break with the Anglican Church: "It was not just the ordination of women, but the problem concerning authority within their Church that convinced them to be in full communion with the Church of Rome... It is important to remember that these Anglicans were trying to lead a Catholic life within the Church of England. The ministry of these priests will enrich the Catholic Church... The Holy Father has asked us to be generous with them and we are certain that the Catholics will welcome and appreciate the new priests..."

What Islam can tell us - With regards to the large mosque recently inaugurated in Rome, writer and priest Gianni Baget Bozzo who no less than a year ago returned to being in full communion with his Church, writes: "Islam will challenge us on religious fronts. The mosque in Rome tells us that sooner or later in Italy Islam will become the second largest confession, which it already is in France. This challenge on the divine and eternal could turn out to be useful in a catholic world reduced to social structures and oppressed by secularism. If religion is making a come-back in the West it is of a popular kind, having nothing to do with intellectual catholicism witnessed in the post-council years. **Radio Maria** is a more authentic response than the many courses of theology which have substituted metaphysics (the study of the first principles) with hermeneutics (pure interpretive analysis) and mystics with psychoanalysis. I must say that I have never seen a Muslim on the bed of a psychoanalyst, whether Freudian, Jungian or whatever. We are challenged by Islam. It is possible that this shall remind us of the sense of reality of God and eternal life." (30 Giorni, August 1995)

United for the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart - It is felt that all Marian movements should be united for the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart. *Help my Immaculate Heart to triumph in this sinful world* Our Lady said in Medjugorje (25.9.91).

Many of the Bishops who have been to Medjugorje, including John Carberry, Michael Pfeiffer, Sylvester Treinen and Nicholas D'Antonio have indicated **Msgr. Paul Hnilica** as the most appropriate person to head such unification. **Archbishop Franic** of **Split** declares: "I join those bishops who believe in the unification of Marian movements to accomplish that for which Jesus prayed at the Last Supper: *"That all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you."*

The most suitable person to guide this movement of unity at this time is Bishop Hnilica, the Pope's great friend and confidant. He knows the world's principal languages, is familiar with the present world situation, he

A silence heavy with guilt pervades the air for the lack of information on the **World Conference on Women** to be held in Beijing (Peking) this September. If it weren't for the talks and information that John Paul II has been giving over the last six months the conference would probably go unobserved.

We cannot overlook the escalating rate of violence against women. Everywhere, every day, openly and not so openly, women are the objects of rape and violence. Deep wounds are inflicted upon them, often amid total indifference on the international scene. Despite the many words, little is done to improve the condition of women and guarantee them equal opportunities in the workforce, society, politics and the family. The Church too, the Pope admits, has erred in the past.

Mrs Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Conference, speaks about her recent visit to the Vatican: "The Church in general and the Pope in particular have been depicted as the main adversary in the world conference on women. During my visit, though, I was able to see how the Pope is first of all an excellent listener and, secondly, he truly is interested in helping others defend their rights. He gave me an eight-page letter in which he says that women's success cannot exist if first their dignity as people is not asserted. This surprised me, because it is the precise meaning of the conference of Beijing. If all thought like him perhaps there would be no need for such meetings."

A thank you to women - The following is an extract from the Pope's **Letter to Women**. "... The Church desires for her part to contribute upholding the dignity, role and rights of women... 'The Church desires to give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for the mystery of woman and for every woman, for the great works of God, which throughout human history have been accomplished in and through her' (MD31). Thank you, women who are *mothers, wives and daughters*, to you who are *sisters* and you *who work*. Thank you *consecrated women*. **Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman!** Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.

I know that simply saying thank you is not enough. Unfortunately, we are heirs to a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and

knows well the situation of the Church and is in full communion with the Holy Father.

Many apostolates have joined in unity for this great Mission under the guidance of Bishop Hnilica. The list is very long and includes major movements world wide.

Information: United for the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart, P.O. Box 1110, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, USA.

even reduced to servitude. This has prevented them from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity... If objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision. When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself. Transcending the established norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way he honoured the dignity which women have always possessed.

I am convinced that the secret of making speedy progress in achieving full respect for women and their identity involves more than condemning discrimination and injustices... Our ability to recognize this dignity comes from the use of reason... and the word of God in particular enables us to grasp clearly the ultimate anthropological basis of the dignity of women.

The Book of Genesis uses a language which is poetic and symbolic, yet it is profoundly true: *God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*. Even though man is surrounded by the innumerable creatures of the created world, he realizes that he is alone. God intervenes in order to help him escape from this situation of solitude: *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him*. The creation of woman is thus marked from the outset by the principle of help: a help which is not one-sided, but *mutual*. **Woman complements man, just as man complements woman.**

To this 'unity of the two' God has entrusted not only the work of procreation and family life, but the creation of history itself. The Beijing Conference provides an auspicious occasion for heightening awareness of the many *contributions made by women to the life of whole societies and nations*. This contribution is primarily spiritual and cultural in nature, but socio-political and economic as well. More important is the social and ethical dimension, which deals with human relations and spiritual values. In this area, society certainly owes much to the "genius of women."

I would like to express particular appreciation to those women who are involved in the various areas of education extending well beyond their family. Wherever the work of education is called for, we can note that women are ever ready and willing to give themselves generously to others, especially in serving the weakest and most defenceless. In this work they exhibit a kind of *affective, cultural and spiritual motherhood* which has inestimable value for the development of individuals and the future of society.

The Church sees in Mary the highest expression of the feminine genius. Putting herself at God's service she also put herself at the service of others: a service of love. For her, to reign is to serve, to serve is to reign.

In this perspective of "service" one can also appreciate that the presence of a certain diversity of roles is in no way prejudicial to

Eucharistic peace march and 14th anniversary of apparitions

This year the peace march was a real Eucharistic procession. It left Humac on 24 August early in the morning to avoid the high sun with Fr. Slavko leading the procession and various priests taking turns to carry the Eucharist. Vicka was also present. She was gravely ill a month ago and in a coma for a few days, and now here she is, praying the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's in a clear, strong voice.

Agostino led the excellent singing. Interpreters were present to translate Fr. Slavko's reflections. Storms broke out all around along the 15 km walk, also in Medjugorje, but the procession itself seemed particularly protected. Three hours and forty minutes later at the shrine everyone was singing the hymn to the Queen of Peace. Fr. Ivan met the procession and the Eucharistic blessing was imparted by Fr. Slavko.

In the afternoon there was a violent storm with hail. Pilgrims on Podbrdo were caught in this. The evening Mass could not be celebrated outside so many had to protect themselves as best they could during another, but final heavy downfall. The Magnificat and the seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be's were recited at the end of the Mass with the visionaries. From beneath the tent Marija spoke to the Italian pilgrims while interpreters translated for the many Brazilian and Polish pilgrims. Many young people from the East then spent the night under the tent.

25 June, the feast day. It is calculated that about **30,000 pilgrims** were present at the shrine of the Queen of Peace. The largest number of pilgrims from abroad were from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and America. The Australian group was led by retired Bishop, Henry Kennedy. The evening celebration, solemn and grandiose, was headed by Fr. Rupcic and concelebrated by 120 priests. Fr. Jozo guided a moving prayer of healing at the end, and Fr. Slavko read out the message in various languages.

(From the notes of Alberto Bonifacio)

continued from page 3:

women, provided that this diversity is not the result of an arbitrary imposition, but is rather an expression of what is specific to being male and female... These role distinctions should not be viewed in accordance with the criteria of functionality typical in human societies. Rather, they must be understood according to the particular criteria of the *sacramental economy*, i.e. the economy of "signs" which God freely chooses in order to become present in the midst of humanity...

When we consider the "iconic" complementarity of male and female roles, two of the Church's essential dimensions are seen in a clearer light: the "Marian" principle and the Apostolic-Petrine principle.

While I commend to the Lord in prayer the success of the important meeting in Beijing, I invite Ecclesial Communities to make this year an occasion of heartfelt thanksgiving to the Creator and Redeemer of the world for the gift of this great treasure which is womanhood." *Federica*

Youth Festival

Indeed a hot youth festival! Who knows if in the future a bit of fresh air will make its way also into the giant tent, as it did for the church with air conditioning! More than 1,000 young people were present for the festival. Most of them came from the East: Czechs and Slovaks, but there were also large numbers of Italians, French, Americans and

Australians. The excellent programme of prayer and music greatly helped to increase the enthusiasm of the youth.

The mornings were dedicated to conferences, preceded and followed by prayer. The afternoons to testimonies. Ivan, Mirjana and Jakov, also Agostino, and some youth from the Comunità Cenacolo (Upper Room Community) - namely Marco, Francesco and Giorgio - shared their experiences. In the evenings there was Holy Mass, then after dinner, Adoration for all.

The themes were: "Discovering God the Creator" by Fra Cosimo, "Discovering Mary, Mother of Life and Peace" by Fra Jozo, "Life and Peace in Danger" by Fra Music, "Deciding for Life" by Sr. Emmanuel. On Friday the 4th, after the conference, the programmed meetings were put off because of the general alarm due to the war in Krajina. Fr. Slavko should have spoken on Saturday about confession/reconciliation. The festival continued for the youth in the various homes/hotels where they were being put up, where confession and Mass were also celebrated by the various priests. **Our Lady's birthday** (5 August) was thus celebrated in an atmosphere of quiet concentration and prayer.

Our Lady had invited the youth to Podbrdo for the evening of 4 July, but this was cancelled. Conclusion of the festival was Holy Mass at daybreak on Sunday 6th August (the Transfiguration of Jesus) on the top of Krizevac where the youth gathered without having been formally invited.

August 15 - Great crowds made their way to Medj. for this feast day, with Italians making up the largest number. These were delighted to have the assistance of Fr. Carmelo from Sicily who, we hope, will remain for much time to come. Forty priests concelebrated on the Assumption day at the outside Mass, whilst on the previous days celebrations had to be in the church due to the sudden fall in temperature. Archbishop Milingo was unable to remain incognito. He celebrated the Italian Mass at 11 a.m. and was also present for the apparition to Ivan and Jakov in the chapel of Adoration.

In these days of August both Podbrdo and Krizevac were adorned with the joyous singing and praying of many groups. In fact, there was never a moment when you could not encounter people on their way up or down. God's grace works in the secrecy of hearts; indeed, people depart from this shrine with transformed hearts.

Soldier Matias of Medj. and 3 comrades were killed in Caplina trying to defuse a mine which exploded. Matias is survived by his wife and two small children.

Eucharistic Peace March. Note: Marika, Milona, Fr. Slavko, Fr. Carmelo with Blessed Sacrament, Vicka and Fr. Tarcisio (courtesy Bonifacio)

* **The Pope in Medjugorje?** - In June the president of Croatia, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, visited Australia and New Zealand. On June 25 he met with the Croatians of Sydney. Having received information that the Pope wishes to visit Medj. he said on that occasion: "The Catholic Church has played a central role in the history of the Croatian people. It has also been with the people in today's time of rebirth." (from Slobodan Dalmacija) [We have learnt that on 31 May the Holy Father said to a British group visiting Rome: "Pray that I may go to Medjugorje this year."] But man keeps on obstructing the Pope's steps!

* Australian Bishop **Henry Kennedy**, here for the third time, moved around wearing all the signs of his episcopal office. He said he simply felt in his heart that he had to do it that way. He wishes for the Church to recognize Medjugorje as soon as possible like Fatima and Lourdes. He feels peace here and a certain agreeable, friendly flow between people that he would like to see in Australia. He regrets that many untruths have been circulated and he wishes for the Croatian people to succeed in their just struggle.

* **Fr. Slavko's missionary voyages** - On 3 July he was in Prague where he blessed the Verite publishing house in the grounds of a convent. This convent had been turned into a jail during the Communist regime, and it is where the actual president, Vaclav Havel, had been imprisoned. The prayers and Mass of the Medj. programme were led by Fr. Slavko in the parish church of Kyov and the former house of culture which had been used for the Marxist education centre and party meetings. After his visit to Ratisovice and Karline, he participated in the talks on European parishes where 4 bishops, 140 priests and a large number of religious and laity were present. Following the solemn Mass (and the rest of the Medjugorje programme) Fr. Slavko said how he sees that the message of Medjugorje is renewing the Czech Christians. Fr. Slavko will be in Austria (Linz) and Germany (Fulda) from 15-25 Sept., Ecuador (Quito) early Oct.; Dublin 27-29 Oct., and Italy 14-20 Nov.

* **Children's village opened** - On the 27th June Fr. Mate Dragicovic, Vicar Provincial of the Herzegovina Franciscans, blessed and solemnly opened the first four facilities in the Children's Village in Medjugorje. It is intended for war orphans and for children with psycho-physical disabilities. The Franciscan Sisters of Mostar will provide for and take care of them.

* **Croatian minister in Medjugorje** - Mrs Ljilja Vokic, who has been to Medjugorje

before, said: "I accepted Medjugorje right from the beginning. My son was sick. I went around the statue of Our Lady there 20 times with him in my arms and in the end Our Lady answered my prayer. The world can say what it wants, but I am certain that God works here. Did He not say that He would be present amid those who invoke His Name? The crowd here is united in His Name and God is truly glorified." (From Nasa Ognjista no. 7/8 1995)

From the Press Bulletin Medj., fax 387-88-642339, director Fra Miljenko Stojic

* **American pilot Scott O'Grady** was shot down in Bosnia on 2 June and remained hiding in the wood on his own for six days only a few metres from the Serb front. Saved by a miracle, he said on the American television that he had a vision like that of the Virgin of Medjugorje. "I thank God, his Mother and all those who prayed for me," he said. (From Slobodan Dalmacija, 26 June)

* **Family news - Marija** is expecting her second child - due in January. **Ivan's wife**, Laureen, left for Boston to give birth there - due early October. Ivan will also go there to be with her. **Jelena Vasilj** gained a degree in theology at Steubenville. She gave a thesis on the Christian family: the best environment for a child to fully develop in body, heart, soul and spirit. She will now leave the US and complete her studies in Rome. This will make her closer to home where her testimony is important for the pilgrims, in particular the young people.

* **Permanent sign** - About the permanent and indestructible sign that Our Lady will place on Podbrdo She has said: *Convert, do not wait for the sign; when it comes it shall be too late*. One thing seems clear: this sign will come during the lifetimes of the visionaries, before the last of them stop receiving daily apparitions. Our Lady has not explained why it shall be *too late*, though Vicka points out that each person will still be able to return to God for his salvation. So what could *too late* mean? What will happen on the earth when the giant mass of our sins with their fruits of death will fall upon us? Vicka says that is why Our Lady insists on telling us that this is the time of great graces and that we should take advantage of it now.

* **Croatian prayer group** in Medjugorje - Born last summer, it is led by Marijo and Agostino. About 20 youth meet weekly, at times on the hills. They learn to give testimony which is not easy for those who grew up in a Communist regime. They are assisted by Fr. Slavko. Let us hope that other youth will leave the pubs and join them.

* **Blue cross** - Marija explains that at the beginning of the apparitions when the police had prohibited them from climbing up Podbrdo the visionaries were in that place by chance and it was there that Our Lady appeared to them. They prayed and sang while the police (who were looking for them) were unable to see or hear them, as if they were blind and deaf. From that day on Our Lady appeared to them often in that same place without the police ever discovering them. Someone placed a cross there and painted it blue. It was not the Virgin who chose that colour, as some have said.

Sr. Emmanuel's diary

* **Priestly vocations - Fr. Peter Dugandzic** celebrated his first Mass in Medjugorje on 18 June 1995. "I was born and grew up in Long Island, New York. My family originates from the Medjugorje area. I first visited here in 1986. I have a degree in psychology, and first worked with computers, then with people as a psychologist; now as a priest. Before coming here I was happy in my work; I earned a lot of money and travelled all over America, but I was not a faithful Catholic. When an aunt told me she was going back to the old country I wanted to go too.

She told me about the six children who see Our Lady and all I could say was: 'Well, let them look at Her.' While here something started happening in my soul but I didn't know what. I began praying and meditating and little by little the desire to become a priest started germinating inside of me. Now here I am, finally a priest and grateful to God and those who helped me." (Press Bulletin)

* I met **Carlos Elias** from **Barcelona** on 20 July and he said: "I came to Medjugorje in 1990 for a retreat with Fr. Jozo and I was so impressed that in the end I decided to give up my profession of architect and enter a seminary. I was ordained a priest just a month ago on the anniversary day and I have come here to thank Our Lady. I shall begin work in the Virgin of Peace parish in Barcelona! Jesus invites us in His Gospel to *come to Him and take upon ourselves His yoke which is sweet and His load which is light*. I say this so that many youth will leave aside their fears and bravely follow Jesus with the intercession of Mary's Immaculate Heart. A.

Bosnia: endless tragedy of the poor

Entire populations continue to be thrown out of their lands in the name of ethnic cleansing. Empty-handed and pursued by the bombings, they have nowhere to go. The Croats of yesterday replace the Serbs of today. To make room for them, the Croats and Muslims are being thrown out of Banja Luka and Kosovo is being colonized. Women and children are being brought into Serbia while their men are sent to fight to offer respite to the exhausted Serbo-Bosnians. The Muslims, most of whom have been sent out of their own lands, are now forced to abandon also their protected (!) cities of Srebrenica and Zepa and soon Goradze. A part of them make it to the refugee cities (already overflowing) or to concentration camps.

It seems there is no other voice but that of the weapons. Bombs continue to drop on languishing cities like Sarajevo. The Croats revenge safety for Dubrovnik and Slavonia and prepare for other blitzes. In the meantime, atrocities multiply and hate places its roots deeper and deeper.

The "big" - hypocrites fighting over death-give importance to power, not justice and continue to prepare more "peace plans." The latest, from the US and accepted by Russia, splits Bosnia between Serbs and Croats, since the victories of the latter put extra weight on the scales. It takes into no account the Muslims who were 44% of the Bosnian population: an undesirable political entity! Of course, the plan is unacceptable to them.

This is the eloquent picture of a Godless civilization which stamps on the rights of the poor - *till God rises to bring justice*. Then, fates will radically change and the powerful will shake!

Wasted Life is Redeemed

The programme of the Youth Festival included testimonies by several young ex-drug addicts of the Comunità Cenacolo (Upper Room Community). We offer you a summary of the ruthless examination they made of their own "wasted" lives, though the greatest, most profound changes in them were not said out of love of modesty.

When I was thirteen I had no one to confide in. I don't blame my parents who had their own problems and could not give me what they themselves did not receive. So I started doing what my friends did: smoking and coming home late at night. Though I knew it was wrong I didn't want to be different to my friends who had the same problems. Then I ended up accepting all that the world offers, thinking that freedom was working for money to spend on having fun.

The Christian way was very distant. I realized though that my so-called "freedom" was in fact, slavery. When I should have been strengthening my character, learning how to say no and how to live, I was instead, becoming all the more enslaved and weaker. I no longer appreciated the things I already possessed and even though I had everything I was always looking out for more. Real joy can only come from being free.

I eventually ended up taking drugs. I started with marijuana to find the courage to get over my fears and shyness, but when that wasn't enough I did what my friends were doing and went onto heroine. That went on for ten years, and I was unable to turn back. I lost my job, my girlfriend, the trust the others had in me. When the money ran out I began stealing and peddling drugs. I could have entered a community, but I kept kidding myself that I could do it on my own even though I felt that inside I was slowly dying.

Drugs kill you, and not just literally. It destroys your ability to renounce things when you want to construct something. I tried asking God for help; He saved me in a couple of really desperate situations - even though I never went to church and I even ridiculed those who went to the parish youth centre...

In the end my father threw me out of our house. That was providential, because then I was all alone. I lived in the streets till the day when the mother of one of my friends suggested I try this community.

I wasted so many of my years; if only I could turn the clock back! I'm happy all the same though, because otherwise I wouldn't have encountered the Lord this way, or known what real freedom is: being happy for what's inside of us, not for what we have.

Over these three years of community life I have matured in many things. I didn't know how to love because I never received love from others. I've learnt not to bear a grudge, to say I'm sorry when I upset someone and

LATEST NEWS (1-9-95) - It took the umpteenth massacre at the market place in Sarajevo before NATO called out their forces to attack the Serbo-Bosnians who were holding Sarajevo and other protected cities under siege.

The use of weapons to defend people under attack when no other means is possible is lawful. Is a solution to the conflict now closer at hand? And will it be the right one?

talk it over with him to then feel better. Two months ago I was entrusted with another guy. He asks lots of things and I try to explain. It takes a lot of patience, but I've learnt how to love and how to control my egotistic attitudes. He has decided to remain in the community because of the help I gave him; and I'm happier than he is.

Now I know how to find joy: through loving others. You feel good inside because you're in God's grace and you have no further need for the car, or the disco or girlfriends. The happiness is inside of you and you discover that love is wonderful. This is what I've learnt in the community through prayer, listening to the Word of God and the advice of friends.

I would like to form a family, but if I don't learn to make sacrifices how can I support a wife and children? At first the community set a three-year period for all those who entered, but now Sr. Elvira has removed that and decided that each person needs a different time to mature, even if it's four or five years. For the moment I don't intend leaving, for I still have to learn how to live with others in a crazy world which sucks you into its whirlpool, uses you till you get sick, then throws you out. Before I leave I want to be sure that I won't be attracted by those things anymore...

Discovered Life in Love

Another's story: I was arrested for stealing and I preferred to enter a community rather than go to gaol. I've been here for four and half years. When I arrived the first thing I noticed was that so many guys - ex-drug addicts like me - prayed. It seemed almost impossible to me, that they were mad; given the life they led before how could they get up so early (6 a.m.) to say the first rosary on their knees...

There are no doctors or outsiders here in the community. Everything that is transmitted to us is fruit of the experience of other guys who had drug problems before us and bit by bit, here in the community, they discovered what life is all about.

I feel that this community helps me, not only to get out of the drug tunnel, but to live according to true Christian values. I began feeling loved. I feel that the community helps me day by day, even if after four and half years I still have trouble finding the strength to get down on my knees. It is a battle every morning having to get up and pray, but I feel the fruits of that morning prayer during the course of the day. So I am slowly learning that to have joy and give joy I need to go through the door of the cross every day. I feel no different to the others, just so lucky to have found this community.

I've been HIV positive for 7 years. I feel it was the Lord who called me here. Knowing now that I can work and feel good inside and have many friends is worth more than being the "richest person in the world." I have to thank the Lord that through prayer I receive strength and His consolation from the others. Then everything becomes prayer: doing the cleaning, working, helping others when you see they need correcting, when you have to be the guardian angel of someone new, helping them out and staying awake with them at night when they can't sleep... Every day is always a new day for me and there's always something new to learn...

A few queries answered

1. Why are so many men of the Church hostile to supernatural phenomena?

Above all, prudence is easily explained and is also necessary in cases where it may be the devil trying to deceive us. The pastors must exercise their discernment without any preconceived ideas, however, their main concern is to lead the faithful to the fount of our faith which is the Word of God taught by the Church and to her means of salvation. Many faithful, whether out of ignorance, too much zeal or enthusiasm, forget this and give an absolute value to manifestations which though they may be good and even urgent-sounding, their purpose is to take us back to the main fount of salvation.

Then there are those whose refusal is based on a desire not to be put in compromising positions - they see but prefer not to see because they would be forced to take action. Some feel too comfortable in a position which public opinion judges to be acceptable, because they fear the *scandal of the cross* which the Pope tells us *always accompanies true signs from God* (Ut unum sint, no. 1). *How can you believe, since you look to one another for approval and are not concerned with the approval that comes from the one God?* (Jn 5:44). The signs of the times are so clear that all can read them without the need to wait for approval if Jesus said: *Why not judge for yourselves what is right?* (Lk 12:57). It takes a free heart, though, to recognize what comes from God.

2. Why are some looked at badly by their own community?

In Medjugorje many brothers and sisters received the grace of conversion which they took back to their communities and groups. Despite this, some point their fingers at them and see them as supporters of sects and disturbers of the peace. Without a doubt, God permits it all so that their persons are not affirmed, to protect them from self-pride. For it is necessary that they disappear into the Church, that they fully participate in Church life to the point of suffering and dying for her, becoming perhaps the grain that falls on the earth and bears much fruit.

They, in turn, must be very attentive to free themselves, with great humility, of odd or unusual elements or tendencies which, though they may have been inspired, are not generally accepted. The word is submission, to their pastors. Accepting obedience is carrying one's cross and not pretending that they can win, or be worthy of mention or even worse, think that only they have the truth. The cross that awaits them is not injustice, but purification which will bear much fruit and resurrection for souls. In the end humbleness and love is worthwhile.

3. Why does Our Lady not stop the violence in the land where She appears?

Also in Fatima Our Lady foresaw the many evils that Russia would have spread to the world and the third world war if her message went unheeded and the world not consecrated to her Immaculate Heart (which was done much later - because of the resistance put up by the bishops - by John Paul II in 1984). We know, unfortunately, what happened. In Kibeho too, Mary had foreseen the slaughter in Rwanda ten years prior to it happening, but She was not taken

seriously. In Medj., amid divided peoples, the Queen of Peace first appeared (1981) wearing mourning clothes and invoking: *Peace, peace, peace*. In another message She then said: *With prayer and fasting wars can be stopped*. Was She acknowledged? Did we pay heed? Our Lady cannot force the will of anyone, neither can God. Do we pretend, like the Judaeans, to see a miracle to believe? *Come down from the cross and we'll believe?*

4. "Is importance not given to the Word of God in Medjugorje?"

The messages make many references to the Holy Scriptures. In Her message of 18 October 1984, Our Lady said: *Today I invite you to read the Bible in your homes every day. Place it where it can be easily seen so you will be encouraged always to read it and pray with it*. In a following message the invitation is even stronger: *Every family must pray together and read the Bible* (14 Feb. 1985) which many families do every morning. *Pray and read the Holy Scripture so that through my coming you may discover the message in it for you* (25 June 1991). *Read the Holy Scripture, live it and pray to understand the signs of this time* (25 Aug. 1993). The message of 14 February was the only in which Our Lady used the verb "must" instead of the usual "invite."

Msgr. Kurt Knotzinger said in an article on this same theme: "At the beginning, in Jelena's prayer group meetings, I personally saw them read the Bible and, after a brief silence, express what they felt." Most prayer groups do the same when they meet, so we can say that the messages of Medjugorje contain only the Word of God, they are easily understood by all and continually invite us to put it into practice. Pilgrims in Medjugorje receive the same recommendations.

Travelling to Medj. safer - With the Serbian army now out of Krajine and the Zara region thanks to the flash operation by the Croatian army on the 4-6 August, travelling to Medjugorje has been made safer, both along the coast and from Split. It should be remembered that **Medjugorje has never been troubled by the war**: in the southern part of Herzegovina there are no Serbs, thus, no danger of ethnic cleansing. It was feared, during and following the operation, that the Serbs would have retaliated, and in fact, Mostar, Siroki Brijeg and Dubrovnik were bombed. **

ECHO IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Italian: Eco di Maria, C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **English:** Echo of Mary, Cas. Post. 27, I-31030 Bessica (TV), Italy. **French:** Echo de Marie, 18 Allée Thévenot, F-39100 Dole, France. **German:** Echo Mariens., C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **Spanish:** Roger Watson, c/o Antonucci, Via Verrotti 1, I-47100 Aquila, Italy. **Catalan:** Amics de Medj., c.Carme 11 baixos, E-08700 Igualada-Catalonia, Spain. **Portuguese:** a) Gilberto Correia, rua de Brito 24, 4915 Vila Praia de Ancora, (ph.911181), Portugal; b) Servos da Rainha, Caixa p. 02576, 70279-970 Brasília DF, Brazil.

* **The Medjugorje Message and Pope John Paul II** - by Msgr. George Tüttö. £2.50 excluding postage. Available at Padre Pio Bookshop, London ph. 0171-834 5363, or Mrs F. E. Scarr, Flat 5, 13 Embankment Gardens, Chelsea, London SW3 4LW, England.

* **Set Christmas cards** containing Medjugorje message of 25.12.90; profits used to support the building of Village for Orphans in Medj. Write: The Medjugorje Appeal, Lambs Business Park, Unit J, Tilburstow Hill Road, South Godstone, Surrey, RH9 8JZ, England.

Sr. Lucia of Fatima Last Signs of Mercy

Letter from Sr. Lucia to Fr. Agostino Fuentes dated 22 May 1958: "Father, Our Lady is very unhappy because nothing has been done about Her message of 1917. Neither the good nor the bad have paid heed. The good go their ways without worrying and without following heaven's precepts. The bad, who are in the wide way of perdition, take no account of the threats of punishments. Believe me, Father, that God our Lord will soon punish the world. The punishment will be material; just think how many souls will go to hell if [people] do not pray and make penance. For this Our Lady is sad.

Father, I tell everyone that many times Our Lady has told me: 'Many nations will disappear from the face of the earth. Godless nations will be the scourge chosen by God to punish humanity if we, through prayer and the Sacraments, do not obtain the grace of their conversion.' The Immaculate Heart of Mary and Jesus is afflicted especially by the fall of the souls of religious and priests. The devil knows that in neglecting their sublime vocation they carry many souls away to hell. We are just in time to keep back heaven's punishment. We have two very effective means at our disposal: prayer and sacrifice. The devil does all he can to distract us and to stop us from finding pleasure in praying.

We will either save ourselves or damn ourselves. However, Father, people must be told not to wait for the Pope, or the Bishops, or their priests, or the Superiors to call us to prayer and penance. It is time for all to begin, of their own initiative, to do holy works and change their lives according to Our Lady's calls. The devil wants to take possession of consecrated souls; he works at seducing them to induce others to be obdurate, hardhearted. He uses all his cunning ways to do this, even suggesting the reform of religious life, creating sterility in the religious and clergy and indifference in the laity.

I remind you, Father, that two things played a part in the sanctification of Jacinta and Francisco: Our Lady's affliction and the vision of hell. The Lady is as if between two swords: from one side She sees humanity in its obstinance while it remains indifferent to the threats of punishment, and from the other side She sees us who trample on the Most Holy Sacrament, despise the punishment and remain unbelieving, sensual and materialistic.

Our Lady expressly said: "We are nearing the last days," saying it to me for three times. The first time She said that the devil has engaged his last battle. One will be the winner, the other the loser; and we are either with God or with the devil. The second time Our Lady told me again that the last remedies given to the world are these: the Holy Rosary and devotion to Her Immaculate Heart. On the third time, when the other means are used up out of man's contempt for them, the last hope we are offered is the Holy Virgin in person, Her numerous apparitions, Her tears, messages to visionaries all over the world. Our Lady said again that if we do not listen to Her, if we continue offending God, we will not be forgiven.

This terrible reality must be taken into account Father, not to frighten anyone, but

as an urgent call. From when Our Lady gave such great effectiveness to the Holy Rosary, there is no problem, be it material or spiritual, national or international, that cannot be resolved with the Rosary and our sacrifices. Recite it with love and devotion; it will console Mary and dry up many tears from Her Immaculate Heart."

* **Last Apparition in Slovakia** - Litmanova 8 August 1995, Our Lady said:

Today's apparition is the last one in this place. I love you and I thank you all for what you have done here for me. My dear dear children, I wanted to waken you from the torpidity of vanity and make you see that you need conversion. I beseech you! I shall remain on this mountain, start meditating my messages. Remain in my Heart in this time, for you must be simple and prudent. The time is nearing, rather it is already here. So remain as children, totally free before God. I beseech you, meditate on what I tell you. I love you and I wait for you in Paradise.

Blood more eloquent than words

That Mary wept in **Civitavecchia** (Rome) is by now without doubt. She wept for 14 times, the last three while the Bishop was holding the statue. Tears of blood represent the great sorrow in Her heart; an unbearable sorrow. Simple folk understand, they need no theological commission to tell them this. When a person gives his blood, as Jesus did on the cross, there is nothing else he can say or give. It is as if Mary, with this event, is putting together all that She has told us in these 14 years to affirm: "They will be more deeply moved by this and my presence more accepted. I want to save them from the imminent danger. Be quick to convert. There is nothing more I can say."

Certainly, the more radical the sign is the more urgent the response is. The time has come to stop pretending. Which of our great programmes can resist before this sign?

The **Bishop** said: "Mary, weep no more! It is our turn to weep." **Fr. Jojo** had told the Bishop: "This statue is a treasure, but the people will be disappointed if they come here to see and cannot also hear a catechesis on the Bible, the Eucharist, prayer, Confession... and they cannot confess. The pilgrims need looking after, a spiritual programme needs organizing. Priests must take care of the pilgrims..."

With regards to priests, the Bishop said: "Their conversion will be obtained through the laity, through the fruits that will be seen here." He took the statue to the Pope who blessed it. "Luckily the Pope is on my side, he encouraged me to place it back in the church and he told me: 'Italians are still dubious about Bishops. Also the Bishops will come, but they will need to be preceded by someone else. Thus, it is good that you go ahead. The others will follow.' Now we need a group that can develop the messages and animate the various categories." Some communities have already offered their services, and one has been chosen to animate the youth on each second Saturday.

Civitavecchia today - Parish priest, Fr. Pablo says: "There is a continuous flow of people here to our church of St Augustine. They come alone and in groups. They pray

and ask to confess. Priests come to celebrate Mass. At times, on week days, four or five buses arrive. Last Sunday there were twenty; so you can imagine, all these people in a church big enough for only a hundred and twenty! I feel Our Lady is in a hurry. The sign of the tears has finished. Now it is up to us to be the sign.

The church opens at 7.30 a.m. and closes as late as 11 p.m. Every day at 5 p.m. there is the meditated Rosary. It is followed by Holy Mass with a homily. Twice to three times a week we have a night-long vigil. During these, Sacramental Jesus is exposed for adoration. The hymns and prayers are guided by a priest; there are moments of silence for personal reflection. Conclusion is with the recitation of the Rosary which is not meant as an introduction, but the culminating prayer of Adoration. This is followed by the Eucharistic blessing.

Most of those who come are not parishioners, though there is a prayer group here which began in Medjugorje and which has always gathered for prayer on Monday evenings. This group has now grown much bigger. Another group has also started up; they pray on Wednesdays and Saturdays. An important thing to note is that we consecrated the parish to Mary's Immaculate Heart on the 27 November last and on the 2nd February (nine weeks later) the lachrymation began.

We are in a new phase at the moment where people need spiritual nourishment. The Lord doesn't want things to stop at Mary's tears, which regard the Church, and more specifically the Church of the next millennium. The Lord wants to make everything new, even in a physical sense."

Have there really been healings? - "The Bishop knows of several cases of physical healing," Fr. Pablo responds. "but there are also quite a number of spiritual healings. For instance, during the holy week 108 Jehovah's Witnesses left their sect, led by their head; a Buddhist converted; divided families were reunited in front of Our Lady and youths who had fallen away from their faith rediscovered it.

Mary, like Jesus, is **asignofcontradiction**. Before God's interventions and authentic events of faith, hell is let loose. We had proof when we became the object of derision and pity for also the clergy. They tried everything possible to impede the truth from coming forth and to stop a new fount of grace from being opened. Many close persons were scandalized and have gone, but many distant persons have drawn near, *because the thoughts of their hearts are revealed* (cf. Lk 2:35). Our Lady does everything on the tips of Her toes, but what She does is marked by the cross and contradiction."

ECHO IS FREE - It lives on readers' donations. Echo has no other source of income. It is your donations that make possible its publication and distribution also to those people not in a position to donate any sum of money.

Forgive us if we remind you to consider the burdensome postal expenses when making a donation.

Thank you for all you can do.

* **All** of the various language editions of **Echo of Mary Queen of Peace** are available in the souvenir shop next to St James church in Medj.; also in the MIR Info. Centre close to the bridge.

»» from page 1: used his *whip of correction on us*. We feel happiness and peace anyway because we know He is almighty and infinitely good.

Moreover, Our Lady **enters to become part of our family**, as if to accompany the solicitudes the Pope and the Church have for it. Many times in the past She has asked us to pray for the family, to say the Rosary and read the Bible in the family. The family is ailing. With separations and divorces, children and parents who can't get on, the elderly being abandoned, the family is dying. Sociologists diagnose, but only Mary has provided the real answer: **there is no peace in families because they do not pray**. Without prayer, God's forgiveness, concern, love and joy cannot reach the family.

When a family gets together to pray Jesus is among them and His grace enters into them both individually and as a group. He gives them support in the difficult moments, peace when they are afflicted and the necessary grace to fight evil. When God's love has entered the hearts of the family members they are in possession of the true medicine and food that nourishes peace, dialogue and harmony. Without God's peace what can they give to one another? The love between spouses, like that between parents and children, comes from God; members transmit it to one another in reciprocal submission, as in the family of Nazareth. Without God we are only empty cisterns with no water to give.

Mary desires placing prayer back in the families, the prayer destroyed by secularization and television. She even teaches us how to begin: with the **morning and evening prayers**. In the morning we ask for God's blessing through the *Our Father*, we begin the day in the Name of the Holy Trinity with the *Glory Be* and we entrust ourselves to Our Lady's help with the *Hail Mary* and that of the angels with the *Guardian Angel*.

We do not face the day ahead alone this way, we will not be submersed by worries or anxiety, problems with work and personal relations that could transform our day into a hopeless calvary. In prayer, we will feel that our loads are being carried by One who is stronger. We end our day with thanksgiving for the good received and because God forgives us for the bad we did. The best way would be to say the Rosary all together in the family. Life is so different when one wakes with God and falls asleep with God!

Our Blessed Mother assures us of Her blessing, of **Her embrace**. This makes us feel surer of Her help and it moves us to see so much concern on Her part. There is a condition to this, however: **you cannot be in my embrace if you are not ready to pray every day**. We must be "ready," more consistent, more available: *my heart is ready, God, my heart is ready* (Ps 57:8).

* **The big St Joseph House** for spiritual retreats was opened on 9 August in the presence of Frs. Jozo, Viktor, Ivan and Leonard. It was also blessed by Our Lady, Marija assures us. The first guests were 50 children from Bosnia who will be visiting the Pope with Vicka.

* For technical reasons, we are obliged by the Italian post office to carry the old name of our bulletin together with the new one. Thus, *Echo of Medjugorje* in small print also appears near the heading on front page.

OUR READERS WRITE

* **Who carried the Holy House to Loreto?** - A reader and admirer of Echo says he is scandalized by our article in Echo 120 where it says that the House of Loreto was not transported from Palestine to Loreto by angelic hands but by the hands of man. He adds: "it is so easy to destroy people's faith and very difficult, if not impossible, to build it back up again..." (Francesco, Rome)

Dear brother, The historical hypothesis which we reported is by now generally accepted. Not only does it not deny our "human" faith in the presence of the Holy House in Loreto but it confirms and strengthens it, for science agrees that those walls truly are Our Lady's house from Nazareth. You make a comparison with the Holy Shroud of Turin and the sham testing done on it, but in our case devotion is more strongly founded. Furthermore, this discovery does not destroy our "supernatural" faith which is not based on popular beliefs or on apparitions, but on the Word of God which leads us to believing in Jesus true God and thus to conversion.

With regards to the Holy House, everyone can believe what they want, but what would true faith gain from the popular belief that the House was transported by angels and not the Angel family? Is it worthwhile to support the case of a miracle at all costs when a fact is able to be clearly explained? Does God's gift to us have to go unappreciated?

* **Seeds of grace in Greece** - Sr. Despina from Aghia Paraskevi (Athens), editor of the Greek edition of Echo, writes to tell us of the zeal, the fervour and the witness of the laity converted in Mejugorje, including Orthodox brothers and sisters. With admiration she talks of the effects of Medjugorje on others, including a wife and mother who started up a prayer group and began organizing pilgrimages. A teacher from Pireo gives witness and passes on the messages to her Orthodox students and their parents. In Tinos Catholics and Orthodox in favour of Medjugorje (i.e. true Christian living) are persecuted, but this does not stop them, and volunteers take turns to ring the church bell to announce the evening Rosary. In Rhodes, an Orthodox man on a minimum wage has 5,000 copies of the messages plus testimonies printed which he then spreads as far as the neighbouring islands. Members of his prayer group are also involved in catechism work on those same islands. A young man was inspired by the Greek Echo and began a prayer group. He has now entered a seminary.

We thank you Mary for continuing to spread the perfume of Christ in those places where the people's Apostle had walked.

* **"Echo vibrates the alps of Nepal,"** says friend Chirendra Satyal who wrote to tell us of the first church in Nepal named the Assumption Church and inaugurated on 15 August by Cardinal J. Tomko. He enclosed a copy of the only Catholic bulletin in Nepal, edited by him, which carried brief news about Medjugorje taken from our Echo.

* **Mary makes up for void** created by earthly mother - From Australia: "... I have always found it difficult to see Our Lady in Her role of Mother to us all, including myself. I believe it is because I had a psychologically terrible relationship with my own mother and others. Those who enjoyed a normal relationship with their mother and can thus

easily embrace Our Lady as Mother should be grateful to their mothers and consider themselves blessed by God. (Alan)

Dear Alan, The more you suffered because of your earthly mother, the more Our Lady will make up for it. For everything that we suffer God compensates enormously! All it takes is faith and we will receive one hundred fold for what we offer to God (in your case your cross). Believe and you will find everything.

* **Blessing by Mary in Canada** - Michele Cacchione who reproduces Echo with the help of a prayer group tells of Mary's protection: "The battle is hard but we are encouraged because it means Satan is not happy for the 11,000 copies of Echo (5,000 English, 6,000 French) that we spread. ...Greetings in the certainty of the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart."

* **From the many testimonies** which mirror our intent the following is from **Argentina**: "Echo is a wonderful treasure; it is indispensable food for souls who desire living for God, because it talks to us about Mary who is the sure way that leads to Jesus, of faithfulness to the Pope and of the importance of prayer which can change the world and us..." (M. Cristina Koleff). From **Colombia**: "Thank you for Echo. I read it straight away. I pass it on to the other sisters and to Mary's Legion. It helps us see the importance of praying for the Pope and the Church. Thank you also on behalf of the Bishop of St Ignatius. (G. Liova) Many **monasteries** echo this thought. For example, the Agostinians of Milan say "it should be read in communities because it has so much to give and to teach in a world where doctrine and the Gospel are presented in a rationalistic manner that excludes all mystery..."

We are pleased to hear from Lisa de Quay that Echo is being sent to UK **prisons** thanks to the *Crown of Thorns* group in Surrey.

Many write to express gratitude: "Echo lets us know what the spirit of the *Pope and the Church* is." (M. Zonny, **Brooklyn USA**); "it does so much good to me and around me in my Greek-Catholic patriarchate" (Fr. Pierre Ahddad, **Cairo**); "it frees me from superficiality and helps me in my spiritual journey" (Aldo, **San Remo**); "it is heavenly bread that nourishes me; its words cut deep into my soul" (Paolo, **Vado Ligure**); "the Echo is a blessing to us" (Ursula, **RS Africa**); "when I read Echo I feel like a person in a foreign country who receives a letter from home" (June Simon, **England**) and "we look forward eagerly to receiving your beautiful Echo" (Sr. Bernadette, **England**). How many say that they eagerly await the nourishment for their souls, and we feel responsible for them.

Fr. Maximilian Kolbe said: "*Our bulletin will be perfect only when it can be signed: EDITOR IN CHIEF: MARY IMMACULATE. And if an article is not quite suitable it shall be done again so that it will become so... All our activity must prove that Mary Immaculate works in us and through us*" (5 July 1936).

This is also our ardent desire for Echo, and we ask our readers to support us with their prayers, so that what we do for Mary is done well. In the meantime we bless you all, together with Our Lady of Sorrows at the foot of Her Son's Cross. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Villanova Maiardina,
26 August 1995*