



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

136

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Message of 25 September 1997:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to comprehend that without love you are unable to understand that God must occupy first place in your lives. Therefore, my children, I invite all of you to love; not with human love, but with God's love. That way your lives will be more beautiful and selfless. You will understand that God gives Himself to you for love's sake, in the simplest of ways.

My dear children, to be able to understand my words, which I give to you out of love: pray, pray, pray! and you will be able to accept the others with love and forgive all those who have hurt you. Repay with prayer; prayer is the fruit of love towards God your Creator. Thank you for responding to my call.

Love, not with human love, but with God's Love

In this profound message Mary shows us what is essential in the life of those who wish to follow Jesus: By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13:35).

1. So there is no ambivalence in our life as Christians, Mary wants us to know God the way He truly is, not the way we would like Him to be. To know God is to give Him first place in our lives and be entirely subject to Him. He who says, 'I know him,' but disobeys his commandments is a liar (1 Jn 2:4), but only those who love understand that: He who loves God knows God and he who does not love does not know God; for God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-8).

So, it is senseless to pray and do many good works without love: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love... I am nothing (1 Cor 13). If any one thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain (Jm 1:26). It is also vain to pretend to love unless we pray, i.e., if we do not give God first place, because it is in prayer that we understand God's love and that: If God so loved us, so ought we love one another (1 Jn 4:11).

2. Mary makes it clear what type of love She is calling us to: love God not with human love but with God's love. This means to love the others as God loves them, with the strength that He gives us. In a previous message: Decide for love, so that love prevails in you; not human love but divine love (20 Nov. 86). Thus, our Blessed Mother is calling us to love according to Jesus' commandment: Love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12). And the effect of this love is that: your life will be more beautiful and selfless. Love finds its joy in loving, so that others are made happy: amor sibi ipsi praemium (love is its own reward).

3. Not only, when you love as God loves, you will see how He gives Himself in simple ways. We do not

need to earn His love; God's love is free, unlike human love which expects recompense. God's love has no boundaries, it does not change, while human love is at the mercy of instincts such as possessiveness, jealousy, rivalry, tired-ness. To love does not depend on how nice or worthy a person is, for God does not do this and nor do we have to right to do it.

For God each of us are the apple of His eye, no matter what we look like. To love, which is a quality of God and in the Bible is called agape, is the giving of self to the loved one, being faithful to him/her and not being subject to the fickleness of one's feelings. Thus loves God: without preference of person or self interest. He loves to give Himself, so His kingdom may extend.

4. We cannot understand Mary's words unless we pray and allow God to enlighten us on the depth of this life of love. Thus the call to pray, pray, pray, so we can receive God's Spirit in order to accept the others just as He accepts them and forgive those who have harmed us. We will repay them with prayer, as Jesus did on the Cross: Father, forgive them, and we will not be overcome by evil, but we will overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21).

5. Prayer not only helps us understand God's love, but it is the fruit of our love for God, which becomes concrete when we decide for His will. Infact, when we love our Creator by doing His will, we are drawn to a more intimate relationship with Him, where we feel the need to give thanks, to be His friend, to collaborate with Him. Then prayer with the heart comes spontaneously, unlike the prayer of the pharisee who prays out of self-satisfaction from having done his duty.

So, if our commitment to prayer and love has weakend, let us renew it now.

Fr.A.

Message of 25 October 1997:

Dear Children, I am with you today and I call all of you to renew yourselves by living my messages. My dear children, may prayer be life for you! Be an example to the others!

I desire, my children, that you become bearers of the peace and joy of God in today's peaceless world. Therefore, my children: pray, pray, pray. I am with you and I bless you with my motherly peace. Thank you for responding to my call.

Pray and bear God's peace and joy

Today I am with you, as on the first day. Mary's presence amid us brings heaven closer to us: it is a stimulus and a call which cannot leave us indifferent. This message is an antidote for mediocrity and spiritual tiredness: that way of letting yourself be dragged along, without joy or incentive. To renew yourself means daily conversion, and your conversion is measured by the way you live the messages. You cannot say you renew yourself if you neglect prayer with the heart and the Rosary, if you do not forgive, if you do not find time for the Word of God, for Mass and confession.

Let prayer, which is Mary's main message, be life for you. To live means to walk in God's presence (Gen 17:1), thus to seek in all ways to please Him, especially by removing every trace of sin. Prayer said out of habit or to fulfil one's duty does not touch life; it cannot transform life. Instead prayer with the heart is an expression of love and it translates into living according to God and serving one's fellow men, so that whatever you do does not come from your ego or carnal feelings or instinct, but from the desire to do the will of the Father, and to accomplish his work (cf. Jn 4:34).

That's not all. To pray with the heart is to let God take the initiative, so that He can build a new you and use you for His work. And we will continually give Him thanks and accept also that which is more difficult or painful. In one word: expect and accept everything from God; be totally dependent on Him, like a child.

Be an example to the others. When we are surrendered to God the others are aware of something new in us. Mary came to teach us the easy, short, perfect and secure way of attaining union with God (Montfort 152) so that all men, in today's chaos, find Him. Mary is asking that we accomplish this project, so that the others can discover and love God through us: I can do nothing without you!

This way we will become bearers of God's peace and joy. In the previous message Mary spoke of God's love, not human love; now of the peace and joy of God (not just human). God's peace and joy is not that sense of satisfaction which comes from owning nice things, nor is it the sense of festivity that we try to create (also in our Churches), but the peace and joy that come from within, from communion with God, "from friendship with Him which no storm can destroy" (25.6.97). Being well educated, up to date, active, or popular is not enough. Without prayer God's joy cannot infect hearts, you don't get to know God. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).

Therefore, pray, pray, pray (this triple appeal was also in the previous message), that is, pray without tiring (Lk 18:1) till even your breathing becomes prayer. Learn from the blind man who cried out: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, and when many told him to be silent he cried out all the more (cf. Mk 10:47). Without prayer you only kid yourself that you are alive, but you are really dead; that you are rich, but you are really poor, that you see, but you are really blind. But for those who do not pray these words are incomprehensible. For them, to pray is to waste time; they prefer to act.

Not even Mother Teresa was spared this type of criticism. It may seem strange, but some criticized her, and a book has been written to demolish her. Why? "All that prayer makes the nuns lose time; the sick people are waiting on them... she could have done more to fight the cause of poverty in the world." In truth, that prayer gave them the strength to communicate to the sick that sense of peace which is worth much more than all the medicines. Mother Teresa would respond: "While they continue to discuss the causes of poverty, I will kneel down close to the poorest of the poor who need love, not debates or theories..."

Our Blessed Mother does not fear to repeat the most important thing: pray! She is with us and She blesses us with Her peace, that is, the eternal fruit of Her prayer.

Fr.A.

The Russian Catholics' Cross

The new text on religious freedom in Russia has been approved. In its preamble, Christianity (not Catholicism) is acknowledged together with Islam, Judaism and Buddhism "as a part of the historical patrimony of the Russian people which cannot be eliminated," however, "the traditional religions of Russia" are Orthodoxy, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, while all the others (including the Catholic religion) have been reduced to religious groups having no judicial character and thus limited in their activities and subject to permits by local authorities.

The political forces won, to assure the favour of the Orthodox and the most influential religions. But God is more powerful than the politicians and his power is made perfect in weakness (2 Co 12:9). Let us help them believe this too.

Another 18 countries are ready to welcome the pilgrimage statues/icons of Our Lady: from Africa to

north Europe and the Far East. So that other countries can be reached in preparation for the Jubilee, collaborators are needed in the dioceses of those countries not yet visited. Contact: Confrérie Notre-Dame de France, 71 rue du Village, F-91530 Le Val St-Germain. Fax France 164-596522

Pope in Rio

Change of course for family: patrimony of humanity

Once again, during the 2nd world meeting with Families held in Rio de Janeiro from 3-5 October, John Paul II cried out to expose the evils which assail the family. An immense crowd turned out for his visit (over 2 million during the closing Mass in Rio's park by the sea). From Rio the Pope spoke to all the families all over the world, and in fact, Brazil reflects humanity with its religious, economical and social contradictions.

Before 2,500 delegates from the Pastoral Theology Congress the Pope launched not only general invitations, but a warning: that there be a total turnabout in the course taken by mankind, saying that it is around the family and life itself "that the fundamental battle of man's dignity is being fought..." Today God's enemies, rather than attack the Author of life directly, prefer to strike out at Him through His works. The person and the family move along parallel lines: whoever attacks the family attacks man; whoever promotes the family promotes man.

Models of decadence; redeemed couple

In his catecheses the Holy Father defended the natural structure of the family founded on the sacrament of matrimony, the family according to divine Revelation of which the Church is keeper: Man shall be joined to his wife (not to "a woman"), and the two shall become one... What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder (Mt 19:4-6). "Combine fidelity with happiness, because one cannot exist without the other. The best protection of the family is fidelity. Fidelity ennobles the family and ensures its happiness. It is not true that married couples cannot be faithful to their total gift of self until death! Defend your families. Fight for this cause to ensure your happiness and the future of the human family." The Pope does not fail to reproach the regressive models proposed by modern thinking where "the elements of equality in the spouses dignity and their necessary diversity and sexual complementarity in the conjugal relationship are neither recognized nor respected. Marital fidelity and the respect of life in every phase of its existence are sub-verted by a culture that denies the transcendence of man created in God's image and likeness."

Matrimony, raised by Christ to the supernatural order is a "way of participating in God's life. The man and woman who believe in Christ, who are joined together as husband and wife, can confess: our bodies are redeemed; the marital union is redeemed. Parenthood, motherhood, fatherhood are redeemed and all this bears with it the mark of holiness."

Nations recognize family as foundation of society - The Pope spoke not only to the faithful, but also to the institutions and political organizations which determine the life of the family, that the family may be acknowledged as the patrimony of humanity. "Defend your families as a precious and irreplaceable gift. Protect them with just laws that fight poverty and the scourge of unemployment and, at the same time, allow parents to fulfil their role. How can young people start a family if they do not have the means to support it? Poverty is destroying the family, preventing access to culture and to basic education, corrupting morals and undermining the health of young people and adults."

The Pope not only defended the family, but he proposed ways for the family to help society recuperate its

natural harmony for an evenly balanced development, saying that they should be actively present in society and in politics so that the needs and concerns of the family are promoted and defended. He stated that a nation cannot substitute the family, but must help it so that economic poverty does not degenerate into moral poverty, in particular for the children.

The cultural problem which ails our modern society is that it does not believe what the Pope, instead, came to point out: that the family is the foundation of society!

The Pope himself was caught up by the warmth of the Brazilian population and on Saturday at Maracanà, before a crowd which filled the biggest stadium in the world, he said jokingly: "The Pope is carioca," as he swirled his stick, Charlie Chaplain style.

"From that stadium, which took on the appearance of an immense cathedral, a message of hope was launched for the whole world," said the Pope in the General Audience of 8 October. "Though it may be demanding, it is possible to joyfully live a faithful love which is open to life; it is possible to participate in the Church's mission and the building up of society."

Mirko

Pope echoes Mary's words - Our Lady said in Her message of 25 August: I invite all priests and religious to recite the Rosary and to teach others to pray. My children, the Rosary is particularly dear to me. Through the Rosary you open your hearts to me and I am able to help you.

In the message sent to the Bishops of Fatima for the 80th anniversary of the apparitions, the Holy Father said: "Dear brothers and sisters, recite the Rosary every day. I earnestly urge Pastors to pray the Rosary and to teach people in their Christian communities how to pray it. For the faithful and courageous fulfilment of the human and Christian duties proper to each one's state, help the people of God to return to the daily recitation of the Rosary, this sweet conversation of children with the Mother whom they took into their house (cf. Jn 19:27)."

Mary, Sole Hope. The Holy Father continues undaunted on Mary's way. At public audiences he continues to point out the importance of Mary's place in the Church and the role which God entrusted to Her for this time. The Pope talks from first-hand experience, given that his life is one of Mary's living miracles.

These are the titles he has given to Mary over the past few months: 1. Mary, pre-eminent member of the Church since her origins (30 July); 2. Mary, type and outstanding model because she is a visible figure of the Church's spiritual reality (6 Aug.); 3. Mary, model of the Church's virginity (20 Aug.); 4. Model of sanctity (3 Sept.); 5. Model of the Church at prayer (10 Sept.); 6. Mother of the Church and of the whole people of God (17 Sept.); 7. Mary by our side as Advocate and Helper (24 Sept.); 8. Mary mediatrix with Christ (1 Oct.); 9. Marian devotion firmly rooted in Christian faith (15 Oct.); 10. To honour Mary always leads to adoration of God (22 Oct.):

A choice of titles which accompany the Church's journey towards the 3rd millennium, for the Father has entrusted His people to a woman (as He did with Esther), to be saved from an enemy who wants to destroy them.

Christmas: awaiting life...

Once again, Advent is upon us. The Prophets, untiring, continue to hold their arms outstretched to the sky. Like honey dripping from the clouds, such is the sweetness, and with fields glittering with dew, the Redeemer will descend to us amid the chants of the angels. Then, in the brief period between Christmas

and Easter, we will recall the greatest revolution of all times: the growth of the sweet child from Bethlehem till, at the age of thirty three, he became a sign of contradiction, which we are to share. But do not fear, for in Advent we also listen to Paul's words: Rejoice in the Lord, always, again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. the Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything... and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:4-7).

How often do we do the opposite and feel discouraged by our sin or by illness or by imminent danger! How many times do we forget that all this lasts but a moment, and that soon the Lord will return and with Him He will bring peace! We close our eyes to the things which seem big but in reality are little and are swept away like chaff in the wind. Let us kneel, as we wait for our salvation: the Son of God, Who is infinitely good, and Who walks before us in poverty and renouncement. His eyes are constantly turned upwards and in doing so He smiles.

Christmas is the feast of the profound nostalgia for heaven felt by the better part of our egos which is the innocent child within us. In vain we seek out this heaven here on the earth; in vain we seek the peace which exists only in heaven...

... the slaughter of the innocents

How many men and women have to bow their heads when they hear of the drama of the Holy Innocents taken from their mothers' arms in Bethlehem! Some of the mothers died because the sword struck them first; others died because their hearts broke on seeing their children being slaughtered. Today, instead, many couples don't even want to hear the cry of their child. They purchase products to defend themselves from the "burden of children" - and isn't it true that on these packets it says: "Fun with-out the consequences!"/> Millions of others choose to kill the life after it has already blossomed in its mother's womb.

Is it their figure that these women care about? Do they think that this blessed growth will ruin it? Or do they consider themselves to be the "mistresses" of their uteruses, thus they kill the innocent children that God had destined for them? Is it because their husbands want lovers without having the responsibility of parenthood? Is it because they don't want to renounce the luxury of the privileged, while 90% of humanity has to renounce much more? Are they afraid of the pain, of the responsibility, of the worries that accompany parenthood? Or do they do it because they do not believe in God's Providence?

Well, this is what they are: sterile trees, and it is written that these are to be cut down. They are flowers without fruit, people without an aim, souls full of disgrace. But what of the day when they could have been consoled by a child's hand, by a child's smile, by the loving look in a child's eyes? When that day comes all they can do is cry over the children they didn't want; over the children they killed.

Harsh words! Too harsh for those who because of poverty, of despair, or of panic, clash with God's law. Thus, every effort, every gesture, every act of charity done to help these little ones be born - either personally or in collaboration with organizations - is indisputably in favour of life. All can participate in this effort, the aim of which is to make the Christian family a refuge of love from which love can radiate over the whole world.

Some have asked me if these millions of little children killed with impunity belong to the ranks of children in Bethlehem who died without baptism, but who, according to the teachings of the Church, were baptized in blood. I don't know, but if they are in heaven, I ask our Blessed Mother to organize a demonstration in paradise for the 28th December (the feast of the Innocents) together with the Divine Son, the angels, the innocents of Bethlehem and the millions of children killed by abortion, which should culminate in a deafening petition so that God will give orders to St. Michael the Archangel, Prince of the

heavenly army, who with the divine power will drive back into hell Satan and his evil spirits who roam around the world for the ruin of souls.

- Fr. Werenfried

(The practice of "Baptizing unborn children" is widespread and is not disapproved by the Church. It can be done by all.)

Apocalyptic catastrophes or Mary's triumph?

We are all busy preparing for the great Jubilee of the year 2000, in the wake of the programme set out by the Holy Father. This should be our prime concern. Instead, it seems that many are more concerned and too alarmed about "voices from heaven" which announce catastrophes and even an "intermediate coming" of Christ which the Bible does not speak of and which the teachings of the Vatican Council II indirectly consider impossible (read Dei Verbum no. 4).

It brings to mind St. Paul's times when the Thessalonians were convinced that Jesus' return was imminent; they were running around in circles without achieving anything. The apostle reprimanded them and said that only God knows when the time will be and that in the meantime they should work in peace and added that whoever doesn't work shall not eat. It brings to mind the 1950's when, frightened for what the future held, people asked Padre Pio: "Sr. Lucia of Fatima said that the third secret should be read in 1960. What will happen after? What will be of the world?", and Padre Pio said in a serious tone: "Do you know what will come after 1960? Do you really want to know?" - and they moved in closer to hear better: "After 1960 comes 1961."

This does not mean that nothing is happening. He who has eyes to see can see only too well what is happening in the world, but nothing of what the prophets have foretold has happened. It was bad luck for them when the dates they guessed went past without anything happening (1982, 1985, before 1990, and now before the year 2000) - yet the people have not withdrawn their trust in them. A person who was close to Pope John XXIII and whom I know well once told me how the Pope, with regards to the many heavenly messages that are referred to and directed at him, commented: "How strange; the Lord speaks to so many but to me, his vicar, he says nothing!"

What I suggest for our readers is to use heaps of good sense. I am not displeased that 5 out of the 6 kids from Medjugorje married and have had children. I get the impression that they are not expecting apocalyptic times.

In St. John Bosco's dream of the "two pillars" he saw a triumph of Mary greater than that at Lepanto. St. Maximilian Kolbe said: "You'll see the statue of Mary Immaculate on top of the Kremlin." At Fatima Our Lady said: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph." In these three prophecies I cannot see anything apocalyptic, just reason to open one's heart to the hope that heaven will come to our aid and save us from this world which has us neck-deep in its chaos of horrors and lack of values.

Let us not forget that prophecies of misfortune are surely false. Therefore, I invite our readers to look upwards and onwards and place their trust in Our Lady who will help us. Let us thank Her already by preparing ourselves for the celebration of the Jubilee and by following the Pope's indications with serenity: he talks always of a new Pentecost in the Church.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth

Other questions - Space will not allow more than brief answers to two questions which followed my article in Echo 133.

1. What does it mean: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph"?

There is no doubt that this refers to a triumph of Mary, that is, of a great grace which She will obtain for the sake of mankind. We can see this from the sentence which follows: the conversion of Russia and a period of peace in the world. I do not believe it is possible to see anything else apart from this; as the events unfold it will be possible to understand its full meaning. Let us not forget that what Our Lady wants the most is conversion, prayer and that the Lord is not offended.

2. If we can say that a prophecy is such only after it has come true, then what do we do in the meantime - not believe anyone? What should we think of all the warnings in the Bible given by prophets, or of forebodings which accompany various apparitions? Are we to ignore them, though they could bring about repentance in people's hearts and thereby help ward off disasters?

The criterion suggested in Deuteronomy (18:21) corresponds to the evangelical criterion: from the fruits one can see if the tree is good or bad (cf. Lk 6:43-45). Then isn't it possible to see anything beforehand? Yes, I think so, when the source of the message is credible because it already produces good fruits. The Bible presents credible prophets whom we can trust (such as Moses and Elijah). Another thing: let us not forget that discernment of charismata belongs to the church authorities (Lumen Gentium 12).Fr.G.A.

Conclusion - This apocalyptic culture, limited to chastisements, is imposing itself upon the world, as though it were a revelation of the revelation, forgetful that nothing can be added to or taken from the Word of God (cf. Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18) and is the cause of great alarm in many souls. This negative type of culture neither generates conversion nor favours the growth of souls in an orderly life of Christian commitment. It takes root in people without a solid doctrinal base, or who cultivate a biased faith which sees only the miracles and the extraordinary and seeks solutions in these. Jesus Himself warned us against this: Many will say: Here is the Christ; there he is. Do not believe (Mt 24:23). Be ready because the Son of man will come at an hour you do not expect! (Lk 12:40).

These catastrophic previsions clash with the jargon which is proper to the Church, to the Pope's serene but realistic vision [of the future] and to the positive messages of Medjugorje! Rather than being happy for God's patience and clemency (Who waits and waits for man to convert) prophets of misfortune are disappointed when events foretold do not take place. Jonah wished death upon himself when God offered His forgiveness to the inhabitants of Nineveh (Jonah 3).

The worst part is that pseudo-revelations end up obscuring the absolute authority of the Word of God, as though the "illuminated" were the only ones who knew the things of God, and the others (those who don't believe in them) knew nothing. This is not the case at all, for the Word of God has opened our eyes on everything: You are not in the darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day (1 Thess 5:4-5).

Third Secret of Fatima - On the 80th anniversary of Fatima (13 Oct.) Card. Ratzinger said in reference to deductions regarding the third secret of Fatima: "Just fantasy." Last year on the same argument he said: "The Virgin does not cause sensation-alism, nor fear; she does not present apocalyptic visions, but guides people to the Son" (see Echo 130, pg 7).

In an article in La Stampa of 20.10.97 Mons. Capovilla, secretary to Pope John XXIII, told of the time in 1960 when Pope John gave the 4 pages hand written by Sr. Lucia to his closest collaborators to read, then he had them placed in an envelope which was sealed and on it was written that the Pope "makes no judgement." Mons. Capovilla also said that the secret does not mention dates or times, and that the versions which speak of divisions and deviations within the Church after the Council and also those which talk of catastrophes are all nonsense.

It can't be denied that the real catastrophe is eternal damnation. Every moment is »»» » ripe for conversion; our time to enter the real life is not known to us. The disasters and evil itself which men

cause to fall upon themselves serve to stimulate their purification and conversion, that they may be saved. If we read between the lines we realize that everything is put to good use by God's mercy.

Why bombard the oasis of peace?

The following is the response by well known Fr. Daniel Ange, apostle and leader of the youth (see Echo 125, pg 3), to the campaign in France conducted by Catholic weekly "Famille Chrétienne" and Mons. Peric's book to throw dirt on Medjugorje. The defamatory campaign shocked French pilgrims.

To deny the fruits is to sin against the Holy Spirit - I speak on behalf of a multitude of young people who feel offended if not scandalized, or who run the risk of becoming such, because of your articles. I am witness to the fact that in about 30 countries where for 20 years I have been ministering amongst the youth, numerous are those who have found God and His Church in Medjugorje, where they were born into the divine life, or simply born again.

The conversions and spiritual and physical healings are countless, as are the broken families who have reconciled and the young people practically saved from death (drugs, sex, attempts at suicide). There are thousands of priests who once again found the joy and fervour of their vocations, at times after years of infidelity or after having abandoned the ministry. And I come across this in all the countries where I work. Doesn't that mean anything, in days like these? I'm talking about long-lasting fruits. How many have found their religious or priestly vocations there and now are priests or consecrated!

An Archbishop from a large European city [we know that it is Mons. Schönborn from Vienna] told me that half his seminarists and young priests received their call there. But many bishops and religious superiors can say just the same thing! In our schools of evangelization a great number of young people offer a year of their lives to the Church after a pilgrimage to Medjugorje.

To deny the fruits, which are universally recognized, is to border upon sin against the Holy Spirit, is it not? If all that does not come from God, then for whom is all the movement in Medjugorje? It's too easy to pass it off light-handedly; to recognize the fruits but not the facts. In other words: the fruits are good, but the roots are rotten. Isn't this contradicting the Teacher: judge the tree from its fruit?

A condemnation of this type means to imply that the young visionaries are all impostors. (You've got to admit that in this case they are the greatest impostors of all times if they've been able to deceive millions of people for 16 years! A miracle which deserves acknowledgement.)

Likewise, it condemns the Franciscans and many other priests as accomplices to a colossal fraud. Now, their evangelical simplicity, authentic behaviour, the clarity in their eyes, have amazed the whole world and disarmed the most aggressive (except those who have never met them personally). The youth who have met them are impressed by their luminosity, seeing in them people from the same generation.

Of course had it been proven that the events were false it would have been dutiful to warn the faithful about it, but this is not the case. To condemn the apparitions without appeal would require proof of the utmost clarity; the youth in particular are very demanding with regards to justice and truth.

Before publishing *urbi e torbi*, the personal position of Mons. Ratko Peric, it would have been necessary to reflect on the serious pastoral consequences among the people, in particular the youth. Was it necessary that also in the Church they should be contaminated by new germs of suspect, they who are already suspicious of everything around them? What right do we have to run the risk of shattering their ardour, freezing their enthusiasm, extinguishing their fervour?

"I beg you on my knees" - I ask: are there today within the Church similar places where the youth really

encounter the Lord, change life, begin to live the Gospel? Shouldn't it be our pastoral duty to support them, encourage them, illumine them and help them to take root, as John Paul II does not cease to do? To run the risk of disappointing them, of making them feel nauseated, is to border on scandalizing the little and the poor which was stigmatized by Jesus and reproached by St. Paul (Mt 18:5; 1Co 8). Should this be done, for the sake of the truth, then I go down on my knees and beg our hierarchy: don't do it light-heartedly, but produce evidence, unequivocal proof. In the meantime, I think that the simplicity (14 August) and the ambiguity (28 August) of your articles is a pastoral error which carries with it disastrous consequences.

A few unfounded objections - The article continues with Daniel Ange responding to a few objections to Medjugorje.

1. Sensationalism? In Medjugorje sensationalism consists in: the Mass, the confessions, the Way of the Cross, the Rosary. What do the pilgrims see? The Host. What do they hear? "I absolve you." What do they do? They fall on their knees before the Cross. Similar to, but simpler and severer than Lourdes. Here, everything is poorer, barer: Nazareth! And even if there were a bit of sensationalism, this is part of the Lord's ways; He accepts people the way they are.

2. Effect of propaganda? Programmes on Fatima and Lourdes can be seen even on the TV ("the pulpit of our times" - Paul VI), but for Medjugorje, which receives millions of pilgrims, not even one tenth of the means which the Church has at her disposition is used to transmit the messages.

3. The visionaries expose rather than withdraw themselves. (Here, the author speaks of the extreme reserve of some: Ivanka who always remains home, Marija busy with three children, Jakov secluded, and of the sacrifice of the others who are continually asked to attend meetings abroad. Vicka is the one who offers more of her time and she does it out of love for Mary and for souls. The fruits are countless, as we know, such as her presence in Paris which produced heaps of conversions. The same can be said of Ivan and Mirjana.) So why underrate the evangelizing impact that these young people have on others? Is it a sin to give testimony to save the people?

4. The apparitions never end. - Mary is free and creative; She never copies. She is clear and intelligent; She knows what the man of today needs. Had Mary appeared just a couple of times, what impact could it have had amidst all the things which assail us every day? In Medjugorje Mary set up the Gospel school, and that's something which takes time. But is there a decree that prohibits daily or even weekly interventions from heaven? Here, it is only the monthly message which is made public, the others regard either the visionaries personally or the prayer groups. In brief, Mary wants to form a generation of young apostles.

5. Her messages are repetitive and banal. - In fact, Mary is a psychologist and a teacher without an equal, and just like all good mothers She repeats Her messages untiringly so that they are impressed into the hearts and minds of her children. Are the messages banal? No, simple, but not banal, and this means that they are authentic and that no one has altered them to make them more interesting. The contents? Purely evangelical; the messages are the faithful echo of Jesus' Gospel.

6. Mary substitutes the pastors. - Not only does Mary lead the people to the pastors, but She desires to help them with their burdensome pastoral work. How many young people can say that they've heard their priests speak of confession, adoration and fasting and urge them to fight against evil? Which bishop, no matter how good, can say he has been able to help millions of baptized souls discover the evangelical value of fasting, of monthly confession, of reading the Word of God, of love for the Eucharist - in other words, able to raise such a wave of new life in the Gospel?

7. All over people demand that the Church be poor, fervent, brotherly, beautiful and smiling: just the

way the youth see her in Medjugorje. So why complain?

8. I can't fail to mention the ecumenical aspect of Medjugorje. I personally know members from the Orthodox, Anglican and various Protestant Churches who have been deeply moved by what they've seen there, where the Mother of Unity is revealed. Does this happen often? Should it be neglected?

I could give plenty more reasons, but I think that the above is enough to make those with serious responsibilities reflect on the matter. I ask forgiveness if I have offended anyone, but I could not remain silent. I did it in the name of all the young people among whom I have the grace to work. I beg you: do not unravel Medjugorje, the school of divine life and grace. Daniel Ange

An eloquent response to this appeal is represented by the 1,200 French pilgrims who arrived in Medjugorje on the 27th October. The translator of the French edition of Echo refers that: "the requests for the messages continues to grow in France, and 300 were distributed last month! Thanks be to God and to Our Lady."

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim. By those who love her she is readily seen, and found by those who look for her. Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she makes herself known to them.

Medjugorje is divine gift without equal

Professor Adalbert Rebic teaches theology at the university of Zagreb and is one of the most prominent men of the Church in Croatia. He was asked by Globus (5.9.97) what he thought of the difficult relationship between the Bishop and the Franciscans in Herzegovina and its negative influence on the Medjugorje event. He replied:

"It is my personal conviction that in Herzegovina both parties need more divine spirit. It must be acknowledged that over the centuries the Franciscans have done a great deal for the people there. They have guarded the Catholic faith in those lands and have always been close to the people. Still today they are called "uncles." They are part of the Herzegovinian family. Why should all this be ruined, and to top it off with decrees, condemnations and threats?

Believe me, this is not in the spirit of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. If you want to know what I think of Medjugorje I can say that it is a gift by God to our people of this area. I don't intend to comment on the truth-fulness of the apparitions. I have my own theological opinion on these, just as I have for Lourdes, Fatima and other Shrines. Medjugorje, however, is a gift from God. I went there a few times on official visits as a government officer during the war. It is a spiritual oasis where man experiences God's closeness, like on Mount Sinai. It is something special which you can't experience in Lourdes or in Fatima. That is why so many people go.

The Bishop's role - Why do some of our priests and bishops look upon Medjugorje negatively? Why is the phenomena of Medjugorje within the Franciscan area? How sad! I saw God's Spirit at work: Masses, confessions, prayers and atonement every day, all day long. How can there be evil if people pray, confess, sing, are happy and are spiritually healed...?

I think that some bishops do not understand that the word "power" in the ecclesiastical sense does not mean to govern, but to serve, love and help. This is the meaning of Church power and of episcopacy. A bishop has to co-ordinate, love, serve and respect the dignity of each person, each priest, whether he be diocesan or Franciscan. Let us pray for the unity of the local Church, that she may be ready - together with the whole Croatian Church - to respond to the Virgin's invitation. This way a big obstacle will be

removed from Our Lady's work.
(from the Press Bulletin)

Queen of Peace in Pompei - Fr. Jozo went on mission from mid September to mid October and visited America, Austria and Egypt. On his way back from Egypt he attended a prayer meeting at the shrine of Pompei (Naples) which lasted nearly 6 hours. About 3,000 people attended. Two young priests, Frs. Andrea and Salvatore, who heard their call in Medjugorje, asked for permission to hold the meeting at the Shrine of Pompei. Bishop F. Toppi, a Capuchin in love with Our Lady, offered hospitality to Fr. Jozo and was enthused by the news of the apparitions.

Interesting to note that on the 14th October 1883 the famous Petition to Our Lady of Pompei was read for the first time in the Shrine, and on the same day of this year »» »» the messages of the Queen of Peace were read in the Shrine for the first time. M. Rossi

* Annemarie Hermann Calvi, our German translator for the Echo, returned to the Father's embrace on the 4th October last. In this moment of grief, her husband, four children and first grandchild, Thomas, are consoled by their faith. A woman of elevated faith and culture, she was always available to help the others. She passed on in silence, sowing sweetness and love around her. We offer our prayers to God for her, and to Our Lady our gratitude for having given her to us and for finding the person to take her place. News from the blessed land

For the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 14th Sept., immense crowds of pilgrims were in Medjugorje this year too, arriving the evening before. The majority were Croatian and many came on foot and barefoot. Before the thousands of pilgrims who covered Mt. Krizevac, Mass was con-celebrated by 95 priests. On this hill, where the big cement cross was erected during the jubilee year of 1933, many signs have been seen which indicate that the journey towards peace must pass through the Cross.

Bishop from India: "Here God's power is tangible" - Mons. Arokiaswamy remained 1 week and on Sunday 10 August he celebrated evening Mass. Speaking about places where Mary has appeared, he said in brief that the Blessed Virgin's apparitions have been to a materialistic world which denies the supernatural. But thanks to Mary, man is able at Her Shrines to feel the loving power of the living God who works miracles of the physical and especially of the spiritual type.

He added that hearts are healed here and man finds happiness and peace for his soul, which is why so many people come. "Do not wait," he said, "for the Church to give her official opinion, for it could take years. What hurts me is the position taken by the local Bishop. The Pope privately encourages those who go to Medjugorje and this for the moment is an approval which suffices.

Accept Mary's messages because they form us to the image of Her Son so that we can become Her witnesses in this world."

The Bishop concluded with a prayer to St. Lawrence, martyr who was burnt alive, to ask for his intercession that we be freed of the fire of our passions.

Archbishop from Libreville (Gabon), Mons. Anguilé, had been wanting for some time to visit Medjugorje. He noticed that the many parishioners who visited came back changed, but others had dissuaded him saying that a Bishop's visit to Medjugorje seemed too official. He came with a group from the diocese as a private pilgrim and remained an extra 4 days.

He said: "I found it edifying to see people of so many different races and languages recite the Rosary in unison. Ivan told me that Our Lady blessed my country and its Bishop. This made me happy because Gabon is in great need of prayers and blessings. We need to pray for the holiness of its priests. I'd be

happy if all of Gabon's priests came here."

Also the president of the **Japanese bishops, Mons. Stephen Fumio Hamao**, visited Medjugorje on the 16th August.

Missionary voyages - Medjugorje friends had invited fra Slavko and Mirjana to visit California at the end of August to attend a prayer meeting, the theme of which was "Do as He tells you." Both here in Modesto, in Bakersfield and in other towns pilgrims meet every weekend to pray.

Fra Ivan Landeka in Holland visited General Blaskic who has been in prison for 15 months awaiting trial. After Fra Slavko had visited, the general expressed his wish for a priest to celebrate Mass for him in the prison. Thus, with the visit by the parish priest from Medjugorje, he was able to confess and participate in the Mass and Communion. Fra Ivan said: "His physical and spiritual state is good. It is interesting to note that he neither accuses nor blames anyone. He is deeply convinced of his own innocence and in the prison he has organized his life as best he can around work, reading, exercise, prayer and rest. He recites the Rosary every day."

NOTICES

* Formative seminar for guides of prayer groups, charity centres and pilgrimages at Hotel Sunce in Neum from 9 to 13 March 1998. The theme: The Spiritual Movement of Medjugorje. Notify your participation by end December at fax 387-88651444. Cost: 280DM for double room (+ 40DM for single room). Transfer to hotel from airport of Split can be arranged ahead by calling fax 385-21361354. For simultaneous translation bring earphones and transistor, or purchase at hotel.

* Seminars of fasting and prayer in preparation for Christmas at the Domus Pacis prayer house, led by Fra Slavko. Places still available for seminars being held from 7-12 and 15-21 December. For information call 387-88651333.

* Organizers of pilgrimages are asked to provide in advance: language, arrival date and number of pilgrims so suitable assistance can be provided. Fax 387-88651444

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was remembered in a Mass celebrated the evening before her funeral by Fra L. Rupcic. He said how Mother Teresa had expressed on a number of occasions her desire to visit Medjugorje so she could entrust to the Queen of Peace a remedy for AIDS.

* New internet site: <http://www.medjugorje.hr>
(from the Press Bulletin)

Mirjana's monthly meeting with Our Lady for non-believers: Between May and September the apparitions took place in her home with only a restricted number of family and friends attending. Instead, on 2nd October it was held at the Blue Cross at about 10.30 am and quite a number of pilgrims attended. This time Mirjana's face did not express sadness, but joy and marvel. There was no message. Pilgrims are free to attend also next month wherever it should occur.

Sofia, Pope's friend, tells - Sofia from Vilnius in Lithuania and husband Marek, well-known poet, are the Pope's friends. They worked with him in Poland and in a Catholic Movement starting 1957. Marek

now works in the Vatican and often sees the Pope. Sofia has said: "We came to Medjugorje for the first time with friends in 1984. It was the 5th October and we began the climb up Krizevac. About half way - I was a little behind the others - I was suddenly illumined on the mercy of our Heavenly Father, Who for years had been sending the Mother of His Son to the earth to bring it peace.

This revelation on the Father's fondness and attention for us lasted only a few moments, but it was a striking experience which caused a profound change within me. That afternoon, at the fourth station, my heart had truly encountered our Heavenly Father! How many times had I recited the Our Father, but now that prayer, so simple, gushed from my heart in a rapture of love and gratitude which continues still today. It is the greatest and most unexpected gift that I ever received in Medjugorje and it made me want to know the third person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit; to feel His live presence. Nine months later, I received this gift too!

What does the Pope say? Immediately after I wrote to the Pope about it, and told him that I never felt happier and so full of hope as at Medjugorje. In his immense goodness, he replied to me personally to thank me for my letter and added that I should always remember the words: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

These words supported me during the hard times in Poland when it was still under the Communist regime. Then gradually, when my husband wrote to the Pope, I would always add a few words. One day, the members of the editorial staff of the paper where Marek worked (which receives Echo from the time it began) were received by the Pope with their families. My husband was sorry that I didn't accompany him, but the Holy Father noticed my absence, and guessing where I was, he said to Marek that God's Mother was competing with him, adding that I had made the proper choice. Marek took advantage of the occasion to speak to the Pope about Medjugorje and he received this reply: "It is a very important and very positive event."

The Pope: "I believe" - About one year ago the Archbishop of Chiavari, Mons. Cavallero, spoke to the Holy Father about his visit to Medjugorje. The Pope asked him: "Medjugorje; do you believe?" The Bishop replied: "Yes, I sure do." Then immediately after: "And you, Holy Father, do you believe?" After a moment of silence the Pope said in a very distinct Italian: "I believe, I believe, I believe." The Bishop himself told this to Mons. Rizzi, the former Nuncio in Bulgaria, who in turn told Marija Pavlovic during the Eucharistic Congress in Bologna.

Vicka celebrated her 33 years with friends. Radiant with joy for having received our Blessed Mother's embrace for the occasion, she said: "I do not have words to express the happiness I feel. It is not a normal kiss; your heart pounds and it seems that you can't hold the happiness in. Then She thanked me! And I thanked Her for all the gifts received, for my life, my family, my house, for the possibility to welcome with love all those who come here... everything."

Ivan has left Medjugorje and will settle in the USA, in wife Lauren's home town.

Mary's messages at the US Congress - Denis Nolan, president of Children of Medjugorje in the USA, writes: It seems that the Gospa has a plan to make Her messages of peace penetrate the heights of the political world in the United States. In fact, a member of Congress, Tom Lantos, a Jew, was moved by the video cassette on Medjugorje and has invited Sr. Emmanuel to Washington to speak about Medjugorje to Congress on 22nd October. The conference, which is open to the public, will be filmed for the TV.

(from Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

Mirjana: pray for non-believers

At the recent Youth Festival in Medjugorje Mirjana said: Since 1987 my favourite day is the 2nd of each month. On this day I pray with our Blessed Mother for non-believers, who says, however: "for those who have not known God's love." She is asking for our help, of all of us, of all those who think of Her as Mother. Mary says we cannot save the non-believers if not through our prayer and example. She is asking us to give utmost importance to prayer in their favour, because She has said that the worst things - such as war, divorce, abortion - come from people who do not believe: "When you pray for them, you are praying for yourselves and for your families and for the good of the world."

Mary does not want us to preach to people, but that we speak through the way we live. She wants non-believers to see God and God's love through us, and She asks us to take this call seriously: "If you saw just once the tears on Her face because of the non-believers, I am sure you would do all you could for them."

Our Lady says that this is a time for deciding; that we, who consider ourselves God's children, have an enormous responsibility. Each of us six visionaries has a special mission. Mine is to pray for those who have not yet known God's love. Vicka and Jakov pray for the sick; Ivan for the youth and the priests; Marija for the souls in Purgatory; Ivanka for the families.

Our Lady's most important message is the Holy Mass: "Mass is not only the Sunday Mass," She once told us. If you should have to choose between various forms of prayer, you must always choose the Holy Mass because it is the most complete and in the Mass my Son is with you."

Our Lady asks us to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays on bread and water and to say the Rosary in the family, saying that there is nothing in the world like prayer said together to unite the family. She asks us to confess at least once monthly, saying that there is no one in the world who is not in need of monthly confession. Mary asks us to read the Bible in the family; She doesn't say how much we should read, just that the Word of God should be read in the family.

I would like to ask you to pray for the non-believers because this prayer dries the tears on Our Lady's face. She is our Mother and like all mothers, She loves Her children. Mary is sad for each single person who gets lost. She says it is important to love the non-believers even before we pray for them, and that we should think of them as our brothers and sisters who have not had the same fortune as we did to know God and His love.

When we will feel this love for them then we can begin to pray for them, however, we should never judge them. Only God can judge. This is what Our Lady says. (3 Aug.97)

"Lord, to whom shall we go?"

On 27th September **Fr. Tomislav Vlasic** resumed the prayer and catechetical meetings with the faithful at Colle Don Bosco (Turin). The first meeting was in theme with the Church's invitation to us all: live a close encounter with Jesus, Eternal Word of the Living God. Fr. Tomislav centered his talk around the following Gospel citation where Peter declared: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life! (Jn 6:68).

"We also can say this with conviction," commented Fr. Tomislav, "however, we also must be ready to follow Jesus to the end, just like the Apostles who were witnesses not only of His death, but also of His resurrection and of His Pentecost. We are free to choose the inner way which leads to an encounter with the living God and which helps us to comprehend the Word of Eternal Life. After having decided for this way, we must depart and reach our destination. Among the many types of personal choices one can make

there are two which concern us all.

The first is the one which urges us to look for a "vague God," that is, a God whom we cannot see, a God who does not respond, a God who does not give us light when we live moments of darkness. Wherever there is self-centredness man looks for a "vague God": he wants to defend his own interests because he doesn't really want to be trans-formed by an encounter with the living God.

Seeking a "vague God" can happen within our own house, the Church, or out of it. We seek a "vague God" in the house when, for example, we continually go from one shrine to another without doing anything to change ourselves. This type of behaviour impedes the Grace of God from penetrating our hearts where He can enlighten them and convert them. In a case like this, also the Words of the Gospel and Our Lady's invitations remain theoretical and are unable to take root and produce fruit, as in the parable of the sower where Satan takes away the seed which fell onto the road and was unable to take root.

Egoistic prayer, which is asking God to grant those things which satisfy one's own interests, is another obstacle to the encounter with the Word which acts in us and which through us transforms the others. The same effect is had by recited prayer (the mechanical repetition of words) which instead of helping us to see and hear God, impedes the existential fusion between creature and Creator. The folklore aspect of a relationship with God does not lead to a real encounter either; for example: the superficial celebration of patron Saints which seem to provide an excuse for outings. God cannot enter into our hearts to re-create us the way we want. The best outing, however, is to enter into the heart of God!

As pointed out previously, the search for a "vague God" can also take place outside the house, i.e., outside the Church. There are a growing number of people who say they believe in God but not in what the Church offers and teaches. This way leads people to oriental religions or techniques of meditation which place them in touch with something superior that they call god. In reality, what they find is a god who is vague, confusing, not revealed, a god who does not possess the Word of eternal life. The methods and transcendental disciplines appear beautiful and fascinating on a psychic level and they do bring on a state of relaxation, but when these people seek interpretations for various phenomena, their souls do not get to experience the freedom and joy of the encounter with God who saves. Rather, it often occurs that they feel the need to seek death so as to reach "higher and more privileged realities."

Thus, we come to the second choice which is being proposed to us: to meet the living God, the God who reveals himself. We cannot reach God with our own might. It is Love which communicates and gives itself freely to each creature who desires it. There is no need to interpret anything, because God reveals Himself in His fullness to us all. In our house, the Church, God Father is revealed in the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. The Trinitarian God is a palpable, visible God; it is Light that illumines all the corners of our beings. In us God communicates life which leads to eternity, but at the same time, we experience eternity in us right from the moment we accept the Word of God as it is. The person who desires to meet God simply needs to open himself with humbleness and remain docile before Him, remove the defences from his heart and mind and go to Him, and then follow Him.

At this point it is up to us to make the choice: do we want to meet a "vague God" where we can hide ourselves in the smoke of our confused minds, or do we want to depart and walk till we meet Jesus, Risen Jesus? ... Beware though, for in this case He will reveal Himself as "He who is" and not the way some would like Him to be... In His earthly voyage Jesus loved everyone, but He neither satisfied nor encouraged anyone's egoism! He is the perfect Light and whoever desires entering into this Light to be permeated by it will surely encounter the Word of eternal life. He will no longer be confused because this encounter will make him blossom, grow, be transformed, produce fruit and become a luminous bearer of

salvation. Just as God's life penetrates us also we rise and enter into God's life: thus we attain communion and not confusion.

This journey where the soul seeks the living God will lead us to a regal way full of light, peace, comprehension and total communion. It is then that a clear response will rise from the depths of our souls: "Lord, you have the Word of eternal life... I will follow you. I will follow you every day as I try to remove the defences and the masks of my egoism, for it is because of them that I look but am unable to see, that I listen but am unable to hear, that I hear but am unable to comprehend. I will remove all this because I want to arrive at the eternal life which no one can overshadow, which never ends..." and we will allow Jesus to live in the world through us, by giving Him our bodies, brains, minds, wills and souls. In us He will reveal Himself; and our lives will reach the fullness they were destined for. No longer our egos, but Jesus in us! Jesus, the Word of life; Jesus God, in us!"

Sr. Stefania

ATTENTION: From now on the Echo of Mary in the principal languages can be picked up in Medjugorje at the MIR-Shalom shop which has moved to the new building opposite the church.

Forgive to Receive Peace (Taken from Fr. Slavko's practical comments)

For some time Mary has been repeating these words often, touching on the fundamental condition for peace. Peace is not possible without forgiveness.

1. To forgive is not easy, we all know that, especially when unpleasant things are repeated, particularly within the family. It was not by chance that Jesus said that it is necessary to forgive "seventy times seven," i.e., always. Often there is a contradiction within ourselves: we want peace, but we do not want to forgive nor to ask to be forgiven. You see, to forgive takes a pinch of humility; to ask forgiveness means to see also one's responsibility. The problem is this: to see one's fault, recognize it and ask forgiveness.

A true story comes to mind. A person came to me and said: "I don't have peace; I can't sleep or work; I can't do anything." Of course I asked: "How long for, and why?" The person replied: "A person hurt me very much and I lost my peace." So I said: "You have to forgive and your peace will return." The person replied: "No Father, I can't, that person hurt me very much."

So I said: "But do you want peace?" "Yes, Father, I can't sleep or eat or work anymore." I repeated: "You have to forgive!" "I can't because it's not the first time that this person has hurt me." "But you want peace!?" "Yes, Father." We could have gone on and on, and it wouldn't have been long before that person began to argue with me too.

We all know that when we are hurt it is difficult to forgive or to ask forgiveness, but if we want peace, we must work on forgive-ness, and not say that it is impossible to forgive. God cannot ask us to do something which is impossible. If we think that it is impossible, then probably we do not pray enough. In fact, Our Lady teaches: "Pray with the heart to be able to forgive and be forgiven" (to Ivanka 25 June 1997). In a message to the prayer group Our Lady said: "If you feel in your heart that you have something against someone, pray till when you start to feel positive feelings about that person." A person in a group reacted by saying: "Then I should pray day and night!" So pray day and night till you are able

to forgive, because peace is a profound desire for all and is worthwhile working at.

The problem of forgiveness is more serious than what we think, especially in the families. Look, when we talk about others to a friend how do we talk? Many times in a negative way, and when this is the case it means that there is a problem of forgiveness. People say: "My life is made hard by my father/mother, my husband/wife, my mother/father-in-law, etc..." It is always the other person who causes our problems! How often do we say, or hear someone say: "the life of my mother/father (etc.) is made hard by me"? We seldom see the problems of those who live with us, but we always know how difficult our life is made by the others. This is a problem of forgiveness.

"I am right!" - Here's another story: God allowed Satan to dominate a city for one day and Satan asked Him for only one thing, i.e., to leave the traffic lights always on green. Result: after one minute there was total chaos. For each accident everyone was in the right, for they all had green. Who can forgive, or ask forgiveness, when you are in the right? You see: how many times have we been in the right and all the others have been wrong, because we had green?

I'm sure that you heard the testimony by Sr. Elvira's youth. Once, one of these said: "We love one another in the community, not because we don't know one another, but because we do know one another. We're not afraid to say to the others that we made a mistake. We love one another also because we know each others' weaknesses." Often, especially in the family, we hide these things and put on masks. Masks, not people! Masks between husband and wife; masks between parents and children! Instead of a family you have a theatre.

2. We usually say that we live badly because of others, and we don't realize when the others live badly because of us. That is, we see the speck in their eye and not the beam in ours.

It's a matter of collaborating either with Mary or with Satan. When we go through negative experiences because of others; when they hurt us or when they speak badly about us, what do we do? If we continue to accuse them, accuse them of being responsible, this is collaborating with Satan, because that is how Satan works. In the Bible we read that Satan is before God's throne and accuses us. In Mary's messages we read instead: "I pray for you... I intercede for you before God.." Our Lady knows us; She knows our good things and our bad things, but She doesn't accuse us or condemn us. Our Lady prays for us.

So, when a negative experience hits you and you begin to pray for the person who has caused it, you are collaborating wholly with Mary. It's not easy, I know. We're all rather weak in this field. We often speak bad of each other and we are tempted to magnify the negative things, and decrease the positive things in others, which is still collaborating with the negative side.

It is also a temptation even if what you say is the truth! for you are still spreading the negative aspect. A recommendation for all of you, especially those who are tempted to speak bad of others: continue to speak bad, but on one condition. Before you start talking about the bad side of a person to anyone, first say: "When I've finished telling you these negative things, promise me you'll say the Rosary with me for that person, or fast for one day..." I'm certain that many will say to you that they do not have time to listen to negative things.

It occurs often that even people who pray a lot, go to Mass, etc., talk bad about others when they are in company: they gossip! You have to make a decision! With whom do you want to collaborate? With Our Lady or with Satan?(16 August 1997)

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THE MAIL**The 3 Rosaries or the Psalms?**

I was asked: Should those who pray with the Psalms from the Office of the Hours also pray the 3 Rosaries daily according to Our Lady's request? (Message 14 August 1984)

The reason behind the request for the complete Rosary (150 Hail Mary's) is that historically it was to substitute the 150 psalms for the Christian people who, at the beginning of the 2nd century, no longer knew the psalms. It is as though Mary were saying: You do not know any more how to pray the way God taught you (the psalms), so pray to Me with the same number of Hail Mary's and I will pray to God for you with the psalms. When you say, "Mary," I will say for you: "God." (see Montfort 225) It is good and effective, though, to be faithful to the 3 Rosaries even if one prays the hours with the psalms. Being committed to the 3 Rosaries is like taking a vow and when this is kept God is glorified and we receive great advantages, as we read in psalm 49: "Pay your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify me."

If for centuries Our Lady has been asking us to pray the Rosary, there must be a good reason, and if She is now asking us to recite all 15 mysteries daily, there must be a good reason. To accept Her recommendation can only bring on good. When we invoke Her in the morning, in the middle of the day and in the evening we are allowing Her to take upon Herself our needs and to defend us from harm. Those who do it feel as though She were carrying them in Her arms.

But Mary does not force anyone. Rather, She is happy for everyone to pray which ever way they want to, "according to the freedom of God's children." Some substitute one or two rosaries with the psalms. That's okay. Others have a favourite prayer, such as the Our Father, or an expression from the Bible, and meditate on it all day long. Also the Saints did this. The important thing is that your heart is united to God, then love will be expressed according to the inspiration received.

Do not worry excessively if you are distracted during the Rosary. Mary knows our weaknesses, but as soon as you realize, recite the Hail Mary with all your heart and this will make up for the distractions.

Substitute the Mysteries with biblical passages? Is it possible to pray the Rosary while meditating on the Word of God instead of the mysteries?

Of course. Our Lady is a teacher of the Holy Scriptures and She has recommended that we read it daily, so this exchange will please Her (though it remains that the 15 mysteries are a privileged prayer). Mary will open your mind and heart to help you comprehend the Word. She "meditated in her heart the Words of her Son," and as the Bride of the Holy Spirit She will help us penetrate and live the mysteries of God.

* Our friend Frank from Maastricht, who translates the Echo into Dutch, lost his mother at the beginning of October. She was in Mostar at the time, and now Frank is having great difficulty with the procedure required to have the corpse taken home. His sacrifice will serve to make his new initiative more fruitful: a Marian television in one of the most unchristian countries of Europe. We offer up prayers for his intentions.

Aid carriers launch SOS - The amount of aid is diminishing, while the need is increasing. New areas of extreme poverty have been discovered in parts of Bosnia and Slavonia under Serb control. 300,000 refugees are about to be sent back by Germany, but they have no where to go! The Queen of Peace is still

calling all Her children to help the poor. For Italy contact Alberto Bonifacio, Via S. Alessandro 26, I-22050 Pescate (LC), Italy; or contact your nearest Caritas or Medjugorje centre.

The four big Croatian flags placed in front of the Shrine two months ago seem to clash with Medjugorje's vocation which is an oasis of peace and charity and place of encounter for all the peoples, even those who are enemies to one another. (A.B)

Mission of Prayer for Priests - "Adopt a priest" is the idea being proposed by friends at Craig Lodge in Argyll, Scotland. A prayer card with the name of a priest on it is given to a volunteer who undertakes to offer prayers, Mass, etc. daily.

Travelling to Medj. - By ROAD: bus from Trieste (adjacent to train station) leaves regularly every evening 6pm and arrives in Medj. 8am. Reservations ring Italy 040-425001.

On 21 November Echo will be 13 years old and will begin its 14th year. Working conditions remain precarious, but Our Lady assists us visibly, and Her messages in 16 languages, with more than 800,000 copies per issue (without counting those reproduced in Canada and Latin America) continue to reach more and more people. A big thanks goes to our Blessed Mother, to the readers who continue to tell us how much good they receive, and to our many helpers and distributors. Despite the sacrifices, we shall continue with the work till it pleases God.

Upon you all I invoke the motherly blessing of peace, so that with the help of Mary Immaculate and the Saints, you will remain always in God's joy and peace.

Fr. Angelo

Villanova M. 27.10.97

Let all priests pray the Rosary. Give time to the Rosary.