



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

155

January-February 2001 - [Info](#)

Our Lady's message of 25 Nov. 2000:

Dear Children, Today when Heaven is close to you in a special way, I invite you to pray so that through prayer you place God first. My little Children, today I am near you and I bless each of you with my motherly blessing, that you may have strength and love for all the people you meet in your earthly life, and that you may give God's love. I rejoice with you and I desire telling you that your brother, Slavko, is born into Heaven and intercedes for you. Thank you for responding to my call.

Fr. Slavko born into Heaven

Every day we have precise tasks to carry out. Though they are nearly always the same and often quite humble, they are a necessary part of our earthly life. Either out of choice or necessity, we often have to dedicate the better part of our day to them. This is our human condition. It happens, though, that we tend to forget that man is not simply a creature, but is, instead, a creature made by God in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). When God is forgotten by man, serious harm is brought upon nature and human dignity. This is particularly true when the ones who forget are baptized Christians who as such bear in themselves the image of the Son whom they are called to imitate (Gal 3:27).

If people forget it is because they do not pray. It should not surprise us then that Mary never tires to call us to prayer. As our Mother, she knows best what our own needs are, and ever so patiently she reminds us continuously. It has always been said that man differs from animals in his capacity to reason. Nowadays, though, it is not quite certain that this capacity is characteristic of man. Would it not be more correct to say that man differs because of his capacity to pray?

Today, when heaven is near to you in a special way, I invite you to pray, so that through prayer you place God first. Today heaven is closer to us for an extra reason; Fr. Slavko's birth into heaven. Saints bring heaven closer to us. This is yet another fruit of Mary's presence in Medjugorje. It is up to us to recognize the time in which we have been visited, and take Mary's messages seriously: pray, and give to God the place He deserves: the very first! God is to be welcomed with the love which allows Him to dwell and act in us. What

better way to spend this Christmas, than to have Him in our hearts?

Mary is with us: today I am close to you and I bless each of you with my motherly blessing. This is a special blessing which gives us the strength and the capacity to love all the people we meet in our earthly lives. Strength is needed to resist the storms that life will often deal up; without this strength that Mary gives we would certainly give in and get lost.

It is not easy to love all the people we meet; it isn't easy to love those who harm us, or hate us, or persecute us; but this is what Jesus wants. It isn't easy to love a person who has hurt us, especially when it is someone close to us, but we have no choice. Jesus has already chosen for us and we have to follow Him.

It is not our fragile and imperfect love that we have to give to others, but the love God has for them; and Mary blesses us to make us capable of giving God's love. With her blessing we can become bearers of God's love and take this love to everyone: those who weep, who mourn, who have sinned, who are lonely or discarded by society, who have lost all hope, and who don't know how to love any more; but also to those who are rich and think they are self-sufficient, and to those who don't believe.

We should be channels through which God's love flows out to all those with whom we come into contact.

I rejoice with you and I desire telling you that your brother Slavko is born into heaven. At the end of the Way of the Cross Fr. Slavko was born into heaven. From the top of Mount Krizevac he passed on into Heaven in the continuation of a life lived at the service of God and of Mary. The news brings joy to our hearts. At the same time we feel wonderfully consoled, for he intercedes for us.

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Christmas message, 25 December 2000:

Dear Children, Today, when God has granted me to be with you with little Jesus in my arms, I rejoice with you and I thank God for everything He has done in this Jubilee Year. In particular I thank God for all the vocations of those who said 'yes' to God in fullness.

I bless you all with my blessing and with the blessing of the newly born Jesus. I pray for you all that joy may be born in your hearts and that you too, in joy, may bear the joy that I have today. In this Child I bring you the Saviour of your hearts and the One who calls you to holiness of life.

Thank you for responding to my call.

Joy in full at Christmas

To our delight, also this Christmas Mary came with baby Jesus in her arms. Not only is this a sign, it is also real; because eternity is that which, before God, is not cancelled, but continues to be. Events which bear the mark of the Holy Spirit are not worn away by time since they are part of God's eternity and not of earth's time. The Event par excellence - the coming of God into the world through His birth as a human child - is eternal; just as Mary

the Mother is eternal. At special moments of our history, through the grace of God, Mary visits us, and speaks to us; and her maternity subsists in eternity.

I rejoice with you and I thank God for all that He has done in this Jubilee Year. Joy has always been, in the history of Israel, a public way of expressing praise and thanks to God, but the joy in this Christmas message is something greater still, for it is everlasting, it is immanent; and Mary tells us: "I pray for you all that joy may be born in your hearts and that, in joy, you too may bear the joy that I have." Mary's joy is not to do with feelings; her joy is Jesus, and the today she refers to is not a moment in time, but is the eternal today of God. Mary prays so that this Christmas might become our Christmas, so that joy is born in our souls. Jesus is already born in us through baptism, but even if we are able to remain pious and faithful it takes a great deal more work on our part to allow Him to live and grow in us. We should not fear, though, because God gives us the grace to pick up the journey, to start again, after each fall. All it takes is that we sincerely decide for Him.

God's coming into the world is set in eternity, and we have access to it every day of our earthly lives, just as every day we can encounter Him in the holy Eucharist. In this special time of grace it is even easier to accept Him into our souls; for not all the fruits of the Jubilee have been reaped yet, and Mary continues to visit and instruct us.

In particular I thank God for all the vocations of those who said "yes" to God in fullness: this fruit of the Jubilee is already mature, and will continue to mature if we open ourselves to God and say our "yes" to Him in fullness, without setting conditions. Once again Jesus is born for us, and He is born in us if our hearts are disposed to accept Him. Most probably, Mary's gratitude regards the blossoming of religious vocations, and for this we must all give thanks to God. However, also we lay people are called to give a full response; a response which will occupy a lot of space in our existence, and become the driving force behind all our choices, decisions and behaviour.

In joy bear the joy that I have today. This joy is the presence of Jesus in us, that no one can take from us (Jn 16:23) and must be accepted and borne in us and the world. God's joy should transpire from our every gesture, shine in our eyes, and flourish on our lips; and in silence it will be transmitted to others. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and part of the kingdom of God (Rm 14:17). If it is absent from our life then doubtful is our faith.

In this Child I bring you the Saviour of your hearts and the One who calls you to holiness of life. Holiness is not a collection of virtues or good works, as it is a question not of doing, but of being. Holiness is being Jesus' dwelling place. We are holy in the amount that His life replaces ours, and this can happen suddenly, in an instant, or it may require a lengthy journey. Sooner or later, though, it will happen if we remain firmly anchored to Mary, and be docile and humble servants of the Gospel and the Church. Then, it will be fullness of joy in His presence, everlasting pleasures at His right hand (Ps 15:11).

Nuccio Quattrocchi

"Purification of Memory" ... what was the Inquisition?

One of the most meaningful aspects of the Jubilee is the purification of the memory for sins committed over the course of the last two millennia.

Amongst the seven invocations of forgiveness pronounced during the Eucharistic Celebration of the first Sunday of Lent, led by the Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger asked forgiveness for the times in certain eras of history when Christians sometimes complied with methods of intolerance instead of adhering to the great commandment of love, and in doing so disfigured the face of the Church. Included in these non-evangelical methods is the long and complex experience of the Inquisition, for which John Paul II has expressed more than once the regret of the Church.

Very often the Inquisition is associated with a series of common places which have given rise to a general impression of violence, oppression and arbitrariness.

It is not possible here to make a summary of the history of the Inquisition (for further study, read Acts of the International Symposium of Study on the Inquisition, held in the Vatican from 29-31 Oct. 1998). Here, we will consider a few points which will allow us to see it in the right perspective following recent historical research, and to give new form to the dismal image handed down to us.

The Inquisition covers a period of about six centuries. It was first founded in the XIII century and lasted to the beginning of the 1800's. It was a judicial institution of the Church which collaborated with the State to defend the faith and eliminate heresy. Persistent, voluntary errors against the Catholic faith by a professed Catholic were considered heretic, but with time also illicit and immoral behaviour (such as apostasy, blasphemy, the practice of magic, bigamy, violation of obligation to fast from meat, and homosexuality) was punished under the same system.

Separate treatment is required for the problem concerning the conversos (jews) and moriscos (Muslims) who, out of self-gain, or under pressure, professed their conversion to Christianity while continuing to practice their former religion. The Spanish Inquisition was extremely harsh with these, to the point that Rome had to intervene to demand less severity. The Inquisitors (who were often Franciscans or Domenicans), as delegates of the Holy See, did not depend on any civilian or religious authority (so that they could not be conditioned); nonetheless, sovereign rulers soon began to exert their power over the Inquisitors and in some cases to the point of making them political instruments by which they could eliminate their adversaries.

If at the end of a series of interrogations a person who had been charged with heresy was found guilty, he could recant and be sentenced with imprisonment, the term of which depended on the gravity of his error. At times a condemned person was set free but had to wear a band of yellow or red cloth as a distinctive sign. Other times, a condemned person was flogged or was made to go on pilgrimage, or participate in a religious ceremony of some kind.

If on the other hand, a condemned person refused, even under torture, to confess and recant, the Inquisitor "abandoned" (not formally hand over) him into the hands of the civil authorities, who would have inflicted a much more severe punishment, including being burned at the stake.

The aim of punishment was to save the soul of a condemned person through penance and

suffering; and being burned at the stake was considered a form of purification of the soul to save it from eternal damnation.

Contrary to what is generally thought, only a small percentage (less than 2%) of trials concluded with a death penalty, and generally, the Inquisition tried to combine justice with mercy by applying the law as leniently as possible. It was preferable to end up in the hands of Church justice than that of the State, for compared to other types of civil trials, the procedure used by the Inquisition offered more guarantees for the accused, holding into account the person's mental, psychological, physical and material conditions. The judiciary system was more evolved than certain forms of intolerance present today in some countries. When it could not be proved that the accused was guilty, the practice was to leave him unpunished rather than risk condemning an innocent man. Unfortunately, there were abuses, but in a period of six hundred years these were the exception and not the rule.

In all fairness we must look at the Inquisition through the light of its own time, and remember that the mentality of that society was profoundly different to our own. There was no such thing as religious freedom, the principle of tolerance or freedom of thought. Only the truth had the right to exist, and the truth for Catholic Europe was in the Church. Neither was there the distinction between State and Church that we have today, so that religious dissent automatically meant civil dissent; which is to say an attempt at society, a crime which the State had to pursue.

Christianity in its whole was involved in this religious intolerance: both Catholic countries (especially Spain, Portugal and their colonies, and Italy) and Protestant countries which had their own form of "Inquisition." However, the anti-Catholic controversy caused by the Illuminists in the XVIII century was woven particularly around the Spanish Inquisition, and it became a black legend which resists still today despite new facts drawn from more objective studies. The Protestants, too, used the black legend to feed the controversy which served to distract attention from a more real and dramatic genocide which they were sadly involved in, that is, against the Indians of North America.

Recourse to violence (including the death penalty) to defend the faith and social order was a generally accepted concept, with references from the Bible and the Fathers of the Church, and famous theologians such as St. Thomas of Aquino. The Inquisitors themselves acted in good faith for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Only a few (including a few saints) were able to remain detached from the cultural conditioning of a violent era whose canons of morality were far from our own.

Today it is recognized that the main fault of the Inquisition was to have forced the faith on others; when faith, to be such, must be free. Jesus never forced anyone to follow Him; He suffered violence, but he never practised it.

Though the Church may be holy, she too had to advance on a long and uphill journey before reaching a mature faith which would more fully comprehend the mystery revealed by Christ, to allow for greater human dignity and freedom of conscience. This doesn't mean the journey was without errors, sin and dark spots which often accompany the journey of individuals in their search of the Truth which is often tormented.

Reflecting on our history helps both men and institutions to be more tolerant and trusting in the infinite mercy of God whom we ask to forgive us in the same manner we are willing to forgive others.

Mirco Trabuio

NEWS OF THE JUBILEE

Politicians: Live your involvement in politics as a service to others!

On 5th November the Pope celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Square for the Jubilee of Government Leaders, Members of Parliament and Politicians. Besides this Jubilee celebration, the Pope dedicated time to them also during a meeting in the Paul VI Hall on Saturday evening, and during a festive assembly held Sunday evening.

Various political events of the moment, such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the election of the US President, made John Paul II's message even more incisive, as he called for quality in politics. "Christians who engage in politics - and who wish to do so as Christians - must act selflessly, not seeking their own advantage, or that of their group or party, but the good of one and all, and hence in the first place, that of the less fortunate members of society.

Justice must indeed be the fundamental concern of political leaders: a justice which is not content to apportion to each his own, but which aims at creating conditions of equal opportunity... and favours those who for reasons of social status or education or health, risk being left behind." ...

"Truly there needs to be a greater spirit of solidarity in the world as a means of overcoming the selfishness of individuals and nations. Those Christians who feel themselves called by God to political life have the duty - quite difficult yet very necessary - to conform the laws of the 'unbridled' market to the laws of justice and solidarity. Only this way can we ensure a peaceful future for our world and remove the root causes of conflicts and wars: peace is the fruit of justice."

To "those with the very delicate task of formulating and approving laws: a task which brings man close to God, the Supreme Legislator," the Pope said: "Laws, whatever the areas in which the legislator intervenes or is obliged to intervene, must always respect and promote human persons. In today's pluralistic society Christian law-makers are confronted by ideas of life and by laws and requests for legalization which run contrary to their own consciences. While Christian legislators can neither formulate nor approve a law against life, when one already exists, it is licit for them to propose amendments which would diminish its adverse effects. ...

We should not flee the world in which God's call has placed them, but rather of bearing witness to their own faith and being faithful to their own principles in the difficult and ever new situations which mark the world of politics."

A. Rubino

Be men and women of peace!

"Who better than you can testify to the violence and to the disruptive forces of evil present in the world?" said the Pope to the thousands of members of the Armed Forces and the Police from all over the world gathered in St. Peter's on 19 Nov. to celebrate their Jubilee. He continued: "You fight against them every day: indeed, you are called to defend the weak, to protect the honest, to foster the peaceful coexistence of peoples. The role of the sentinel, who scans the horizon to avert danger and promote justice and peace everywhere, befits each of you."

The Holy Father spoke with admiration and appreciation to those who place their own lives at risk for the sake of others. "Your daily experience brings you face to face with difficult, some-times dramatic situations, which jeopardize human security. However, the Gospel comforts us, presenting the victorious figure of Christ, the judge of history.

However complex and difficult situations may be, do not lose trust. In the human heart, the seed of hope must never die. Indeed, always be attentive to discovering and encouraging every positive sign of personal and social renewal."

Service rendered for the good of others "will be more effective and made stronger by God's justice if they let themselves be guided by Jesus in the promotion of peace: a fundamental right of every man and woman; taking into account that 'insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until the coming of Christ' (Gaudium et spes, 78)."

Make the Gospel your code of conduct

"Christ calls 'to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.' He calls you to be holy. And to be able to achieve your vocation, according to St. Paul's well-known expression, 'Take the whole armour of God... Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the Gospel of peace above all taking the shield of faith ... take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' Above all, 'pray at all times.' (Eph 6:13-18)."

S.C.

Athletes of God

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it" (1 Co 9:24). "With this metaphor of healthy athletic competition, St. Paul highlights the value of life, comparing it to a race not only for an earthly, passing goal, but for an eternal one. A race in which not just one person, but everyone can be a winner.

Today we listen to these words of the Apostle as we gather in Rome's Olympic Stadium which once again is transformed into a great open-air church," announced John Paul II to the thousands of Athletes and their families who came to celebrate their Jubilee on Sunday 29 October.

"This is a fitting occasion to give thanks to God for the gift of sport, in which the human

person exercises his body, intellect and will, recognizing these abilities as so many gifts of his Creator.

Playing sports has become very important today, since it can encourage young people to develop important values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, sharing and solidarity. Because of the global dimensions this activity has assumed, those involved in sports have a great responsibility. They are called to make sports an opportunity for meeting and dialogue, over and above every barrier of language, race or culture. Sports, in fact, can make an effective contribution to peaceful understanding between peoples and to establishing the new civilization of love."

While stressing the important aspects of sport, the Pope stressed the need to recognize the various transgressions to which it can succumb, "and take every care to protect the human body from any attack on its integrity, from exploitation and idolatry."

Anyone who plays sport knows that: "persevering effort is needed to succeed in life. It is only at the cost of strenuous training that significant results are achieved. This is the logic of sport; it is also the logic of life, for without sacrifices, important results are not obtained.. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this: 'Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (one)' (1 Co 9:25). Every Christian is called to become a strong athlete of Christ, that is, a faithful and courageous witness to his Gospel. But to succeed in this he must persevere in prayer, be trained in virtue and follow the divine Master in everything."

The Holy Father points out, however, that Christ is God's true athlete: "Christ is the more powerful Man who for our sake confronted and defeated the 'opponent', Satan, by the power of the Holy Spirit, thus inaugurating the kingdom of God. He teaches us that to enter into glory, we must undergo suffering; he has gone before us on this path, so that we might follow in his footsteps."

Stefania Consoli

Be Christ's witnesses in the world

On Sunday 26 November the Holy Father celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Square for the Jubilee of the Apostolate of the Laity. Thirty-five years after the close of the Council, the Pope urges us to discover the great wealth of its doctrinal and pastoral motives.

"The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council marked a decisive turning-point. With the Council the hour of the laity truly struck. Thirty-five years after its conclusion, I say: we must return to the Council. In particular, you lay people must again take those documents in hand. To you the Council opened extraordinary perspectives of commitment and involvement in the Church's mission.

Today more than ever your apostolate is indispensable, if the Gospel is to be the light, salt and leaven of a new humanity.

However, what does this mission entail? What does being a Christian mean today, here and now? Being a Christian has never been easy, nor is it easy today. Following Christ demands the courage of radical choices, which often means going against the tide."

The Pope reminded us that the Jubilee invites everyone to a serious examination of conscience and lasting spiritual renewal for ever more effective missionary activity, as we are called to be examples for others: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers."

"As witnesses to Christ you are especially called to bring the light of the Gospel to the vital nerve centres of society. You are called to be prophets of Christian hope.

Dear friends, do not be afraid to take up this challenge: be holy men and women! Do not forget that the fruits of the apostolate depend on the depth of spiritual life, on the intensity of prayer, on continual formation and on sincere adherence to the Church's directives. Today I repeat to you that if you are what you should be - that is, if you live Christianity without compromise - you will set the world ablaze!

You face tasks and goals which may seem to exceed human forces. Do not lose heart! 'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion' (Ph1). Always keep your gaze fixed on Jesus! Make him the heart of the world!"

S.C.

Your love gives meaning to life

"Look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). On 3rd December, the First Sunday of Advent, the Holy Father celebrated Mass for the thousands of Disabled and Volunteers who came from around the world for their Jubilee at the Basilica of St. Paul-Outside-the-Walls.

"Today's Jubilee celebration is one of the most significant and dearest to me. Your presence expresses the truth that, on the ways of faith, hope and love, the power of the Holy Spirit means more than any human limitation or weakness. May this Jubilee meeting be a time of grace and strength for you all in the task of bearing witness in the world to human dignity, whose source is not the outward condition of the body, but the primordial likeness to the Creator."

"By your presence you reaffirm that disability is not only a need, but also and above all, a stimulus and a plea. Of course, it is a request for help, but even before that it is a challenge to individual and collective selfishness; it is an invitation to ever new forms of brotherhood. By your situation you call into question those conceptions of life that are solely concerned with satisfaction, appearances, speed and efficiency.

And where inattentiveness sharpens suffering and loneliness, faith shown in love and generosity gives strength and meaning to life.," said the Pope to the 12,000 people present, of whom 4,500 were family members and volunteer workers. John Paul II had warm words of thanks to those who take care of the disabled brothers and sisters: Thank you for the witness you bear by the fidelity, strength and patience of your love!" to family members; and of the volunteers he said: "You are a people who bear witness to hope, who silently but effectively are helping to build a freer and more fraternal world."

The Pope, who reminds us all of our responsibility towards our disabled brothers and sisters, did not fail to appeal to all those with political responsibilities: "to work towards ensuring living conditions and opportunities such that the dignity of the disabled is effectively recognized and protected." And at a festive celebration in the afternoon, he added: "The integration of disabled persons has made progress, even though there is still a long way to go. .. It is the right for every disabled person in all countries of the world to enjoy a dignified life. It is not only a question of satisfying their specific needs, but of seeing their own desire for acceptance and autonomy recognized. Integration must become an attitude and a culture; and lawmakers and government leaders must give their consistent support to this cause.

Scientific research is called to guarantee every possible form of prevention, while protecting life and health.

And among the rights to be guaranteed, we must not forget the right to study, to work, to a home, to the removal of barriers, and not only architectural ones!"

The paradox of Christian hope is that what seems humanly a ruin, is in the divine plan always a plan of salvation. Our Lord is the Lord of life and hope. Every human limitation is ransomed and redeemed in Him. Thanks to Jesus, disability is not the last word on life. Love is the last word. His love which gives meaning to life."

S. Consoli

"Thankful for life!"

Disabled people aren't old cars in need of repairs, but creatures in need of help to live. The disabled person himself is far more important than his disability.

The Church calls on the disabled persons to be teachers. The Holy Father said to them: "We count on you to teach the whole world the meaning of love." In the following letter from a man with a serious disability we read of his deep gratitude for life and of his joy despite his cross.

"I am 41 years old. They say I was a beautiful baby, but I bore a terrible illness which would totally immobilize me. If I were one of those people who love to complain I could tell you of all my suffering and humiliations, but I don't want to make anyone sad. I prefer to spread the joy God has placed within me; it wouldn't be fair to keep it for myself.

It's not that I love having this cross; but since I have it, I may as well put it to good use. It's by uniting one's suffering to that of Jesus, and with Him transforming the cross of sorrow into a cross of love, that it becomes a means of salvation, and a fount of mercy and forgiveness.

I'm no hero. I'm not a saint either. I'm just a man who has put his life into God's hands and has let himself be guided by Him. By God's mercy I was able to experience a wonderful thing: the more my body depletes, the higher my spirit rises and is made aware that life is joy and a gift, and truly wonderful! Many lose time to search for proof of the existence of God and the soul, but isn't life proof enough?

... I wish that no one had to suffer, but I know that can't be. I'm happy, though, to exist, because nothing can stop me from loving. And for this I bless the good Lord who made me for love's sake. Jesus' generosity can't be compared when He visits you with this Love. Everything that you suffer with Him and for Him is transformed into a channel, and this channel is flooded with joy and grace. And then you see your littleness, but you also see how much you are loved!

My condition is so miserable, humanly speaking, that I really don't have any reason to be happy, so much is my suffering and so many are my needs. Yet, I feel the joy of life, because not only do I live (my body lives), but my soul possesses Life!

How many times have I heard people tell me in an effort to console me: "What can you do? This is your destiny. You were born under a wrong star." Instead of consoling me, they humiliate me; for they take away my freedom, turning me into nothing more than a puppet, or the victim of a cruel puppeteer who has fun at making me suffer. But every man is called

to suffer, because every man is called to love. Rather, it is in suffering that one shows his love for God.

I often ask myself what the reason could be for so much suffering and pain, but Jesus has never wanted to clarify this mystery. He didn't come to explain why we suffer, nor to remove it. He only taught us how to use it as a means of salvation and conversion. And I believe that loving is more important than understanding. It is in this surrender that suffering becomes joy; and this, for sure, is the greatest of mysteries.

What can we do with this suffering? A burden to make our heart heavier? A pair of blinkers to stop us from seeing the suffering of others? Or should we say to Jesus: "Listen, Lord, I've got a big bundle of suffering here; it darkens my soul and suffocates my heart. Take it and use it, make it yours. If I keep it for myself it becomes a pile of rubbish, but if I give it to you, if I unite it to your suffering, then I know it won't be lost and that I won't have suffered in vain, because you will turn it into a means of redemption and salvation.

My suffering is darkness and anxiety, but you turn it into light and happiness. It is my prison, but you turn it into liberty. But there is one thing, Lord, that I ask of you: don't let my heart close itself up, that I should see only my own suffering. Lift me up into your arms! And lift me so far up that I am able to see the suffering of the world."

Luigi Rocchi

"Return to Primitive Fervour" The "Woman" against the "dragon"

(Continued from last issue)

If some in the Church tend to treat Satan's power with extreme lightness, our Blessed Mother does not underestimate the effects of his power, but warns us of his perverse intentions: "Dear Children, Today like never before I invite you to pray... Satan is strong and desires destroying not only human life, but also nature and the planet on which you live. Therefore, dear Children, pray to be protected through prayer with the blessing of God's peace. God has sent me among you to help you. If you wish, grasp hold of the Rosary, since only the Rosary can do miracles in your life" (25 Jan. 1991).

The Queen of Peace doesn't limit herself to revealing Satan's evil action in souls, but in a very concrete way she tells us what the most effective spiritual weapons are to overcome him: "I invite you to engage in combat against Satan through prayer. Now that you are aware of his activity he will intensify his action" (8 Aug. 1985). "It is only through prayer that you are able to overcome every influence of Satan, wherever you are" (7 Aug. 1986). Our Lady also underlines the importance of partaking in the Eucharist: "I call you to a more active prayer, and to be more attentive at Holy Mass. I would like the Holy Mass to be an experience of God for you" (16 May 1985). On more than one occasion Our Lady has reminded us that an intense and persevering prayer drives away the enemy: "Intensify your prayers, so that Satan is driven away from here" (5.9.85).

Our Lady wants us to know that the Rosary, in particular, is a powerful means of driving out the enemy: "Dear Children, put on the armour which defeats Satan and overcome him with

the Rosary in your hands" (8.8.85). "If you pray Satan cannot hinder you in the slightest of ways, because you are children of God and He watches over you always. Pray the Rosary; may it always be in your hands as a sign to Satan that you belong to me" (25.2.88).

Inflamed with love as she is, Our Lady implores us to renew the use of sacramentals offered by the Church, as an effective protection against evil: "I urge you to place numerous blessed objects in your homes, and each person should have a blessed object on himself. Have all the objects blessed, and that way Satan will tempt you less because you will be clothed in armour to protect you from him" (18.7.85)

Our heavenly Mother repeatedly tells us that the objective of Satan's activity in Medjugorje is to impede the great plan of grace for the world which God wants to fulfil in this time through Mary: "I am with you also in these troubled days during which Satan wants to destroy all that my Son and I are building... Satan wants to destroy everything holy within you and around you. Therefore, my Children, pray, pray, pray... (25.9.92). "... these days Satan is trying to thwart all my plans" (12 July '84). "Pray, my Children, because Satan persists in wanting to thwart my plans. Pray with the heart, and in prayer, offer yourselves to Jesus" (11 Aug. 1984).

As we see, Our Lady urges her children to become active instruments in the battle against the enemy; and she places in the hands and hearts of her children the weapons of light needed for the battle: profound prayer, fasts and sacrifice. "Satan is strong and wants to impede my plans of peace and joy and make you think that my Son is not resolute in His decisions. Therefore, I invite you, my Children, to pray and fast more intensely..." (25 Aug. 1991).

However, the truly decisive spiritual weapon which is able to crush every satanic action is love, that "divine love which was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rm 5:5). Our Lady says: "May your only means be love, always love. With love you will convert into good everything that Satan tries to destroy and possess. It is the only way to be totally mine and for me to help you" (31 July 1986).

When faced with so much satanic violence which lashes out at the world with unheard of cruelty, Our Lady does not hesitate to ask her children for the highest witness of love, which is the offering of one's own life to God for the salvation of others. It is in full conformity with the Gospel: "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:12-14).

This is the apex of Mary's call, in Fatima and Medjugorje, and the seal to the definite victory of her Immaculate Heart over the dark powers in the world: "Dear Children, Satan is strong and for this reason I am asking for your prayers, and that you offer them to me for the sake of those who are under his influence, that they may be saved. Witness with your lives. Sacrifice your lives for the salvation of the world.." (25.2.88).

This is the regal journey victoriously covered by Mary to the foot of the Cross; from this living fount flow grace and light in abundance and without ceasing, till it reaches the hearts of all men, and to give new life and new hope to multitudes of brothers and sisters. Though they lament beneath the yoke of sin they thirst for God's love. Out of love His side was opened and from it gushed forth the living water which they desire; and His living water is offered to the world without measure through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the most loving of Mothers!

G. Ferraro

The devil and his "organization"

Reflections on Satan's actions in our life inevitably bring us to consider his "organization" of satanic sects through which the devil spreads his plan of death in the world. The following excerpts from the interview of Fr. Amorth for the magazine "30 Giorni" follow on from our article in Echo 154.

"The things that I know about satanic sects have been told to me by people who decided to abandon them, and to do so it cost them enormous effort and placed their own lives at risk. What they experience in the sects leaves deep wounds, and the diabolic influence causes great suffering. It takes exorcisms to liberate them. Anyone who decides to abandon a satanic sect lives in terror. In America he would be killed; and if this doesn't happen in Italy yet, the sect does perform a curse (a satanic rite) against those who abandon.

Q. Do you think that satanic sects are spreading fast in Italy?

A. In Italy I would say there are about six to seven hundred, and they must be small groups because that allows them to get together more easily without being noticed. There are four big satanic sects in Italy; the others would be small groups of about a dozen members each. Satanism in Italy, however, involves a great number of people who don't even belong to a sect. Take satanic rock, for instance. Now, I don't to accuse rock music, but there is a form of rock music known as satanic rock which preaches a terribly negative outlook, and combats the Catholic religion and all forms of social order, and teaches, instead, that everything is permissible and that the individual is god. It leads to hatred of the Church. There are also others forms of satanism. I recently saw a book - it belonged to a young girl - and it contained a rite of consecration to Satan and ways to commit suicide. Suicide amongst adolescents is on the rise. We must not forget that God is God of life, and Satan is the lord of death. St. Augustine said that if it weren't for God, Satan would kill us all.

Q. Why do you think satanism spreads so easily today?

A. There are too many people who have no reason for living. Young people receive everything from their parents, except the faith. When there is no more faith in people they cede to superstition, and particularly today, to the occult.

Q. For many, joining a satanic sect is a just a game...

A. Sadly this is true. Many, in fact, start because they are bored. The occult and satanism always have roused people's curiosity. The new experience, new emotions, new power that people acquire in the sects fascinates them; and Satan really does hand out his gifts of wealth, pleasure and success. In the same way that Christ was tempted: "I will give you the whole world if you prostrate yourself before me," we also are tempted; and Heaven knows how many fall at Satan's feet today!

Q. Do you think satanism is on the increase?

A. Yes, I do. Some people, on hearing these things, are horrified, but some imitate the examples! Satanism today receives so much publicity; and internet has become one of its main channels. Access is so easy; and once you're in you're given full instructions, even on

how to contact them. Consecrated hosts are being stolen all the time; and these are sold! So satanists believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, more than some Catholics!" (Fr. G. Amorth; an interview)

News from the blessed land

Fr. Slavko Barbaric, O.F.M., died on Friday 24 November 2000 of a heart attack, after finishing the Way of the Cross on Mt. Krizevac, which he led almost every Friday with the parishioners and pilgrims. He suddenly did not feel well, sat down, became unconscious and gave up his soul to the Lord. It was 3.30 pm.

Born 11th March 1946 in Dragicini, Bosnia-Herzegovina, he was ordained a priest on 19 December 1971. After five years of pastoral work in the province of Herzegovina, in the parish of Capljina, he did his postgraduate studies in Freiburg where he obtained a doctorate in religious pedagogy and the title of psycho-therapist in 1982. From 1982 to 1984, he served as students' chaplain in Mostar. Because of his work with the young people and his lessons on prayer to which the students responded enthusiastically, the Communist regime began persecuting him.

Thanks to his knowledge of the main European languages and his immense love for the Mother of God, in spite of the many obligations in the parishes he was affiliated with, brother Slavko dedicated his every free moment to work with pilgrims in Medjugorje. He was officially transferred to Medjugorje in September 1983.

Familiar to millions through his many books and articles on spiritual subjects, Fr. Slavko faithfully led the evening programme of prayer in the parish. Often in the early mornings he could be found in prayer on Mt. Krizevac. He led numerous spiritual retreats in Medjugorje and conducted meetings on the theme of the Medjugorje events in many parts of the world. A beloved son of the Gospa, Fr. Slavko faithfully served the needs of the Parish, and millions of pilgrims all these years.

It is difficult to enumerate everything that this great man did, but the time he spent in Medjugorje was definitely a very special time in which he dedicated his life to spread the message of peace which was born in Medjugorje 19 and a half years ago.

(Press Bulletin)

We miss Fr. Slavko already

Slavko died immediately after completing the Way of the Cross on Friday 24 November. He died in front of all those who had accompanied him. It was a sudden death, despite the ascetic lifestyle which one thought would have given him a long life. No doubt, he had worn himself out for the Lord. The visionaries greatly miss their spiritual director who was so often the priestly and spiritual mediator between them and the parish.

Medjugorje has lost its international ambassador (a polyglot for the five continents) and its main interpreter for the pilgrims. He was about to receive a veto for those journeys which so lengthened his radius of action. During and after the war he had created important humanitarian works, such as the Village for children and widows in Medjugorje and the

adjacent school. He had first desired the annual Youth Festival in Medjugorje, and the annual seminar of prayer for priests; and he organized monthly retreats based on prayer and fasting for pilgrims.

He was a trained psychologist, and a creative, modest and spiritual man. While some think the monthly message is poor and repetitive, Slavko would, month after month, bring out its spiritual depth and wealth which was always rooted in the Gospel; and as a priest he sought to transmit its flame. Those who thought he was not serving a good cause will dare to rejoice at his death; a death which deals a blow to the spiritual sphere and fruits of the Shrine.

Regarding Slavko's death we have learned that he had concluded the Way of the Cross not in front of the big cross as was usual, but near the station of the Resurrection, in front of the XIV station (deposition in the sepulchre). At the end of this Jubilee Year, on the 24th of the month which was the date of the first apparition, he concluded his meditation with these prophetic words: "May the Gospa pray for us at the hour of our death." Then he blessed the group; and as he began to descend he had to sit down.

On that same day, after Slavko's death, Marija had her daily apparition. It was expected that Mary would have said something about him, but all she said was: "Nastavite dalje!" which could be translated as meaning "keep on going" and was one of his typical expressions. The corpse was placed in the Chapel of Adoration in an open coffin according to custom. Many paid homage to Slavko with a final visit in an atmosphere of profound peace and prayer, where the desire for heaven was mixed with tears.

On the 25th, day of the monthly message, Marija was in Medjugorje. With tears in her eyes she laughed as she repeated: "Slavko u nebu! Slavko u nebu!" (Slavko in heaven). It was the first time that someone had been mentioned in an official message (except for the Holy Father). In doing so "Our Lady acknowledged him before the world, just as he had proclaimed her messages to the entire world," concluded Sr. Emmanuel who transmitted the heart-warming news concerning his last moments.

He was buried the day after in the presence of a large crowd of both locals and visitors. Mons. Peric, who had tried over the past year to make him leave Medjugorje, celebrated at the funeral: a sign of peace and communion which Slavko had patiently and lengthily waited for.

Faithful to his fasts and morning prayer (his hour of tranquillity) Slavko wore himself out for God's cause, both at home and in the five continents. It won't be easy for the present parish team to fill his boots. May Slavko continue to work for us from his place in heaven!
Fr. René Laurentin (for Echo of Mary and Chrétiens Magazine)

Sr. Emmanuel remembers

It is with tears of joy that I write of our dear Fr. Slavko's return to his Father's home. The circumstances of his death are amazing and most beautiful! We are in awe of the way God called his faithful servant, who was watchful and praying at the hour of his Master's return. The name Slavko comes from the Croatian word for glory, and it is at the glorious panel of the Resurrection, just below the top of Krizevac, that the Risen One came to fetch His servant and take him up into his everlasting embrace. (...)

The clouds which had brought some rain on the way up divided and let the sun shine through momentarily just on the spot where Fr. Slavko had died. The group accompanying

him then saw a rainbow appear over the valley which seemed to rise up from St. James' church in Medjugorje.

At the funeral an endless procession wound its way through the streets of Medjugorje to escort the coffin of their priest and apostle and pay him homage. By special permission, Fr. Slavko was buried in Kovacica graveyard behind the church. In the name of the visionaries Jakov thanked him for having been with them for all these years, in the best moments as well as the worst. (...)

Let me share with you a word of Fr. Slavko which describes his personality, and his determination and sense of humour so well. It was in 1987, and my friend Kate was about to go up the stairs to the Rectory with him when he stopped to listen to a group of elderly American ladies chattering at the bottom of the steps. He looked amused and asked Kate if she had heard what they were saying. "No, Father, I was not paying attention," she said. "Well, each one was explaining to the others how she manages to save energy! One does her laundry, another her cooking, and another her shopping, etc., in a way which saves energy. Each was vying with the other for the best energy-saving formula so as to have more time and energy to spend elsewhere."

Then he added with a mischievous look: "I wonder what they'll do with all that extra energy when they are lying in their coffins! You know, when I die, I hope that no one will be able to squeeze out another drop of energy from me!" (and his hands mimicked the squeezing). He ran up the stairs, then turned around and said: "And what about you?" This is a question for us all today! Fr. Slavko left this world after having done his utmost. Such was his example!

(From Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

Eyewitness reports

Following are some first-hand reports:

A sister from the Beatitudes Community was amongst the faithful who prayed the Way of the Cross with Fr. Slavko. She recalls: "All the way up, at each Station, we stopped some metres beforehand because of a group which was preceding us. So as not to disturb them, Fr. Slavko maintained a certain distance; a gesture which I found so respectful. That is why he did not finish the Way of the Cross in his usual manner beneath the big cross on top of Krizevac, but at the last Station (of the Resurrection). After the blessing he remained briefly with the pilgrims, then, as usual, went around the cross to pick up litter to keep Krizevac clean before descending."

On the Friday and Saturday many men and women of all age groups and nationalities, including many young local people, came to pray beside his coffin. I heard many say they were moved by Fr. Ivan Sesar's words (the new parish priest) at Fr. Slavko's tomb on Sunday afternoon. One person said he was touched by the words: "You left us with many projects and it won't be easy to fulfil them without you, but I promise that we will continue." This is significant when we think that Fra Ljubo, a young Franciscan who acted as assistant to the new parish priest, has just been appointed as Fr. Slavko's successor for the parish. Let us support him with our prayers!

As former parish priest, Fr. Ivan Landeka knew Fr. Slavko better; his words were also moving: "We often told you that you'd die on those mountains; and you really did. The hill of apparitions and Krizevac were your 'office.' Just lately you had received quite a few

"bashings" which wounded you. Forgive us for not understanding you. You always went on ahead, and before we could understand what you were about, you were half way there. You put your talents to good use; you used up all your gifts..."

In a long procession, people came to bid farewell to this Franciscan who spent his life to make others love Mary Queen of Peace and her Son, Jesus. Together with Fr. Jozo and Fr. Tomislav, Fr. Slavko was one of the apostles called to be a witness of the apparitions from the very beginning.

Nicola Bertani

His work will continue

Fr. Ljubo, a Franciscan in Medjugorje, has been appointed as Fr. Slavko's successor for the parish and as such will comment the monthly message of Our Lady from Medjugorje. He said:

"Above all I want to pray to Our Lady to help me and to open the hearts of all those who listen, so that her message may bring physical and spiritual well-being and the peace which hearts and families so desire. I pray to Our Lady to make up for my shortcomings and errors caused by my limits.

The death of our brother Slavko was sudden and unexpected. It is sorrowful because it has left a void in many people for whom he was a true father who so faithfully served our Heavenly Mother and her calls for so long.

I am aware that no one can replace him, for he was faithful, dedicated and untiring in his love for Our Lady and her cause. And his love spread out to touch many others who had never experienced love of any kind, neither human or divine. In his work as confessor, preacher and speaker, his dedication was total. He was always on the move; he was never idle.

When Our Lady said (on 25 July): "Do not forget that here on earth yours is a journey towards eternity, and that your home is in heaven," Fr. Slavko commented for Radio Maria: "Mary invites us to be constantly aware that here on earth we are pilgrims and that we come from God's love. God wanted us here in this time, this century, this country, this family - right here where each of us are - with the gifts of which he has endowed us; and at the same time He has given us the freedom to choose for eternal life. For us to have this awareness Our Lady has set two conditions; that is, to be open to God's love and to abandon all sin and egoism."

(From a recording)\$

Together with all those who loved Fr. Slavko, we of "Echo of Mary" mourn his death, and will miss him and the precious work he did for Medjugorje. Well aware of the esteem and affection he held for Fr. Angelo and his 'Eco di Maria,' we are grateful for being able to publish the news regarding his pastoral activities.

At the same time we rejoice with the Saints and the Angels and our Blessed Mother for Slavko's birth into heaven. We are certain that he will continue to help all those who work to spread the message of Medjugorje and intercede so that fruits of conversion and peace will be reaped by souls the world over.

To those who continue fra Slavko's work, we embrace you in the Heart of the Queen of Peace, and remain united in prayer.

Eco di Maria, Italy

Jakov, the youngest of the six Medjugorje visionaries, received his last daily apparition in 1998. Our Lady promised she would appear to him every Christmas day. So also this year Our Lady came, holding the Child Jesus in her arms, and joyfully blessed everyone. She gave the following message:

"Dear Children, Today when Jesus is born - and with His birth He brings immeasurable joy, love and peace - I invite you in a special way to say your 'yes' to Jesus. Open your hearts so that Jesus may enter them, come to dwell in them, and begin working through you. Only in this way will you comprehend the true beauty of the love, joy and peace of God.

Dear Children, rejoice for the birth of Jesus and pray for all the hearts which have not opened to Jesus, that Jesus may enter also each of these hearts, and work through them; and that every person may be an example of a true person through whom God works."

Jelena Vasilj, chosen by Our Lady to be a living channel of her love through the events of Medjugorje, will collaborate with the Echo of Mary from this present issue.

Jelena will help us reflect on the various

themes which regard the life of men in their journey towards the Kingdom of God.

Considering her profound affective and spiritual ties with Fr. Slavko, Jelena desires dedicating this first reflection to him.

"A fruitful death"

None of us can say they weren't surprised by the death of Fr. Slavko. It was such a surprise that it took a little effort to accept the idea that this was to do with Our Lady's plan. The words Our Lady said to Marija Pavlovic the day after were thus consoling. But still, death is a mystery which often leaves us feeling estranged and confused. If philosophers have not been able to penetrate its veils, let's not forget that also Jesus' disciples were strongly perturbed by it (Peter denied Jesus three times when faced with His death). It is a fact that the human heart yearns after life; St. John tells us that even Jesus was deeply moved by Lazarus' death, and wept, which convinced the Jews of Jesus' love for him (cf. Jn 11:35). If the death of our dear father Slavko deprives us, on the one hand, of the affection of a man dear to us all, on the other hand, his death has borne many fruits. He is the seed which, upon dying, bears much fruit, making the harvest a rich one (cf. Jn 12).

I was speaking with some friends who were also deeply moved by his departure, and it seemed to us all that we were going through a new conversion. A friend told me that it was as if things had become clearer, as though a veil had been removed. And so here we were in front of the mystery which surrounds death; but Slavko's was the 'luminous' death of another

person who not only was obedient to the end, but whose death was an integral part of God's plan for himself. His death reminds us, in some ways, of Christ's death. Like his Lord, Slavko had just completed the Way of the Cross, and it was close to 3 pm which is the hour of Jesus' mercy. This Christian death, then, becomes part of our inner life.

We didn't see it as a casual event, but a necessary one; and it should be the same for us all, if we've decided to follow Christ. So it's not just a passing on into the new life, which in a certain way we all experience through baptism and the sacraments, but, rather, has to do with the trial of love we undergo during our lifetime.

Each of us experience death a little through the degeneration of our bodies, through sicknesses. The Lord invites us to lay down in His hands our old self, including our body which we become so attached to. Hence, we are called to make our passing-on an active, not passive, one where we give up to the Lord all that we received, so we can receive in fullness.

This can be lived already, with intensity, in the spirit. The spirit, in a certain way, suffers from the separation of the body, and continues to do so until it is reunited with its 'glorious' form. To experience Christ's death in us means, above all, to simplify our life and be oriented towards the essential.

Truly, our life is no more than a twinkle. God can call us right in the middle of our fullest activity, as He did with Fr. Slavko; so we ought not let our spirit become burdened by superficial worries. We must, instead, tend towards love, for it is the only thing which will remain in the end. We are given this life so that we can conquer Heaven, and eternal life is our reward. So we have to be on the watch at all times, making sure we are not caught up by the chains of man's weaknesses, human judgement and material dominion.

Death is a sign that each of us belong to Christ alone, and that the final judgement is His. To anticipate this moment and be prepared for the test, we can find help in an examination of our consciences every evening before we go to bed, as though it were a little "last judgement."

Death is also hanging on our walls, on the crucifix. That body is the dead body of Christ; and it was under this that Our Lady asked us to remain to meditate the glorious mysteries because the Father glorified His Son on the cross, and through His cross death has been overcome.

Let us adore the Cross, as Our Lady desires, and pray for the virtue of patience. Patience, says the Apostle, generates hope, and hope is the ultimate source of faith and charity. And let us ask Our Lady to pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

Jelena Vasilj

In memory of Fr. Slavko..

* "His sudden death left us feeling lost and sorrowed, but Our Lady's message brought comfort and light. Alberto Bonifacio, great friend and collaborator of Fr. Slavko.

Alberto reminds us that the 8th International Seminar for leaders of Peace Centres, prayer groups, pilgrimages, etc. will be held in Medjugorje from 26 Feb. to 1 March 2001. The theme is: "Peace and Reconciliation". Bookings must be made. Fax Bosnia 387-36651300, e-mail: medjugorje-mir@medjugorje.hr; phone Bosnia 387-36651988

* Nothing has changed, for I continue to petition you for help; I have the impression that you'll be busier now than when you were in your beloved Medjugorje! - Gianni Romolotti, Milan

* From the moment I heard of Fr. Slavko's death I began praying to him to intercede for my wife who has been suffering for some time of a bad and painful back which limits her activity. This is the 5th day and there has been steady and progressive healing. I am sure that Fr. Slavko is petitioning Mary and that together they are presenting this cause to the Almighty. - Philip Vickers, France

* I shall miss Fr. Slavko. He was one of the pillars of Medjugorje. We had the pleasure of meeting him during a meeting in Paraguay in February of 1995, then in Ecuador the same year. His humble and fatherly presence was a grace for us all. - Rebeca Vanialgo, Paraguay

* I bless you Fr. Slavko for all that you did for me in Argentina and during my visit to Medjugorje. I will always remember you. I can never forget the Eucharistic Adorations done with your guidance. Please pray very much for me and my Argentina. Thank you for the "seed" you sowed in souls during your pilgrimages around the world! - Conrado Bauer, Argentina

* Our sincere condolences to the parish of Medjugorje and all those involved with the shrine for the loss of our brother Slavko; an expression used by Our Lady which we also like. - Centro Maria, Rome

* Fr. Slavko was a great fisherman of men. Like Jesus, he gave up his life at the foot of the Cross, for all of us. Thank you Fr. Slavko! - Roberto Magagna, Madrid

Concerning the Echo..

Alan Morris, permanent deacon from South Africa: I look forward to the Echo arriving, long may it continue and I am sure that Our Lady is behind it all. There is always so much news.

Sr. Bernadette, England: I look forward so much to each issue and use many articles for my morning meditations.

Fr. John Pascoe, England: Thank you so much for sending me the Echo. I am thrilled to read it each time it comes and use it in my homilies.

Brother Piero, Uganda: Thank you for Echo - I read it straight away - and thank you for the service you render to the many brothers and sisters. I'm a 67 year old Combonian missionary, 40 of which I've spent in South Africa, Sudan and Uganda. I wish to be united to the millions of faithful who pray for peace in the world, especially for Africa and Uganda which is so much in need of peace. Only one month ago, Combonian priest Fr. Raffaele, was shot, his belongings stolen and his body burnt. May Mary, Queen of Peace, intercede for us all before the good Father.

Sr. Franca, Albania: Dear friends of Echo, thank you ever so much for sending me the

journal so regularly! I'm so happy when it arrives; it helps me in my apostolate in this land where the people find it so hard to believe. I am aware of how much it costs you to keep the paper going and for this reason I always remember you in my prayers so that Our Lady may protect you and provide for your needs.

Franciscan Missionaries of the Eucharist, Los Angeles: Many, many thanks for Echo. We always look forward to it so eagerly. God bless you and provide for you, that you may always work with enthusiasm in bringing others to love our Blessed Mother.

Sr. M. Elizabeth, Kenya: I just wish to congratulate you for the way you have kept up with this inspiring and prayerful magazine. I can't tell you how many people so look forward to be remembered when I get copies from you.

** Our heartfelt thanks to readers who remembered us at Christmas with greetings and prayers! On behalf of the many unable to offer financial support, a big thank you for donations received. Please forgive us if we cannot thank you personally.

"God bless us with the light of His face."

May He be the only Light in our lives! And this light will shine in us for others to see when we really will give the Lord first place in our hearts.

Let us offer our bodies as instruments of justice, that His salvation may be fulfilled.

God bless us all.

Villanova, 1 January 2001

** During recent General Audiences John Paul II has spoken on the subject of interreligious dialogue (cf. Echo 154) in response to the numerous discordant opinions expressed since the publication of the document "Dominus Jesus". Of particular significance were the following points. (We will resume with the topic next issue.)

"All the just of the earth sing their praise to God, having reached the goal of glory after travelling the steep and tiring road of earthly life. They have passed 'through the great tribulation' and have been purified by the blood of the Lamb, 'poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28). They all share, then, in the same source of salvation which God has poured out upon humanity. For 'God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him' (Jn 3:17)"

"All the just of the earth, including those who do not know Christ and his Church, who, under the influence of grace, seek God with a sincere heart (cf. LG, no. 16), are thus called to build the kingdom of God by working with the Lord, who is its first and decisive builder."