

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

Jan-Feb 2006 - Yr 22 # 1; Echo of Mary, Queen of Peace, P.O. Box 27, I-31030 Bessica TV, Italy. Ph/fax +39(0)423470331 - E-mail: info@ecodimaria.net- A translation of the original Italian: Eco di Maria

185



Our Lady's message 25 November 2005:

“Dear Children, Also today I call you to pray, pray, pray till prayer becomes life. My Children, particularly at this time I pray before God to give you the gift of faith. Only in faith will you discover the joy of the gift of life that God has given you. Your heart will be joyful thinking of eternity. I am with you and I love you tenderly. Thank you for responding to my call.”

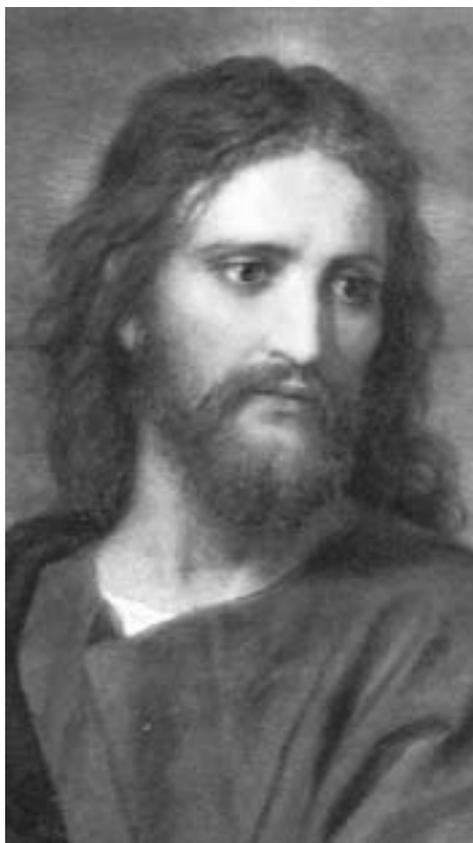
The Gift of Life

In a world that emphasizes the ephemeral, virtual choices, and temporary relations, Mary speaks of **eternity**. In a world where the doctrine of market attempts to mortify the individual personality and produce a mass of stereotypes, Mary proposes the doctrine of the **faith** which enhances the dignity of the single person, ratifying the original, unique essence of the individual. In a world where man attempts to seize the principle of life, Mary ratifies that **life is a gift of God**. Let us meditate on her words, that our soul may be imbued with this message, and our soul be irrigated, fertilized, and blossom; and may not pass without having accomplished its purpose (cf. Is 55:10-11).

Pray, pray, pray, till prayer becomes life. Prayer is a bridge that connects us to God; it places us in communion with Him. It acts as a vehicle for His Love. Prayer, real prayer, is never sterile: sooner or later it makes life fertile, gives shape and substance to life, it becomes life, eternal life which we can experience already on the earth, because the eternal life is *to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent* (cf. Jn 17:3).

My Children, particularly at this time I pray before God to give you the gift of faith. At this time when our opulent countries identify the Christmas gift with consumerist presents Mary instead implores for us the **gift of faith**. And she will surely obtain this gift, as it is also God's desire. **Only in faith will you discover the joy of the gift of life that God has given you.** This is not just biological life, but much more so, it is life in Christ Jesus, in His Name (cf. Jn 20:31). *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* (Jn 10:10) which is to say full life in which will reign messianic peace (Is 11:1-9) and *there shall no more be an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days* (Is 65:20).

Life is a gift of God, and as such is to be accepted from the moment of conception, is to be respected, honoured,



He is the King of peace, and He blesses us with His peace

cared for and defended in all circumstances, in health and in sickness, in youth and in old age. Human life is to be protected from everything that disfigures the image of God impressed in it (cf. Gen 1:27). Life is to be promoted so it may always conform to Christ impressed in each life at Baptism. Life is to be offered up, in Jesus and with Jesus, to the Father so that it may be a *sacrifice pleasing to God*. These days sacrifice is refused without realizing that by doing so it is man who is sacrificed and reduced to a good for consumption, merchandise for exchange, an object for the market. Life is to be lived as a **gift of God**, and thus offered, spent for others: *heal the infirm, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without cost, give without charge* (Mt 10:8).

Your heart will be joyful thinking of eternity. Eternity is life in Christ: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory* (Col 3:1-4).

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 December 2005:

“Dear Children! Also today in my arms I bring you little Jesus, the King of Peace, who blesses you with His peace. My children, in a special way today I call you to be my bearers of peace in this world without peace; God will bless you. Do not forget my children: I am your mother. With little Jesus in my arms I bless you all with a special blessing. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Bearers of Peace

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you (Jn 14:27). These words of Jesus come to mind each time Mary speaks of peace. There is an enormous difference between the peace that comes from God and peace of the world. True peace is a gift of God; it is fruit of His most pure Love. Worldly peace, even when it is not fruit of oppression, can at the most be fruit of human solidarity; it can contain a reflection of divine Love, but it can never be its fruit. We know our limits, and the recurring temptation to defend or impose peace with weapons – once with the sword, today with terrible instruments of destruction.

Like then, and perhaps even more so now, ours is a **world without peace**. It always will be for as long as we seek peace with our own strength, instead of imploring for this gift from God. Though not easy, it is the only way to put a stop to hatred, hostility and divisions that continue to divide civilizations, nations, peoples, and religions and even people within the same nations, the same religious creed, the same city and the same family. Today divisions have penetrated even the psyche of individuals, creating apprehension or more subtle sicknesses than in the past.

This **world without peace** is our world, our planet earth, but also the world of our cities, of our families, and our personal world. What can we do? Where can we start? We can start from the message: **“Dear Children! Also today in my arms I bring you little Jesus, the King of Peace, who blesses you with His peace.”** This is where we can begin. The Infant Jesus is in Mary's arms, not to be cuddled by His mom, or admired by us. No, He is there to be given to us (**I bring you**); He is there to be received by us, lived by us. It all starts from here. If we accept Jesus in us, His blessing will blossom into peace, because He is the **King of peace**. May our soul be the womb for God who comes into the world, and shrine of His Presence.

There is no special project to study. We only need let ourselves be penetrated by

The Year of two Popes

the presence of the Child that Mary brings to us as a gift, and be inundated with His blessing. Jesus is the sole project of peace that God offers us, and He is found in a bed of straw. Conversion begins from an encounter. The Gospel is not a treatise on theology, but the story of an encounter between Jesus and mankind: those who accept Him, those who treat Him with indifference, and those who refuse Him. *"But to all who received Him, He gave power to become children of God"* (Jn 1:12).

If we let Jesus encounter us we will bear His peace, His caress and His loving look to those who seek our hands, and our eyes. *You received without cost, you must give without charge* (Mt 10:8). No longer eye for eye, violence for violence! Now, after the coming of Jesus, the reply to hatred is love, only love; to violence it is forgiveness; to betrayal it is the kiss of peace. This is possible only if we are so full of God that we are a pure expression of His presence in us. This is why we must become a womb for God. *Nothing is impossible to God* (Lk 34:37).

Mary knows; she repeats it to us in all her messages, and today she confirms it with the triple blessing of the Son, of the Father, and of her own personal and **special** blessing. Before it is too late, may we be converted into **His bearers of peace**.
N.Q.

THE CHURCH

The Church lives from Christ and with Christ. He offers her His spousal love, guiding her through the centuries; and she, with the abundance of her gifts, accompanies men and women on their journey so that those who accept Christ may have life and have it abundantly. The Church always desires to be welcoming, in truth and in charity.

MARY IMMACULATE

Looking at Mary, how can we, her children, fail to let the aspiration to beauty, goodness and purity of heart be aroused in us? Her heavenly candour draws us to God, helping us to overcome the temptation to live a mediocre life composed of compromises with evil, and directs us decisively towards the authentic good that is the source of joy.

The closer a person is to God, the closer God is to people. We see this in Mary. The fact that she is totally with God is the reason why she is so close to human beings. For this reason she can be the Mother of every consolation and every help.

Our Lady says to us: 'Have the courage to dare with God! Try it! Do not be afraid of Him! Have the courage to risk with faith! with goodness! with a pure heart! Commit yourselves to God, then you will see that it is precisely by doing so that your life will become broad and light, not boring but filled with infinite surprises, for God's infinite goodness is never depleted!'

COMMUNION WITH GOD

God calls us to communion with him, which will be completely fulfilled in the return of Christ, and He himself strives to ensure that we arrive prepared for this final and

At the conclusion of a year it is natural to turn back and cast your eye over past events. In particular, on the last day of December, the Church sings the *Te Deum* after the last Vespers to give thanks to God for the year about to end. Not only, but the compilation of what we could call an annual report helps lay foundations for the year to come.

As we think of the year 2005 memories stop especially at the events in the "house of Peter" – in particular on the conclusion of the lengthy and **fertile pontificate of Pope Woytila**, and the beginning of the **new pontificate of Pope Ratzinger**, who is a gift to the Church, the splendour of which is being gradually revealed to us.

A great deal has been said about John Paul II, but given the greatness of this man and the depth of his spirituality there is still much more to be said, however, there will be other occasions for this. Nonetheless, we cannot fail to give thanks for his example of faith, courage and obedient love which enabled him to face death on the cross of his infirmity which he offered up to the Lord to the last with the meekness of a lamb... till the end, when he whispered: "Now let me go to the Father's house..." The rest is news.

decisive encounter. The future is, so to speak, contained in the present, or better, in the presence of God himself, who in his unfailing love does not leave us on our own or abandon us even for an instant, just as a father and mother never stop caring for their children while they are growing up.

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is God's gift and His project, but human beings are called to respond with their entire being without excluding any part of themselves. Thus, the entire work of creation and redemption which God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, continues to bring about, from the beginning to the end of the cosmos and of history, is summed up in every individual person. And because the first coming of Christ is at the centre of the history of humanity, and His glorious return is at its end, every personal existence is thus called to be measured against Him - in a mysterious and multiform way - during the earthly pilgrimage, in order to be found "in Him" at the moment of His return.

LIGHT

Light is a source of life, and means knowledge; it means truth, as contrasted with the darkness of falsehood and ignorance. Light gives us life, it shows us the way. But light, as a source of heat, also means love. Where there is love, light shines forth in the world; where there is hatred, the world remains in darkness. The true mystery of Christmas is the inner brightness radiating from this Child. May that inner brightness spread to us, and kindle in our hearts the flame of God's goodness; may all of us, by our love,

The holy death of this *grain of wheat* has germinated a new ear and given us Benedict XVI: meek pontiff with clear and solid ideas, able to orient with wisdom and strength the path of today's Church as she journeys amid the waves of doubt, uncertainty, relativism, and nihilism submersing the man of today.

We needed a pope like him. He is one of the greatest living theologians, yet it became immediately evident that he is also meek, timid, reserved, fatherly and humble, in contrast with the image painted of Cardinal Ratzinger who was feared for his doctrinal rigour.

He is not afraid to tell the truth, which he proclaimed in his first message dedicated to peace. He has thus been proceeding in the wake of his "venerable predecessor" as he likes to call JP II, while remaining ever attentive to the needs that arise from the heart of humanity.

We have drawn from various public interventions of Pope Benedict in an attempt to capture his thought and to see which paths are being asked of us to journey along, both personally and together.
S.C.



bring light to the world! Let us keep this light-giving flame, lit in faith, from being extinguished by the cold winds of our time!

IN TRUTH IS PEACE

In truth is peace expresses the conviction that wherever and whenever men and women are enlightened by the splendour of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace.

Peace cannot be reduced to the simple absence of armed conflict, but needs to be understood as 'the fruit of an order which has been planted in human society by its divine Founder.'

Whenever there is a loss of fidelity to the transcendent order, and a loss of respect for that "grammar" of dialogue which is the universal moral law written on human hearts, whenever the integral development of the person and the protection of his fundamental rights are hindered or denied, or when countless people are forced to endure intolerable injustices and inequalities, how can we hope that the good of peace will be realized? The essential elements which make up the truth of that good are missing.

Lying is linked to the tragedy of sin and its perverse consequences, which have had, and continue to have, devastating effects on the lives of individuals and nations. How can we fail to be seriously concerned about lies in our own time, lies which are the framework

Feast of Light for Consecrated Persons

The feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, celebrated 2nd February, or forty days after Christmas, was fixed in ancient times, and has undergone various changes. In the Eastern Tradition this day is called the *Feast of the Meeting*, because in the sacred space of the Temple of Jerusalem, the meeting takes place between God's graciousness and the expectation of the chosen people; between the Old and New Testaments.

It later spread to the West and became known as the *feast of lights*, and the solemnity of the benediction and procession with candles – lit during calamities – was introduced, as a way of renewing one's entrustment to God. From here it became known as the *Candlemas* feast. Thus, the theme of light is fundamental, for light symbolizes Christ: the true Light who came to illumine His people and all peoples. He opens the way of salvation for every man. This is why the candles are blessed and why one goes in procession towards Christ in the house of the Father where we find Him in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Connected with the Nativity and the Epiphany, **this feast also serves as a bridge to Easter** since it celebrates the consecration of Jesus to God, when Mary and Joseph presented the Son of God at the temple according to Jewish law, that through Him the way of salvation may be opened for all.

According to Jewish law a woman was to be purified forty days after giving birth, and at the same time was to offer a ritual sacrifice to the temple for a first-born son as a ransom since first-born sons belonged by right to God. For these two reasons Mary and Joseph went to the Temple, but in their case the offering of the first-born son to the Lord was particularly significant since they were placing the life of the little Saviour back into the hands of the Father from Whom they had received Him, and by doing so they were renouncing their rights as parents. At the Temple, while Jesus was still a babe and in Mary's arms, old Simeon, illumined by the Holy Spirit, proclaimed to all the truth of the babe's identity and **sacrificial mission for the redemption of the world.**

Mary is not unaware of the Son's call, and at the Temple old Simeon prophesies the future of the baby and her own. He tells her, in fact, that a *sword will pierce her soul*, when she will actively participate in the redeeming work of the Son with the **offering of her own suffering.** Simeon also hails Jesus as the One who will be the glory of his people, Israel; and as the one who will prepare the salvation before all peoples and be *light to illumine all peoples.*

In 1997 John Paul II, contemplating the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, chose this festivity to celebrate the first **day dedicated to consecrated life.** The Pope asked all consecrated persons to thank God together for the gift of their

vocation, and to renew together their commitment before Him. This appointment is renewed every year in each diocese of the world.

Every consecrated person knows he or she was predestined for his task, from the very beginning of his life. Of course, each has a story and charism of his own: some proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, some choose to stay next to those most in need, others to teach children, while some dedicate their lives to prayer and to adoration of God as reparation for the refusal God receives from the hearts of men.

However, the thing that unites them all is the task to proclaim – with the word or with works – the **primacy of a supernatural reality**; that is, that God is alive and in our midst, and He alone can give an answer to man's problems.

The candles that are lit at Candlemas remind us of the **need to be vigilant**, by keeping the light of hope, of faith and of love always at hand, in a world which often sinks into darkness and anxiety.

Consecrated persons have to know how to see beyond the uncertainties of our world, to read the signs of the times, like Simeon and Anna the prophetess who were able to see in the baby Jesus the great miracle of Salvation being donated to the world. To those who accept Him,

the Holy Spirit grants a penetrating gaze, a wisdom that is more than human, and inexplicable strength and courage; to show the world that **he who lives in God and for God** disposes of mysterious resources that make him special and transfigure his humanity.

The choice of a life lived in poverty, chastity and obedience must liberate the person of his egoism, and bring him to inner freedom that allows him to **live the life of a redeemed person** who is not imprisoned and bound by sin. This way it is possible to show (the world) that the Kingdom of God can be realized already here on the earth, and that His grace is superabundant and transforms our humanity from degraded to risen.

The consecrated person becomes **light for the nations** when he shows with his life that it is possible to pass from death to life, when he knows how to spread the joy of living to others, when his love knocks over the contempt and lack of love in others. His love must be **selfless love**, able to propagate mercy and forgiveness of sins, and heal the wounds of the heart.

Consecrated life, in its various forms, is a witness that life in God is full of joy, and is capable of showing the Father's Face, that the world may see His presence. The various and multiform experiences that range from prayer to charity make the *things* of God tangible. Some in the world might best reflect His love; someone else His patience, peace, or wisdom, so that the mosaic of His presence takes form, and that people may know that God walks beside His children in those who offer themselves to Him without reserve. Sabina Rosciano

for menacing scenarios of death in many parts of the world. Any authentic search for peace must begin with the realization that the problem of truth and untruth is the concern of every man and woman; it is decisive for the peaceful future of our planet.

The truth of peace calls upon everyone to cultivate productive and sincere relationships; it encourages them to seek out and to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, to be transparent in their dealings with others, and to be faithful to their word. At the same time I ask for an increase of prayers, since peace is above all a gift of God, a gift to be implored incessantly.

TO THE "TECHNOLOGICAL" MAN

The men and women in our technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart. That is why it is so important for us to open our minds and hearts to the Birth of Christ, this event of salvation which can give new hope to the life of each human being.

Wake up, O men and women of the third millennium! At Christmas, the Almighty becomes a child and asks for our help and protection. His way of showing that he is God challenges our way of being human. By knocking at our door, he challenges us and our freedom; he calls us to examine how we understand and live our lives.

Men and women of today, humanity come of age yet often still so frail in mind and will, let the Child of Bethlehem take you by the hand! Do not fear; put your trust in him! The life-giving power of his light is an incentive for building a new world order based on just ethical and economic relationships. May His love guide every people on earth and strengthen their common awareness of being a *family* called to foster relationships of trust and mutual support.

BLESSING

The blessing of the Lord produces well-being and salvation through its own power, just as cursing procures disgrace and ruin. The effectiveness of blessing is later more specifically brought about by God, who protects us, favours us and gives us peace, which is to say in other words, He offers us an abundance of happiness

TO THE CONSECRATED

Since its origins consecrated life has been marked by its thirst for God. Do not be afraid to present yourselves as consecrated persons, also visibly, and do your utmost to show that you belong to Christ. The Church needs your witness, she needs a consecrated life that confronts the challenges of our time courageously and creatively. In the face of the advance of hedonism, the courageous witness of chastity is asked of you.

In the face of the thirst for money, your sober life, ready to serve the neediest, is a reminder that God is the true treasure that does not perish. Before the individualism and relativism that induce people to be a rule unto themselves, your fraternal life, which can be coordinated and is thus capable of obedience, confirms that you place your fulfilment in God.

Benedict XVI



CONSOLATA BETRONE

“In the womb of the Church you will be trust”

In Christian mysticism a victim soul is by no doubt the highest state one could aspire to. In a certain sense, one could say it was both a compendium of all vocations, and a crown upon them all. But we must understand the meaning of victim. A victim soul is a person who offers himself willingly, and even if he is to suffer, he does not offer himself to suffering itself, but to the Man of sorrows, out of love, to share in His passion of love. Yes, he is a person who sacrifices himself, but in the sense given by the Old Covenant: that is, to offer a sacred gift to God.

Consolata Betrone, of the order of the Poor Clares, lived near Turin in the first half of last century (1903-1946), and was without doubt a victim soul who had the courage to respond to the cry of Jesus: “I thirst for victims to save the world. I thirst for brides, not for nuns; and in this precise moment I need victims more than I need brides,” and she offered herself as a holocaust (sacrifice that is burnt till it is totally consumed, as in the biblical sense). And she made her offering for the sake of “each soul in the entire universe, that Jesus might save them all,” and in particular for the priests and religious who were not faithful to their vows or who denied their vocation.

Inspired by Thérèse of Lisieux, she had the audacity to be “that soul that was weaker than mine, littler than mine” whom the holy Carmelite nun had said “would receive still greater graces, if it abandoned itself with absolute confidence to God’s infinite mercy.” And Consolata was that soul. Of her Jesus said: “*In the womb of the Church you will be trust... I am very pleased with the blind trust, infantile trust, boundless, immense trust that you have in Me... Never allow, not even for an instant, that the enemy should penetrate your soul with the thought of mistrust, ever! Believe in me as only and always good; believe in me as only and always a mother for you... Consolata, understand my heart... tell the world how good and motherly I am... I am and I love being exclusively good and merciful with my creatures. Don’t paint me as a severe God, if I am a God of love... I shall save the world with merciful Love!*”

To console Jesus for the great mistrust in His Goodness and Mercy, Pierina Betrone took the name Consolata (she who is consoled) when she took her vows, in a desire to console the Heart of Jesus and all those who weren’t able to perceive and receive the Lord’s love. And it was Jesus Himself who showed her not only the way to console Him but also how to “*love Him as none other had loved Him and to save souls that none other had saved.*” This way is the unceasing act of love “*Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls!*” that the Redeemer called the very small way of love and trust. It wasn’t meant just for her, but for all little souls, since the Lord wants: “*the triumph in the world not only of Mercy, but especially of Love, particularly in the very little souls.*”

“*Jesus, Mary, I love You, save souls* encompasses everything,” the Lord had told her: love for Him and for creatures: “*the*

souls in Purgatory and the souls in the Militant Church; the innocent soul and the guilty soul; the dying, the atheist, etc... Do not lose time; remember that every act of love is a soul.” **This act of love, if uninterrupted, is destined to cut off the roots of all evil,** and to remove life from the old man so that the new man may live and be only and totally love for God (Jesus, Mary I love you) and only and totally love for men (save souls). It is an *evangelical* way in the true meaning of the word, for it requires that one should remain continuously in His love, to have Christ’s own sentiments, to have no other time except to think of loving Jesus and Mary and saving souls. This is equal to the perfect denial of self that Jesus asked of His disciples.

It is for this reason that Jesus told Consolata that she would have been *annihilated* by an uninterrupted act of love. She experienced that “to be an uninterrupted virginal act of love, one must disappear,” disappear before creatures and before one’s own eyes, so as to follow with all one’s might – in profound silence and in love – “God alone, till all is fulfilled.” This Poor Clare’s radical response prompted her: “to never attempt to make myself happy: neither through food, nor drink, nor rest, nor clothes, nor tastes, nor preferences; but to seek total annihilation of my will, my due, my personal work... annihilation of the tongue... respond only when necessary and with an act of love.”

To live this act of love without interruption, with all one’s being, in times of consolation and in times of trial, requires heroism, it requires stripping of self, but it makes the heart pure, and it unifies it. It is similar to prayer of the heart, but it is even greater, for it not only unites one to Jesus, but to God through Jesus and Mary. It unites the soul to their Hearts which are offered in sacrifice to the Father as a sacrifice of love for the sake of souls.

Jesus and Mary cannot be separated, just as one cannot separate God’s love from the offering of self for the salvation of our brethren. For Consolata, in fact, love for Jesus and Mary could not be separated. It was this love that generated her love for souls. At the end of her earthly life she said: “Oh, I am certain that one day when the Divine Heart will show me to the world He will say only one thing: ‘She trusted me! She believed in me.’ Yes, Jesus will do great things, and I already join myself to the Blessed Virgin to sing the Magnificat. A few more months and Consolata will become Consolatrix (she who consoles). Yes, with love I shall bend down over every heart that groans, that suffers, that despairs, that swears, that curses... How I feel sorry for those who suffer...”

It was this divine love for souls that made her desire Paradise so that she could do good for all. Now that Sr. Consolata is in the Father’s bosom, her thirst to do good is entirely satisfied according to the Lord’s promise: “*Yes, your Jesus will grant it to you: you shall tend your ear to all the sorrows of the earth, you shall wrench from me the greatest graces, and from each soul - in recompense - you shall always ask for holy communion... yes, I promise you even now, that apart from the special mission of your brethren, you shall be everyone’s Consolata.*”

Cristina Palici

Jesus, Mary, I love You, Save Souls!



In the message of 25 July 2005 Our Blessed Mother at Medjugorje said: “Dear Children! I call you to **fill your day with short and ardent prayers.**”

There are countless brief and ardent prayers. Perhaps we all have a favourite one we like to repeat more frequently. It would be an ardent task to

find the origins of each, but I think it is fair to say that they are all inspired by God’s Spirit of Love; by Love for Love, for love of souls and love of us. One such inspiration was given to the Servant of God **Sr. Maria Consolata Betrone (1903-1946, Italy)** after reading St. Therese of Lisieux’s *Story of a Soul*. Consolata herself was granted mystical experiences, but she is particularly remembered for her “very small way” which can be summed up in the following three points which are the nucleus of Our Lord’s instructions to her:

1. Offer an **unceasing act of love** from the heart: *Jesus, Mary I love You, Save Souls!*
2. Have a **smiling “yes”** for everyone, to see and treat Jesus in everyone.
3. Have a **grateful “yes”** for everything.

An act of love is also an act of reparation: the Lord told Consolata: A “*Jesus, I love You*” repairs a thousand blasphemies. The importance of this brief but powerful invocation can be understood by Jesus’ own words: “*All I ask for is this: a continuous act of love: JESUS, MARY I LOVE YOU, SAVE SOULS...*”

He invited Consolata to intensify the prayer, and to make no delay: “*Don’t waste time: every act of love is a soul! Of all the gifts, the best gift you can offer me is a day full of love. I desire an uninterrupted Jesus, Mary I love You, save souls! from when you get up in the morning till when you go to bed at night.*”

The act of love that Jesus wants is much more than lip service. It must be interiorized: with one’s mind that concentrates on loving, with one’s will that wants to love, with one’s heart that loves. The formula *Jesus, Mary I love You, save souls* is but a help.

To German mystic, **Justine Klotz (1888-1984)**, the Lord inspired a similar ejaculation, with special regard for priests: “*Jesus, Mary I love You, save priestly souls, save souls!*” When we pray for a priest we are praying not only for him, but for the many souls under his pastoral care, for a holy priest will bring many other souls into the realm of God’s love. But they need the support of our prayer. We offer an immense gift to the Church, to ourselves and to the world when we pray for priests... and for the gift of many, holy vocations!

Beverly K. Drabsch

Communities at Medjugorje Different Charisms One Heart

On the 10th November at Medjugorje there was a meeting for all the communities present in Medjugorje. Lately the meeting has been held 2-3 times a year, and takes place in a different Community each time. This time the host community was the *Oasis of Peace*. In all simplicity we spent a large slice of time sharing, then we recited the Rosary prior to Holy Mass which was celebrated by the newly ordained priest Fr. Luka Maria from the Beatitudes Community.

Besides the three better-known communities (*Oasis of Peace*, *Beatitudes*, *Kraljice Mira*) there were others, more recently founded: the two branches (male and female) of the community founded by Mother Rosaria – *Adorers of the Most Precious Blood and Apostles of Our Lady of Sorrows* – with the charisma of prayer of reparation. There was the very new *Heart of Mary Community*: under the guidance of Sr. Milena several young people from various nations live an experience of community life combined with intense prayer, for periods of varying duration. And then there was the *New Horizons Community* for former drug addicts. The *Cenacle Community* was not present this time, but they were in spiritual communion with us all.

We were all visibly moved by the sight of so many young people, representatives of different movements, but once we overcame the initial impact it became evident how we had something in common; and it was the serenity written on the faces of each – no doubt a mark of Mary – and through this serenity the love of God was able to transpire. The brothers and sisters, each in his or her own way, were witnesses of the same fact: “God had disposed, Our Lady had called. God had arranged, all I did was respond.”

Different were the backgrounds, the style of dress and of life, different were the charisms, but it was precisely this that made our meeting - held in the name of the Lord who unites all in Him - a meaningful and powerful witness. Each of us was a piece of the big family that the Queen of Peace has brought together in her Heart.

The common element that brought us together was this desire and decision for the Lord. Every step that another brother or sister makes is both a help and stimulus for the rest of us. Every encounter has been a source of grace for us all.

It's like a series of paths all leading to the same place; at times running alongside each other, at times intersecting. Or like a race where there are neither winners nor losers, but where someone else must always open the way for those who come afterwards. But who is greater: he who sows or he who reaps? he who leads the way, or he who follows behind bringing more beautiful and more abundant fruits? “*He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true: ‘One sows and*

another reaps’.” The harvest is great, numerous are the ways, there's room for everyone, and each is important in God's plan. I think the most credible sign of our state as servants and members of God's family is precisely this **communion while respecting one's originality**, which ought to flourish in every community and radiate outwards to embrace the reality each encounters.

Our prayer time, though quite simple and natural, was an intense moment, and I dare say made us all aware that though this friendly exchange and sharing of experiences and impressions is important, we truly encountered each other while we were on our knees before Eucharistic Jesus, in union with Our Lady's unceasing prayer. We recited the Rosary in several languages and thus witnessed to the unity according to the plan of the Blessed Virgin. At Holy Mass this unity was brought to fullness in the reciprocal gift of self as each of us placed his own poor yet precious offering on the Altar where all is recapitulated in Christ and offered up to the Father through His perfect sacrifice, thus becoming seed of holiness, blood that brings full life, incorruptible life, pledge of salvation, broken bread for distribution and consumption by the faithful.

Following are various testimonies:

Br. Alessio Maria **Oasis of Peace Marian Community**

It was a time of wonderful and serene communion. Sharing the joys and fatigues of the journey, and praying together were wonderful occasions to get to know each other better and to see how we are all journeying together behind the Lord Jesus. It helped us to see how we all belong to the same family of God, and how we are all at the service of the *Gospa*.

Since I'm fairly new in Medjugorje it has been a source of wealth for me to actually meet persons I'd already seen in church, on Podbrdo or on Krizevac – those people who place their lives at the disposal of Our Lady – and to learn more about their communities and their spirituality. It made me think of the words of St. Paul when he spoke of different charisms but one Spirit; of one God at work in everyone, of special manifestations of the Spirit in each person for the good of all.

I also think of our heavenly Mother's words: “*My Children, through the messages I wish to create a beautiful mosaic with your hearts so that I can offer each of you to God as an original image* (25.11.89). *My Children, I wish to make of you a beautiful bouquet of flowers, prepared for eternity* (25.7.95). *I desire that my heart, the Heart of Jesus, and your heart be fused into a single heart of love and peace* (25.7.99).”

Thank you, thank you, thank you Mary!

Roland **Apostle of Our Lady of Sorrows**

The meeting of the religious communities present in Medjugorje is a precious moment, as it allows us to experience the spiritual unity which the *Gospa* has created to fulfil the plans she has for us and all mankind.

I found it of great consolation and

comfort being able to share the daily experiences of mission and apostolate. It was a great opportunity to encourage each other with the strength of one's decision for God and for the Queen of Peace. In our spirit we were able to perceive the strong wind of the storm that is thrashing out against the world; the storm of incredulity, compromise and falsehood.

I thank Mary, Mother and Queen of Peace, who called us aside to be hers and to serve God's Kingdom with the offering of our lives.

Sr Halina **Kraljice Mira, potpuno tvoj – po Mariji k Isusu Community**

(This Croatian name means: Queen of Peace, wholly Thine, to Jesus through Mary. It is Padre Tomislav Vlastic's Community, in brief called the Kraljice Mira Community. Translator's note)

The Lord needs and desires His workers, collaborators, and children. Thanks to this event (the encounter for Communities) it became clearer for me how the Lord calls His workers, and how the presence of these communities in Medjugorje is a great gift. I understood more clearly that the diverseness of our charisms is a wealth and an important witness for the “world” which continually makes it way to Medjugorje.

Sharing about the spiritual journey of each, the type of spirituality, and the daily life, with bouts of spontaneous laughter in-between, strengthened our spiritual communion. During the Holy Mass which we celebrated together we were able to express our joy and gratitude to God for each other. It was then, more than in any other moment, that the Lord was at the centre of our encounter. Our praise was raised up to Him, and it was to Him that our souls desired belonging. We could feel the grace of the blessing of God our Father and the motherly and loving gaze of our Queen of Peace.

It is a beautiful gift of the Lord being able to surrender oneself and entrust one's life to Him, and that He should allow us to express our individuality and freedom whilst serving Him. I nurture immense gratitude for what God has done for me, for giving me life and for calling me into a Community, and for showing me how each vocation is important and precious when it bears life within it.

Sr. Lioba **Beatitudes Community**

We are always enriched when we're all together like this. The joy and love we experienced, the encounter amongst brothers and sisters of the different communities, from so many different countries, cultures and continents is for me a taste of Heaven. Despite our differences, we are gathered together in the big family of God.

This reminds me of Our Lady's message of 25 July 1999: “*I wish for you to understand that I don't want to realize just a place of prayer here, but also (a place for the) encounter of hearts. I desire that my heart, the Heart of Jesus, and your heart be fused into a single heart of love and peace.*”

When we are able to live this, we already experience the Kingdom of God, and our heart is gladdened by the thought of eternal love.

Interview of Fr. Tomislav

Twenty five years with Mary

This year is the 25th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Medjugorje. You were a witness of the extraordinary events of the first years. In the light of your personal journey and your priestly experience, what memories awake in you today?

With regards to my past years in Medjugorje, not a lot of things come to mind right now. In 1985 I began gradually withdrawing from Medjugorje to live in contemplation. As my relationship with God grew deeper there was an awakening of the memory of my soul, that space where the Holy Spirit was able to assume the role of main actor, to reveal the Mystery. In this memory there's not so much the phenomena of Medjugorje, but rather the divine truth of the living and true God, and the Mother of God who is present in and works in us. It is the truth of the Church.

Whoever receives an extraordinary grace must make it bear fruit for the Church. The visionaries have said, with regards to some of the secrets, that when these will be revealed it will be too late for many. This means that what counts is our participation in the divine action in us, including that which is being manifested at Medjugorje in such an extraordinary way

So what do you think is the most important thing about Medjugorje?

As I said, the memory of our soul records everything. The Holy Spirit reveals the contents of it to us gradually, to lead us to the entire truth. All is entrusted to the Church to accompany us on our way to God, as the deposit of the divine truth is revealed to us.

For all of us it is extremely important that we accept the Mother of God as part of God's salvific plan; and accept her person. By following her example, and letting ourselves be guided by her motherly love we participate in her glorification. Through Mary we conceive Christ in us, and in us He grows, offers Himself, and is glorified. Through Mary Most Holy we take part in the salvific event of Christ.

It is a dynamic journey that involves the human being on all the levels of his existence and guides his development. For this reason it can also confuse and overwhelm him, but in a good sense. He who accepts this action of God, and converts, allows himself to be fully included in the salvific event worked by Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and allows himself to become an instrument of divine action himself. If this doesn't happen, man remains closed up within his own little world, though remaining a believer.

Our Lady at Medjugorje continues to invite us to conversion. Do you think people are truly converting?

The fruits are many and evident. That people are converted, let's leave it to Heaven to judge. In the message of 25 December 2005 given to Jakov, Our Lady said: "*Children, throughout all this time in which God has permitted me to be with you, I have*

continuously called you to conversion. Many of your hearts have remained closed... Begin to pray. Pray to God for the gift of conversion." I think these words should make us seriously reflect.

Don't you think this message is perhaps a little too severe; that it might discourage those with good will but who feel too weak?

I would say not! This is a mistake, based on our fears, which we immediately seek to justify. St. Francis of Assisi, at the end of his earthly life, told his brothers: "*Brothers, let's start from the beginning because so far we have done nothing!*" These words are very significant also for us.



When a person is open to God he always sees new horizons ahead of himself, and he always receive new graces. He is fascinated by life in God and with that same vital fascination he attracts others to God, since they feel its pull and are overwhelmed.

In these our times, with evil so strongly present, God expects His children to let themselves be powerfully involved in His divine life, so they in turn may involve others, and overturn and destroy evil, and ultimately overturn death itself. If believers remain outside this dynamic action, they remain flat, they do not arrive at authentic conversion and they are subject to the aggressive action of evil.

In this message that you quoted, Our Lady asks us to pray. For many years she has continued to ask for prayer, almost with insistence. Why, do you think?

Our Lady is faithful to herself. She shows us the way; she indicates the most suitable means to awaken in us the divine life and all its dynamics. There is no doubt that prayer is the fundamental means for active participation in the life of grace.

Why are many of our prayers not granted, even when we think they are good things?

St. Augustine explains that bad people (*mali*) pray in a bad way (*male*) for bad things (*mala*). We turn around ourselves, and we want to involve everyone and everything, including God, in our egoistic needs. God withdraws from this type of behaviour.

In the message of 25 December 2005 that I cited before, Our Lady also says: "*My Children, Jesus is peace, love and joy. So decide for Jesus.*" True prayer raises a praying person, and introduces him into the life of Christ. It detaches him from his egoism and makes him participate in the dynamics of salvation. This is the prayer that attains its scope.

Our Lady has frequently called us to fast. Many have difficulty fasting. Can you say something about this?

We must understand that in God's plan, everything is connected harmoniously; also fasting. Independent from the form one may choose to fast, its scope is to lead the person away from material and spiritual consumerism, and to awaken in him the quest for God, to steer him towards conversion. As with prayer, fasting too is an indispensable means to arrive at God.

What advice can you give us to advance in the spiritual journey?

The scope of our life is to enter into mystical union with Jesus; to enter into the fullness of His life. If we have the Son, then we also have the Father, and the Holy Spirit will lead us – says St. John the apostle. If we allow ourselves to be involved and overwhelmed by Jesus Christ, then we will be His people and He the Immanuel, the God-with-us. All apparitions, all graces granted us have this purpose.

If we journey decisively in this direction, that is, towards total union with Jesus, then everything in our life will change. Faith, hope, and love become dynamic, able to involve and overwhelm others. This is the way we become involved in the action of divine grace, and participate in the mandate of the apostles, moved by the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, we remain closed up in our own superficial religiosity, turning around ourselves and our concern for the future, and trying to get others involved not in God but in ourselves: it's like a destructive vortex.

The world doesn't seem to be going too well. Many people are concerned, pessimistic. Do you think something in the world is changing?

Very much is changing; very much! God is the true protagonist of history, even if He seems hidden. His action is silent, hidden to the "greats" of the earth. He transforms everything, and He doesn't want to damage anything. He allows humanity's crises so that man will seek God and convert. God does wonderful things even today, often through the little, simple people, those who are most hidden. Besides, He has always acted this way throughout history, even in the life of the Virgin Mary.

What do you expect from the 25th anniversary of apparitions at Medjugorje?

A jubilee is a jubilee! A jubilee brings many graces with it, and opens up great scenarios of divine action. So I expect very much. In particular I expect an awakening of God's people: with regards to prayer, conversion, and fasting; that they may be caught up by God.

I hope each believer will comprehend that the main stage where God acts is within himself, in his soul. The fruits will come, both in and around persons. God's people will thus see the realization of His promises; they will see the salvation of mankind. And then, believers will bear the announcement of the happy news of the salvation of each person. This is my hope and also my prayer to God and to our Mother. *

Beyond time and space

Beyond all possible thoughts and imagination. Beyond all possible capabilities and merits. Beyond all possible plans. Such is Mary's presence at Medjugorje. She is present, beyond all possible human logic; beyond all possible will to keep or ignore her; beyond all possible human law and reasoning.

For nearly 25 years the Blessed Virgin has been visiting Medjugorje to visit her children who still belong to time and space, to help them cross the frontier; now, here on earth.

HOW? Prayer: continuous and free of all schemes. **Sacrifice:** loving and generous. **Holy Mass:** fully participated and celebrated with life. **The Word:** lived in a continuous liturgy, that makes of us living gospels. All this, together with an unconditioned acceptance of the Mother, makes us citizens of Heaven even though our feet are on the ground; and it helps us to be sincere witnesses of the kingdom that awaits us beyond the frontiers of death, but which is already here in our midst... or rather, inside of us.

Mary came to remind us; she came to renew in us the news that She herself had accepted from the angel that day in which the Word became flesh in her womb; the news of God becoming one of us to lead us back to Himself, to pull us out of the world of corruptibility that degrades our nature, and to show us how to raise ourselves to a dimension where we are immune to all forms of corruption.

But to understand we must above all **allow Mary to enter our life** – really and naturally. It is no longer time for mere

devotions towards formulae or images, even if our sophisticated world wants us to believe that only what we see and own is true. So that we are not deceived we must **allow the invisible to transpire** – the invisible of what our inner gaze has accepted and acknowledged as true.

WHAT OUGHT WE DO? It's as easy as breathing; because Mary is like fresh air. Mary's "fresh pureness" reassures the soul, gives new oxygen to the spirit, and gives new vigour to tired limbs. Her fresh-ness invigorates the blood, giving new desire to live, to be, and to rejoice.

All this can be seized when at Medjugorje our feet quickly climb over the stones of the hill where Mary appeared 25 years ago: Podbrdo, which I like to call Mother's Hill. If you listen carefully, in the silence of your heart, you will hear her breathing, ever so lightly, as she caresses and embraces you; and you will feel her motherly kiss. She will speak to you, to make you feel her invisible yet absolutely real presence. And when you descend from the hill you will say in your heart: "Mary is here. I met her; for she called me, awaited me, and embraced me."

And what ought we do when back home after visiting this place of grace? Back home, back in our little worlds made up of relationships, duties, commitments and timetables, **Mary should transpire** from our soul! After having absorbed her, her presence should overflow into the air, so that others may perceive and breathe in her perfume, and be pervaded by her, and filled with her. As fresh air through an open window, the Blessed Virgin will renew

them. *Then, the invisible will become visible.* The Eternal One will break through time and break down the frontiers.

WITH MARY THERE IS AMPLE SPACE. It takes courage; courage to adventure through her Heart, without fearing the lack of limits that man normally creates round himself. We are used to structures, to tracks, to the narrow laws of human customs that we build out of fear of the unknown that we cannot control. United to Mary it is possible to go beyond time and space, where our beings dilate as much as God allows. Then, we will enjoy every fullness that our soul is capable of.

Mary is present, but she does not let herself be captured. She gives herself, but she does not let herself be possessed, or used. Like Jesus, she is a pilgrim on the way to Palestine.

The Queen of Peace has been with us for nearly 25 years to lead us in this time which is treacherous, but also precious for our souls. And she leads us with all the grace that fills her, wrenching from God extra time to teach us, console us, confirm us and exhort us.

SHE HAS SAID MUCH WITH HER MESSAGES. And she has prayed much more, also loved more, and most likely suffered as she looks down on her children who are so often distracted, closed, indifferent, or even unwilling. I think the time has come for an honest and realistic summing up, to understand with greater clarity the project that God wants to realize through Medjugorje: that is, to responsibly grasp the situation and decide to respond ever more sincerely to the calls of Mary, a Mother who never forgets to thank us for "having responded to her call."

Stefania Consoli

Mary's Grand Programme of Light

by Giuseppe Ferraro

At the core of the message of the Queen of Peace there is a clear line of light, a plan of grace of undreamt-of dimensions that God is granting the world at our time through Mary. Perhaps it won't hurt if we try to sharpen our inner vision to grasp the essential core of this great mystery of love, also in view of the **great jubilee of 25 years of apparitions of the Mother of God.**

In her messages Mary frequently makes reference to an **extraordinary programme of salvation entrusted to her by the Father for our time**, which she calls "a special time" (25 June 1993) "connected in a special way to heaven through me" (25.5.96). This extraordinary plan of grace I would say is the key to the true spiritual meaning and the deepest reason for the presence of the Queen of Peace amongst men: "I wish to thank you for making it possible for my project to be realized" (25 June 2004); "Dear Children, you have helped me with your prayer to realize my plans. Continue to pray, that these plans may be realized in full" (27 Sept. 1984).

Our Lady is calling us, in fact, not to trivialize the authentic meaning of her presence, perhaps by unduly reducing its

bearing into a lower category of pious Marian devotion which in itself is praise-worthy, though inexorably marginal. Instead, Mary is strongly stressing the **explicitly biblical and intensely prophetic character** of this great event of grace, so important for the Church, and fully qualified to be enrolled in the great divine plan of fulfilment of the work of salvation: "Pray, and God will help you discover the true reason for my coming. Children, pray and read the Sacred Scriptures, so that through my coming you discover the message in them for you" (25 June 1991); "Read Holy Scripture, live it and pray to understand the signs of this time" (25 Aug. 1993).

If we go over the messages and the history of the events, and look at the **unfolding of the various spiritual fruits which have germinated from the dynamic grace of Medjugorje**, it is possible to grasp the fundamental lines of evolution of this giddy effusion of salvific light that, like all God's interventions, passes through an impenetrable "mysterium electionis" hidden in the Father's Heart.

The instruments used by Mary to fulfil her programme of light stand out – according to God's style – for their total **inadequacy in the eyes of the world.** As first instrument we have a tiny parish Community situated in an obscure hamlet in an isolated region of the

Balkans that practically no one had ever heard of; but of it Mary said: "... you will give me the joy of seeing completely fulfilled the plan that God has for Medjugorje" (7 Feb. 1985).

It was here that Mary first appeared to **six little visionaries**, most of them young teenagers, one a mere child; and then through **other little souls**, often enriched with secret gifts and spiritual charisms, each of them called to a specific mission, each a small piece in the great mosaic of Mary's love.

Mary, communicating directly to the hearts of her children, is **attracting to this place**, which she calls "the source of grace" (8 May 1986), multitudes "from every race, people and nation": people who from all eternity are written in the Heart of the Most High, and called in particular for His plans of salvation: "Dear Children, I want you to understand that God has chosen each of you for His plan of salvation for mankind," (25 Jan. 1987); "Each of you is important in my plan of salvation" (25 May 1993).

Each soul is urged to **respond in perfect liberty** and with the simplicity of a child to the call God is addressing us through Mary: "Therefore, my Children, I desire that your decisions be free before God, because He has given you your freedom" (25 Nov. 1989); "... you are called and you must respond to the call of the Father who calls you through me" (25 Oct. 1987). **The decisive way is this:**

and if accepted it generates an extraordinary effusion of grace that launches Mary's plan in us and through us: "I await only that you give me your yes so I can offer it to Jesus and so He may fill you with His grace" (25 May 1992). In fact, **Mary expects from her children an unreserved "yes"** to offer to the Father in union with the one that gushed forth from her own Immaculate Heart so she may **immerse us in a vital relationship of communion with the Heart of her Son**: "I call all those who have responded yes to me to renew their consecration to my Son Jesus, to His Heart and to me, so that we may use you even more effectively as instruments of peace in this world without peace" (25 April 1992).

Consecration to the Heart of Christ, however, means "to have in us the same sentiments that were in Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:5), that is, the **fullness of God's pure Love**, that same spiritual lymph that pulsates in the Son's Mystical Body which was totally and freely offered up to the Father for the salvation of the world. "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

It is for this that the Queen of Peace, as she did at Fatima with the three shepherd children, never ceases to exhort multitudes of children to offer themselves totally to God: "Witness with your life. Sacrifice your

lives for the salvation of the world" (25.2.88); "Offer your suffering to God as a gift so it may become a beautiful flower of joy" (25.9.96); "Reconcile yourselves with each other and offer your lives that peace may reign over the entire earth" (25 Dec. 1990).

In fact, **this is the decisive nucleus of her great plan of salvation**: turn us into **joyous vessels** of God's pure Life and Love for the world, by letting ourselves be interiorly transformed and become almost an extension of her living presence amongst men: "Dear Children... today I call you to open yourselves to me and to become instruments in my hands for the salvation of the world..." (25.3.94); "I call you to live my messages and to transmit them all over the world, so that a stream of love may flow amid the people who are full of hatred and without peace. I call you, my Children, to become peace where there is no peace, and light where there is darkness, so that every heart may accept the light and the way of salvation" (25.2.95).

It is only this way that the immense "river of living water as clear as crystal" (Rev 22:1) that gushes forth constantly from the Heart of the Most High can be poured out in fullness on the world and **heal all souls and the entire creation**, through the salvific work of the Church completely renewed by Mary: "I call you my Children to comprehend the importance of my coming and the seriousness of the situation. I want to save all souls and offer them to God" (25.8.91).

Nonetheless, the salvific peak of this extraordinary programme of grace can be reached only through the offering of self: in every spiritual place of the universe, not only in a sacramental dimension, but also in the Eucharistic (Mystical) Body of the Son, who lives and pulsates with love especially in the **new communities** which Mary herself has roused in these our times.

It is for this that she is guiding - with **various charisms** - spiritual groups who represent the new people. These **souls, who have totally offered themselves to God**, are expressions of the mystery of Communion which is the very essence of the Church, old and new; it is the supreme gift given to men through which Christ spilt His blood and through which still today He desires aspersing the world with the endless currents of life that gush forth from his pierced Heart, for His is "the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

This is the yeast of life that the Mother of God desires spreading throughout all nations and continents, so that also the earthly members of the Mystical Body of her Son may be fully regenerated as she guides the universe to the Easter pass-over which alone can remove us from corruption and death and bring us into the incorruptible life of the new heavens and new earth. This presence in the world of the Queen of Peace is for all a sure and luminous sign. *

A thought for Echo

"We joyfully thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 1:3)

I wonder: why does man - why do we - so often complain, and criticize the work of others? Why do we not accept or love our neighbour? Why do we exploit others; steal what is theirs? Why are we always wanting, and never happy?

Perhaps it is because we don't know how to praise and thank the Lord. We don't know how to praise and thank the Father for gifts received, for gifts which we receive continuously, in particular for the Gift of His Son Jesus.

When man is incapable of praising and thanking, he loses the gifts he was granted and is unable to see what is given him continuously. Praise and gratitude is also a gift from the Most High to be safe-kept. It is a means granted to mankind by Providence so he can offer something in exchange for the gifts received. It doesn't matter that our offering is poor in comparison, for He likes it that way. Praising and giving thanks is a divine gift that allows us mortals to exchange something with God. Truly amazing!

So it becomes an exchange of gifts: God's to man, and man's to God. Also Paradise, which began on this earth is a continuous gift of God to man who exchanges his gift by offering up praise and thanks. I think of this exchange of gifts between God and man for all eternity and think of Paradise. It is only natural for a Christian to praise and thank the Lord. It couldn't be any different, for even the Eucharist is a thanksgiving.

The capacity to praise and thank God

is a powerful gift endowed upon man from on High. It casts away evil - the devil - who makes us see only negative things, the bad side of things, and impedes us from seeing the Gift.

May there always be praise on our lips! and may we never complain about things. Instead, may we entrust everything to God who provides and leads for the best. Perhaps this way we will see the marvels of God, even miracles. But why not try?!

I ask myself: what could the reason be for Mary thanking us in each of her messages. A form of courtesy I think not. Perhaps she learnt from her Son Jesus that to give thanks is an important element in life, because thanking means to love, it means to create communion, and because it is an activity that belongs to Heaven, because Jesus always thanked the Father.

So, if this is the case, let us make this a resolution: to thank and praise our Lord at all times, for what we have and for what we are. And ask Him to make us become people of praise and thanksgiving. This way we'll have joy for us and others.

This year will be the 25th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Medju, and this is a real gift of grace for us all. So let's particularly thank Divine Providence for this gift, and try to do it as often as we can, if not always, which is the best way not to lose this gift, and to make fertile "the talents" that are being offered to us.

Pietro Squassabia

Echo is a free publication. Donations are gratefully accepted; without them we cannot continue to distribute the Message to Mary's little children around the world.

How to donate:

- 1. International Postal Orders** payable to Echo of Mary (see address below)
 - 2. Personal cheques** payable to "Echo of Mary." See address below.
 - If convenient, by **bank transfer** into one of our **accounts**. Specify *Echo of Mary Assoc.*
- **Italy:** Banca Agricola Mantovana (BAM), Ag. Belfiore, Mantova. Bank coordinates: IBAN: IT 02 Z 05024 11506 000004754018
 - **Britain:** Royal Bank of Scotland, 26 George St., Oban, Argyll, PA34 5SA. Acc. no. 8326 0400 154351
 - **USA:** JP Morgan Chase, ABA: 021000021, in favour of MPS, New York Acc. no. 544778865. For Further Credit: Ass. Eco di Maria Acc. no. 33753011

Our postal ADDRESS:

Echo of Mary Association, P.O. Box 27, I-31030 Bessica TV, Italy.

Ph/fax: Italy +39 (0)423-470331

**Echo is on line at: www.ecodimaria.net
e-mail: info@ecodimaria.net**

May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us. Amen.

15 January 2006

don Alberto

2006: 5th Centenary of the birth of great missionary priest, St. Francis Xavier. May he intercede for us!