

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 May 2008:

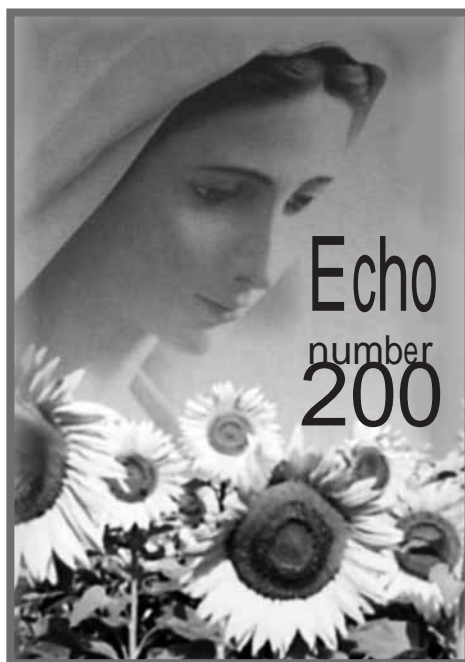
“Dear Children, In this time of grace in which God has permitted me to be with you I call you anew, my Children, to conversion. Work for the salvation of the world particularly while I am with you. God is merciful and grants special graces, hence, ask for them in prayer. I am with you and will not leave you alone. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Work for Salvation of World

Grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1996). “Full of grace,” is what the Archangel Gabriel called Mary (Lk 1:28), and it is what we repeat in the *Hail Mary*. And this time of ours is an exceptional **time of grace**, because together with the gift of Mary's presence we also receive the fullness of grace present in Her. The grace of Mary's presence at Medjugorje is already immense; Mary calls us also to receive the Father's Love, and to surrender ourselves to His Will, and to live in communion with Him so we can become more like Jesus. Today also, our blessed Mother insists: **“In this time of grace in which God has permitted me to be with you, I again call you, my Children, to conversion.”**

Conversion is a journey of assimilation in Christ, and a great grace which requires free adhesion on our part so it can produce fruit. It's not such an easy thing since it requires a change of direction, and an offering of self without reserve after the model of Jesus and Mary. But we are not alone, since Their help is assured us. The result depends on us and on our free choice to accept the Divine Will.

“Work for the salvation of the world particularly while I am with you,” says Mary, and this, I would say, is the focal point of today's message. Our conversion and our communion with Christ do not regard only us, but invest all creation. The salvation of the world, made possible and certain by the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not unhinged from our own personal salvation, and awaits our own “yes” to God (cfr Rm 8: 19-23).



“Love is the will to live and to let live, because life is the primary good. In the measure that one loves is the measure of the realization of the human person.” (E. Vergani)

Each of us is called to **work for the salvation of the world**. It does not matter that one might be called for just one hour, or to bear the weight of the full day; his reward will be measured according to justice or even (God's) magnanimity (cf. Mt 20:1-16). Our human weakness is not a limit, but rather, can be our strength: *It is when I am weak that I am strong*, says the Apostle (2 Cor 12:10), which is valid also for us because it is our human weakness that makes us truly needy of God, where the void in us awaits to be filled by Him.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing and no one can ever separate us from the love of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord (cf. Rm 8:35-39). However, I do have within me, in my will, the capacity to refuse this Love. What a great and terrible responsibility has been given us!

One does not need a title or degree to **work for the salvation of the world**. All it takes is to let oneself be led by Mary, which is always possible particularly while She is in our midst. So let us not ignore this call by Mary; let us not put it off till tomorrow, lest it be too late. Our weaknesses and limits are not excuses; God will compensate for them. **“God is merciful and grants special graces, hence, ask for them in prayer. I am with you and will not leave you alone.”** We have all we need, even more so. Therefore, why wait any longer?

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 June 2008:

“Dear Children, Also today, with great joy in my heart, I call you to follow me and to listen to my messages. Be joyful bearers of peace and love in this world without peace. I am with you and I bless you all with my Son Jesus, the King of Peace. Thank you for responding to my call.”

I am Calling: Follow Me

On the 27th anniversary of her apparitions at Medjugorje, Mary comes to sustain us in the journey with her presence and messages and lets us know that she does it with **great joy**. It is joy for all the grace God is granting through her intercession, and for the response of millions of people all over the world; the response of the humble who are more open to the faith, and of the poor who are more in need of God.

And those who respond to this call come from all walks of life: the pious and sinners, children, adults and the elderly, the laity and consecrated people. God does not look at what one's position in life is, nor at his degree of studies, or his job, or his physical aspect and not even at what he may have been in the past. *Man looks at appearances, the Lord looks at the heart* (cf. 1 Sam 16:7).

God is Love and He seeks the heart that knows how to accept Love. It does not matter what you've been till now. If your heart is not entirely closed to Him, but is open just a little, then call Him and He will come because He has already come to you in Christ. All He needs is for you to acknowledge Him: *If a man loves me* (opens his heart to me) *he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him* (Jn 14:23).

“Dear Children, also today and with great joy in my heart I call you to follow me and to listen to my messages.” I think Mary's joy must also be for all those who have yet to follow her and heed her messages, but no doubt will in a date unknown to us but not to her. The heavens are still open. This is still a time of grace.

Delay no longer. Try taking her messages seriously. She will lead you to Christ and He to the Father. Try following. Try heeding. The path along which she is calling us leads to peace and love, for she is the Queen of Peace and of Love, and when peace and love will begin to glow in your heart you will bear them yourself to others, even to those who do not know them. **“Be joyful bearers of peace and of love in this world without peace.”** This is really a world without peace.

I seek your good

“For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.” (Ps. 121)

Where there is war, there is obviously no peace. However, the absence of war does not imply peace, since divisions, abuse of power, violence, perversion, injustice, and even anxiety, fear and worries are not expressions of peace, especially not of the peace Jesus promised us: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you (Jn 14:27).*

“I am with you and I bless you all with my Son Jesus, King of peace.” May this blessing descend upon us, and may we receive it. It is a blessing that bears true peace, the peace announced by the Angels at Jesus’ birth; the gift of peace that was sealed with His Death and Resurrection. This peace no one and nothing can take from us because it is the expression of His Presence in us, in our heart, in our soul. We would have to drive Him away from us to lose this peace. However, Mary watches over us so that this won’t happen, because despite our limits and our sins we believe in His Love, and *whoever believes in Him will not remain in the darkness (cf. Jn 12:46).* As long as your heart is beating there is hope. Entrust your heart to Him. Trust and allow your Mother to help you trust Him. Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary!
N.Q.

“I will seek your good,” says the psalmist. It is wise to seek the good of others. We are all called – says the psalmist – to seek the good of others, in the imitation of Jesus, who mediates for our own good with the Father. To seek the good of another is to give good to another. Goodness is transmitted, similar to the way a mother transmits to her child the love she has for him. To speak of good or goodness makes the mind think of beautiful, good things, especially things that come only from God, and which we find in the Son. So, to seek someone’s good and desire the good of another is a bit like giving Jesus to the other. Nothing should stop us from desiring the good of another, not even life’s adverse events, not even hostile people.

To seek the good of another is akin to defending the other, and ourselves, from evil. It is akin to blessing the other, and brings down blessings upon the events of our own lives. In seeking the good of others we act in the manner of God who blesses always, who gives always to everyone, who makes it rain upon the good and the bad. Our every action – even the least – ought to become an occasion to seek the good of the other. Even a greeting, such as the Franciscan “Peace and good!” (“pace e bene”: quite common in Italy – translator) is able to transmit something good to the other. Perhaps that is why St. Francis thought up that particular greeting. But even a “Good day!”, or “hello” if said with courtesy and a smile has this effect.

If we become bearers of good with our lives, we will not neglect even the littlest things, because good is nourished even by little gestures, by little bits of attention, by simple words. Let us ask Mary to help us become bearers of good for whomever we meet in life, and make us understand that the good of others is also our own good, and that the bad of others is also our own bad because there is no bad that belongs to or comes from others that can be good for us. Let’s pray to Mary to make us attentive and prefer those actions that bring good to others, without distinction. This way we might bring a change to our own lives and to the lives of others.

LITANIES of LORETO - by Fr. Ludovico M. Centra

With this article we conclude this little series of meditations on the Litanies of Loreto. I thank the Lord for this occasion to reflect on the most beautiful invocations and titles that Christian Piety has endowed on the Most Holy Virgin.

Queen of Peace

This invocation is dear to Christians since as disciples of Christ they have always had to suffer persecution. Christians also make this invocation to implore peace among all peoples. It was included in the Litanies by Pope Benedict XV in 1917, during WW II which caused the death of millions, and when Russia was devastated by the revolution which brought Communism to power; and as Our Lady said at Fatima, Russia’s grave errors would spread much further beyond its own boundaries, and bring much suffering also to the Church.

I like to recall the providential coincidence between the apparitions of Fatima (when Mary requested the recitation of the Rosary to end the war) and the decision of the Pope to include in the Litanies this title. Still today this invocation is very dear to Christianity, and also to the Virgin herself. As a matter of fact, in 1981 when she appeared at Medjugorje, Our Lady presented herself as the “Queen of Peace.”

This invocation is consoling for us who live in this atomic age when man’s appetite for power exceeds every limit, and the fear of destruction creeps into hearts. It is assuring that our heavenly Mother should come to remind us that she watches over her children and our families, and that she has come as a messenger of the peace that comes from the heart of the ‘Prince of Peace’, our Lord Jesus Christ. His peace will never end; his peace will grant us the same life of God. It is the peace proclaimed by the choir of Angels the night of Christmas when God - for love of us - was born a baby in the holiest of families.



**Benedict XVI:
Rosary enjoying
new springtime**

Holy Rosary not pious practice of past - says Holy Father - but a prayer that brings peace and reconciliation

“In the experience of my generation, May evenings evoke pleasant memories of evening appointments to pay homage to the Virgin Mary,” said Benedict XVI. (...) “Today we together confirm that the holy rosary is not some pious practice relegated to the past, a prayer of distant times to be thought of nostalgically. Indeed, the rosary is experiencing what is almost a new springtime.

“In the modern world that is so dispersive, this prayer helps us to place Christ at the centre, as did the Virgin who meditated upon everything that was said about her Son and upon what he himself did and said. (...)

“May Mary help us to welcome within ourselves the grace that emanates from these mysteries, so that through us, this grace can ‘irrigate’ society, starting with our everyday relationships, **purifying it from many negative forces and opening it to the novelty of God.**

“The rosary, when it is prayed in an authentic manner - not mechanically and superficially, but profoundly - brings peace and reconciliation,” he said. “It contains the healing power of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, invoked with faith and love at the heart of each Hail Mary.”

Queen of the Family

This invocation makes our heart dilate with joy as we contemplate Mary in the role of her true ‘vocation’. Through Mary’s obedience to God’s will she accepted her vocation as wife of the righteous Joseph, and thus became mother in the family of Nazareth. The divine plan of redemption foresaw the birth of the Son of God as a perfect man who thus grew up under the protection and guidance of a mother and father.

When we invoke Mary as Queen of the family we acknowledge her vocation and generosity at placing herself at the service of God and of all mankind. This invocation, desired by JP II, speaks to us of the beauty and greatness of the family as a ‘domestic church’: a place where the project of love by man and woman in a collaboration with God can be realized. It also acknowledges the greatness of St. Joseph’s role as protector over the family. Through their help, may every Christian family be a ‘little church’ in which the mystery of Christ is relived. And may it be blessed, guided and protected, especially today when the institute of marriage is so under attack. The origin of the family is divine for it is the image of the Most Holy Trinity; and it is the only place where the divine love can encounter human love. Hence, it is right to invoke Mary as Queen of all our families.

Important Anniversary for Echo

200th Edition of Echo!

by *Stefania Consoli*

Round numbers seem to have more effect don't they. They even seem more important. But we know that each edition has its own importance, and that the festivity that accompanies a certain anniversary – especially with a double zero – reflects the gratitude for having come so far.

Before such an 'important' figure it comes natural to look back and draw up some sort of balance sheet, and then look into the future with hope and trust. So far the Echo has come off the press 200 times to be sent to the homes, or pockets and hopefully hearts of many people all round the world. In many cases the final destinations are and remain unknown to us, since the ways and paths that Echo is taken along are often casual, even unforeseeable.

There is, however, a light but powerful movement of an invisible hand that accompanies it to the many little corners of the world, to sow little seeds of faith in souls which thirst for God. The hand belongs to Mary, Queen of Peace, from whose inspiration we draw for the make-up of Echo which we hope brings not only words, but also the love and concern of Mary for each person. We experience her closeness and encouragement even during adverse times. Mary inspired the "birth" of this little publication, and we feel we can say with certainty that she continues to support it. We experience this each edition, even when the mind is a blank, and with prayer and supplication the ideas and articles begin to take shape.

We experience it when it looks like we may not have the funds to publish the next

issue, and then the donations come in, and the Echo continues. And there are also the translations into many languages, and the work of those brothers and sisters who with generosity give up their time and efforts so that the Echo can be read in different nations. All this is able to take place because it is beneath Mary's mantle: one must entrust and trust.

Two hundred issues. The first, little more than a type-written page for a group of parishioners, was published in 1984. Looking back, we immediately think of Fr. Angelo who generated the Echo and made it grow. He watched over it like a caring mother who wasn't afraid to fight to protect it against threats and difficulties, one of which was his terminal illness.

If the Echo has continued till now it is because it 'echoes' that special event that faithfully comes for our own benefit: the apparitions of the blessed Virgin at Medjugorje. So the real celebration is in honour of Our Lady, and of that special grace from heaven which perhaps we still haven't come to appreciate sufficiently. We think it lovely that this celebration of ours should coincide with the date of the 27th anniversary of the apparitions by the Queen of Peace.

So now, let us look to the future and once again entrust to Mary our publication together with the desire that it might always be a clear reflection of her grace. We consecrate to her all our workers, volunteers, and especially the readers that continue to show us their esteem and favour, through which they demonstrate their desire to grow in the school of Mary. And finally, we praise and thank the Lord for having permitted Mary to remain with us, so that we are not left alone.

After two hundred editions taking a closer look

By *Fr. Alberto Bertozzi*

Two hundred editions of Echo: that's quite an accomplishment – and I think anyone who knows something about printing would agree. When a publication such as ours reaches this "age" it means that both he who writes and he who reads gives and receives something important and useful.

What is left in me after these two hundred editions?

How many words, how much work and dedication, and above all, how much love has there been? And how much of it all has stayed in me? The entire operation begins with Mary, the Mother of God, and the word she gives us. This is translated, and commented. This gives way to an operation of announcement, of prayer and of charity – and not without fruit.

As a man, a believer and a priest, I am called to verify what has changed in me; and I think of the parable of the sower that talks of quantities: "thirty, sixty...", but I don't mean to propose a measurement of the conscience in terms of quantity. Quality, though, can be intuited, and is seen by those who are near us. I'm sure it happens that someone has thanked you for bringing him the Echo, or when you bring it, he entrusts you with an intention to pray for. This is because the 'quality' of being someone whom God listens to, is intuited. So to all those who work for Echo - the editor, secretary, translators, dispatchers, distributors, and all the readers – goes my gratitude and joy, in the spirit of Mary who exulted with song, and humility and works of charity.

Am I unchanged?

Despite the many gifts and calls that may have come your way through the pages of "Echo" are you still the same? Perhaps for various reasons, and after an enthusiastic start, do you feel you've gone backwards? The feeling of regret is already a good sign, as it signifies that the Holy Spirit is at work in your heart. And it means that Mary - your mother – has not tired of you. I want you to firmly believe that she never could, just as your Father in heaven never could. So you see, there is already something to be grateful for.

And I invite you to search in your heart for just a word: a word that God entrusted to Mary to speak to your heart, that makes that invisible chord that connects you with God keep on vibrating with life.

I am certain that Fr. Angelo would have used more ardent words to tell you the same things, those things that he told me even before the very first edition of Echo came out. And I'm certain that you – readers of Echo – give him joy.

— CALLED TO LIVE COMMUNION —

It is as though the Echo were inspired by God not so much to transmit news as to create communion, through being an instrument in Mary's hands to communicate a **sense of belonging**, to create unity of intentions and true communion in the sole Spirit.

It is not so much as the actual reading of the Echo that produces fruit. It is the grace of Medjugorje that accompanies the reading of it that produces good fruits. And one of these is the sense of belonging to a family, the family of God. This sense of communion in God overcomes distances and architectonical barriers; and is not conditioned by language or culture. Communion creates friendship with God, and friendship amongst His children.

If we live communion among us we will certainly know how to transmit it also to others, because communion is strong, brave and possesses the power of God. Even though the Echo is a small publication, it is called to take its part in strengthening the bond of love between Heaven and earth. This will thus be our small way of making room for Jesus so His presence among us can be stronger and more effective, since He said that He is present where there is communion.

Where there is communion there is love, and love is contagious. It can make everything beautiful, even the Echo, though it is a small thing. Perhaps the Echo is dear to Our Lady because it calls together many people who journey along the way which She has indicated, which is the way traced out by her Son.

I would like to say that the Echo is made beautiful by the love of those who read it and accompany it with prayer and aid, in union with the Spirit; and by the love of those who write it, and dedicate time to it. I think this is how we can help Mary work to make all things beautiful with the light and love of her Son.

Pietro Squassabia

YEAR DEDICATED TO SAINT PAUL UNDERWAY

“I am happy to officially announce that to the apostle Paul we shall dedicate a special Jubilee year, from 28th June 2008 to 29th June 2009 in occasion of the bi-millennium of his birth!”

Without a doubt the joy with which Benedict XVI proclaimed this event is deep and sincere, because the encounter with Paul of Tarsus – the apostle who more than any other knew how to express the universality of Christ’s message – is such that a heart cannot but be touched by joy. His letters, written to people of his time, talk to each of us personally, making us feel as though we were his ‘friends’, almost family, as though they were written for us.

They were addressed to groups of people who lived in an era and a culture so different to our own, yet they are so present-day, so modern, so new. Who of us cannot see himself in the lines of those famous letters? Who can remain indifferent to the numerous calls St. Paul addresses to us, with trepidation and near “maternal” concern, in his desire to urge man to respond fully to his Lord?

The re-discovery of this luminous figure and of his letters is precisely one of the objectives of the Church for the Pauline year. It shall be a year rich in initiatives, such as pilgrimages to the places where St. Paul journeyed, encounters with other Christian communities, a special liturgy before the Tomb and the chains of the Apostle. According to centuries-long tradition, these chains were the ones to have kept St. Paul a prisoner in Rome. This precious relic is now on show in a special reliquary close to his sepulchre in the Papal Basilica of St. Paul outside the Wall.

“This year must become for us all a new Damascus, a time of true conversion,” said the bishop of Cartagena Mons. Juan Antonio Reig Plà in a pastoral Letter for the Pauline Year. “I invite everyone to let himself be invaded by the same fire that burned within St. Paul, that fire which did not allow him to remain firm in one place.”

Editor

Proclamation of St. Paul, in light of Mary

by *Giuseppe Ferraro*

It might seem at a first glance that St. Paul’s proclamation – more than other inspired authors – leaves the figure of Mary in the shadows, so to speak. In fact, in the writings of the Apostle, there is no direct reference to her, except the marginal mention in the letter to the Galatians: “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law” (Gal 4:4).

A closer look, however, will show us how the prophetic intuitions of the Apostle and the humble message of the Queen of

Peace do converge. It is significant that there should be an explicit reference to a passage of Holy Scripture in the messages of the Queen of Peace. This passage is the Ode to Charity that we read in St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians at chapter 13. In her message of the 25th June 1988 Our Lady said: “*Glorify God, my children, with an ode to love, so God’s love may grow in you day by day to its fullness.*”

To understand the value of this reference, we must recall that Mary invited us to read Holy Scripture to understand her presence in the world: “*If you pray God will help you discover the true reason for my coming. Therefore, my children, pray and read Holy Scripture so that through my coming you may discover in Holy Scripture the message that is for you.*” (Mess. 25.06.91).

This is a precious key that helps throw light on the presence of Mary who is a “great sign” (Rev 13:1) on the horizon of the history of salvation and the journey of the Church, allowing us to read the Word of God under a new light. We have a case of **sharp tuning** between **Our Lady’s messages** and the Word as announced by **St. Paul**, where Our Lady invites us to glorify God and be fully immersed in that “*love that is loyal and pleasing to God*” (25.06.1988) that “*accepts everything bitter and difficult for the sake of Jesus who is love*” (ibidem).

It is the love sung by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: “Love is patient and kind, love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (Cor 13:4-7).

This is the radical way to which our Lord calls us. It is the way Mary followed with perfection, and the way upon which she encourages her children to take so they can be eternally united to the Heart of Jesus who, “though he was in the form of God (...) he emptied himself... and being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him...” (Phil 2:6-9).

The profound messages of the Queen of Peace converge with the central theme of the Letter to the Corinthians; and enable us to see “*the true reason of her coming*” (message 25.06.91). Mary’s presence at Medjugorje, read in the light of Revelation, helps us discern on the horizon the second coming of Christ and the final fulfilment of the work of salvation (“*These apparitions of mine at Medjugorje are the last for humanity. Make haste and convert!*” - Mess. 17.04.1982); for she has been sent to regenerate the members of the Mystical Body of the Son, to prepare the militant Church for the great mission that – by virtue of the “mystery of His will” (Eph. 1:9) – has been entrusted to her by God since eternity,

that there might be through her the definitive “recapitulation in Christ of all things: things in heaven and those on earth” (Eph 1.10). This is the “*new time ... that God grants as grace, so we can know Him ever more*” (Mess. 25.01.93) of which Mary speaks to us in her messages and to which she is guiding us with wisdom.

This **full and immediate knowledge of the Father**, to which the Queen of Peace desires leading us is the heavenly condition which she already enjoys in the perfect communion with the Trinity, and is the destination that the militant Church is called to. It is also the profound sense to the call to total offering of self to which the Queen of Peace calls us in her messages. This perfect communion is the source of the Love described by St. Paul; and by virtue of this intense relationship of the Church (and her members) with the mystery of Christ, the work of salvation of the world is wrought.

It is not by chance that the Apostle, in chapter 13 of the Letter to the Corinthians, places this final reality immediately after the “Ode to Love”: “Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away, as for tongues they will cease, as for knowledge, it will pass away... Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (Cor 13:8-19).

I would say that all of us who have encountered the grace of the Queen of Peace at Medjugorje recognize this experience of the mystery of God that wants to reveal itself intensely in souls. Though each in various ways, it is one of the most common experiences. It is as a seal upon the new heavens and new earth that Mary proclaims, which becomes more perceivable when in your soul you accept to consecrate your life to God through Mary’s Immaculate Heart. [It is] an unequivocal sign of the approaching of the time prophesied by St. Paul, when **all mediations will cease**: “When the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away” (1 Cor 13:10).

This is the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, when the mystery of perfect communion with the Trinitarian life – already fully realized in Mary – is realized to the full in the militant Church and the entire universe. Then, the great proclamation of the Apostle will be fulfilled: “In Christ all shall be made alive... at his coming those who belong to Christ; then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father... For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:23-25).

Pope’s Txt msg to Youth :

“The Holy Spirit gave the Apostles
& gives u the power boldly 2
proclaim that Christ is risen!
– BXVI” (WydSyd08)

Reporting from Medjugorje...

Month of Mary

The month of the Sacred Heart has just come to an end. June is a month of great saints such as Anthony, Aloysius Gonzaga, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, and for many faithful June is also the month of the Gospa, the month in which we are especially grateful for all the wonderful things that Our Lady has worked through her extraordinary presence here in Medjugorje.

It is also the month in which we normally "draw up the sums" of the previous year. For us this is the twenty-seventh year of grace, and still Our Lady tells us that this time is a gift. Are we using it to the best advantage?



Working for the Anniversary

At Medjugorje June is also the month of great preparations. In the first half of the month one breathes a kind of "calm before the storm," where everyone is somehow involved in preparations for this great event: the friars, the parish choir, the community, the hotels, and all those who work, perhaps in shops, or by taking in just a couple of guests into their homes. Seen in this way, it is nice to live this preparation in a communion which embraces all. Perhaps we are not all aware, or always aware of this, but aren't we, in the end, all working for and with Mary?

Dense Summer Programme

From the anniversary onwards the summer months are dense with activity and quickly pass as the programme proceeds. Despite a bit of a wane in the flow of pilgrims in the middle of July, it can be said that the summer months up to October see Medjugorje abuzz with activity.

Immediately after the 25th June (the anniversary) there is another great influx of pilgrims for the 2nd July, which is when Our Lady comes with an extraordinary apparition to Mirjana. Then there are the spiritual exercises for priests, the youth festival (which draws ever more people with each passing year) and the solemnity of Mary's Assumption into Heaven. Then there's the Exaltation of the Cross which is a much-loved feast in all of Hercegovina. Here it is celebrated on the Sunday before the 14th September, according to a long-standing tradition.

From the heat... shelter us

As usual the summer here is typically very hot. In July the weather can still be changeable, but the August sun is usually scorching and unrelenting. Thus pilgrims are forced to start out very early in the morning or wait for the cool of the evening to climb the hills.

Dawn on Krizevac is blessed by a lovely breeze, while the rays of the rising sun light up the path that winds steeply up the hill, gradually giving form and colour to the bushes and trees, the earth and the rocks, the crosses and the plaques, as they emerge from the darkness. Even the soul seems to receive the same light, and finds strength for the new day from the hope and love of Christ who died for us on the cross.

Renewed with this strength and hope, dare we still rebel against our daily crosses that await us at the foot of the hill? But He will be in us strength and love, and Mary will complete within us the work of the Holy Spirit who is spirit of humility, and of true Love which comes from self-giving and sacrifice.

Night Apparition

For almost the entire duration of summer there is the extraordinary apparition to the visionary Ivan twice a week at ten in the evening, at times atop Podbrdo, at times at the feet of Podbrdo where the blue cross is (placed here to recall the first apparition of the 24th June 1981). If the pilgrims manage to remain in silent recollection, this night prayer can be for all an unforgettable experience marked by profound intimacy in which each person's soul can feel the special presence of our blessed Mother.

Even arriving just before the apparition one is drawn to the same recollection that reigns among the faithful gathered. The Rosary is recited, interlaced with quiet songs; then at ten o'clock there are more or less ten minutes of a moving silence. After this Ivan briefly describes the apparition. At times Mary expresses happiness, at other times she lets transpire a little sadness, and asks for prayers for certain persons or situations. Nearly always she addresses those present by calling them "dear children," and departs with a blessing.

Mary is always with us. These brief encounters ought to help us, to re-awaken the soul so it can learn to live in the awareness that Our Lady has called us and loves us personally. Our every little prayer is precious in her eyes, and She would like for us to live happily, and to never forget the things of Heaven, and that she is by our side.

Francesco Cavagna

Annual Apparition to Ivanka

When Our Lady entrusted the tenth (and last) secret to **Ivanka** on the 7th May 1985, she ceased to receive daily apparitions. At the time Our Lady promised to appear to her once a year on the anniversary date.

Ivanka, who was at home with her husband and three children for the apparition,

referred: "Our Lady spoke to me about the ninth secret. She gave us her motherly blessing."

Apparitions to Mirjana

2nd June 2008 - "Dear children, I am with you by the grace of God, to make you great, great in faith and love - all of you: you whose heart has been made hard as stone by sin and fault*; and (instead) you, devout souls, I desire illuminating you with a new light. Pray that my prayer may find hearts open, so they can be illuminated with the power of faith, and open new ways of love and hope. Be persevering. I shall be with you."

(*According to Mirjana, when Our Lady said this, she was looking at those present to whom it referred, with a painful expression and tears in her eyes).

Padre Livio, of Radio Maria, commenting the above message, said among other things: "Mirjana (...) prays with Our Lady for the conversion of those who are most distant from God. This explains why in Our Lady's messages to her, we find references to closed hearts and people darkened by sin. This message is a bit difficult at first sight, but clear in its concepts. We must keep in mind that the message is given in Croatian, and then translated, and translations do not always fully render the original meaning."

"This mention of Our Lady looking with sadness upon some (amid several thousand present), makes us see how it is meant for those present. But it is also meant for us all," he says, pointing out that we mustn't illude ourselves that we are without sin. Instead, we must see it as a prompt to search our heart, to open up to the grace and let love into our heart; and to accept Mary's helping hand.

2nd July 2008 - "Dear Children, With motherly love I desire inciting you to love of your neighbour. May my Son be the source of this love. He, who could have done everything by force, chose love, thereby giving you the example. Also today, God transmits immense goodness to you through me, and you, my children, have the duty to respond to it. With the same goodness and generosity treat those whom you meet. May your love convert them. This way, my Son and his love will rise in you."

Our Lady added: "Your pastors must be in your hearts and in your prayers."

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone in "The Last Secret of Fatima" (2008) which has an introduction by Pope Benedict, **clarifies the misconceptions about the status of Medjugorje.**

On page 94 he briefly comments: "Bishop Peric's statement expresses a personal opinion of his own. It is not a definitive official judgment on the part of the Church. The Church defers to the Zara statement issued on 10 April 1991, by the bishops of the former Yugoslavia and the statement leaves the door open to further investigations of the affair. So the process of verification needs to move forward."

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL FAMILY: Mary's Gift at Medjugorje

by Stefania Consoli

If we look carefully at the words Mary has given us these past 27 years we will come to see that the word 'family' is used frequently. Our Lady speaks of the family with dearness, calling it a place of holiness, conversion and prayer; a place for authentic growth if the family places God and His laws of love at its centre. The fact that Mary calls us "*dear children*," tells us what she is for us: the mother whom God chose for Himself and for all mankind. We cannot forget that Mary became mother in the family of Nazareth. Together with Joseph she accepted into the earthly family the Only Son of the Most High.

It isn't difficult to *be a family*, because it is not a human invention; it is rather a faithful image of the **Most Holy Trinity**, the model of communion of love par excellence. It is here that most perfectly life is communicated from one person to another in a continual proposal of love by the Father and a continual response of love by the Son: "Fullness of joy in thy presence, pleasure for evermore in thy right hand" (Psalm 15:11). This is the family nucleus at which we are called to look upon and imitate so we can know how to relate, and make flow forth that precious good so necessary for our life, which is called love.

It is worth our while to stop and consider the value of love which ought to be the family's privileged sphere, for it is from love that we come, and to love that we return. Thinking of the waters of a river that have to rush downwards into the sea because of a force which is not their own, might help us see how **love in us is a compelling force** that is born in us without consulting us. It is a law of the soul that determines the most profound decisions and orients our desires. It is not a mere feeling; not something that one is aware of, which then goes away. Love is a concrete reality, a stable dimension, an eternal and unchangeable movement that is fixed in us and moves us in the realm of honesty. We can do everything by virtue of love which grants fullness and joy, and motivates us to overcome difficulties and cancels the memory of sorrow.

The family is thus the cradle of love. Love is the family's bridal chamber, its house, the place where love is nourished and is able to express itself the best, as a fire that burns wood. If today the family is profoundly in crisis, where disintegration and division reign, where the nursery of life is changed into a field of death, it means that at the bottom of it all is fear of love.

And that is why **Mary takes us back to the beginning** to rediscover what the main elements are that keep the family together. It is significant that all the visionaries of Medjugorje felt the impulse to form a family, a choice which cost them criticism and incomprehension, but which in some

way reveals a broader plan. If we look more carefully we will also see that the mark of the family has been placed by Mary on other spiritual realities. In fact, many of the religious communities born in or inspired by Medjugorje are similar to families being made up of men and women who share the same charism. Might we not say similar to the experience of the disciples – men and women - who followed in the footsteps of the Master to share the fatigue and the joys of the journey?

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt 18,20). The Master left behind himself this: the call to come together to pray, to share, to support (each other). At Medjugorje Mary is doing the same: "*Renew prayer in your families and form prayer groups. That way you will experience joy (as a fruit of) prayer and communion. All those who pray and are members of prayer groups are, in their hearts, open to God's will and joyfully witness God's love*" (25 Sept. 2000)

A natural and spiritual family, then, which is the place for profound communion, and reflection of the blessed Trinity. This is the gift of the Queen of Peace for us her children, for it is in the family that life is born and love generated. Do we want to accept this?

Signs Become Seeds

Breath of peace and love,
Breath of Paradise born in the heart,
This the sign received at Medjugorje,
Locked eternally into my heart.

Not extraordinary signs or wonders,
Not signs in the sun or heavens admired.
But a light breeze and a pure scent,
On my heart peace and salvation planted

Years pass, and with time seeds flourish,
Spreading perfume of Thee.
And a child, sought after and awaited,
With love responds, emitting Yes timidly.

All is changed now,
Though unchanged it seem, nought is as
before: in my soul now is thee
Awaiting with patience my unreserved Yea.

Yet another caress, Mother dear,
to take from me all that I cling to still.
Offer it to Jesus, oh Mother dear.
Take all, take me.

Mother of mine, I am all Thine.
May my soul be consumed in thee,
Prophecy of Love, thou art,
O Dulcis Virgo Marie!

(Anonymous)

Praying Together, in a Group

In this our time the Lord is awakening many souls to the faith. Also through the most blessed Virgin He is indicating a journey of conversion and holiness. When one is touched by grace and decides for God he acknowledges divine intervention and responds – with liberty – to God's call by seriously undertaking a journey of faith. The initiative is God's; the response must come from man, by feeling blessed and welcomed into the embrace of the Father who desires bringing back to himself every child. For, "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4).

It is a journey that involves the entire people of God. Thus it is necessary for each person to feel responsible for his brothers and sisters, who were redeemed in the same manner by the blood of Christ. In particular, when we pray we ought to recall that we are part of the mystical body of Christ, through which flows God's grace, as well as our prayer and self-offering. The Church of the saints who already live fully in God, and the souls who still await to be purified in Purgatory are real, and we must bring them to God in our prayer.

"Pray together" means to live communion with every creature near and far - in both a geographical and time sense - and not only at our prayer meetings, but always, as a habit. The Holy Spirit can help us learn to be in harmony with others, through Jesus Christ. The risk is to otherwise fall into individualism, even in the faith.

Prayer group as source of communion

To live communion in God is the most beautiful gift, and the most difficult, but it is fruit of a spiritual journey and a sign of maturity. Our model is the Most Holy Trinity, where life flows and is generated continually between the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each has the opportunity to live this communion: either in a religious community, or in the parish, or a movement, or a group, or the family. The starting point is that you decide for God and be available to let yourself be led and transformed by the Holy Spirit who always opens new ways and grants us strength and grace. Our duty is to be humble, able to listen, make sacrifices, and above all be desirous to offer yourself to God with sincerity, and place at the disposal of your brothers and sisters the gifts you received gratuitously from Him. All this is learnt gradually through a journey of personal and common conversion..

To gather together to pray is an essential moment that consolidates our union with God and our communion with others. The height is the participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice: to offer oneself on the altar together with Jesus, immolated Lamb, and draw from Him light and strength for our daily journey. As our model we have the experience of the first Christian community, in which believers "*were devoted to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the*

breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Prayer meetings: mirror of liturgy

Also our prayer meetings should reproduce the scheme of the Eucharistic celebration. In silence before God we create the space within us to enter into an intimate relationship with Him, allowing the Holy Spirit to act freely within us and awaken our soul. Acknowledging our weakness and need for His love and help, we humbly entrust to Him all our burdens, sins, worries and situations. This inner silence prepares us to listen to His Word, which always inspires something new in the soul if we know how to look deeply inwards and receive what the Spirit is suggesting at that moment. This then enables us to partake in the moment of sharing with the others, and overcoming our shyness, we can give and receive if we mirror ourselves with sincerity and humility. Prayer thus is born spontaneously from the depths of the heart, and can be expressed in a request for forgiveness, an intercession, a praise or thanksgiving.

Together, as instruments of blessing

Perseverance in the certainty that the Lord knows what is best for each of His children enables us to surrender ourselves ever more to His will, and from this comes inner peace even when we go through trials, and suffering, and when we rationally do not comprehend. This way, we can become instruments of blessing, and bring into every situation the life of God who defeats all death and opens the soul to resurrection, so it can become a new creature.

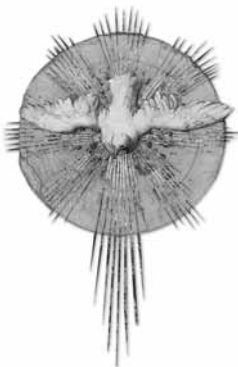
Each person must decide to live before God with integrity, without blame, and renounce every human compromise so he can remain faithful. God's grace is always stronger, and it desires separating the light from the darkness so that all is recapitulated in Christ. Prayer must thus lead to the transformation of life, to a life of holiness in the degree foreseen by the Lord. Otherwise, our words remain void and unable to make manifest the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

This journey is the one being opened up by the Mother of God. She knew how to say 'yes' with sincerity in every moment of her life, and remained ever faithful to God. Through this communion in God even Satan will be defeated if the people freely decide to belong totally to Jesus.

Chiara Piccinotti

**"Prayer groups
are powerful.
Through them I
can see that the
Holy Spirit is
at work in the
world."**

(25 June 2004)



Pope Benedict XVI on New Communities

New communities, ecclesial movements, groups of various types: there has been a flourishing in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. This blossoming in the Spirit reveals how the Lord desires bringing new sap into the Body which is the Church, to rejuvenate her and enrich her with new charisms, so she can meet the needs of our time.

Not always, though, does this sprouting meet with comprehension and consensus. Rather, and in line with evangelical teaching, new realities often experience the "persecution" that Jesus speaks of in Mark 10:29-30.

Perhaps out of fear of excessive forms of exuberance, or for fear of losing control, there is a more than just discernment by ecclesial authorities which at times turns into diffidence towards the novelty, and what should be a healthy pruning becomes mutilation, and paternal admonishment becomes prohibition. So how can the **initiatives of the Spirit be promoted** without the person who should be cultivating them finishing with destroying them?

Pope Benedict XVI himself supplies the answer. In Rome at a seminar on new ecclesial movements organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity (15-17 May 2008) he said to the near 150 bishops from all round the world: "The ecclesial movements and new communities are one of the most important **new developments prompted by the Holy Spirit** in the Church for the implementation of Vatican Council II."

He pointed out that Paul VI and John Paul II knew how to welcome, discern, encourage and promote the sudden irruption of the new lay realities, which in various and surprising forms, brought new vitality, faith and hope to the Church, witnessing to the joy, the reason and the beauty of being Christian, with a sense of gratitude for belonging to the Church.

The Pope, however, underlined: "This development is still awaiting adequate comprehension in the light of God's plan and of the Church's mission in the context of our time." Many forms of prejudice, resistance and tension have been overcome, he said, but there still remains the need to a "more mature communion of all the ecclesial components, so that all the charisms, in regard to their specificity, can fully and freely contribute to the building up of the one Body of Christ." (...)

"Go out to meet with much love the movements and new communities; let us make an effort to know their reality adequately, without superficial impressions or reductive judgments." Charity – he said – is the distinguishing mark of the Good Shepherd, as it lends authority and efficacy to the exercise of the ministry (the clergy) have been entrusted with.

"Approach with great love the movements and new communities," urged the Pope, "in order to gain an adequate understanding of their reality, **without superficial impressions** or reductionist judgments.

"It also helps us to understand that the ecclesial movements and new communities are not a problem or an extra risk that further weighs on our grave duties. No! They are a gift of the Lord, a precious resource to enrich our whole Christian community with their charisms. Thus, **a confident welcome** that gives space to and values their contributions in the life of the local Churches must not be lacking."

Difficulties or incomprehension about particular questions do not authorize a closure. The "much love" should inspire prudence and patience – he said – adding that Pastors are asked to closely accompany the movements and new communities with **fatherly concern**, cordiality and wisdom, so that the many gifts they bear can be for the benefit of all (...) "The ecclesial movements and new communities that are just beginning should, for their part, thoroughly submit to the discernment and 'delicate' and 'vigilant' accompaniment of ecclesiastical authority," Pope Benedict pointed out, "so that the authenticity of their charisms and the solidity of their communion with the Church can be verified.

"Those who are called to the service of discernment and leadership," he said, **"should not lord it over the charisms,** but should rather beware of the danger of suffocating them, resisting the temptation to make uniform that which the Spirit willed to be multifarious to concur in the building up and the enlargement of the one Body of Christ, that the same Spirit makes firm in unity." (...) In the necessity of making corrections, they should be done with that same 'much love' – he said. "May the Spirit of God help us recognize and protect the marvels that He himself brings forth in the Church for the good of all men."

Editor



Without the Holy Spirit

Without the Holy Spirit:

*God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is merely an organization,
authority is a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the Liturgy no more than an evocation,
and Christian living a slave morality.*

But in the Holy Spirit:

*the cosmos is resurrected and groans
with the birth pangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is present,
the Gospel is the power of Life,
the Church shows forth the Holy Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the Liturgy is both memorial and
anticipation and human action is
deified.*

By the late Metropolitan Ignatios of
Latakia, Syria

Nando's Experience

Nando, who has **helped out with the despatch of Echo** since the very beginning, recently experienced something very singular when he was seriously ill. He tells us in his own words:

"I was feeling very ill when I became aware of a presence close to me, as though of a friend who was welcoming me. I had the impression it was Our Lady. Despite the gravity of my state of health, I was very present in the spirit, and I said to Her: 'I know you want me with you, but I am not ready because there are still some things I need to complete for my family which still needs me.'" My wife who was next to me could not understand why I was speaking thus. Mary heard my words and said to me: "All right, but I have to ask my Son."

And while I felt a sense of general well-being, my thoughts went to the years spent for the Echo and the realization of Mary's plan, and I realized that they were not spent in vane. This gave me a great trust in her. After this episode my health began to improve and now I am very well, given my age. When I think that the doctors gave us no hope of me living I have to say that it was Mary who gave me back not only my physical health, but also a great sense of peace and trust in the Lord. Now I know that Mary is truly Mother, and ever so docile to Her Son's plans."

Nando's experience helps us see into the episode of the wedding of Cana. Mary, as Mother of Jesus, upon seeing the need of others, interceded before her Son, and He transformed the water into wine for the joy of all. Nando and his wife Lina now consider his experience a grace from Heaven, a grace to be treasured.

Church in Albania: don't leave us alone

The Bishops of Albania asked the Pope not to be left alone before the many challenges that the Church in their country is facing. Archbishop Massafra said the faith of the Church in Albania is "very alive. Whoever comes to participate in our liturgies, to see our experiences of faith, leaves truly impressed by the vitality, a moving vivacity in the faith experience. Those who come from Europe have lost this enthusiasm," he said.

"This doesn't mean we don't have difficulties (or) problems, but the crosses that form part of our daily life show that there is vitality."

Among the challenges for the Church in Albania, the prelate noted "that of secularism, of the desire to get rich right away, of emigration - external and also internal, with floating populations, with many problems also in the area of families."

From the Mailbox

Fr. G. Bellò, Treviso (Italia): Your Echo is great! It is worthy to be shared with others, and worthy of the support of all those who are devoted to Our Lady. As a priest I offer copies to the Pastoral Council, the Catechists and my parishioners. I find in it material for sermons and reflections. Blessings!

W.J. Allan, Canada: On the feastday of Our Lady of Fatima I thought it appropriate to send my small donation to support that little jewel: the Echo. It is a little publication, but it bears a treasure of wisdom (Mary's messages), and pages of love, counsel and consolation.

A group of volunteers from Canosa di Puglia (Italia): Your beautiful publication brings peace and prayer into the home. Our group is made up of volunteers who spend time every day at the centre for young handicapped people.

Vademecum for Distributors of "Echo of Mary"

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord."

"Dear Children, also today I would like to call you to live the messages" (10.10.85)

"I desire that you be active in living and communicating the messages" (5 June 1986)

One of the ways we can accept Mary's call to spread the messages is by sharing Echo with others. There are no economic rewards for distributors of the Echo; rather you will have to spend time to distribute it, and money to move around.

However, the reward will be great already in your heart because you will feel peace and joy. It will help you keep high the faith as you meet others with whom to share this extraordinary event of Mary's presence in our midst. It is almost an 'election' to a silent and precious assignment which will not fail, in good time, to bear fruits which the Blessed Virgin herself will place in your hands as a reward.

If you wish to help distribute the Echo, please remember not to leave it anywhere where permission would first be required, and don't abandon it to its destiny, but feel responsible for it, checking occasionally whether old copies need removing, tidying up, etc.

Mario Sfriso (printer)

Echo fully relies on readers' donations.

To all who have been instruments of Providence for Echo, enabling us to continue to help Mary reach her children, goes our heartfelt thanks, whom we remember especially in prayer and at Holy Mass.

If you desire a written response for your donation, please kindly request it. May God reward you and your loved ones onehundredfold!

B.xvi to Youth: Eucharist True Medicine for Immortality

Reflecting on the resurrection of Lazarus, **Benedict XVI** said in an address to the youth (on the 9th March 2008) that the human being is more than just a biological being: "Although he is part of the this great biocosmos, man transcends it because, certainly, man is always man with all his dignity, even if he is in a comatose state, even if he is an embryo; but if he only lives biologically not all of the possibilities of his being will be realized, which open new dimensions." The first of these dimensions that he mentions is that of knowledge, a knowledge that in man, as distinct from animals, is identified with a "thirst for the infinite."

We all aspire to "drink from the fountain of life itself," he said, and for this we entrust ourselves to the "second dimension of human nature," which is that of love. "Man is not only a being that knows, but he lives in a relation of friendship and love... Science, and medicine in particular (...) cannot satisfy the desire for eternity that is proper to man, not even if the pill of immortality is discovered.

"Let us imagine what would happen with an immortal biological human life: a world grown old, a life that would no longer leave room for young people, for youth, for this newness of life. So, this cannot be that immortality [that comes from] drinking of the fountain of life, which we all desire."

The only **true medicine of immortality is the Eucharist**, and the certainty of being loved by God - he said.

Pope's Txt msg to YOUTH at WydSyd :

"Young friend, God and his people expect much from u because u have within you the Father's supreme gift: the Spirit of Jesus - BXVI"

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The Lord bless thee and keep thee! May He show His face to thee, and have mercy on thee! And may He give thee peace!

don Alberto

Italy, 16 July 2008