



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

80

February 1991

Our Blessed Mother's message of 25 January 1991:

Dear Children, Today, as never before, I am inviting you to pray. May your prayer be prayer for peace. Satan is strong and wants to destroy not only your human lives, but also nature and the planet on which you live.

Thus, my dear Children, pray to be protected through prayer with the blessing of God's peace. God has sent me to be with you in order to help you. If you wish, grasp hold of the rosary; only the rosary can perform miracles in the world and in your lives. I bless you; and I will remain with you for as long as God wishes.

Thank you because you will not betray my presence here. Thank you, because your response is necessary for the sake of Good and Peace.

Thank you for responding to my call.

PRAY FOR PEACE; GRASP HOLD OF THE ROSARY

This evening, the message is precise and clear, for it has thrown light on the events of these last few weeks. Not just with regards to the war in the Persian Gulf, but also to the state of today's people's souls, minds and hearts. So rather than comment on the message, I prefer praying with you, for it is urgent that we pray.

"Almighty God, together with the Blessed Virgin, with the angels and the saints, I adore You. Together with the heavenly Church and with the earthly Church, and together with the holy souls in Purgatory, I adore You.

Almighty God, You are our God, our Saviour, our King, our Friend. You are our Father. Only You can change the situation in the world. But we pray to You so that You might be glorified in us, in each heart and in each being. All the glory is Yours.

Oh Lord, may the world convert, that souls might not go lost. Lord, if You wish, You can change the whole catastrophic situation; but I especially pray to You, that hearts might be open and comprehend this warning, and that they might be transformed according to Your law.

Lord, awaken all hearts, even those of people who spend their time watching television, that

all might become adoring hearts; hearts which pray. Forgive us, Lord, for not having understood You, for not having understood Your Blessed Mother. Over these ten years we have not understood the power of the Rosary.

Lord, the politicians cannot change the world; only You can; and man can co-operate through prayer and adoration and surrender into Your hands. I know, my Lord, that our prayers are not very strong, but we offer our lives to You, we offer everything through Mary's Immaculate Heart. Look at Her Heart, look at Her Love. It is in the most difficult times that You show Yourself in the most powerful and glorious of ways. Show Yourself to this world and give all of humanity Your signs so that all hearts will be opened and all of humanity will turn away from sin.

May the blessing of Almighty God descend on all men, in all troubled hearts, and may hearts be changed, transformed with the power of the Merciful Love of Jesus. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. "

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic'

Fr. Angelo's comment:

We knew from Jesus that "Satan was homicidal from the very beginning", that is, that he wants man's physical and spiritual death, for he "gets his power from death" (to make us fearful, avid, violent, desperate and finally damned!).

Today, however, Mary also adds that "Satan wants to destroy also nature and the planet on which we live." The news which reaches our ears from the Persian Gulf: seas made lifeless by the spilling over of oil, and air infested with poisonous gas, tell us something of Satan's plan.

Unlike the mass media, Our Lady has not blamed the dictator of Iraq for this disaster. She has blamed Satan, even though man is not blameless if he decides to become Satan's instrument.

Our Blessed Mother's message is similar to St. Paul's admonition in Ephesians (6;10-18): "We are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age." It is from them we must defend ourselves through prayer. Hence we must never forget the power of the Rosary; it is an invincible weapon!

Our Lady, loving Mother, doesn't want to judge (and neither should we), for she loves all men, including Saddam; and it is our duty to pray for him, to entrust him to Our Lady's concerning Heart. Nothing is impossible for God, so we should pray for him that his heart might convert. Jesus tells us that it is easy to love those who love us, and that we should: "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you" (Lk 6:27), and, "if your enemy is hungry, you should give him food, and if he is thirsty, let him drink. Thus you heap red-hot coals on his head" (loving embers to make him tender) (Rm 12.20).

This is what the Gospel teaches, but our faith is weak. If it is true that Saddam is an

instrument in Satan's hands, it is also true that Satan can do nothing beyond what God permits. Thus, Saddam is used by God to rouse us from a state of mortal torpidity. God wants His forgetful children to look at Him and call to Him, to show them what their Father is capable of doing. Mary is extremely discreet when She says, "if you wish, take hold of the rosary!" There is a lot of stress on those words, "if you wish." It's as if we had to grab onto a life-saver. She then thanks us three times. In particular She thanks us in advance, sure as She is that, "we will not betray Her Presence here," (She encourages us so much to heed her call) and to tell us that our reply to Her call is needed to obtain Good and Peace.

Fr. A.

**WE DID NOT HEED QUEEN OF PEACE
SO WORLD IS TORN BY WAR AND CATASTROPHE
Mary's children who pray give world new hope**

Despite God's immense gift to the world (Mary's apparitions), the world on a whole remains ungrateful. Many people have responded, it is true, but how many are there that should have responded, but didn't? Not even the Church has accepted her after nearly ten years of continued presence, despite the abundant fruits of conversion and penance. And now there's a war. A ruthless, catastrophic war, and we don't know how it will end, with all that destructive force in the hands of perverted wills, guided by "the one who was homicidal from the beginning." A Christian heart cannot help but feel infinitely sad in seeing brothers tear themselves to bits and play at destroying God's works. Despite all this, a Christian heart is not deprived of peace, and it continues to spread peace throughout the world. Just as Our Lady told us only last month, "there cannot be peace in the world if we do not have peace within ourselves."

But peace and order come from God; we cannot make it ourselves. Through disowning our common Father, we become enemies, selfish, egoistic enemies. If we do not accept the laws of nature, we become ferocious hounds - homo homini lupus. We cannot say no to violence and weapons when we approve the continued slaughter of innocent babies and justify the 80 million abortions per year in the world. We cannot pretend that social contracts be respected when we so easily break the conjugal contract (where two people become one flesh) and thus the majority consent to the breaking up of the family.

Then there's the law of grace, however, that unveils God's infinite love and is given to us through the Spirit of Jesus. If this Spirit, which is the salt of the earth, fails to come, the universe becomes insipid and the Spirit cannot continue to communicate Its reason and living force. Mary too, has been warning us for nearly ten years that we must recognize God, that we must make peace with Him in our hearts, otherwise peace cannot conquer the world; and She too is now silent. She is no longer calling people to the mountain, but only repeating that we pray for peace.

At La Salette in France, Our Lady confessed that She could no longer hold back Her Son's heavy arm. Has She let it fall then? It is not God Who sends war, but men who want it

against His Will, even if war is not as terrible as eternal damnation. On the other hand, for the Word of God misfortunes can be a necessary purification for the creation of new order. The prophet Isaiah says, "for I have listened to the warrant of destruction issued against the whole country by the Almighty Lord," (28.22) a warrant of destruction that will bring inexhaustible integrity" (10.22).

God's mercy is evident even today, and seems to invite His chosen ones to implore Him. Abraham interceded for five sinful cities. Bold as he was, he prayed and obtained the following response: that a small number of innocent people are more important to God than the guilty majority and He would therefore take back His word. In deed, God's will to save is by far greater than His will to punish. Since the number of just people could not be found, God did not save the city, but He saved the just family, according to Abraham's request, by letting them escape from the city that was to be ruined, so that their seed would not die.

Even if the world is unaware, our hope rests on those that are left, i.e. the chosen ones, as, "even if he has punished, he has compassion, so great is his kindness; since he takes no pleasure in abasing and afflicting the human race" (Lm 3.32).

The hope of the world are those who believe in the Lord's mercy and that, "day and night will take no rest in reminding the Lord of his promises" (Is 62.6), even when He punishes with the rod. Is this the great purification? We are not interested in knowing it, rather, let us take advantage of this grave moment to become one of those who keep watch and beg with loud cries and tears He Who can give us real peace. The Mother is with them, She works in silence, and like Judith, She is preparing to take vengeance on Her adversary.

Fr. A.

THE POPE ON MISSIONARY SPIRIT

On 23 January John Paul II's encyclical letter, "Redemptoris Missio," was released. It seems strange that while everyone is so intent on worrying about the present problems, the Pope dedicates one of his encyclicals to the missionary problem, i.e. to Jesus' mandate: go and make disciples of all the people. He wants us to remember that a true Christian is always called to be a living testimony which spreads the message of salvation.

In fact, if a person is Christian then he has accepted the Good News and puts it into practice, and really experiences what it's like to be freed from sin. He knows that God is with us and looks after us, and thus he cannot help himself from joyfully announcing this Good News, like the woman who found her lost coin. In one word, he becomes a witness and an announcer of the truth, and even if he does not have a specific task as a preacher, he will preach it with his new life: "Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God" (Lk 9). Yet there are Christians who would never think of being announcers of the kingdom of God, not even in their daily lives, or in their jobs, thinking that only "authorized people" should do it. And there are some "authorized persons" (priests and laymen) who, as organizers or directors, administrators, teachers or

office workers, are completely disinterested in their specific mission as evangelizers (for which they were ordained). It is as if Jesus' command to become fishers of men and to cast the nets, was not meant for them, as though they were just clerks in a firm called the Church!

The Pope, in this age where the sense of Christianity is breaking up, is reminding all Catholics, all over the world, of the missionary sense of their faith. Accepting and experimenting God's gift simply means having to announce it through our words and through our life. In front of man who always wants more and more and fears losing his possessions, we ought to be announcers with sober, joyful lifestyles; for we do not lack anything, we have nothing to fear or to expect, we have received everything, we have already come to the end of the times (1 Co 10.11)

In front of our static and stale Christianity we often forget the essence of the message, which is the life that Jesus communicates to us through the Holy Spirit and the new way that we should journey on where Jesus is the Bread and when we eat this Bread we are never hungry again. Jesus is the Treasure and when people find it they sell everything they have so they can buy this Treasure. Those who discover this Treasure cannot live the way they did before, but continually announce to others this great discovery through a new way of living where nothing else counts but Jesus.

Fr. A.

Thank You, Father for the gift of fasting. It reminds me that:

1. Next to the gift of prayer, You gave us fasting, as a powerful weapon to defend us against the evil in us and in the world; to resolve all problems, whether they be personal or collective.
2. This day reminds me of how You suffered atrociously in Your Passion to redeem us and that You also ask of me a little penance, so that I may be purified and thus help You to save the souls of our brothers that have gone far from You.
3. You are the Bread of eternal life and those who eat this Bread never suffer hunger. You are the Water that quenches our thirst for ever. You give me this Bread of eternal life and this beneficial Water every day.

**MIRACLES, SIGNS, CHARISMS
promised by Jesus overflow there where there is faith**

In an era like ours where the faith is dead and sin triumphs, and where materialism and naturalism have invaded also the world of the Church, Medjugorje is a sign of contradiction.

The Sacred Text was falsified when certain "biblists" decided to interpret the Sacred Scriptures in their own way, and this was followed by certain theologians who thought up new theories; and this left the whole pastoral field open for contamination.

From this viewpoint, it is easier to understand the importance of Marian apparitions. At Lourdes, Our Lady confused illuminism and rationalism, opposing Her Immaculate Conception to sin. At Fatima the Blessed Virgin announced the great events of this century, calling for conversion and prayer to avoid the chastisement of war. As the Queen of the Rosary, she opposed the Christian mysteries to materialism which would have spread throughout the world from Russia. At Medjugorje she is responding to the naturalism of our times with the superabundance of apparitions, messages, signs and miracles. As the Queen of Peace she is showing mankind the way to peace. But too few have responded, and the results are evident. If the Yugoslav bishops said nothing in particular with their latest declaration perhaps it is because the events are still underway, but ten years have passed, and multiple exams and tests have been performed on the visionaries. By now Medjugorje has become a Shrine which abounds in confessions and conversions, where people pray and from which radiates prayer centres.

Everyday people, people who pray (including the many bishops and priests who have been on pilgrimage to Medjugorje), do not need to wait for official declarations before believing what they've seen and experienced. Prayer groups have sprung up all around the world, organized by pilgrims who want their Medjugorje experience to continue. Here in Rome I lead a prayer group myself; about 700 people come every month and spend the afternoon praying. They have been doing this for 8 years. This perseverance can only come from the Spirit.

Let me say again that Medjugorje is the answer to the present naturalism. If naturalism is founded on false interpretations of the Bible and theology (just as in all past heresies), then it is in the Bible and the supreme Teachings of the Church that we must look for an answer that will throw light on the facts. I will limit myself to two citations from the Bible that certain theologians had forgotten about, but that will be comforting to our readers. When the Risen Christ had sent His apostles to proclaim the Good News to the whole world (I am referring to the end of St. Mark's Gospel), He made some very precise promises: These are the signs that will be associated with believers (i.e. those who will believe in Me, in all times): "in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover" (Mk 16.17-18).

These words are clear. Now if at Medjugorje the Word of God is proclaimed with such abundance, can we be surprised at the liberations, healings and extraordinary signs that are happening? We should be surprised if they weren't happening. And if they weren't happening, we would have to ask the Lord to make them happen. And in fact, for my second biblical citation, I'll show you how the first Christians prayed: "Help your servants to proclaim your message with all boldness, by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Ac 4.29-31). I would like to ask the nearly 500,000 readers of this splendid publication that reaches so many countries, if anyone can tell me of a church (I'll be happy with just one) where this prayer of

the first Christians is repeated. Don't you think instead that these days the healings, miracles and prodigies, rather than being asked for, cause fear? Why? Because they are contrary to the reigning naturalism, and without which, one is not up to date.

Let's pass on to the supreme Teachings of the Church, as it was expressed in the last Council. Here too, I will be happy with only two citations. Among the many themes that were dealt with, charisms was also spoken of - those extraordinary gifts that the Holy Spirit donates to whom and when He wants. The Council tells us, "The Holy Spirit dispenses special graces also to the faithful. These special charisms, or even the most simple or common ones, must be accepted with gratitude and devotion" (LG 12). It seems to me that this lesson is not observed when the charisms are accepted with suspicion and bother, rather than gratitude and devotion.

Another important statement: "On receiving these charisms, it becomes a right and a duty of every believer to use them." (...) "The duty of judging whether they are genuine, and of making sure they are used properly, lies with the Pastor" (AA.3). Therefore, those who receive extraordinary gifts have the right and duty to use them; and the Pastors are laden with a precise duty - that of discernment and use. It would be difficult to say how these instructions (St. Paul also was quite clear in this) are being put into practice in the single dioceses. What I care about, is to throw light on how the Church is not afraid of extraordinary facts, as long as they come from God and their use is controlled by the legitimate authority.

In the light of the Bible and the Teachings of the Church, the events of Medjugorje are neither strange, nor excessive; but are in line with the promises made by Jesus to His followers.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth

NEW YEAR IN MEDJUGORJE

Thousands and thousands of pilgrims came to Medjugorje from around the world to begin the new year with the Queen of Peace. There were, in particular, many young people from both Italy and Austria.

New year's eve was a day of preparation with the help of Fr. Slavko, and confessions in the afternoon. After this, people started making their way up Podbrdo where it was said Our Lady would appear. In fact, after the Rosary and songs Ivan received an apparitions, and he referred that Our Blessed Mother prayed lengthily over everyone and then blessed everyone and invited all to go joyfully to the church and pray for peace.

Everyone moved on hastily to the church, taking the short cut through the fields, and at 10 pm the beautiful vigil for youth began. The songs were led by a chorus and orchestra with international components, and everyone listened in awe at a young Austrian's interpretation of "Night of Faith."

Fr. Slavko had all the lights turned off and explained how the darkness reminds us of the state of sin from which Jesus, Light of the world, freed us. Milona translated Fr. Slavko's brief exhortations said in Croatian and Italian, into various languages. We then meditated

the Rosary which was guided by some of the visionaries - Ivan, Vicka and Marija.

At 11.30 p.m. Holy Mass in Latin began, with Consecration at exactly midnight. The bells rang and everyone in the Church remained in lengthy adoration, whilst the violins played "Stille nacht" -Silent Night. Then there was an explosion of joy: Jubilate Deo! That's how the new year began for thousands of young people. (...) Holy Mass continued, with beautiful songs and music. Linda, the young blind woman from America sang in such a sweet voice and played a strange small instrument. The vigil ended at 1.00 am, but no-one wanted to leave the church, it was just so nice staying there singing and praying. In the end we all made our way out to the square where the songs and joy continued.

(By Alberto Bonifacio)

AN UNFORGETTABLE VIGIL

I had been to Medjugorje three times, but this time, five years after my first pilgrimage, Mary called me to Herself, converting me from Oriental practices. In these five years, She led me very gently towards Jesus, whom I did not know, letting me discover that only He can save and make us holy. There is no one else and no other technique. In a word, She taught me to pray.

Graces, however, must be cultivated, and this time Our Lady let me feel Her call once again, so that She could give me something more. I will always remember the new year vigil. Just like many other young people I fasted on bread and water, even though it was Monday, in preparation for the prayer of the new year. In the evening on Podbrdo there must have been two or three thousand people praying with Ivan and his group.

At the same time that the bells were announcing the new year (together with the many distant bangs of the world coming from the neighbourhood), Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was raised by the hands of the celebrant and offered to the Father. Even though the church was terribly crowded, (and outside there were just as many people), the joy cancelled any tiredness and discomfort. After Mass, most of us stayed on to continue singing and praising the Lord; and though I didn't know any of those around me, I was not at all embarrassed to embrace them. It was as though they were my brothers and sisters - I felt in deep communion with them. I had no doubt of Our Lady's presence!

The day after, during adoration, Fr. Luciano told us of how a young couple had decided to live their engagement in chastity, and also of a lengthy confession that freed a creature from the chains of evil. These were just two of the many precious fruits of those grace-filled days! And the feeling of belonging, the joy, and the peace, was so great that I could have stayed there forever. Now, that I'm home and back to doing the usual things, I feel as though I had taken a bath of grace. I have new strength for prayer and fasting, and a profound desire for adoration, like I never felt before. I feel renewed. And I now feel the desire to offer my suffering to God for the sake of others. In those days we were told many times that we must awaken and cultivate the spirit of gratitude in us, and that if it dies, the field is left free to sin.

Thank you Jesus, thank you Mary.

Paolo

THE TRUTH ON THE BISHOPS' REPORT

After the reunion of the 27-28 November 1990 in Zagabria, the Yugoslav Bishops gave their conclusions to the Holy See in a report containing three points. The report was meant to remain secret whilst waiting for the Holy See to emit a deliberation. In fact, both the Vatican Radio and the Glas Koncila had announced that no communication had been given after the conference. The report, however, was secretly passed on by someone to the ASCA Agency, which in turn spread their own artfully distorted interpretation of the facts.

"Avvenire" reported the following on the 3rd January 1991: "In the extraordinary meeting of the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference in Zagabria, held on 27-28 November 1990, the Bishops declared: 'The Bishops have been kept up to date of the events of Medjugorje since they began, by the local Bishop, the Commission of the local diocese, and the Commission for Medjugorje of the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference. Based on the research work done to date, one cannot affirm that supernatural apparitions or revelations are taking place. In the meantime, the constant arrival in Medjugorje by faithful from various parts of the world requires attention and care on the part of the Bishops.

Consequently, our Episcopal Conference, in the spirit of ecclesiastical communion, is in favour of assisting the local Bishop so that the organization of the pastoral work in Medjugorje will promote proper liturgical and pastoral activity so that any other phenomena and content which goes against the spirit of the Church is impeded.' "

The report clearly says nothing definite about the supernatural events of Medjugorje; while it shows the Bishops' concern and consideration for the ever growing presence of pilgrims. Why then, did the Press present such a negative version - a version that caused apprehension and dismay, giving a first impression that Medjugorje had undergone a fatal blow? You see, the publication of this confidential report was done in a way that would deliberately interpret the declaration in a negative sense. In fact, it was not the text of the Bishops' document, but the words in the comment by ASCA agency that caused all those sensational headings against the supernaturalness of the apparitions - a comment that was published before the document itself.

The following words in particular created that negative point of view: "The presumed apparitions of Our Lady at Medjugorje, that have caused thousands of faithful to leave their homes and visit Medjugorje, have no supernatural character. This conviction was expressed by the Yugoslav Bishops ..." Bishop Franic' says, "No definite declaration. Supernaturalness is not excluded."

"The declaration made by the Yugoslav Bishops," affirms Msgr. Franic', Archbishop emeritus of Split, "was misunderstood by some members of the press, some of which were also Italian. They did not pronounce themselves regarding the authenticity of the

apparitions, but simply said that based on the exams done to date, the supernaturalness of the facts could not be ascertained. Abbe' Laurentin explains in 'Avvenire' (3 Jan) that if the supernaturalness has not been assured, then neither is it excluded."

"It is evident," continues Msgr. Franic', "that when apparitions are still happening, the Church cannot make a definite judgement. The bishops have not finished their investigations. They intend to continue with their research, study and considerations. If they say 'non consta' (referring to the supernaturalness) it doesn't mean that there is no supernaturalness.

(Incidentally, it took 4 years for Lourdes to be recognized, and 13 for Fatima; and other supernatural manifestations of this century met with hostility and public repudiation - e.g. the Merciful Jesus of Sr. Faustina, prohibited for 20 years and now accepted; and the charisms of Padre Pio who was interdicted for a good 30 years and is now close to being canonized. Ed. note)

But the new and very consoling fact is that the bishops reviewed the previous restrictive orders, making pilgrimages now practically unconditioned.

According to Bishop Franic', it was not in the order of the day of the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference to examine the authenticity of the apparitions."

(from 'Avvenire', 5 Jan.)

What do the competent ecclesiastical authorities say?

'Create a Commission of Bishops for the pastoral work.'

A communication by the Secretary of the Y.E.C. (which was also affirmed by some members of the Commission for Medjugorje) confirms what said. In the absence of Cardinal Kuharic' and of Msgr. Komarica, Fr. Leonard Orec' (parish priest of Medjugorje) turned to the Secretary for clarifications. Following is the information that he was given by church authorities in Zagreb and which was announced over Radio Maria on the 8th Jan:

1. The Investigating Commission has not pronounced any definite judgement to date regarding the supernaturalness of the events in Medjugorje.
2. The Investigating Commission was encharged by the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference to continue their work.
3. The Secretariat of the Y.E.C. did not inform the press of their opinion regarding the events of Medjugorje. They are surprised and ask how the ASCA agency could have had the information.

Fr. Leonard continues:

It seems that certain people are in a hurry to spread incorrect news before the opinion of the Y.E.C. is known, to give themselves a certain advantage. All this, however, only creates confusion and hinders the positive decision of the Y.E.C.

(He adds): In an interview done by the Croatian Television on 23 December 1990, Cardinal Kuharic', Archbishop of Zagabria and president of the Y.E.C., said that the Y.E.C. and he also, has drawn a positive view from the events at Medjugorje.

Fr. Leonard seemed very happy, as the Yugoslav Bishops have started visiting Medjugorje and preside over the Eucharistic Celebrations and also because of the care that the bishops have shown towards the pastoral life of Medjugorje. In fact, a Commission of Bishops has been nominated just for this reason. Fr. Leonard concluded, "Medjugorje is moving onwards and she's doing it with the Church."

(From notes by Alberto Bonifacio, in charge of the transmission on Medjugorje for Radio Maria.)

TRIALS ARE NECESSARY **Medjugorje is a work of God!**

It hurts to see Medjugorje being attacked so, but it's also an eye-opener, and we are able to see the raging anger of the devil and his accomplices for his great Adversary, the Blessed Virgin. For precisely in Medjugorje countless souls are finding salvation, and countless Christians are being roused from a mortal sleep.

The devil is so angry because he knows the battle is already lost; and if many ask if Medjugorje loses credibility in the meantime, we have to look at Jesus who teaches that "scandals are necessary." A way of recognizing that Medjugorje comes from God and not from man, is in the fact that after each attack Medjugorje comes out stronger than ever.

How can the contrasting views of Medjugorje by Christians and the clergy be explained? Jesus, too, was condemned by the "church" of His time; so we shouldn't be amazed if His Mother is not accepted either when she comes to the earth to repeat Her Son's Gospel message to mankind. The Gospel, God's "letter" to mankind, contrasts with man's tendencies, for man tends to seek his own glory, not God's. So we have a twofold reaction: there are those who are willing to change their ways of living and accept all the prophetic reminders that lead to conversion. Then there are self-satisfied people who defend themselves by saying God has spoken and nothing else can be added to His word. Their response is: "We already know the Gospel ... this is fanaticism or fruit of mentally sick people and should be refused... we are happy with our every-day lives which count more than extraordinary events ... "

Our Lady is the Prophetess of the present time, and just like all prophets who come to remind us of God's Commandments, She is not well met either; not even in the Church (Jesus too, "came to his own domain, and his own people did not accept him").

God's power is at its best in weakness.
He turns His enemies into footstools.

There is nothing to be amazed at - we would have to be amazed if things had been the other way around. All things that come from God are greeted similarly by men - i.e. contradiction, scandal, the cross. "But where there is a cross," Jesus says, "I will draw everyone to me." It is a baptism needed by Him and by us. "That's how God wins though, because, His power is

at its best in weakness" (2 Cor 12.9), and the cross prepares for the resurrection. Mother Nature is wonderful: when a plant is pruned, it thrives and bears fruit. Trials discourage the timid, but strengthen the resolute.

There really is no need for astonishment. It had to go that way, as: "You therefore must be on your guard. I have forewarned you of everything" (Mk 13.23). How could it be possible that with such a high post at stake (some make a complete turnabout in their lives), the adversary would not interfere? - "because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that his days are numbered" (Rv 12). The more man creates obstacles, the more Mary distributes God's grace. We have seen how cold showers and harsh criticism ends up causing a favourable reaction of new interest which in turn ends up spreading the good news. In the beginning it was the hostile Government press that made Medjugorje known; then the Bishop with his rash behaviour attracted increasing attention. Without realizing it, he was working for Mary.

By now the game is over; through the prayers and fasts and the love for our enemies, Mary has gained ground, bit by bit, to the point where the pilgrims who were once hindered or tolerated, are now protected and helped by the bishops themselves. The Italian press too, after the first outcries (scandals make more news than positive facts), soon came back down to the facts, and some treated the argument with seriousness and gave excellent reportage. We were even asked to give interviews to local TV and press. We could say that, "the Lord ensnares the wise by their own astuteness" (1 Co 3.19), putting the journalists at peace, who thought they had grounded the Medjugorje supporters. This is what the Gospel teaches us, "as God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom" (1 Co 1.25). And remember that the Holy Spirit guides the faithful (sensus fidelium) so that they remain firm in the Truth and are not easily led by rational explanations, even with so many contrary voices beating around our ears.

Fr. Angelo

AT MARY'S SCHOOL Youth 2000

QUESTIONS ABOUT VOCATIONS

Accept God's Love and all problems are resolved

by FR. TOMISLAV VLASIC'

I have received many written queries that need responding, but even if we spoke for hours, the problems would still exist. Not our words can resolve these problems, but God's help. It would be sufficient if we were able to simply accept the fact that we are truly, but truly, loved immensely by God. We only need tell ourselves: "I am the apple of my God's eye!", and with this conviction in our hearts, begin to sing and rejoice. All of your questions would disappear if you could find in your family or group, somebody else who experiences God's

love in his/her life. All the questions that we make depend on two wrong attitudes: either we are worried about certain things, or we want to justify certain things. Get rid of your justification, and your problems and decide to sing nonstop for the next one hundred years!

1. One common question: how can I recognize God's will? (if I have to get married or become a monk or nun, or go this way or that?) We must start from the beginning. There is an infallible answer: it is LOVE. If God's Love is at the centre of our lives, then it is God who leads us and illuminates us. God is the only light, the only Master. If we reply with all the love that we are capable of, then we will see the right way to go. But don't cry if you think you've made a mistake! Start loving there where you went wrong. If you have become a priest, keep loving with all your being. If you are married, start loving with all your heart, because a Christian has only one vocation and one answer: LOVE. I would prefer to be a poor wretch and know how to love, rather than be a great theologian or bishop and not know how to love. The vocations of consecration are better as they take us to a deeper love. So today you will reply to God and God will reply to you.

2. Many ask: I don't know what to do. Once, Our Lady confided in us and told us of Her suffering. She said: My greatest suffering is when my beloved sons ask what they should do. One day I asked Our Lady: What can I do now for the parish? As I will not be here any more. How can I move the people? She repeated to me, "Love, love, love," and then, "In this moment, I am with you and in all the families in the world; I am everywhere because I am love." With love you can be everywhere. Is it too simple? But this is the problem that arises when we ask what we should do. People expect to hear great things, but the greatest thing is to love with God's love. In the smallest of things, if you are immense love, you will do great things. Start by doing all your insignificant daily chores with great love. Pray very much to obtain this love. Nourish yourselves with Eucharistic love. Adore this Eucharistic love, discover it. Try to make this love grow in you and spread it; then you will find all your paths. If we have love for Jesus we will find the way to realize that love. This morning somebody asked me: "What do I do when Mass lasts one quarter of an hour?" You can come a quarter of an hour beforehand and adore Jesus; or you can cry for a quarter of an hour during the Mass; you can stay on for another quarter of an hour after the Mass to adore Jesus and console Him. You could decide to stay for ever in front of the Blessed Sacrament to console Him and yell out to the world, like St. Francis: "Love is not loved." You could become a priest to live the Eucharist properly. See? There are a thousand possible answers. The problem is not in our heads that don't understand, but in our hearts which are not free.

3. Some have said that they do not understand celibacy. It must always be based on freedom. The positive answer can be found in intimately loving Jesus. When a person finds this intimate love for Jesus, it means that no other person has found place in his heart to impede the fulfillment of love. That is why celibacy cannot be normal without this intimate love for Christ. On the other hand, celibacy can be more normal than marriage when there is this perfect love, this intimate love. I like to see celibacy as being close to marriage. To be fully happy in both vocations, one must find the depth of God's love. Then these two vocations integrate and draw benefit from each other. How can we fill our hearts with the brain? Celibacy without this intimate love for Jesus is frustrating; just like a marriage is terrible if there is no love.

4. A person told me: "I would like to offer myself totally to God, but I have much sadness within me." It is so easy to donate oneself; this person wants to make a joyful offering, but the Lord finds only sadness. The answer is to offer your sadness to the Lord, so that it will become part of His sadness: "Lord, your love is crushing me, Your love is greatly suffering in me. I am your love of Gethsemane. Someone has tied me to a post and they continue to flog me. Oh, now I have understood. I am carrying Your suffering. I thought You were far from me, but You are one with me. You were so close, but I couldn't understand. I adore You and I thank You because You are my heritage. Thank You for letting me bear Your suffering for many sinners." If you can come to understanding that the Lord shows Himself to you even in the cross, then you will see Him in you and around you. Just accept with love, and adore Jesus.

If you could only understand what it means for a sad and destroyed person to offer his suffering to the Lord! A mystic said, "This only is missing in Heaven! That's why Jesus came to the earth, to gather up this wealth." In your own little tragedies, you can offer all the tragedies of the world to God. Gather up, gather up these tragedies; place them on the altar and you will become participants in a great sacrifice. Then you will quickly realize that your soul has started living. Then there will be no further death or failure inside of you, but joy. Joy that you will feel when you have to do something that you don't like doing, but then it will give you great joy.

Enrich Jesus with your poverty. If only we could open all the hospitals to Jesus, offer all the people that are tied to a post! If only those people who are dying would offer themselves to Jesus! We would have many holy martyrs. Become united to the Mystical Body of Jesus; so that you will become a living Eucharist.

So is suffering wrong? Do not love suffering, but love in your state of suffering! Look for Jesus in this. One usually has to go through suffering to find Jesus. That way we are purified and our suffering takes on a positive value. But let's not look to suffer for the sake of suffering. This would be a sickness. If I love Jesus and take His suffering upon myself, then I am doing it because I love Him. It is through this process that love grows in me. That is why the martyrs had a fire within themselves and they were happy and contented.

5. Two people have decided to get married. What is their duty or service in the Church? Love. Here though, I must add something. Physical love is not a failure. Does a married Christian have less value than someone who is married to Jesus and offers his or her virginity? Which ever of the two loves more is greater. Whether you are married or not, enrich your love with the (Divine) Love that we have spoken of. If God says that He loves us like a groom loves his bride, then do you think that showing this tender love of God in your marriage is not great? If you can nourish a child with this love, and lead him to love, do you think that this is not great? Is it a minor thing to show God's Love to the others through such tenderness? Is it minor if we can love everyone else with this love? You will find many things to do in the Church where you can donate this love!

6. A person has asked me: "This vocation of totally offering oneself - is it valid only for consecrated people, or also for lay people?" Everyone can offer themselves in equal manner. You can be consecrated because you are called to holiness. I beg you all to open your hearts to this call. Offer all your sadness, your crosses, your suffering. Inflammate these crosses with a divine flame of love! There are, however, other vocations within this picture. God wants

these people to promptly offer their youth; He wants to enflame them with much love and entrust them with great crosses, in proportion to this great love. These people will bear this weight of sin.

Don't worry about the weight of the cross. The crosses that the Lord gives us always lead us to greater love. There are those who say to the Lord: "I want more!" I'm sure that many in this moment know what I'm talking about. It is a vocation that is impressed in their hearts. It is a gift of God given through Mary. And of course, these people must be freer than others, so that they can dedicate all their forces, all their time to the Lord. The centre of their every day lives must be the Blessed Sacrament. All of us then, will answer according to each one's interior call.

7. Some ask about a parents' attitude towards the youth, and vice versa. It is a reciprocal service of love. Children cannot be without parents, but neither can parents be without children. And I don't just mean physically, but also spiritually. If parents do not love and do not serve their children in love, then they will not have love and they will not have good children.

(Fr. Tomislav - from a registration.)