



# ECHO OF MARY

## Queen of peace 130

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All Saints and Mary Immaculate. Yr.12 #6

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### **Our Lady's message of 25 Sept. 1996:**

**Dear children, I invite you today to offer up your crosses and your sufferings for my intentions. I am your Mother, my children, and I desire helping you by asking God to give you His grace. Dear children, offer your sufferings to God as a gift, so they may become a beautiful flower of joy. Pray then, my children, to understand that suffering can become joy and the cross the way to joy. Thank you for responding to my call.**

### **For my sake offer up your cross: it will become joy**

The cross is the point of departure and the essence of Christian life. For Jesus it meant total obedience, in atonement for man's disobedience. For us, accepting the cross means bending our will to accept God's will which goes against our project for earthly happiness. Be not amazed then that Mary repeatedly calls us to make the Cross central in our lives and for us to make a special consecration to the Cross in our homes (12 Sept. '85) and to accept the Cross with love, as Jesus did, so it may become joy (cfr. 11 Sept. '86). It is only through looking at Jesus' Cross, which is the utmost proof of love, that we can understand the Cross and receive the strength to carry it.

Our Lady fears not to talk to us about the cross, despite the present tendency to present an easy-going Christianity with no obstacles, which misleads man, thinking he can be saved without a cross. Mary knows that only the cross is what matures God's children, just as pruning makes the grape vine more fruitful. Scripture says: God is treating you as his sons... Any punishment is painful at the time, and far from pleasant, but later, in those on whom it has been used, it bears fruit in peace and goodness (cfr. Hb 12:7-11).

Suffering exists because of sin, but when united to that of Jesus it serves to make atonement and purifies us from all that displeases God. When offered to Him it obtains for us enormous grace. Of course, Mary refers to physical and spiritual suffering, to difficult relationships and to the lack of love, but also to the crosses which one suffers through being faithful to God: because witnessing to Jesus and His Mother can create incomprehension, mockery and hostility. Remember: anybody who tries to live in devotion to Christ is certain to be attacked (2Tim 3:12).

When crosses arrive we are usually tempted to ask God why, often accusing Him of having permitted

them. Other times we may complain about them, saying they are too heavy. Instead, God makes them to fit. Perhaps you've all heard the story of a man who kept complaining to the Lord about his cross. In the end the Lord gave him permission to visit an enormous cross factory and choose the lightest one. The man tried them all, but none seemed to fit. In the end he found one that seemed lighter than the others: he realized it was the one he had always carried.

Our Lady invites us to offer up our sufferings to God as a gift: with love and no regrets, just the way one offers a gift to a dear one. We will discover that they will become a beautiful flower of joy and we will know what it is like to suffer for love's sake. St. Paul exclaims: In all our trouble I am filled with consolation and joy (2 Co 7:4).

So that the crosses do not frighten us, Our Lady lovingly encourages us to offer them to Her, as She needs them for Her intentions. On various occasions Mary has told us what some of these are: peace, families, youth, priests, those far from God and those under Satan's influence. Besides, She knows better than us what our own spiritual and material needs are - we only need to trust Her.

Mary also consoles us and reminds us that She is our mother and desires helping us. Which mother does not use all her means to help her children? Montfort says that Mary prepares her servants' crosses with so much maternal sweetness and pure love as to make them gladly acceptable, no matter how bitter they may be in themselves (cfr. 154). Mary ensures us that She will ask God to give us His grace. Paul says: You can trust God not to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it (1Co 10:13).

It is only through constant prayer that we receive the grace to understand that suffering is joy and the cross the way to joy. Truly, the crosses that we offer to God become joy in an anticipation of heaven, and if we were able to fully understand we would exclaim together with St. Paul: the only thing I can boast about is the cross of the Lord... (Gal 6:14). It is for this that we can see joy shine on the faces of those who suffer greatly. St. Francis said: So great is the good that awaits me, that every affliction is dear to me, and Montfort: What a cross to be without a cross!

Fr. Angelo

## **I implore you: convert! to renew the world**

### **Our Lady's message of 25 October 1996:**

Dear Children, Today I invite you to open yourselves up to God the Creator so He may change you. My children, you are dear to me; I love you all and I invite you to be closer to me so that your love for my Immaculate Heart is more fervent. I wish to renew you and lead you with my Heart to Jesus' Heart which still today suffers for you and calls you to conversion and renewal.

Through you, I wish to renew the world. Understand my children, that today you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. My dear children, I invite you and I love you and in a special way I implore you to convert! Thank you for responding to my call.

1. Now that great numbers of pilgrims are once again making their way to Medjugorje Our Lady calls us to reflect anew on the reason of Her coming, so as not to get used to Her presence and let it become a habit unable to carve into our hearts or lives. Our Lady is saying: "Convert so you can respond to the

immense task I give you, which is to renew the world, because today you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world."

Above all, Mary is calling us back to God. He made us, we belong to Him. For such a great task, open yourselves with filial trust to God. He is our Father; He can do everything and He loves us, because we are His children: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Lk 11:13). Mary reminds us that He is our Creator, thus He can create in us a new heart and place a new spirit within us (Ez 36:26): not a spirit to condemn the world, but one which loves it so as to renew it: I have not come to condemn the world, but to save it (Jn 3:17).

God, however, wants to save the world through us: you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Is this utopian? No, if we think of the 12 fisherman from Galilee who changed the world with their faith in Jesus. But it takes much more than being "good Christians" with "good habits" who think they are better than others because they go to Medj., but are not fire that burns. When the salt is insipid and the lamp is off, we are useless and we send others away from the salvation, while we should bring it to them. 2. In this operation whereby we should change, Mary acts as mediator before God. To do this, She ties us with bonds of love: you are dear to me; I love you all. Thus, come close to me so your love for my Immaculate Heart is more fervent... It's like saying: "Come close to my fire so you too will burn with love." We should each ask Mary how we can do this. For example, through living our consecration more fully and being more faithful to our commitments, which are prayer and Rosary with the heart, confession, fasts, forgiveness, serving others, or maybe through a vow or a sacrifice.

I want to lead you with my Heart to Jesus' Heart. You, instead, let yourselves be led away from Him by your carnal desires, your vain idols, your pride and your baseness. "Come to me because it is only in me that you find the fullness of Jesus": whoever finds me finds life. He suffers for the way we offer resistance to His love. It was for His love that He descended from heaven and let Himself be destroyed, because He wanted to destroy the wrong life in us to make the divine life shine out. Jesus wants to renew the world and establish a "civilization of love" through you; out of love He called you first. Jesus asks us for continuous conversion so we do not settle into a false religiousness and become dead fires unable to generate warmth.

Today, Mary is calling me, She is asking me, She is imploring me to convert, because my delay, or worse, my refusal, stops the new world from rising from the ruins of this old crumbling world. Fr.A.

## Looking at the Cross of Jesus

The Church tells the dramatic story of a God who was destroyed for love, and for love he rose in the light. In his story we find our story. When we look at Him we receive the strength to accept the adversities of life and all the while remain in peace. Keep your gaze on Him: His wounds are open, His face is covered in blood and His side is torn apart.

He is alone and anguished; all have abandoned Him. Yet, He draws us to Himself. His sight is accompanied by the charm of true love: a total offering of self to the point of giving His life for those He loves. He willingly incarnates human suffering to obey the Father. If we let Him enter our lives without reserve, He will teach us to rise above our sufferings while being supported by hope. He pays the ransom to free us from the slavery of passions to introduce us into the freedom of love which for man remains the only condition for happiness.

Jesus Christ is the only one who upon entering the depths of our hearts can give a meaning to our

affliction and take us beyond aridity and darkness. If we let Him reign He will lead us beyond human presumption, and for the world there will be peace. Through looking at Him we are able to overcome the scandal of innocent sorrow: Jesus too was innocent and He took upon Himself my sins. He is my salvation!

I will bless His Name in eternity! I will let myself be purified by the cross without rebelling, knowing that only a purified heart is able to live a state of joy and freedom. In His Word I will find the lighted tracks which He has left and as I follow them I will find the way to go. Fr. Giovanni Bozzo

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## **LATEST DECLARATION by Vatican on Medjugorje**

### **Faithful and priests not forbidden to go on pilgrimage**

Last June news was spread by the press that the Vatican had prohibited pilgrimages to Medjugorje. Dr. Navarro-Valls, spokes-man for the Holy See, immediately denied (see Echo 128, pg.2), but since many were still not convinced, he again intervened: "While the Vatican has never said that Catholics cannot go to Medjugorje, it has said to bishops that dioceses and parishes cannot organize official pilgrimages [*italics ours*].

You cannot tell people not to go there without proof that the apparitions are false. So far there is none, thus anyone can go there if they so wish." The above declaration was given by Navarro-Valls on 21 August to the CNS, the largest Catholic news agency in the USA. He added: "A Catholic who goes to Medjugorje has the right to spiritual direction, thus, the Church does not prohibit priests from accompanying pilgrimages which have been organized by lay people."

Dr. Navarro-Valls insisted on the fact that the Vatican's position towards Medjugorje "has not changed," repeating what Mons. Bertone (from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) had already stated in his reply to the query of a French Bishop (see Echo 128, pg. 2). "The bishops said and Archbishop Bertone confirmed that given the numerous gatherings by the faithful in Medjugorje it is necessary for the Church to offer spiritual direction, therefore, priests may follow the pilgrims... "

The Vatican spokesman added that he thought it necessary to repeat the above because he said: "it is sad that the words of Archbishop Bertone should be understood in such a limited [and distorted] way. Have the Church and the Vatican said no to Medjugorje? Not at all." (Press Bulletin)

### **The press hid the truth, and continued to hide the truth**

A lot of coverage was given by the major newspapers and TV stations to the false interpretation of Mons. Bertone's letter. The same amount of coverage was not given, however, for the successive declaration. Indeed, very little was given; Avvenire being one which did give a correct coverage. But could we have expected anything else? It's obvious that the truth greatly disturbs someone!

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"Jesus, the sweet Truth, hungers and thirsts so greatly for our salvation that he dies... In truth, also those with a similar thirst are unable to think of themselves and give little consideration to their own lives...

Their greatest cross is seeing God being offended and insulted and souls being lost. This cross is so heavy that they forget their own lives. Far from escaping from affliction, they search it out and rejoice in it. They do as Paul did, that sweet lover of tribulations who prided himself in bearing torments for the love of the crucified Jesus." (St. Catherine)

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## **The Pope shook France and she rediscovered her Christian vocation**

The Pope's Pastoral Visit to France to celebrate the 15th centenary of King Clovis' Baptism was seen in a negative light by the mass media which had predicted its failure. In the end they had to admit it was a success - because the Pope did not go as a political visitor, but as a pastor. In his words: "I come as a pilgrim to meet the Catholics of France and to join with them in prayer in those places that are important to the religious history of their country and of Europe. ... and to invite them to understand better the debt the Church owes some of their forebears in the faith, whose memory is still very much alive in the Vendée, Brittany, Tours and Reims." (From the arrival speech to President Chirac.)

In the Vandée, at Saint-Laurent, the Pope paid homage to St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. The meeting dedicated to the religious of Western France, permitted the Pope to cherish a spiritually profound moment of prayer beside the Saint's tomb. He said: "You know that I am very indebted to him and to his treatise True Devotion to the Bl. Virgin Mary. Today, because my Pastoral Visit focuses mainly on the sacrament of Baptism, I would like to highlight the fact that, in Montfort's mind, the whole spiritual life flows directly from the sacrament of Baptism as is shown by a significant passage of Montfort's Act of Consecration to Jesus through Mary. In the middle of the act we find: "I ... unfaithful sinner, renew and ratify today in your hands (Mary's) the promises of my Baptism. I renounce Satan, his pomps and his works for-ever and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ"

To the 30,000 youth (not the 3,000 estimated) who had come to meet him, the Pope recalled the heroic resistance of the faithful during the bloody events of the Revolution. "So I say to you: be brave! Don't let yourselves be overcome by the indifference so widespread around you! Don't let yourselves be impressed by those who reject the demands of our Christian faith or who scorn it. ... I pray that the martyrs of times past will guide you on your way, so that they will keep you free from all influence and power and communicate to you their joy in believing and their courage in serving, after the example of Christ."

A great response was given by the people the day after, Friday 20th, at the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-d'Auray, in Brittany, visited by millions of pilgrims each year and dedicated to St. Anne who appeared to a farmer in the 17th century. The Breton Catholics responded with intense joy and enthusiasm and the Pope was visibly moved. He reminded them of their missionary call and of their faith inherited from the many saints who marked history by their witness. John Paul told them: "Like your fathers in the faith, be builders of the Church in the new generations!"

The Pope then met young couples at a festive gathering at Memorial Park. He listened to their testimonies and spoke to them of the consequences of the gift of faith in married life: love, fidelity, loving relationship, loving kindness, dialogue, prayer, responsibility and forgiveness. "The marital relationship cannot rest on sentiments of love only; it rests before all else on a definite commitment which is clearly chosen, on the covenant and on the gift which come through fidelity. ... Married life also passes through the experience of forgive-ness. Every person who forgives permits the one who is forgiven to discover the infinite greatness of God's pardon."

On 21st the Pope was in Tours to celebrate St. Martin who played an important role in the conversion of King Clovis who was touched by the sight of so many pilgrims making their way to Martin's tomb. After meetings with Sts. Clotilde, Remigius, Vaast and Genevieve, he received his Baptism. Bishop Honoré called St. Martin the protagonist of the entire history and evangelization of Gaul. Before a crowd of about 200,000, the Holy Father praised St. Martin: "he was a man of prayer who let Christ take possession of him entirely. Called against his will to be Bishop, he preserved his sense of humility and continued to live in the style of a monk ..."

In the afternoon, in St. Martin's Basilica, the Pope met with "life's wounded": the sick, the elderly, the poor, the homeless, and the sans-papiers, that is, the illegal immigrants who one month ago were brutally kicked out of a church by the police. He greeted them all affectionately: "those whom no one notices, those who are shunned. ... Like St. Martin, we are invited to open our eyes and recognize in the poor man dying of cold at the city gates, in the stranger who knocks at our door, a brother to be welcomed and loved."

He invited the French to find new ways of life, inspired by solidarity and sharing, so as to respond to the increased number of attacks on the dignity and integrity of man. He offered them Martin's example: "All his life he sought to live to the full the message of the Beatitudes." The Pope went on to list the saints many virtues: "poor in heart and gentle, he proclaimed the Good News to the poor, deliverance to captives, joy to those in sorrow. ... Persecuted for justice, he showed that Christ filled his whole life and deserved to be followed at all costs..."

On Sunday the 22nd, the Pope concluded his Visit at Reims. On one hand the secularized public opinion saw in the celebration an attempt by the clerics to revenge the Catholic origin of France and an affront by the Church to the independence of the state. On the other hand there were fundamentalist Catholics who had never accepted the republic of France born from the Revolution. The Pope's intention, however, went far beyond all this.

Speaking of the Baptism of Clovis, which was an individual act, as was that of the Franks who decided to be baptized (the nation was not baptized) he invited everyone to meditate in depth on the meaning of one's own baptism and helped the Church of France examine its conscience: "This great jubilee celebration of Baptism gives you an opportunity to reflect on the gifts you have received and on the responsibilities which flow from them. For centuries, these gifts have certainly been multiplied many times over in all those who have become the salt of the earth in your land, in those who have let shine and continue to let shine the great light of Christian witness, of the apostolate, of the missionary spirit, of martyrdom, of all forms of holiness."

(He named the martyrs of Lyon: Martin and Remigius, and Francis of Sales, Eugène de Mazenod, Joan of Arc, Therese of Lisieux, Vincent de Paul, John Baptist de La Salle, and others) "Certainly you will remember dark periods of infidelity and confrontation, the consequences of sin. But you will recall that every trial is an urgent call to conversion and holiness. It is when the night envelops us that we must think of the breaking dawn and believe that the Church is reborn each morning through her saints. ... I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. ... The heritage of past centuries is not just a treasure to safekeep, but a powerful inspiration to advance on the pilgrimage of faith following ever new paths."

The Pope's words and example are those of a guide whose inner vigour both strikes and fascinates us. To see him walk with difficulty and his hand shake is moving, but he also offers us a lesson of courage and dedication. This is what broke down the wall of hostility put up by the mass media against the Pope. The Holy Father did not dally over unimportant questions; he showed the French what the true sense of Christian dignity is, and that it derives from their Baptism; i.e. renounce Satan and follow Christ and live as God's children should live, so as to eliminate sin which obscures man's reasoning, making him

incapable of defending himself from the aggressiveness of ideologies.

The Pope's presence was able to communicate the full communion he has with Christ: this defeated his enemies. The protests that had been announced were nothing more than a couple of processions in Tours and Reims which received a lot of attention from the media, but in reality, had little effect. It seems that the Catholic soul of the French has re-emerged and shaken off the inferiority complex tied to the secular culture which torments most of the countries belonging to the old Europe. Edit. Team

## **Pope's 50 years of priesthood. Help him carry his cross**

On the feast of the Holy Rosary, Bishop Paul Hnilica asked all Marian prayer groups to support the Pope during this difficult moment of suffering. "The suffering we read on the face of the Pope urges Marian people world-wide to implore Jesus and Mary ever more ardently until the force of incessant prayer can assist him to continue to resist ... and fulfil the painful mission entrusted to him: to introduce the Church into the Third Millennium, as Cardinal Stephen Wyszynski had prophesied to him upon his election as Pope: "If God has called you, you must introduce the Church into the Third Millennium."

During the Angelus of 29.5.94 the Pope said: "...I understood that I was to introduce the Church into the Third Millennium with prayer, with many initiatives ... and with suffering, above all with the attempt of 13 years ago and this new sacrifice."

Mons. Hnilica continues: "... throughout the world many faithful have taken initiatives to invoke a great Rosary campaign. The Holy Father, a great devotee of the Rosary, can only but rejoice at this... On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his priesthood, which falls on the 1st November 1996, we as Marian groups can give him a great gift: recite many Rosaries for his intentions.

If the voices calling for him to step down become more insistent, we know that with his cross of ill health, he is offering a precious and irreplaceable gift for the salvation of mankind today. The voices of those calling for his resignation are I think, certainly not inspired by God. Our Lord has never failed to give His divine assistance to His Church and never has any Pope during all the 2,000 years had to resign on account of ill health. We pray that only Jesus Himself may decide when the end of the Pope's mission will be, and not the human logic of his enemies.

Two years ago the Pope shouted from the Colosseum at the end of the Way of the Cross: 'do not empty the Cross of Christ.' Let us be careful not to empty the cross that John Paul II is carrying by measuring it up against our own human logic. Like Simon of Cyrene, we should do all we can to help him carry it, above all, with our affection and genuine confidence in Jesus and Mary.

In the eyes of the worldly man, present also within the Church, the physical suffering of the Pope can seem a senseless obstacle, but in the eyes of God it is quite the contrary."

Let us also offer to God his immense sorrow for the introduction of abortion into Poland. "A nation which kills its children is one without hope," he said with anguish. We trust in God's justice and salvation. Let us recite with him the prayer to Our Lady which he wrote for his pilgrimage to Fatima in '91:

Mother of the Redeemer! Mother of our century! Once again I am before you in this Sanctuary to kiss your hands, because you stayed beneath the Cross of your Son .. and you continue to stay, with your gaze on the hearts of these children who already belong to the third millennium. With a vigilant gaze and a mother's constant protective care, you continue to defend, with your powerful intercession, the dawn of the Light of Christ within the hearts of peoples and nations.

**Pope's example in hospital** - On the day of his operation, Tuesday 8th October, he got up at 3 am for 1 hour of mental prayer. At 4 am he recited the first part of the Rosary and the Divine Office and at 5 he celebrated Mass. The operation to remove his appendix took 50 minutes and all went well. After the operation his desire was to celebrate Mass as soon as possible which he did on 10 October in the chapel adjacent to his hospital room. On Sunday 11 he recited the Angelus prayer from the window of his hospital room (which he affectionately called Vatican no. 3). The Pope teaches us how to suffer with Christ for His Church and keep on looking on.

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### Mother better than Mediatrix

In a study published by Civiltà Cattolica regarding the definition of "Mary's mediation" Fr. Galot affirms: "The term 'spiritual maternity' better expresses the role actually being carried out by Mary. The Council affirmed that due to her co-operation with the work of salvation, Mary became for us 'Mother in the order of grace' (LG 61). This motherhood is a form of mediation, but the mediation is made more precise. 'Mediation' on its own is used to describe many interventions where a person can play the part of an intermediary. 'Motherhood' is a more specific word and full of meaning for men who have experienced affection and the nearness of a mother..."

By virtue of her participation in the redeeming sacrifice, Mary is Mother of the spiritual life of the disciples. Through the pains of childbirth Mary acquired a spiritual motherhood which extends to all mankind, and for which she paid dearly. By saying to His Mother: Woman, this is your son, Jesus was asking Mary to accept the death of Her only Son to become Mother of other sons.

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## SEEDS OF UNITY

### Blood unites us

The last of the Pope's summer Angelus prayers, dedicated to the great witness of the Eastern Church (see Echo 129, pg. 2) was in memory of the Catholic and Orthodox martyrs of the 20th century. He first spoke of Saints Boris and Gleb, two sons of St. Vladimir (the first Christian prince) who were assassinated on the death of their father by a usurping brother. The Pope recalled the prayer said by Boris before he died: "Glory to you, wondrous Giver of life who has deigned to let me share in the passion of the holy martyrs... You know, Lord that I offer no resistance... But you, Lord, see and judge between me and my brother; do not impute this sin to him and receive my soul in peace."

The Pope then spoke of: "... the great experience of martyrdom in which Orthodox and Catholics in the East European countries have shared during this century. Persecuted by an implacable atheistic power, many courageous Gospel witnesses 'completed' Christ's Passion in their flesh. True martyrs of the 20th century, they are a light for the Church and for humanity. The blood of martyrs, Tertullian said, is the seed of new Christians. It is also a sap of unity for the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. If at the end of the second millennium 'the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs' (Tertio millennio adveniente, nr. 37), we can hope that their witness, carefully gathered in the new martyrologies, and especially their intercession may hasten the time of full communion between Christians of all denominations, but above all between the Orthodox Churches and the Apostolic See.

May the Queen of Martyrs obtain for us the inner strength of the martyrs of every age, so we can offer Christ a clear witness of life. In fact, 'martyrdom' means witness.



## Paschal silence and joy in Russia's favourite saint

"We must immerse ourselves in God before evangelizing"

One of the most precious gifts of the Orthodox Church is the custody of the dimension of the Spirit in the life of the Church. St. Serafim from Sarov (+1833) is a saint who was both strong-minded and gentle. His witness was a constant reminder of the Holy Spirit's transfiguring energy. A conference on Russian spirituality at the beginning of October in Vercelli was dedicated to this saint. Catholic Bishops and Eastern Metropolitans were present.

Patriarchs Bartholomew of Constantinople and Alexei of Moscow spoke of him as a "humble monk and the most popular saint of the Russian people whose witness revealed the victorious, paschal and joyful face of Christian faith." What can he tell us today? Serafim entered the monastery of Sarov as a young boy after a lengthy illness from which he was healed through divine intervention. He began a long period of asceticism and silence amid the solitude of the forest of Sarov, and remained 1,000 days and nights in prayer. Towards the end of his life he interrupted his reclusion and began a humble ministry of spiritual fatherhood among the people. He did not reveal anything new, nor did he preach a different Christ, but he repeated the words which the Church has been proclaiming for centuries: Christ is risen! Christ, my joy, is risen! To whomever visited him he repeated: my joy is Christ, and they saw Christ in his transfigured eyes.

"The aim of a Christian's life is to acquire the Holy Spirit" he said. To see Serafim was to see the intimate relationship with God thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit. When incessantly invoked, the Spirit visits men, leading them to experience agape love (divine love) in all their relationships.

Silence is acceptance of the Mystery, but it is a silence which costs dearly: "perfect silence is the Cross," Serafim would say. Serafim followed the maxim of the desert Fathers to the letter: "Shed your blood and receive the Spirit."

\* Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople will visit the Church of Trent next Spring. "The exchange between the two Churches must continue as in the first centuries when Bishop Virgilio evangelized the Trent region with the help of three monks from Cappadocia... Virgilio and Chrysostomo were friends, and we need to consolidate those bonds of friendship and brotherhood," said Bishop Sartori. As further proof of ecumenical solidarity towards the Russian Orthodox, the Trent region has formed a twinning with the Church of Moscow which was sealed by Mons. Sartori and Alexei II. Constant relations between the two Churches began anew back in 1966 when Patriarch Aghenagora donated to Trent the relics of the three martyrs from Cappadocia and whom Bartholomew will honour during the 16th centenary of their martyrdom in Trent.

\* "No more being enemy-brothers" is the promise of the Eastern and Western Christians who were present at the three-day ecumenical meeting entitled "Mediterranean Christians" in Bari. The participants arrived from 13 different countries! The dream of the youth from the different Christian faiths present at the conference is that of a Mediterranean and a European Continent made up of "brothers who are also friends." They hope their desire may spread also to the adults.

**"Do not fear to have children!"**

In a television interview just a few days ago, Mirjana courageously talked out against a present tendency:

"Do not fear to have children; you should fear instead not to have any!" These are Our Lady's words. Mirjana added: "When the secrets will be revealed, you will understand the importance of having had many children. I too hope to have many." These are words meant to oppose abortion and to heal us of our fear for the future. Mirjana has already received the ten secrets; she is a mother and I would say a very responsible one..

\* Baby Davide Emanuele, the second child of Jakov and Annalisa, was born in Asola, Mantova on 5th September. He will be baptized in Medj. on 20th October.

\* All the various language editions of Echo of Mary are available in the souvenir shop next to St. James' church in Medj. and at the MIR Info. office close to the bridge. Space allowing, a full list of addresses for the various editions will appear next issue.

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## **News from the blessed land**

### **Pilgrims more numerous than pre-war times**

\* The month of October with such a full programme saw many pilgrims, more so than before the war. The East competes with the West: the numbers of Poles and Czechs equal that of the Italians in the early days. On some days Mass is celebrated in 10 to 12 languages.

The feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven attracted many pilgrims. Groups of Croatians were seen arriving bare foot and then bare foot they climbed the hill of apparitions. Two youths from France, both 17, also did 1,600 km on foot.

\* Feast of the Holy Cross - The Catholic papers reported that 50,000 pilgrims were present on Mount Krizevac on 15th September for Holy Mass. Great crowds of Croatian pilgrims were present; most of whom had travelled hundreds of kilometers during the night to reach Medjugorje at dawn. There was even a group of five nuns from the Ukraine who had journeyed for 5 days. While Mass was being celebrated on Krizevac, 4,000 faithful participated at Mass in the church which was being celebrated by English bishop, Mons. Augustin Harris together with Fr. Pervan and 25 other priests. Many were present also for the evening Mass held in the open. (Press Bulletin)

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### **Mirjana's latest apparitions Mary's anxiety for those far from God**

On 7th October Mirjana was interviewed by a group from Foggia.

Q. Mirjana, do you continue to see Our Lady regularly?

A. Yes, Our Lady always appears to me on 18th March and 2nd of each month. With regards to the 18th March She told me that Her apparitions would last all my life. I do not know when those of the 2nd will finish. They are very different from those I experienced with the other visionaries up to Christmas 1982. While Our Lady appears for these at a set time (5.45 pm) I do not know when She will arrive. I begin to

pray when it is about 5 am and at times Our Lady appears in the afternoon, or even in the late evening. The duration of the apparitions also differs: those of the visionaries last about 3 to 8 minutes, the ones I receive on the 2nd of each month from 15 to 30 minutes.

Our Lady prays together with me for the non-believers, though She says: "For those who have not yet known God's love." For this intention, Mary asks for the help of us all, or those who look at her as Mother, because She says we can change the non-believers through our prayer and example. In these difficult times, Mary desires that we pray especially for them, because all the ugly things that happen (wars, homicide, suicide, divorce, abortion, drugs) are caused by the non-believers. That is why She repeats: "When you pray for them, you are praying also for yourselves and for your future."

Mary also desires that we be an example with our lives, rather than preach out loud, so that the non-believers can see God and God's love in us.

On my part, I urge you to take this seriously. If only you could see just once the tears that run down Our Lady's face when She speaks of the non-believers, I'm sure you'd pray with all your heart. Mary says that this is time for deciding, thus, we who say we believe in God have a great responsibility when we know that our prayers and sacrifices dry the tears from Our Lady's face.

Q. Will you tell us of your last apparition?

A. On 2nd October I began to pray at 5 am and Our Lady appeared at 7.45 am and remained till 8.20 am. She blessed the objects presented to Her, then we began to pray an Our Father and a Glory (She obviously does not pray the Hail Mary) for the sick and for those who asked me for prayers. We dedicated the rest of the time to prayer for the non-believers. She gave no message.

Q. Does Our Lady ask all the visionaries to pray for non-believers?

A. No. She asks each of us to pray for a particular intention. Vicka and Jakov pray for the sick; Ivanka for the families; Marija for the souls in purgatory; Ivan for the youth and priests.

Q. Which prayers do you say with Mary for the non-believers? A. On the 2nd of the month I use prayers taught to me by Our Lady, known by only Vicka and myself.

Q. Besides the non-believers, has Our Lady spoken to you about those who profess a different faith?

A. No. Our Lady only speaks of believers and non-believers and She says that the non-believers are those who do not see God as Father and the Church as one's own house.

Q. How do you see Our Lady on the 2nd of the month? A. Normally, as I see each of you now. At times I hear only Her voice, but these are not inner locutions as I hear Her the same way I hear the voice of someone I cannot see. I never know beforehand whether I will see Her or just hear Her.

Q. Why do you cry so much after the apparitions? A. When I am with Our Lady and see Her face, it's like being in heaven. Then when She goes I feel the pain of separation. That is why I need to remain in prayer for some hours afterwards to give myself time to recover and realize that I must continue my life here on earth.

Q. What are the messages which Our Lady insists on the most?

A. The same ones as always. One of the most frequent is the invitation to participate in the Holy Mass not only on Sundays, but as often as possible. Once She told the six of us (visionaries): "If you have Mass to attend at the hour of the apparition, you must choose the Mass without hesitation, because during the Mass my Son Jesus is with you." She also asks for fasting; the best type being bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays. She asks for the Rosary, especially in the family. With regards to this She said: "There is nothing more effective for uniting a family than the Rosary said by parents and children together."

Mary also desires that we confess at least once a month. Once She said: "There is not a single man on the earth who does not need to confess once a month." She also requests that we return to the Bible; at least a small reading from the Gospel each day. It is absolutely necessary, however, that families read the Word

of God together and reflect on and with it. The Bible is to be placed in a visible part of the house and not forgotten in some dark corner.

Q. What can you say about the secrets?

A. First of all, a visible sign will appear on the hill of apparitions and it will be understood that it is from God because it could not be anything made by man. For the moment only Ivanka and I know the 10 secrets; the other visionaries have received 9. None of them regard my personal life, but are for the entire world. Our Lady made me choose a priest (I chose Fr. Petar Ljubicic) and ten days before the secret comes to be I will have to tell him what and where it will be. We shall have to pray and fast together for 7 days, then 3 days before he will reveal the secret to all. He will have to reveal it.

Q. If you have this task, does this mean that they will all come to be within your life time? A. Not necessarily. I have written the secrets down and it could be that another person will have to reveal them. However, there is one thing I want to say, and that is that Our Lady often says: "Do not talk about the secrets, but pray. Those who look at me as Mother and God as Father, need not fear anything. And do not forget that with prayer and fasting you can obtain everything."

## Lutheran Pastor discovers "religion of the heart"

Necessity for Mary, confession and unity. Many Christians from other confessions are sensitive to the call of Medjugorje. A well-known pastor from the Lutheran Church of Norway, Erik Rostboll, was here for three weeks together with his wife Kirsten. He desired experiencing the climate of prayer in Medjugorje and discovering something on the reality of the Holy Mother. He has written 15 books, many of which have been translated into various languages, and he also collaborates with the radio and the press.

His most successful book, *And the Cock Crowed for the Second Time*, concentrates on Peter and the fact that Jesus chose him from among the Apostles to found the Church, and that if we let ourselves be guided by God, He can choose also us to be His apostles. His second book, *Holy Poverty*, talks of Erik's voyages in the Far East where he visited Buddhist monasteries and spoke to many of the monks. He was particularly struck by their spiritual life and the way they are surrounded by much material poverty. It was amid this that they show signs of being "alive." Our mentality is based on strength, wealth and consumerism, therefore, we lose the wealth of the spirit. In the East, religiousness is not only a way of thinking, but a way of living. He points out that it should be the same for Christians.

Erik would have liked to have become a hermit, but because of his literary and mystical knowledge, his bishop often urged him to hold conferences. One day his bishop offered him the position of pastor for a community and Erik accepted. He also collaborated for a radio station for twenty years. His persistent desire to become a hermit disappeared when he met and married his wife.

Back home, his wife urged him to speak of his experience, but he was hesitant, in particular about the Rosary: he didn't feel totally at home in Medjugorje, while his wife continued to make progress at Mary's school.

There was something, though, that he did see clearly: the poverty of the Lutheran Church which left too much to reason, and the differences which separated the Churches. "With great sorrow," he said, "I realized that I was unable to receive the Eucharist because I was not a Catholic. I recall the day that a Cardinal, whom I knew well, told me that though I was lining up to receive Communion I could not receive it. I said to him out loud: 'Jesus is calling me; I have to receive Communion.' The Cardinal ceded and said: 'I beg you to take it very seriously.'

I dearly hope that one day the problems between the Churches will be resolved. I think that the Lutheran Church should return to personal confession. It's true that much is said of forgiveness of sins and the Eucharist, but there is need for Confession." Kirsten added that they both try their best to pray with the heart.

Erik was uncertain whether to recommend his faithful to visit Medjugorje or not. He thought it would be premature while there was still the problem of Communion. His wife, instead, thought it wise to recommend all the faithful to go to Medjugorje to receive at least a blessing so that the pain of the separation, and their faith in the one God would be awakened in them. She said that only Christ would be able to help them overcome the separation, but in the meantime, the faithful would have found the Mother of God and Confession. The dialogue between the two was so heart warming that they both fell profoundly in love with Medjugorje.

Erik says that the things which caused the separation should be put aside while efforts should be made to approach the living Christ, through His Mother. "We too, would then come nearer to each other. One day, when we will be more willing to do as God asks us, we will be united." Erik wishes peace upon all men. (Medj. Offiziell)

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## Returns to priesthood after 20 years and tells of drama of ex-priests

It's not every day that you meet a person who returned to priesthood after 20 years. It happened to Bob Sodlack, a 50 year-old high school professor, who was in Medj. to offer thanks. The first time he came was in 1990, to pray for his family which was on the verge of breaking up after 13 years of marriage. He had been to many to look for help, but in vain, so he came to Medjugorje, more than once. With time, his heart opened up, he was able to forgive, he received a new energy and he began to live a new life.

Q. What did you do to save your marriage?

A. Everything I could. I wanted to save it at all costs, for the sake of the two children. I even offered to buy my wife a house, with the intention of helping her to trust in God who can heal a couple's wounds. I asked Kathy to pray with me and I went to Mother Theresa's nuns to pray with them. After six months nothing had changed but I told the nuns I would keep on trying. They replied: "We are praying for your return to the priest-hood." I got angry with them and told them to pray for my marriage! They just smiled.

Q. How did you know about Medjugorje?

A. I had heard about it a long time before, but just didn't care. Then one day I listened in on a conference held by a friend. My heart was aching to hear and to know more about Mary's intercession. I said to myself that I would go and ask Her to save my family. So that's when I came here in 1990. I prayed to Mary saying: 'I know that I did the wrong thing by leaving the priesthood, but I beg you, save my marriage; we have two children.' The day after I went to listen to Fr. Jozo who spoke about priesthood. I cried - I didn't know why - but the tears just ran down my face. I had never been so touched.

In America I never even thought about returning to the priesthood. We're too surrounded by theory, theology, psychology and sociology, without any spiritual life.

At the end of Fr. Jozo's talk and prayer, I wrote him a note: "Do you want to listen to someone who 20 years ago was a priest?" A little while after he invited me to meet him - out of all the people present, he called me! I went straight away and though I was feeling uneasy I opened up my heart to him. He did not

say much, but he listened carefully and in the end he reminded me that I had forgotten the eternal values and that I would have to decide on my own which path to take.

### **Activism empties priests**

Q. What was it in your priesthood that disturbed you?

A. Above all, the behaviour of my parish priest. He gave me superficial tasks: things to do, to organize, meetings... but nothing spiritual. I was taking care of the humanitarian things. With time I stopped reciting the divine office because I had no time, then I became interested in psychology with the hope of finding a reply. Mass was the only thing I did not throw away because I had always held a great veneration for it. One priest was amazed at my faith and he told me that he did not believe in the Eucharist. Another one spoke about the lawfulness of suicide. I was shocked. People all over were speaking out against celibacy which for me was becoming a burden too heavy to bear. Since I had to organize outings and other manifestations, I eventually abandoned also the Eucharist. I felt like I was losing something.

Later on I met the girl who became my wife. I was feeling ever more lonely and isolated and terribly void. I went to a psychologist and for him it was clear that I had to leave the priesthood and marry. I spoke with priests, but none of them told me not to leave the priesthood; they just tried to give me psychological counselling. I ended up losing my faith in priests. Many of my professors had left the priesthood after the Council; I did too. Though I was profoundly saddened, I did not bother to question myself on the reasons or give ear to my doubts. However, I continued to go to Mass, even though I could not receive Communion.

Q. What did you do when you went back home from Medjugorje? A. I was more tranquil and I began thinking seriously about the possibility of returning to the priesthood. I prayed the Rosary and cried every evening, thinking: after all I had done, could God call me again? There was a storm in my heart. The following Easter I went back to Medjugorje in search of a reply. One day I went into the chapel of the apparitions where Mass was being celebrated in French. The priest was talking about the priesthood. I cried and after the Mass I asked him for advice. He just said: "Pray!"

Q. Did you come to a conclusion?

A. While I was on the plane on my way back I prayed to Our Lady: "If it is your wish that I return to the priesthood, one week with you in Medjugorje isn't enough, I'd need a whole year." However, I knew I could not stay away one whole year because of my obligations, yet I felt I would return. And I did, even though my brother advised me against it, given the war that was raging.

Q. How long did you stay?

A. A good six weeks. While I was there I gave them a hand with the youth festival and I met Fr. Tomislav Vlasic who deeply impressed me. Despite the war, I saw many people and I could feel that they were looking for God. In my heart it was becoming ever more obvious that someone looking for God must find a priest. If people do not look for God then there is no need for priests. I had been the first to stop looking for Him, but now the need of priests was growing tremendously.

Back home I went to see the Archbishop of New York who was very open to my problems and he helped me obtain from Rome the annulment of my reduction to the lay state when my youngest son will turn 18. In the meantime also my wife has accepted my decision. I've met other priests who'd left the priesthood. Some were amazed, some approved, some did not. To one I said: "Go to Medjugorje and see, and you will understand that a priest can only be a priest with the grace of God. The Church in Medj. is a reality; the same with the Mass, the Sacraments and Confession. This is what makes me return. It's wonderful to experience God, that Our Lady appears, that so much love is donated to us. Return, you too." He looked

at me, without saying a word.

Q. After this experience, why do you think priests leave their vocation?

A. It's difficult to say. I don't want to condemn anyone, but I believe that the reason is lack of faith. When faith in God, and particularly in Jesus in the Eucharist, is obscured, all foundations crumble. A priest who believes in the Eucharist, in what he is celebrating, could not leave the priesthood. Now, these problems concern me very much. I heard about a friend who was about to leave his vocation so I went and spoke to him and I found the means for him to go to Medjugorje. I hope and pray for him.

Q. How responsible is the community in the life of a priest?

A. If the parish community does not pray, if it is not close to its priest and if it does not pray for him, then the priest remains alone. In my first parish I saw all sorts of things, but I did not find any saintly people, good families, or people who pray, who came to adoration. I only saw the people at Mass, who once outside led lives of arguments, separations, drunkenness, drugs and deceit: that was their daily bread. There was nothing to inspire me positively, to dedicate myself to the spiritual.. I ended up losing my spirit and what happened, happened. I condemn no one, but now I know how we are responsible for each other.

Q. What will you say in your first Mass?

A. It's difficult to think about that day; I know it is Our Lady's gift. For sure, when I will be back at the altar I will cry and then quite simply I will tell the congregation to love the Lord and the Virgin.

Q. Have you got something else to say?

A. I came to pray for my family and I ended up returning to the priesthood - something I didn't think possible. For me Medjugorje is proof God's omnipotence. I am grateful. I invite all priests to live with intensity their spiritual life and to help those who have begun a spiritual journey, without ever losing courage, and even if it seems that people are not searching for God, they are. I would like to say to all parish communities to pray for their priests. That is, do what Our Lady says, to pray for each other. Just look at how many times She has invited us to pray for priests and bishops! As a Mother, She knows what we need. I remain united with you all in prayer. (from Glas Mira, Sept. '96)

\* "Very difficult today for priests to remain faithful" - An English-speaking priest was recently in Medjugorje, wearing his priests' collar and a cross; he celebrated Mass every day and fervently offered help to the pilgrims. What is so special, when many others do the same? Well, he was here also one year ago, travelling incognito, with a group of friends, dressed in beach attire. He was going through a crisis; he did not participate in Mass, or in the prayer.

One day he went to listen to Vicka out of curiosity. After she had spoken about the messages, she accepted to pray over the sick. Everyone moved forward and the priest was pushed forward too. He found himself next to a woman who was suffering greatly. Vicka placed her left hand on the woman and her right hand on the priest. Vicka knew neither of them, nor anything about them. As she prayed she had words of consolation for the woman, then Vicka smiled to the priest and said: "Goodbye my father!" The priest was greatly shocked, wondering to himself how she could have known... With Mary's love in his heart, he gradually returned to his priestly life. One year later he is back, with his heart full of happiness, to give thanks.

Our Lady said to Mirjana: It is very difficult today for priests to remain faithful! You must pray for them and help them. They do not need our judgement; they need our prayers and our love. (Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

## First he renouced rugby, then his siesta, for Mary's sake

While in Medjugorje Gerardo prayed. All the while one of Our Lady's requests kept coming to his mind: Dear children, renounce what you are most attached to! He desired doing something for our Heavenly Mother and immediately thought of his great passion for rugby. He understood that it had overtaken his life. In fact, he spent hours and hours on the field, watching the matches on TV and reading all the sport papers available. So he courageously decided to leave rugby and give first place in his heart to Jesus. He came to realize that rather than being difficult to do, it made him feel so free.

On his way back to Medjugorje, in front of Ivan's vineyard, as he was reciting the Rosary, he heard in his heart another request from Mary: "The siesta!" but Gerardo hesitated! Gerardo is a farmer and lives in the Alps; in the summer the work is hard and half an hour of rest is more than necessary. It was also true, though, that in the later years his half-hour rest had become as long as two hours, gradually depriving him of his energy and making him vulnerable to Satan's suggestions. Gerardo understood how Our Lady was right. Before he left Medjugorje he offered up his siesta to Mary, with love and with tears of joy running down his face.

Gerardo was back today and testified his joy for the great plague that Mary had removed from him, saying that for nothing in the world would he return to the way he was before. "One can go to Medjugorje to ask," he said, "but one can also go there to give, and when you give you are made much richer."

[Give to God all that He asks. Above all, renounce sin and then our passions which impede us from loving Him with all our heart. Satan subtly tries to make us ignore or minimise our baptismal renouncements. This is why Mary repeatedly asks us to decide. God will thus be able to make us a part of His blessings and fill us with them. Editor's note]

\* Satan divides husband and wife; Mary reunites them - While the spirit of evil works at dividing married couples, here in Medjugorje Our Lady continues to work miracles to reconcile them. In September 1995 Martine and Charles, both 50, spent a week in Medjugorje. As French craftsmen they were in financial difficulty, but more than this, there had been no dialogue between them for years. Charles was deaf: his left ear was physically dead and because of this he was depressed and had closed himself up, creating a serious state of tension for all the family.

During the first two days of their pilgrimage, Charles remained to himself, in silence, while Martine participated in the various prayer meetings. She offered her suffering to God and, full of trust, she asked Mary to heal Charles and their marriage.

On the third day she asked Jesus to heal Charles' ear with His Precious Blood. That same evening Charles was aware of some-thing in his ear, like a running liquid, though nothing was visible. The next morning he noticed that he could hear perfectly with his left hear!

From then Charles was no longer depressed; he began smiling and gradually took part in the prayer. Thanks to the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist his heart began to fill with an immense joy that he had never before experienced. A totally new couple got onto the bus for the return voyage: they discovered the grace of the Sacrament of matrimony.

Charles' doctor was baffled: though the ear was still clinically dead, Charles could hear perfectly. Jesus and Mary turned a disunited and unhappy couple into a happy one which now spends its time helping others. (Sr. Emmanuel)

\* The Mother's Village in Medjugorje for war orphans has chosen St. Therese of the Child Jesus as its patron saint. Therese, too, lost her mother when she was 4 years old.



"Come to me all you who are weary"

The prayer meetings guided by Fr. Tomislav Vlastic both for the people and the groups of "total-offering souls" have by now become an annual appointment. During the month of October they are held in various places of North Italy. The most important of these was at the Salesian Shrine of Colle Don Bosco where he met with priests on the 11th and with the faithful on the 12th. The themes are chosen by Fr. Tomislav as a part of a method to help souls open their hearts to God in a filial and trusting relationship. Last year Fr. Tomislav reflected on the divine Mercy ("I have not come for the righteous, but for sinners"). This year the theme was "Come to me all you who are weary" (cfr. Mt:28-30). This was, in fact, a step ahead towards Jesus who is our fount of solace and salvation. "The most important thing is that you believe that God loves us in an infinite way and that He desires saving us," said Fr. Tomislav. "His love is active and as He destroyed Himself for our salvation, in the same way He wants to destroy our sins and make us free. Nonetheless, one must believe in His Goodness and unconditioned Love, other-wise, we block the transfusion of salvation and the transformation of our beings. The Lord wants to communicate the full life to us, so it is important that we come nearer to God in the right way, leaving all the burdens that do not come from Him behind us.

Everything that causes anxiety along our journey towards God is tied to something or someone which is not God. It is only when we abandon everything to search for nothing else but the Kingdom of God that our soul is free to elevate. All this can happen if we embrace with love our own cross and see it as a special grace, like the special place where we met the Lord."

The 2,800 participants, who were very attentive, filled both the upper and lower Basilicas. They let themselves be gently guided, with the help of prayer, meditation, confession and Holy Mass, towards Jesus, to receive new strength after the fatigue of carrying out one's daily tasks. Grafted onto Him, they proceed towards the Father. The Salesian Fathers said how they have noticed a progressive inner growth in the faithful enrolled in Mary's school. Sr. Stefania

\* Fr. Slavko visited England from 24-30 August. Many were the participants in the Way of the Cross in the centuries-old wood of Peter Huttley, an Anglican who converted to the Catholic Church after visiting Medjugorje. Holy Mass was then celebrated, followed by Eucharistic Adoration. On the 25th August a prayer day was held in the parish of Wimbledon close to the stadium, and on the 26th the great annual youth meeting was held in the Carmelite Monastery in Aylesford.

\* Educational and Spiritual Seminar, organized by the fathers of Medjugorje to be held at Hotel Sunce, Neum, from 24-28 Feb. 1997. Book before end Dec. Fax 387-88-651444. Cost: DM 275/person. Simultaneous translations provided. Conclusion Friday 28 in Medjugorje. Frs. Rupcic, Srdanovic, Zulehner, Barbaric, Laurentin, Orec and Stojc, plus fathers from Medj. to attend.

### **Third Secret of Fatima:**

nothing sensational,  
it regards crisis of faith

Cardinal Ratzinger, one of the few people besides the Pope who knows the secret of Fatima, was in Fatima on the anniversary date of 13 October. During his visit he responded to questions by the most popular radio station in Portugal, Radio Renascensa, regarding the third secret of Fatima. He said: "To all the curious people I say that the Virgin does not create sensationalism, or fear, nor does She present apocalyptic visions. Instead, She guides men towards Her Son, and this is the essential."

If after 80 years the secret has still not been published it is because: "the Church wishes to oppose the

expectation of unheard-of things so that Marian devotion remains sincere. Our Lady did not appear to the little shepherd children - unknown by the world - to create sensation, but to call the world back to the Sacraments." The decision to reveal the secret "depends on the Pope, but let us not forget that the Pope is guided by the Holy Spirit..."

In the interview the Cardinal said that the fact that the Pope was saved in the attempt on his life on the 13th May 1981 is a miracle. "Alì Agcà was a sharp shooter, and the date itself is very significant!" He added that what worries the Pope most today is the "weariness in people's faith in so many parts of the world, especially of those in Europe. Instead of being happy to know the true God, they see Christianity as a burden or just a habit. And there are many who want to create their own Church as though it were a private club, forgetting that the Church was wanted by Jesus so we could know God and His word and obtain salvation... We hope in the return of a new joy in the faith."

The Cardinal then visited Sr. Lucia, the 89 year-old visionary in the Carmelite convent of Coimbra, and confirmed that the third secret "does not regard something which we will have to one day face, but is a help to the faith."

We think the Cardinal's explanations coincide with Fr. Amorth's (see Echo 126, pg. 4). When you put together the above elements: the weariness in people's faith, especially in Europe, others who create their own Church, and Mary who only wants to teach people about faith, it is easy to deduce that the secret regards the fall of faith, the divisions in the Church and that this is Satan's moment. The same interpretation was also given by the bishop of Leiria-Fatima on the 16 August 1924. It was not without reason that Jesus said: "But when the Son of Man comes will he find any faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8)

## **Civitavecchia: fount of grace**

In the church of St. Augustine, before the statue of Our Lady which wept, great numbers of pilgrims continue to arrive every day. The parish priest is aided by three other priests and on festive days by five. These are supported by 3 families of nuns, and the group of volunteers. Many priests come to celebrate here. Cardinal Palazzini, Archbishop Stettino and Mons. Jajdaski were recently here to celebrate Our Lady of the Rosary and to pray for the Pope's health.

## **A message to make us reflect**

We decided to print this article the way it is. Judge for yourselves on its contents.

The life of the visionary from Kurescek in Slovenia, Franz S., now about 70, has been a tormented one. As a young man he was an atheist; a few years ago he was ordained a priest by the Archbishop of Lubiana. Franz transmits the messages he receives from Our Lady to the archbishop who then gives them to a priest to be published.

The following message, received four years ago (18 July 1992) is very significant: "Praised be Jesus Christ! I myself did not intend for the apparitions of Medjugorje to be accepted by the entire Church. I was saddened, however, by the Bishop's personal stand. Given his position, he should have followed my children and my messages. He offered a personal opinion based on human criterion, and thus, without humbleness. For this he was unable to recognize the divine mercy which had chosen me to speak to the entire world through the little visionaries of Medjugorje.

I, your Mother, do not take revenge for disobedience; neither is God a God of vengeance. However, from disobedience springs forth evil, the consequence of which is the non-consideration of God's message. He

who refuses God's will remains without His blessing. Throwing away God's blessing means offering a space which should have been occupied by grace to the forces of darkness which will fill it. (1)  
 O priests, my beloved sons, I expect from you a mature spirit, certainly not a hindrance to the spiritual progress of my children who are entrusted to you. I bless you and I accompany you with much love and much tenderness." (from Botschaften-Mediatrix, Wordern, Austria)

(1) Man is not neutral ground; he is destined to be occupied either by God or by Satan. The parable of the house occupied by a strong man and then by a stronger man (Lk 11:21-26), illustrates this. Thus, if the graces God sends us of His own accord are hindered, we remain exposed to the attack of Satan and his worst spirits.

Each Christian whose faculties are free and grace-guided, normally has the ability to recognize God's signs. Jesus says: "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" (Lk 12:57). He was referring to the individual conscience able to judge the negations by the religious authority of the time. Not all of us have the maturity to judge fairly. A weak person is easily conditioned by another who asserts his authority, or who offers a wider way.

Church authority is at the service of the truth and its function is to recognize and regulate the charismas with the light of God and in obedience to God, not to impede them at pleasure according to human criteria.

We recall that also Vicka heard Our Lady pronounce words of regret for the Bishop's attitude for the suspension of two priests. Such warnings are valid for all Christians, Bishop or non (see Rev. 2 - 3 for bishops; St. Catherine's letters to the Pope) and they should be accepted as loving signs from heaven, not as undue human reproof.

God uses also little people to enlighten the great and turn them away from error.

\* For the orphanage in Siroki Brijeg, send donations to Matteo Rossi, Via delle Grazie, I-54100 Massa, Italy. Indicate: for Fr. Jozo.

Lesson by poor pilgrims - Some in Medjugorje make their pilgrimage one of true poverty. While there a woman spent her time with a group of Czech pilgrims, who are ever more numerous.

"For a week we slept in tents and lived on bread and water, a bit of cheese or salame, and took coffee only three times. We went everywhere on foot. Fruitful meetings were had with the communities, Fr. Slavko and Jelena. The programme was very intense, with no time to rest: Mass, prayer on the mountains and meetings for the Czech pilgrims (about 500) in the park.

A growing sense of guilt began to take hold of me. I could see the graces I had received and the errors and sins I had made and the time I had wasted. I had never in all my life seen with such clarity the difference between good and bad. My sense of guilt was a terrible burden and I was no longer able to see the graces I had received. I went to confession and the priest said to me: love Jesus and Mary always; do not think if you are good or bad, just love..."

Repentance and sense of guilt - Ten marks for your confessor! To receive light on all our past errors is a grace which Our Lady grants so as to lead us to true repentance and conversion of the heart. It is a good fruit of Medjugorje. Quite different is a sense of guilt which makes us see only our sins rather than the joy of God's mercy and forgiveness. It makes us think that we are going the wrong way and that we are unworthy of God's help. Satan makes us think this. He disturbs us always to make us lose our peace. He accuses us day and night before our God (Rev. 12:10).

But you be at peace. God looks only at our good intentions of the present; He has cast all our sins behind his back (Is 38:17). This is the truth and Satan knows it only too well. Say to him: go back Satan, for I know whom I have believed (2 Tm 1:12).

\* Our Lady took Noel with Her - Noel Lippaert left us on 29 September; he had just returned from the hill of apparitions with his 30 pilgrims from Canada when he suddenly fell to the ground: it was a heart attack. Shortly after he died in the hospital of Citluk. Noel was the father of 3 children and animator of the Montreal prayer group. He lived Mary's messages to the full and dedicated his time and energy to serving Her, instilling Her peace in the others. For years he had been spreading the French and English editions of Echo. It is a great loss for our Canadian friends, but we are all certain that the good grain which falls to the earth bears much fruit. Peace to all.

"You did it for me!" - Among the many works that are being roused by the Queen of Peace, one is this: an island on the Croatian coast (Jakljan) ceded to Fr. Jozo by the government for 3,200 war orphans between 1 and 20 years of age. The aim is to re-educate and recreate their personalities destroyed by the war (some are deaf, mute, mutilated, or with grey hair at the age of 9-10). The Mir i Dobro association, from Viggiù has built two large houses and 26 bungalows, they've bought a motorboat and will fund the operation, however, they need help. Send donations to: Mir i Dobro, Via Giovane Italia 3, I-21059 Viggiù (VA), Italy.

"It will soon be Advent," says Fr. Jozo. "How can we prepare ourselves for Christ's birth? With prayer, fasts and good works: help light the fires in the homes of the refugees who've returned to Varea; there are 12,000 of them. Their windows are broken, they have no heaters, nothing to prepare their tables with. This is how you can prepare for the great feasts. I thank you for your generosity and for all the humiliations received at the frontiers, for your patience and your perseverance..."  
Contact your nearest Caritas or Medj. centre which organizes aid delivery.

\* Helga from Norway writes: "I am Lutheran. Last Spring my family and I heard about Medj. We went there in June. Its over-whelming message has changed our lives..."

Echo turns 12 with 800,000 copies and 16 language-editions!

Thanks be to you Mary for having continued to call us these 12 years and for the many brothers and sisters who help us spread your message of peace to the ends of the earth. Thank you because you continue to make this instrument grow so it may reach many hearts.

An annual report: Echo begins its 13th year with about 800,000 copies in 16 languages (the latest of which is the lovely Swedish edition). The five major language-editions (Italian, French, English, Spanish and German), with 480,000 copies are edited and handled from Mantua. The others (Portuguese - one from Portugal, one from Brazil, Dutch, Catalan, Swedish, Russian, Polish, Rumanian, Magyar, Greek and Albanese) are run by good-willed people in their own countries.

I humbly ask for your prayers. The workload is burdensome, so is the necessity of keeping pace with the expectations of the Heavenly Directress. In your prayers please also remember all who work for Echo. From a tiny trickle, Echo has become a river in full, ready to break its margins.

Sister poverty forces us to keep the 8 pages, thus, we have to keep to the essential. A lot of material accumulates over 2 months, so we have to renounce any material not strictly tied to Medj., and wonderful testi-monies from all over telling us of how much good the Echo is doing. This encourages us to continue. Please do continue to write.

Our heartfelt thanks to all those friends who continue to support this little seed with donations or other help.

Through the intercession of Mary Im-maculate and all the Saints, we invoke upon you all, the blessing of God, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit - that we may all become worthy of the task of renewing

the world to which Mary is calling us.

Villanova M. 3.11.96

\* A complete collection of Our Lady's messages in Braille [in the French language] has been made available thanks our translator for the French edition of Echo, Mrs. Yvonne Maisonneuve from Lyon. Contact: Enfants de Medjugorje, 15 rue Joseph le Brix, F-76800 St. Etienne du Rouvray, France.

Satan cannot do anything. Thank you for your response to my call.