



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

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Unless the Lord builds the house... Pray, that God may act

In April's message the Blessed Virgin invited us to reap the fruit of Easter, which is our life united to God our Creator. In fact, Jesus' sacrifice re-established the original communion with God, our Father, thus giving meaning to our life: we live to please Him, while awaiting to possess Him for all eternity. If we, on the other hand, voluntarily sin and remain in our sin, life is broken and becomes death. This is why Mary seriously warns us: Children, I invite you to abandon sin and accept prayer at all times. Prayer is the opposite of a life of sin, because it permits us to live an on-going relationship with God, Who is the fount of every good.

Prayer is a question of life or death. Mary echoes Jesus' words: you must pray always without tiring. It is not by chance then that for nearly 16 years Our Lady, with the delicacy of a Mother, continues to repeat "pray." Life without prayer can only fail, because not we, but God, saves: My Father is working still and I too am working (Jn 5:17), but this can happen only when through prayer we open ourselves up to His inspirations, or rather, to His commands, so His plan may be fulfilled.

Mary turns over our pastoral of programmes and feverish activity which come from the lack of inner experience and make us compete with the world, to establish the primacy of personal prayer, of prayer in the family, of prayer in the groups, where the Holy Spirit creates communion. Communion is a true sign of God's kingdom. It is faith-filled prayer that moves the Almighty One, much more than initiatives planned around a table.

When we feel oppressed by humiliation and are feeling useless remember that Jesus did too. His prayer was never more effective, though, as in the garden of Gethsemane and during the agony of the cross. His victory, in fact, came from the sepulchre. He has already defeated the world and risen, He waits for His victory to be realized also today. For this we must remain firm on His Word and in faithful prayer.

Mary's messages are a pastoral revolution in an era when man, who has discovered all, thinks he has to do everything and does not let God work. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain... Sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward (Ps 126). It is He Who gives fertility to the Church and calls who He wants into His vineyard. All He asks us to do is to pray to send workers into His fields.. Nothing else! For it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy (Rm 9:16)

Our Lady's message 25 May 1997:

Dear children, Today I invite you to glorify God. May the Name of God be holy in your hearts and in your lives. My children, when you are in God's holiness, God is with you and He gives you peace and joy which come from Him only through prayer.

Thus, my children, renew prayer in your families, and your hearts will glorify the holy Name of God, and heaven will reign in your hearts. I am close to you and I intercede for you before God. Thank you for responding to my call.

"Glorify God in your hearts.. and in your families"

Today's message echoes and explains the words Jesus taught us to say to His and "Our Father" - they are words which we have been assured will not change.

Above all Our Lady invites us to glorify God in our hearts. All creation glorifies God, just as works of art exalt those who did them, but His glory must shine out particularly in His greatest work: the human heart.

Yes, in our hearts and in our lives may His Name be hallowed. This means that our life must reflect God's holiness. God desires that His children be like Him: You shall be holy for I am holy, says the Lord (Lev 19:2 & 1Pt 1:16) and thus the others will recognize Him in us and will give Him glory through us. But if we profess God only externally we will not live according to His commands and the others will not see His holy Name in us, but they will blaspheme Him. See what the prophet says: my name is profaned among the nations because of you (cfr. Ez 36:22). Thus, we are to glorify God in our hearts, and ask ourselves what we need to remove or do so as not to dishonour the holy Name of God in us.

When you are in God's holiness, He is with you... One might say that it is a difficult - even impossible - task to carry out! With our hearts open to God in prayer, we receive His Spirit and not only will we be afraid to offend Him, but we will want to do everything for love of Him and His will. This is holiness: whether you eat or drink, or do any other thing, do it all for the glory of God.

When the channel to God is open, that is, when we pray, He gives us peace and joy. How different this is to complaining or criticizing all the time or from seeing only the negative things. It takes a pure eye to see what God continues to do and be amazed at His work, and to note the poor comparison with our daily activities.

In the end we will be able to thank Him also for the difficulties, the sicknesses and the crosses because of our certainty that He can transform everything into good and in doing so fulfil His plan for us. Our Lady, it seems, wants to teach us to repeat in every occasion the prayer of praise: Praise and glory to you, Lord Jesus.

Thus, renew prayer in your families. Mary says "renew" because prayer should always be a new relationship with God, just as love is always new. Prayer is renewed also when members of a family take turns to express intentions: in another message Mary said: be active in your prayer.

With prayer, we let God enter our family and then it is He Who provides, Who keeps the family together and makes it grow and Who also sees to its problems and heals its wounds. If the family places itself under Jesus' protection it becomes aware of what is wrong and with His grace is able to apply a remedy, but when the family is left to the mercy of the passions, humours and whims of the individual it risks

breaking up.

What good is generated from prayer in the family! If the family says: hallowed by Thy Name, the members understand that sin must be removed, for sin is the opposite of God's holiness. The hearts will thus glorify God's Name and His glory will reflect on them, and they will experience paradise here on the earth. This is not utopia, but a gift which God gives to those who revere Him.

That this may be fulfilled, Our Blessed Mother ensures us that She is close to us and intercedes for us before God. We cannot expect the new world, or rather, heaven on the earth, from any other place than from our family united under God's protection.

Fr.A.

Pope in Poland: Europe, return to Christ!

The Holy Father himself mentioned the main reasons behind his 11-day pilgrimage to Poland (31 May-10 June): 1. The exaltation of Jesus' presence at the international Eucharistic Congress of Wroclaw; 2. The millennium of one of Jesus' great witnesses, St. Adalbert, bishop of Prague and evangelizer of the peoples from central Europe to the Baltic shores where he was martyred; 3. In the Name of Jesus, wisdom incarnate, to recall the 600 years since the foundation of the Theology Faculty at the University of Krakow, which radiated the Christian culture in all of Europe, founded by Queen Hedwig (canonized by the Pope before 1.5 million people) and her husband Wladyslaw Jagiello. Those who were expecting a tepid welcome in Poland were forced to think otherwise - it was calculated that 6 million followed the event. They had to acknowledge the presence of an unknown power in this aged and feeble man; a power unknown to them but known to us. It is the energy of a mustard seed acting within him and the star called Mary which guides him. His far-sighted wisdom, full of certainty and hope, conquered hearts and made the sceptics change their minds.

1. Man's bread - In Wroclaw, before 500,000 people, the Holy Father celebrated the high point of the Eucharistic Congress: the Statio Orbis: "spiritually gathered around this altar today is the Church in every continent of the globe to make the profession of faith in the Eucharist and to sing the hymn of thanksgiving for this ineffable gift."

Emphasis was placed on the theme of the Congress: For freedom Christ has set us free, explaining that "true freedom demands order: moral order, order in the sphere of values, order of truth and goodness. When chaos and confusion reign in the moral sphere freedom dies, man is reduced from freedom to slavery becoming a slave to instincts and passions... To say that the Church is an obstacle on the path to full freedom indicates that there is an incredible confusion of ideas!"

The Holy Father invoked: Give us this day our daily bread, and in doing so reminded us of: "the geography of hunger: a tragedy which not only is a great challenge but a great indictment, for the earth is capable of feeding everyone... Lack of work is a sign of social and economic under-development. I ask God that all those who desire to honestly earn their bread may have the opportunity to do so."

2. The Christian roots of Europe - The presidents of the seven republics where St. Adalbert evangelized were present for the open-air Mass in Gniezno (where he is buried) to celebrate the millennium of his martyrdom: Czech Rep., Slovakia, Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania. To these heads of state the Pope said: "The foundations of Europe are built on Christianity, because without Christ it is impossible to comprehend man..."

It was the ranks of missionary saints, like St. Adalbert, who brought to the peoples of Europe the teaching about love of neighbour, even love of enemies - a teaching confirmed by the gift of their lives for the sake of others. This Good News has sustained our brothers and sisters in Europe over the course of the centuries... it was repeated by the walls of churches, abbeys, hospitals and universities... proclaimed by art, literature and music. Upon the Gospel were laid the foundations of Europe's spiritual unity."

3. Return to unity - At this point in the homily the Pope flew high on eagle's wings, in view of the 3rd millennium: "Today, after 18 years, we should return to the homily in Gniezno, which in a certain sense became the programme of my pontificate, but first of all it was a humble reading of God's plans, linked with the final 25 years of our millen-nium.

I said then: 'Is it not Christ's will, is it not what the Holy Spirit disposes, that this Polish Pope, this Slav Pope, should at this precise moment manifest the spiritual unity of Christian Europe? We know that the Christian unity of Europe is made up of two great traditions, of the West and of the East... Yes, it is Christ's will, it is what the Holy Spirit disposes, that what I am saying should be said in this very place and at this moment in Gniezno' (Homily at the Cathedral of Gniezno, 3 June 1979).

What an extraordinary moment of history we have been granted to live in! Christ calls each of us to prepare the new springtime of the Church. He wishes the Church to enter the new millennium full of freshness."

"I give thanks to almighty God for the great gift of freedom granted to the nations of Europe: The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad... Can we not say that after the collapse of one wall, the visible one, another invisible wall was discovered, one that continues to divide our continent - the wall that exists in people's hearts? It is a wall made out of fear and aggressiveness, of lack of understanding for people of different origins, different colour, different religious convictions; it is the wall of political and economic selfishness, of the weakening of sensitivity to the value of human life and the dignity of every human being...

There will be no European unity until it is based on unity of the spirit... Its present lack of spiritual unity arises principally from the crisis of this Christian self-awareness."

4. "Pray that I may see the year 2000" - Cardinal Wyszynski told him when he was elected Pope: 'You must now lead the Church into the new millennium.' In reference to this the Pope said: "Dear friends, the years are passing and you must beg God on your knees that I can succeed."

5. The Pope's prayer to Our Lady of Jasna Góra in Czestochowa was one of the loftiest and most touching moments of his pilgrimage: Mother of the Church, Blessed Virgin Help of Christians, I bring to your feet the whole Church, all the continents, countries and nations... I entrust to your intercession the preparation for the Great Jubilee of Christianity...

6. The Pope spent two days in Zakopane for the consecration of the shrine dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, built as a thanksgiving for the failed attempt on John Paul II's life in St. Peter's Square on 13 May 1981. The Holy Father used the occasion to talk of the Fatima message which he said, "consists in an exhortation to conversion, prayer, especially the Rosary, and reparation for one's own sins and for those of all mankind. It aims at man's interior transformation...

The Fatima message is an outpouring of the love of the Heart of the Mother who is always open to her child, never loses sight of him, thinks of him always, even when he leaves the straight path and becomes a prodigal son."

When the Pope fell asleep during Mass on Saturday it worried many, but the Pope's spokesman said he

was only tired: "I often ask myself what is more tiring: a voyage like this or 15 to 16 hours of work in the Vatican, closed up in two rooms."

7. The youth. Hundreds of thousands joyfully greeted the Pope in Poznan. He told them: "We need to know how to use our freedom. Do not let people make you slaves. Faith in Christ and the hope which he teaches enables man to conquer himself..."

8. Before the Shrine of St. Joseph in Kalisz the Pope asked that life be defended regardless of each one's religious convictions, and he quoted Mother Theresa (who said the following at the International Congress in Cairo): 'I am sure of it when I say that the greatest destroyer of peace in the world today is abortion... The child is the most beautiful gift of God to a family, to a nation. Let us never refuse this gift of God.' .. and the Pope concluded: "A nation which kills its own children is a nation without a future."

9. Church's work has changed - In Krakow the Pope spoke about the new situation in Poland, observing that the Churches behind the curtain which suffered persecution under the Communist regimes, today risk facing social questions with a wrong approach. For this reason he exhorted the bishops to consider the changed situation, using discernment and accepting just criticism while not forgetting that Christ will always be a sign of contradiction. One's own vision of the faith cannot be imposed on others... The lay people must be helped to develop the political, economical and cultural thoughts in harmony with the Gospel: the clergy cannot substitute the laity.

UT UNUM SINT!

Expectations of Graz (or of grace!)

Jesus prayed for unity and Mary is anxious that there be peace among all Her children. Let us then invoke the Lord's grace upon the 2nd ecumenical assembly (in Graz, Austria, 23 - 29 June) which was held when the 16th anniversary was being celebrated in Medjugorje.

Seven hundred delegates from about thirty different countries representing the Churches from the Atlantic to the Urals - Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches - prayed and sought to make communion. The theme: Reconciliation, gift of God and source of new life. This reconciliation was first made by the Father with us, through Christ. We are asked to do the same with our fellow men. Many thousands of Catholics accompanied the delegates (headed by Romania with 992) and there were many young people from the East.

The 1st ecumenical assembly, held in Basel in 1989, was an historical meeting, for it was the first time in 500 years that Christians of different faith got together to pray. A new atmosphere was born, marking the beginning of common research. It is unfortunate that it is always the sin of man which delays the realization of God's plans.

Hour of Trial - On the eve of the ecumenical meeting, the patriarch of Russia, Alexei II, under the influence of nationalistic circles (they accuse the Catholic Church of proselytism) declined the invitation to meet the Pope in Vienna. Perhaps for this reason, the patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, who has worked a great deal for reconciliation decided not to come to Graz. Not only, but he did not send his delegation which for 21 years has always participated at the Pontifical High Mass for the 29th June in

St. Peter's. Has the longed-for journey to unity with the Orthodox come to a stop? The Holy Father, though understandably discouraged, gave no sign that he lacked confidence at the Angelus of 29 June when he spoke of the Assembly in Graz: "We have prayed intensely over these days so that full unity may be realized among all Christians. I feel it my duty to be an ardent promoter of this unity, aware as I am of the mandate Jesus entrusted to Peter, first Bishop of Rome: 'Confirm your brothers.' " Let us be united to the Pope in the fervent petition for unity.

The Pope in Prague - "Ask forgiveness, receive forgiveness" The "Bohemian brothers," descendants of the Hussites, paid homage to the Pope during his visit to Prague at the end of April, by participating at the ecumenical prayer with the Pope in the cathedral. Two years ago, instead, they refused to meet him because he had canonized a Catholic priest killed by the Protestants. He was moved by their refusal and immediately after at Oloumouc he made a "request and offer of forgiveness" which has borne fruit. This year he repeated: "In the name of the Church of Rome I ask forgiveness for the wrong inflicted on the non-Catholics and at the same time I ensure the forgiveness of the Catholic Church for what her children have suffered. May this day mark a new beginning for the common efforts in following Christ, His Gospel, His law of love and His supreme yearning for unity among those who believe in Him." A significant gesture was made by Cardinal Vlč when he announced that the Catholic Church would not claim proprietorship of the cathedral in Prague.

Catholic Church not acknowledged by Russia - only Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist religions are "traditional religions;" with right to citizenship - while Gorbaciov's liberal law of 1990 (blocked by Eltsin in 1993) would have given total freedom to religious practice.

Let us pray that the Catholics of Russia may accept the Cross without lamenting, for the Cross is a gift from God and a source of fertility. God's power is made manifest through weakness (cf. 2Co 12:9).

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand (Mk 3:24-25).

Holy Father specifies

For months Pope has been dedicating general audiences of Wednesday almost exclusively to Mystery of Mary.

"The disciple took Mary among his possessions."

On 7th May the Pope gave this meaning to the words of John 19:27 which are normally translated as: "He took her into his home." These words indicate Mary's place in a Christian's life. Let's see what the Pope said:

After entrusting John to Mary with the words: Woman, behold your son!, Jesus, from the Cross, turns to His beloved disciple: Behold, your mother (Jn 19:26). With these words, He reveals to Mary the height of her motherhood: as Mother of the Saviour She is also mother of the redeemed, of all the members of the Mystical Body of her Son.

In the light of this entrustment to his beloved disciple, one can understand the authentic meaning of the Marian devotion in the ecclesial community. In fact, it places Christians in Jesus' filial relationship to his mother, putting them in a condition to grow in intimacy with both of them. (..) According to the original Greek, the Gospel text continues: "From that hour the disciple took her among his possessions" ... Mary's spiritual motherhood and the first manifestation of the new link between her and the Lord's disciples

begins precisely in this context. The expression seems to highlight John's initiative, full of respect and love, not only in taking Mary to his house but also in living his spiritual life in communion with her. In fact, a literal translation of the Greek expression "among his possessions" does not so much refer to material possessions since John "possessed nothing of his own" (St. Augustine) but rather to the spiritual goods received from Christ: grace, the Word, the Spirit, the Eucharist... Among these gifts the disciple accepts Mary as his mother, establishing a profound communion of life with her. May every Christian, after the beloved disciple's example, "take Mary into his house" and make room for her in his own daily life, recognizing her providential role in the journey of salvation.

"Risen Jesus first showed himself to His Mother..."

... and though the Gospels make no mention of it, it is more than likely. So said the Pope in the general audience of 21 May, repeating what many Fathers of the age-old tradition believed. The mass media showed their ignorance by writing that the Pope had re-written the Gospel!

"The Gospels mention various appearances of the risen Christ, but not one to his Mother. This silence must not lead to the conclusion that after the Resurrection Christ did not appear to Mary; rather it invites us to seek the reasons why the Evangelists made such a choice. On the supposition of an "omission," this silence could be attributed to the fact that what is necessary for our saving knowledge was entrusted to the word of those "chosen by God as witnesses" (Acts 10:41), that is, the Apostles, who gave their testimony of the Lord Jesus' Resurrection "with great power" (cf. Acts 4:33). If the authors of the NT do not speak of the Mother's encounter with her risen Son, this can perhaps be attributed to the fact that such a witness would have been considered too biased by those who denied the Lord's Resurrection, and thus not worthy of belief.

Furthermore, the Gospels report a small number of appearances by the risen Jesus and certainly not a complete summary of all that happened during the 40 days after Easter. St. Paul recalls that he appeared "to more than 500 brethren at one time" (1 Co 15:6). How do we explain the fact that an exceptional event known to so many is not mentioned by the Evangelists? It is an obvious sign that other appearances of the Risen One were not recorded...

It is legitimate to think that the Mother was probably the first person to whom the risen Jesus appeared. Could not Mary's absence from the group of women who went to the tomb at dawn indicate that she had already met Jesus? This inference would also be confirmed by the fact that the first witnesses of the Resurrection, by Jesus' will, were the women who had remained faithful at the foot of the Cross and thus were more steadfast in faith... A fifth-century author, Sedulius, maintains that in the splendour of his risen life Christ first showed himself to his Mother...

[In the Catholic wing of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the faithful venerate an antique bas-relief representing the Risen Christ appearing to his Mother.]

Receiving Holy Communion

Act of reverence necessary when receiving in hand

Sad spectacles: how to avoid them

1. "The Church has always required that the faithful show respect and reverence towards the Eucharist when about to receive it. The Episcopal Conference has established that the faithful may kneel or remain standing to receive the Eucharist. If they kneel there is no need for them to make a further act of

reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament since the act of kneeling expresses adoration. If they remain standing, as when the faithful proceed up the aisle, they should make an act of reverence before receiving the Sacrament, at a suitable moment, being careful not to disturb the other faithful waiting in line [this could be a deep bow]" (from *Inaestimabile donum*, 3.4.1980, no. 11)

2. "Besides the use of receiving Com-munion on the tongue, the Church allows the use of receiving the Eucharist in the hand: both should be presented to the minister to receive the Body of Christ with reverence and respect. The faithful are free to choose either of the two ways. The usual way of receiving Communion on the tongue remains totally suitable..."

(Italian Episcopal Conference, Eucharistic Communion, 19.7.1989)

In Medjugorje, and other churches, the host is placed habitually on the tongues of the faithful to discourage those who steal the consecrated hosts for sacrilegious use (eg. black masses). It also puts a stop to the sad spectacle of people receiving the Body of Christ in their hands with no respect. Where possible, the host dipped in the Blood, resolves this problem.

Jesus to Alexandrina da Costa: "... Tell your spiritual father (Fr. Pinho) to preach till his last breath that I should be visited and loved in the holy Eucharist. It is I who ask this. They may ask anything of me when they are in my presence (in front of the tabernacle). It is from there that a remedy is had for all evils."

Laurentin warns: "Medjugorje repressed"

René Laurentin sent also to us a copy of his book "Latest news, year 16," accompanied by a letter:

"Dear friends, ... After the war I wasn't sure if it would still be useful to publish the annual up-date on Medjugorje, however, despite a heavy work load I decided to do it, for Medjugorje is the target for violence and confusion which you yourself can see.

Last year was particularly clouded by false news, for example when the press said that the pilgrimages had been interdicted, and when they failed to publish the denial by the spokesman for the Vatican. Many Christians do not go to Medjugorje anymore because they think it has been interdicted. How many graces and conversions lost!

Two recent books on the apparitions which have been widely spread give a gloomy view of Medjugorje. They speak of the apparitions as being turbid, harmful and condemned!

In the present case, as with St. Joan of Arc who was condemned by a perfectly regular court, I am convinced that Christian freedom and the duty to help others who are in danger, gives me the right to inform, with all due respect for the authorities and for obedience. Thus, my desire is to:

1. Dissipate false news and clarify the truth; 2. Place emphasis on the immense work of grace being wrought in Medjugorje which I feel is more than in any other place.

Today many await the death of the Pope so that Medjugorje can be repressed. This would be unjust, regrettable and contrary to God's work, just as the assassination of Joan of Arc was.

I think that to spread the truth can contribute to impede this spiritual abortion which had been attempted in 1986.

It would thus be desirable if you can mention the book so as to defend and explain Our Lady's plan which you serve. Heartfelt thanks for what you will do."

René Laurentin (B.P. 808, F-91001 Evry Cedex, France)

* 6TH UK YOUTH 2000 Int'l Prayer Festival (under canvas) at Wintershall, Bramley, nr. Guildford, Surrey, from 28-31 August. Contact YOUTH 2000, P.O. Box 119, London SW 7 5RH (Fax 0171 370 0211) for information about this and other YOUTH 2000 events in UK, Ireland, USA, Germany, New Zealand, Canada, Trinidad, Panama and Mexico, and for information on how to start YOUTH 2000 in your country.

News from the blessed land

Mary's beloved son

Medjugorje participated in the meeting in Sarajevo with 250 parishioners and 350 foreign pilgrims. They prepared for the Holy Father's visit to Bosnia with prayer and reflection on the Blessed Virgin's message of 25 August '94 which said: Dear Children, I am close to you today in a special way and I pray for the gift of the presence of my beloved son in your country. Pray, my children, for the health of my most beloved son who suffers and who was chosen by me for this time. I pray and intercede before my Son Jesus so that your fathers' dream may be fulfilled. Pray, my children, in a special way, because Satan is strong and wants to destroy the hope in your hearts. I bless you. Thank you for responding to my call.

Pope in Sarajevo: "Medjugorje, Medjugorje!" When the Pope visited Sarajevo many had hoped that he would have stopped over in Medjugorje. In Echo 133 we already mentioned how the President of Croatia, Mr. Tudjman, had declared in the presence of politicians and priests, that John Paul II had said that he also wanted to go to Medjugorje during his visit to Sarajevo. Mons. Ratko Peric, bishop of Mostar, who was present when Mr. Tudjman said this, did not utter one word about it. The Pope did not visit Medjugorje, but he did not forget it.

On 12th April at the airport of Sarajevo the first to greet the Pope were three bishops and two provincial Franciscans. When it was the Provincial from Bosnia, fra Petar Andjelovic's turn the Pope looked at him as if to ask something and said: "Medjugorje?" Fra Petar pointed to fra Tomislav Pervan, Provincial from Herzegovina. Fra Tomislav said: "I am from Mostar and Medjugorje." The Pope nodded with satisfaction while repeating: "Medjugorje, Medjugorje." The scene was seen by all who followed the event on television.

During the celebration in the cathedral of Sarajevo, the Holy Father twice invoked the Queen of Peace for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of those present interpreted these words as being addressed to the Queen of Peace of Medjugorje. After the dinner in the Catholic seminary of Sarajevo, fra Tomislav gave the Pope the latest book of photographs of Medjugorje. He also spoke a little about Medjugorje. The Pope accepted the book and listened in silence. The expression on his face showed interest and joy. At the airport in Sarajevo, at the moment of departure, fra Tomislav Pervan bade him good-bye and said: "Holy Father, Medjugorje is waiting for you." The Pope smiled (seen on TV) and said: "Medjugorje, Medjugorje."

Vatican Delegation with two bishops in Medjugorje - In his voyage to Sarajevo (called by its Croatian name Vrhbosna up to the time of the Turkish occupation in 1463) Pope John Paul II was accompanied by 11 high-ranking officers of the Holy See, journalists from the Vatican, representatives from the Secretary of State and two bishops. During the visit the delegation, made up of about 30 people, made a visit to the Shrine of the Queen of Peace. Mons. Maged Elhachem celebrated Mass and in his homily he said that

they went to Sarajevo to encourage the Holy Father and to give, with their prayers, a modest contribution to peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other territories.

After Holy Mass, fra Ivan Bradvica led them to the hill of apparitions. On the hill they all prayed together and spoke about the events in the parish of Medjugorje. When they were leaving, Bishop Elhachem said that he had come to pray for peace in his tormented land, Lebanon.

Bishop Hillary from New York said that he had been to Medjugorje already once and that it was a pleasure for him to be back because he could feel the presence of the Blessed Virgin.

The Croatian Ambassador at the Holy See, Ivo Livljanic, who headed the delegation, declared that in these times it is already a miracle that many people come to Medjugorje to pray. He also added that the ambassadors were the main supporters and promoters of the visit to Medjugorje.

Commission for Medjugorje no longer exists. What short-term and long-term actions with the Church take with regards to the events of Medjugorje? Difficult to say. With the dissolution of the Yugoslav Episcopal Conference there is no longer a Commission to follow the events. In the meantime, Medjugorje follows its course, certain that in the end, as the Scriptures say, the tree will be recognized by its fruit.

A proposal by Mons. Franic for Medjugorje - The events of Medjugorje have become part of the life of the Church. One man who had been opposed to the events in the beginning but who changed his mind after visiting Medjugorje and became a fervent supporter of the apparitions is the Archbishop emeritus of Split, Frane Franic.

He was one of the most eminent members of the second Vatican Council and together with 500 other bishops he condemned Marxist atheism which in the end was defined as "the most radical form of atheism that the history of mankind has ever known."

For his merits he was given an award in Split; on this occasion he held a discourse entitled: "Communism destroys all which is good" (19 April 1997). In the dialogue which followed the conference he confirmed his proposal for the Jubilee Year, which is that the Church of Croatia celebrate the solemnity of the Jubilee in the shrine of the Queen of Peace in Medjugorje.

He also said: "I wrote in *The Church in the World* (Croatian theological magazine) that in the year 2001 our bishops, with approval by the Holy See - and John Paul II is in favour - could organize a service of thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin of Medjugorje for all the gifts received, and in particular, for the gift of freedom which came from the hands of God thanks to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin."

The Croatian bishops have not yet made a public reply to the proposal. It would certainly be a great event, not only for the Church of Croatia.

When Archbishop Franic presented the latest book of photographs on Medjugorje in Split he said: "The apparitions of the Blessed Virgin must be considered as a further intervention by God in the history of mankind which will be understood only after much time. I personally heard Our Lady's voice, though I did not see Her. I see the fruits of Medjugorje, which are prayer, fasting and brotherly love, as signs of a preparation for an encounter with God. With the declaration of 1991 our bishops reaffirmed that Medjugorje is a place of pilgrimage and of prayer, and for the faithful from all over the world it has become just that."

German military bishop - Just a few days ago Mons. Johannes Dyba, bishop of Fulda in Germany, visited Medjugorje. He came to visit the German SFOR units in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "I could not come to Bosnia and Herzegovina and not come to Medjugorje," he declared.

Three bishops from Uganda and response from Nuncio

Bishops keep on arriving. From 8th to 15th May three bishops arrived from Uganda. Before coming here they asked the papal nuncio in Uganda, Luis Robles Diaz, what he thought about them going. He replied: "The Pope does not speak publicly about Medjugorje, but he is in favour of it. Go!"

They celebrated Holy Mass on the evening of 12 May. One of them, Mons. Drandua who has been a priest since 1970, also held the homily, which the Press Bulletin published in its entirety. After having said in English before a multi-lingual crowd that the Holy Spirit has only one language, that of prayer, he said: "I am happy to have come to this school of prayer, founded by our beloved Mother... It has been a wonderful experience. I cannot say that the Blessed Virgin appears... People come here and change life. I had not confessed for 10 years, since I became a bishop, but here I confessed more than 100 people! I am certain that the Lord uses this place for the conversion of peoples. When I go back home I will tell my priests to keep one day of the week for adoration and for all of them to recite the Rosary."

Mons. Byabazaire, priest since 1969, said how he found people who pray and do penance. "I too went up Krizevac with a certain trepidation, but once I reached the top I felt extremely happy. I saw people climbing without shoes; they were praying intensely and I joined them. I was greatly impressed by the evening Mass where everyone prays without understanding the language, also at adoration. I spoke to the visionaries and I saw that they are mature and sincere. When I go back home I will say that the Blessed Virgin's words are simple, like those of a mother which enter the hearts of children."

Mons. Oyanga, priest for 33 years, said: "This is a place of meditation and the people who come here make communion and feel equal with one another, despite the fact that they come from different parts of the world. This struck me profoundly.

Adoration is a unique experience. I saw people fast. In the house where I was put up the pilgrims only ate salad and bread for dinner. This is spirit of sacrifice which I had not seen for a long time. It has been an experience which will give me the strength to talk to people about the Blessed Virgin who is so close to us."

Bishops of Uganda and Bishop of Mostar speak of peace

The three bishops from Uganda also met Mons. Ratko Peric and found him to be very available. "Bishop Peric," declared Mons. Drandua, "told me that for him Medjugorje is not a problem because people pray there. His problem are the Franciscans who, in his opinion, want to be independent. I told him that Medjugorje speaks always of peace, that the Virgin invites people to change their hearts, and that She speaks of peace in the heart. I told him that if both he and the Franciscans change, peace will be possible. I told him to have the strength to humble himself before the Lord and to begin to pray for peace. I begged him to work for peace.

I suggested that he call the Franciscans, and even if only one should come not to worry, for not everything can change in one day. I said that he must go to them, for he is the pastor who must say: "Dear brother, come, I beg you," and if he comes then things will work out. He replied that he would try,

adding that the Franciscans accept neither the general ministry nor Rome. I told him that Rome wants peace between them and that he must work concretely at making peace.

The bishops from Uganda could not have spoken more frankly than this. Their proposal is evangelical; a proposal of peace inspired by the Queen of Peace.

A Bishop from Cameroon - Also Bishop Adalbert Nzdana was in Medjugorje for 5 days; he concelebrated often at the evening Mass. On Friday 13th he solemnly blessed the pilgrims after Mass and said in French that he had come with the desire to experience Medjugorje as a simple pilgrim. He said how he discovered that Medjugorje is a school of the Gospel which spreads to the four corners of the earth with great power.

Archbishop from Slovenia shares Pope's thoughts - Fr. Slavko was invited by friends to visit various parishes of Croatia and Slovenia. Many participated in the meetings which were organized around the evening programme of Medjugorje. He also met the Archbishop, Mons. Franc Rodeo, who asked Fr. Slavko if he knew if many Slovenians go to Medjugorje, to which he replied: "Once the bishop of Pescara asked the Pope how he should behave with the faithful who go to Medjugorje and the Pope replied: 'What do the people do there?' to which the bishop said: 'They pray, confess and do penance.' The Pope then said: 'So let them go.' " Fr. Slavko asked the archbishop if he shared this same opinion and Mons. Rodeo smiled and said 'yes.'

Fr. Slavko and Vicka in Africa - After numerous invitations from the African continent Fr. Slavko Barbaric and the visionary Vicka spent 25 days visiting various countries in the south. About 30 meetings had been organized, and the participants showed much interest. They met 7 bishops, some of whom celebrated Mass during the evening services (which like those of Medjugorje included the Rosary, Holy Mass, prayer of healing and testimony by Vicka). Some of the meetings were held outdoors, in the Croatian language (translations were provided), accompanied by vivacious African music. Fra Slavko and Vicka also met with priests, men and women religious, the elderly in rest homes, children in orphanages and faithful in churches.

In many areas of Africa prayer groups have been present for 10 years. An official invitation was sent by the Peace Centre of Lusaka (in Zambia), asking Fra Slavko and Vicka to visit that country.

On their way back from Africa they stopped over in Belgium (friends of Medjugorje had invited them) and in Switzerland where they visited the Croatian migrants living in the Catholic missions.

16th anniversary of apparitions

On 24th June in 1981 the visionaries saw Our Lady and fled with fear. The day after they returned to the same place on Podbrdo to pray, and Our Lady appeared to them. This is why the anniversary is celebrated on the 25th. So far more than 10 million people from all over the world have come to Medj.

The six visionaries are: Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez, born in 1977 and mother of three children. She had a daily apparition till 7th May 1985, the day on which she received the 10th secret. The Blessed Virgin promised that She would appear to her on the anniversary each year, which She has always done.

Mirjana Dragicevic-Soldo, born in 1965, has two children. She received the 10th secret and had her last daily apparition on the 25th December 1982. Our Lady appears to her on her birthday (18th March), and from 2nd August 1987 Mirjana can perceive Our Lady's voice on the 2nd of each month.

Vicka Ivankovic, born in 1964, has so far received nine secrets (like the others who follow). She continues to have daily apparitions. Marija Pavlovic-Lunetti, born in 1965, has two children and is

expecting a third child. She has daily apparitions and on the 25th of each month receives the monthly message to transmit. Ivan Dragicevic, born in 1965 and Jakov Colo, born in 1971, are both married and have two children each. They also have daily apparitions.

All the visionaries live in Medjugorje, except for Marija who lives in Monza (Italy)

Lest we forget - On 29th May 1993 in Gornje Vakuf 3 young people were killed while delivering aid. Fabio Moreni, one of the victims, had told a local prayer group: "We find consolation in reciting the Rosary together during our voyages, thanks to the CB radios installed in our vehicles. We always manage to visit Medjugorje where the soul is filled with peace and joy: without a doubt a gift of the Blessed Mother."

We know that the many Medjugorje friends who take aid to Bosnia do the same. The mother of Sergio Lana (another victim) wrote a moving letter in which she said: "Sergio was my only child; you can imagine how much I loved him.. I do not hate you for killing him; I forgive you..."

(From the Press Bulletin)

The Rosary does break down barriers

A French tax collector was baptized by Fr. Jozo on 23rd April last. In 1990 Mr. Hervé, an unbeliever, decided that he would divorce in 1997 when his youngest daughter would no longer be a minor. During Easter of 1994 his wife Denise who prayed and had faith, went to Medjugorje with friends. She experienced a moment of grace when Vicka prayed over her, like being invaded by a great force. Her immediate reaction was to burst into tears, then she went to pray on Podbrdo where she felt at peace and full of joy like never before. On the way down she and her friends decided to offer the Rosary for her husband.

On that same day Mr. Hervé in France was taken by so much hatred for his wife that it frightened him. At around 10 pm (when his wife and friends were saying the Rosary) he was taken by the divine presence and an extraordinary illumination showed him his true life, his sin and the fathomless love of his Creator. In a moment he was able to comprehend that God exists and that Mary is his Mother, and his resistance broke down. He felt young again. "At the age of 50," he said, "I was born in 5 seconds."

Easter 1995 - Mr. Hervé came to Medjugorje with Denise and as he listened to Fr. Jozo in Siroki Brijeg he decided that he wanted to be baptized there. A priest told him that he needed to receive instruction first. Two years later he returned with his family and was baptized by Fr. Jozo in front of a crowd of French pilgrims more than one of whom cried for joy. Fr. Jozo said: "Here is the fruit of a wife who prayed with perseverance for 32 years and obtained the grace of her husband's conversion."

Fruit of Rosary also healing of baby in mother's womb - Sherry and Ron had been trying for years to have a child. She finally fell pregnant, and while the first ultrasound scan revealed nothing unusual, the second one revealed a serious heart disorder. There was only one chance in a hundred that the baby could survive an operation. The parents were broken hearted.

Sherry recalled the wooden rosary beads that a friend got in Medjugorje for her. She prayed with them and pressed them onto her tummy as if to make the baby feel them too. Soon after Sherry felt the baby move. Also the next day, after reciting the Rosary, Sherry felt the baby leap.

At the next ultrasound the parents both prayed and hoped intensely. The gynaecologist called all the staff to show them that the water which would have suffocated the baby had inexplicably gone. There was no

further need for an operation, and so Sherry and Ron went back home. Annamaria was born in September 1994; she is a healthy and happy baby. Her parents became apostles of Mary and of the Rosary.

I'm not saying of course that the Rosary has magic powers. No. At times God allows us to be tried, but through prayer He gives us strength and peace. The Cross then becomes a source of joy, says Mary. Many healings are not had, because we don't pray or fast enough for the sick person. Our Lady said that the white rays on the miraculous medal are the graces which She would like to give us, but which we do not ask for.

Sr. Emmanuel visited Mexico and the USA after the Lord's Ascension. Denis Nolan bore witness to the abundant grace received particularly in Guadalupe. Millions of spectators were able to watch 17 live transmissions on the TV.

(From Sr. Emmanuel's diary)

Fr. Jozo in Italy: a shower of graces. Among the various meetings in Italy, particularly moving was the one in the Basilica of Modena on Saturday 5th June. It was the last of the first 5 Saturdays offered up for Italy.

His words and witness moved one thousand people during the five-hour meeting which went in a flash. "Peace must first be in the heart which has reconciled with God and with one's brothers and sisters, then it is able to spread to the families and the world," said Fr. Jozo in his talk after the Rosary. He spoke of the first apparitions and of his own experience, of his initial disbelief and then of his conviction for which he was put in jail. With great passion he commented the last 5 messages.

To everyone he gave a picture card of the Queen of Peace and Rosary beads and he blessed them as we held them in our hands. He made a summary of the messages, calling them the five stones which kill Goliath: 1. pray the Rosary daily with the heart; 2. the Eucharist; 3. the Bible in a place of honour, to be read every day; 4. fasting; 5. monthly confession; weekly for the youth.

Adoration followed Holy Mass; the Blessed Sacrament was taken in procession along the aisles of the church before the solemn blessing which concluded the meeting.

(Manlio)

Vicka in Verona: why Our Lady does not give new messages. On the 1st June there was a great crowd in Verona to meet Vicka and Sr. Elvira plus some members of Sr. Elvira's Upper Room Community. Their witness touched people's hearts. Sr. Elvira's words on the therapy of grace for drug addicts soundly shook the auditorium.

As usual, Vicka received Our Lady's apparition at 6.40 pm. It lasted 10 minutes. Vicka was radiant when she got up, and said: "Our Lady was happy; She blessed us all by placing Her hands on us. She said She does not want to give other messages because men still do not do as She asks. We must take what She says seriously."

What most impressed those who were close to Vicka during her stay in Verona was her absolute fidelity to Mary's messages, with regards to prayer and fasting. When some one pointed out to her on the Friday that because they were travelling it was convenient to take something else besides bread and water, Vicka replied: "Our Lady has never said this," and she took only bread with tea.

Vicka also showed an uncommon openness and comprehension for the youth, never judging them with harshness.

Also Sr. Elvira, though she is extremely dynamic and bold, was so absorbed by her prayer that she did

not notice what was going on around her. These are people who truly believe and who make us reflect. (Fr. A.R.)

Civitavecchia marches on

The summer months have not stopped the flow of pilgrims who come to pray before the [little statue](#) of Our Lady of Medjugorje which wept. On Saturday 12th June there were 19 buses, and on Sunday 13th there were 20 and of course there were countless cars. Pilgrims come in great numbers also during the week. Cardinal Sensi was recently here as a pilgrim; he served as apostolic nuncio in Jerusalem, in Turkey and in Portugal. There was even a group of pilgrims from Colombia, accompanied by their bishop.

Lachrymation to receive acknowledgement?

Following an opinion expressed by Laurentin in Corriere della Sera mid April, the spot lights have once again been placed on the phenomenon of Civitavecchia.

Briefly, the French Mariologist said that there is no need for the supernaturalness of an event to be acknowledged, that only the authenticity of the cult needs acknowledgement. The journalists asked Mons. Grillo for his opinion of Laurentin's statement (Mons. Grillo is the bishop of Civitavecchia; the last time the statue wept it was in his hands). Mons. Grillo said that in a future date he would make a further declaration with regards to the lachrymation.

The following is taken from an interview published in Messaggero.

Q. Acknowledgement of the cult does not definitely clarify whether or not there has been a miracle, does it?

A. That is why I intend making another declaration, to say what the diocese thinks of this event. But if you ask me why the statue wept, there is nothing I can say; it is a mystery to me too, even though I witnessed one of the lachrymations.

The truth is that no one has been able to show that there has been a trick, and the theological commission has said there is no explanation for the event. Now, if a statue cries blood before more than 60 people and if the Bishop himself witnesses one of the lachrymations; if there were no mechanisms in the statue and if it could not be manipulated, then it is a logical consequence that the statue of Our Lady really did weep.

Q. Are you going to declare that there has been a miracle?

A. Not so fast. I said that I will make a declaration and soon. I have some research work to conclude first, of the theological and spiritual nature. Then, with the help of God, I will say what everyone expects [to hear]. Saying that the statue wept and saying that there was a miracle are two different things.

Q. If it is found that there has been a miracle, or that there has been a supernatural event, this church will become a shrine; is this not correct?

A. The Church does not have any land here in Pantano where a shrine could be built. In any case, should the need arise, the diocese will invite the Italian architects to draw up a plan and the most suitable one will be chosen.

For now the most important thing is to overcome the state of emergency: last Sunday [13th April] with 14,000 pilgrims here, all of whom would have liked to enter the little church, the police had to intervene.

A Madonna that cries? That's all we need...

(...) One of the "luminaries" of theology (we prefer not to reveal his name) said of Civitavecchia: "Don't tell me that people are still talking about the madonna of Civitavecchia! (The small m is not ours.) I was hoping people had forgotten about it... I'm sorry it hasn't. These manifestations reveal a great deal of ambiguity."

The interviewer told him of an important Italian bishop who placed his hands on his head when he heard about the lachrymations of Civitavecchia. The theologian said: "I like that! As if to say: that's all we need!.."

We know how difficult it is to discern when the question regards charismas; often you don't know what to think or how to behave. However, in my opinion that theologian went too far. To begin with, miracles are fruit of God's will, not of man's, even if man can ask for them. I think it a waste of time, a pathetic pretension, to dispute over a theme where God alone is sovereign arbitrator.

In the shrine of Civitavecchia there are by now hundreds of wedding rings left by couples who received the grace of reconciliation. Had there not been that lachrymation and thus all that "noise" around the church of Pantano, those couples would still be arguing, or still be separated. I would like to ask that theologian to show me his collection of marriages that he has saved with his theological ministry so full of rationality.

If we broaden the subject to the history of salvation, things become even more complex. Redemption began with St. Gabriel's apparition to Mary - are we going to doubt this too? Do we need to ask ourselves if it was really necessary, or think that it was just an hallucination? And what about Christ's Incarnation which followed that apparition? And what are we to say about the apparitions of the Risen Christ?

The Apostles are what they are because they witnessed Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:22). It was thanks to an apparition to Peter that the doors of evangelization were opened to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).

Without this apparition the entrance of these into the Church would have been delayed, and only God knows by how much.

God acts how and when He wants. A Christian is not called to see if events correspond to his mental schemes, but to discern whether the thing truly comes from God. Christ worked miracles to testify that He came from God and as such He spoke and worked.

(From Madre di Dio)

Our Lady of Fatima: hope for Church in Byelorussia - On 1st May the statue of Our Lady began its 2-year pilgrimage. It will visit 300 parishes in 3 dioceses. Prior to and during its stay, spiritual exercises, prayer vigils and liturgical celebrations will be organized. "The statue of Our Lady will be accompanied by processions and handed over from one parish to the next. The pilgrimage will give new vigour to our Church," said Cardinal Swiatek of Minsk.

Cardinal Minsk paid for his fidelity to the Pope with 10 years of hard labour. When he was made a bishop in 1991 ecclesial life was inexistent, so he got his Polish mission-aries to greet all those they met along the streets with: Praised be Jesus Christ. Those who responded became the first parishioners and that is how the new parishes were born. "I am optimistic," he said. "Participation at Mass is on the rise. At Easter I consecrated the first 5 priests. Of the 115 seminarists in Grodno 44 come from my dioceses, and soon we will re-open the seminary in Pinsk for 60 new seminarists.

I'm a little worried about the foreign nuns and 6 volunteer priests who work in the territories badly hit by Chernobyl. Their health has been damaged; they have to alternate 2 weeks of work with 2 weeks of rest."

Immerse self in Gospel and Psalms

These were the last public words of Fr. Giuseppe Dossetti when on 21st June 1996 a group of young priests from Foggia went to visit him in Monte Sole. These words represent the testament of a wise patriarch who knew men and who knew that nothing else could be of any value to man.

"I have two things to say, then one other thing, like in the Book of Proverbs. The two things are these: the Gospel and the Psalms. Nothing new. I firmly believe that the entire life of the Church depends more than ever, and more and more each day, on the Gospel. The life of the Church in an immense historical flow that we can neither foresee nor imagine but which will be upon us soon (in the first years of the next century) depends on the Gospel, that is, Gospel lived in the Eucharist.

The Gospel: priests and lay people, almost without distinction, must immerse themselves in the Gospel. I particularly insist on this, and I also mean in a quantitative sense: read it, read it and read it, let yourself be formed by the Gospel read over and over again, a thousand times a day were it possible, 'sine glossa.' Read it continuously, as much as possible. Read the Gospel with your ears closed and your minds empty of thought; He will root up the rest, in a relationship which is continuous, personal, lived and believed with all one's being, while you know that you are reaping the Word of God the same way it was sown by Jesus when he went by the ways of Galilee.

Listen to the Gospel the way it is, without gloss; listen to it continuously, as St. Francis used to say, so that it will scrape your brain, and mould your spirit. Scrape your brain and mould your spirit, without you noticing it, and without you ever tiring, for it is absurd to tire of the Gospel: its profundity is inexhaustible, infinite. It continuously moulds us, supports us, forms us, creates us; as Christians first of all.

Up to the time of Gregory the Great, and even after him, there were canons which impeded men from becoming priests unless they knew the Psalter off by heart. This tradition was maintained for a long time. It wasn't necessary to earn a degree, or to study theological anthropology, but to memorize the Psalter, which in my opinion was more than earning a degree. Respect [is due] of course for the values which make up the modern-day culture and for progress made in theological and biblical studies, but [one must] rise above these.

I had my New Testament and my Psalter bound together; I mix them up and I work them, but it is they who work on me. To me this only is truly fruitful and worthy of doing: Psalter and Gospel, Gospel and Psalter. A lot of your time is taken up by your pastoral activities, but nothing can stop you from doing this; both can be done together.

These are the two things I wanted to tell you. Now I'll tell you the other thing: history... " (Fr. Dossetti went on to say how it is necessary to know history and read it with the spirit of the Gospel so that it can become a teacher of life.)

Antonio Rosmini: humiliated prophet soon to be beatified

The Church will beatify Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855), whose bicentenary is celebrated this year. A lengthy period of silence followed his condemnation last century, and now this supreme philosopher and teacher of spirituality has been rehabilitated.

Pope Pius VIII said of him: "His aim was to lead men to reason and through reason to religion." Rosmini

believed that religion and reason could go together, just like faith and intelligence. Without sacrificing the truth or giving way to lay thought, he gathered up the most valid elements of modern thought, demonstrating that they were compatible with Christianity. He promoted a renewed, poor and free Church, which fulfilled its evangelical mission.

He expressed these ideas in his work entitled *The Five Wounds of the Church* (1848) for which he was condemned. Yet with a prophetic spirit, he touched on some of the themes promoted by Vatican Council II, such as the collegial status and unity of the bishops; the need for the clergy to receive a profound formation so as to meet the needs of the times; Church autonomy where Church and state respect one another, and co-responsibility and active participation by all the faithful in all Church activity.

He was about to be nominated Cardinal and secretary of state by Pope Pius IX (1848), when, for repeated accusations by members of the most conservative ecclesial environments (by whom Rosmini was defined "teacher of infernal doctrine," "betrayed of the Church" and "ignorant") he fell into disgrace even for the Pope. Rosmini accepted with serenity the mysterious events which Providence had arranged, surrendering himself to it with exceptional meekness.

Time proved this faithful servant of the Church right. His book, thanks to Pope Paul VI's intervention, was given the Imprimatur in 1966. Repercussions were felt, though, also by the two religious families he founded (one male and one female): his followers and his books were kept out of the Catholic schools and the Church cultural centres.

Now, the authorization by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the beatification of the Servant of God Antonio Rosmini, not only rehabilitates a prophet who was humiliated by his own kind, but in it we see a lesson for all when evaluating events and people who are often condemned by the chronicles and exalted by history. This has been happening for the past two thousand years: this is the law of the Cross. Mirko

The anniversary message (25 June 1997):

Dear Children, I am with you in a special way today and I bring you my motherly blessing of peace. I pray for you and intercede for you before God so that you will comprehend that each of you are bearers of peace. You cannot have peace if your heart is not at peace with God. For this reason, my children, you must pray, pray, pray, because prayer is the foundation of your peace. Open your hearts and give time to the Lord, that He may be your friend. When a true friendship with God is created, there is no storm that can destroy it. Thank you for responding to my call.

Prayer alone can give true peace

Mary, who appeared as the Queen of Peace, is still with us after 16 years because we need peace, true peace, that peace which the Son gave us: I leave you peace, I give you my peace, not like the world gives it do I give you peace.

True peace is communion with God, like in the earthly paradise. Worldly peace ignores God and His order; God is substituted by man's own ego and passions and instinctive powers which generate only disorder. We are all more or less victims, such is the power of the deceit and of the lies of Satan (cf. 2 Th 2:11). At times there are situations where it seems impossible for peace to be created, but in truth, this is not so (Mary says so in Her message).

Mary gives us Her motherly blessing of peace. What does this mean? A blessing is the effective

transmission (since it is done in the name of God) of a grace which has the power to produce that which is hoped, as long as he who receives it does not put up obstacles.

What Mary gives us is called "motherly blessing" because it is loaded with all Her power as Mother of God and Mother of us, so that peace is realized in us. These are words which you, Mary, address to your children in the hour of trial when the prince of this world seems to have the power to remove our peace with all sorts of seducing ways which lead to sin, problems and disagreements, violent reactions and hatred and rebellion. Again, it causes worry and anxiety to the point where people lose their peace. Yet Mary came to make us into bearers of peace in this peaceless world. This is Her prayer of intercession before God: that "each of you comprehend that you are bearers of peace," therefore, try your best to be such; take it upon you as your responsibility.

How can we bear peace? You cannot have peace if your heart is not at peace with God, or in other words, in a communion of love with Him. She adds that this is not possible unless we give time to the Lord: that time we often think we cannot give because "we have so much to do!" What an illusion! What an error! And what a muddle we get ourselves into! It is one of Satan's tricks to make us think that other things are urgent, and it has the aim of impeding us from going to God. Mother, how many of your children think that life can be good also without praying, while you continue to tell us: pray, pray, pray. Three times: the perfect number. Also the Apostle warns us to: Pray without stopping (2 Thes 5).

The very first urgent thing in our lives is prayer, then in our lives we will have order and peace from God. If we give time to God He will multiply our time. To give time to God means to place ourselves at His disposal for as long as He wants, so He can place His Spirit in us and change us. Then we will feel the need to give Him even more time, and God will take possession of His child who will no longer fear, having learnt that God is almighty. This is peace.

When prayer creates true friendship with God, there is restfulness in God, and no storm can destroy it. It is like the house built on the rocks. Let us not be discouraged if a storm has destroyed our peace. It will happen again, but we know the reason and also the remedy.

Thank you Mother; we bow down to pick up your motherly blessing of peace and with your help we want to do as you tell us so that we can have peace.

THE MAIL

A few of the many letters:

From **Orsingen** (Germany): "I'm enthused about the immense spirituality of your paper. I particularly like the interpretations of Our Lady's messages: they enter deeply into the heart. I am profoundly struck by the biblical citations all through Echo. Nothing can be explained better if not through the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16). I have now decided to distribute it myself." (Markus Trunk)

From **Slovenia**: "Giuseppina Mozzina has returned to the Father. She was one of the first apostles of Medjugorje, having led 15 trains full of pilgrims and 300 bus loads there. The Gospa praised the Slovenes who were among the first to accept Her messages. Slovenia proclaimed independence on the day of the 10th anniversary (25.6.91) and for 10 days was invaded by the Yugoslav army. The date has become a national holiday. (Sticna France)

From **Albania** many write to say how much good they receive from reading Echo; of the "warmth which the Echo of Mary spreads." From Shkodër Valeria and Josefi refer that in the restored church of Our Lady Muslims and Catholics prayed together every day of May: "A thousand candles burned for

Albania."

From **Chicago**: "Echo is like a shot of vitamins: it is so encouraging while the world is cold and deriding." (Onorina Tainer)

Echo must not irritate anyone. From Sangemini, Italy, a very active distributor complains about having to fight against the incredulity of many, including parish priests who refuse Echo, saying that the apparitions of Medjugorje are false and that Echo does not have Church approval. He would like a declaration saying that the above is wrong...

Dear Claudio, "child of thunder," the Church gives her approval to all those who faithfully preach the Gospel with the word, with writings and with obedience. There is no Church authorization to show you, just as Our Lady does not have one to show when She comes to us. The Spirit blows where he wills, and happy is he who knows how to accept Him. Our Lady exhorts us to love and to smile in the case of a refusal; Jesus teaches us to be meek and humble of heart as He is and to render good for bad. Do this and you will have peace. To do much, which you say you want to do, means above all to pray much, the rest comes after. You cannot force Echo on anyone, or bother people about it. Mary does not want this; you would just end up spreading conflict instead of peace.

* All the various language editions of Echo of Mary Queen of Peace are available in the souvenir shop next to St. James church in Medj. and in the MIR information centre near the bridge.

LATEST NEWS: For the 16th anniversary there were 50,000 people (the journalists say more) and 212 priests from 31 different countries concelebrated with Bishops Franic, Hnilica and another from Colombia. 54 of the priests were from Poland alone! Many priests were busy in the confessionals. In the morning, 5-6 thousand people took part in the peace march from Humac to Medjugorje (15 km) with the Blessed Sacrament. All the visionaries are in Medjugorje, except Marija.

As promised, Our Lady appeared to Ivanka on the anniversary. The apparition lasted 6 minutes. Our Lady spoke to her also of the 5th secret. The following message was given: Dear Children, pray with the heart to be able to forgive and so that also you will be forgiven. I thank you for your prayers and for the love you give me. [We note that the Pope also made the same recommendation.] (Fr. Slavko on Radio Maria)

To all of you who wish to live Mary's messages, may Her motherly blessing of peace be upon you for the month of Jesus' Precious Blood, which Mary gave to Her Son, and for the month of the glorious Assumption into heaven where Mary was crowned by Her Son. Peace and good upon you all!

Don Angelo

Villanova M. 26 June 1997

Today I bless you with a solemn blessing which the Almighty grants me.