



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

157

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Our Lady's message, 25 March 2001:

Dear Children, also today I call you to open yourselves to prayer. My Children, you live in a time in which God grants great graces for you but you do not know how to make good use of them. You concern yourselves over everything else, caring very little for your soul and spiritual life.

Wake up from the tired sleep of your soul and say "yes" to God with all your strength. Decide for conversion and for holiness. I am with you, my Children, and I invite you to the perfection of soul and of all that you do. Thank you for responding to my call.

Wake up!

This impassioned appeal by Mary: "Wake up from the tired sleep of your soul", should not be taken lightly. Nor should we file it away too early. This tired sleep is not the kind that restores a weakened body; Our Lady is talking about the sleep of our soul; a state of torpor, coma, death. This tired sleep can be compared to profound spiritual coma - the antechamber of a death from which there is no return, no resurrection - and to wake up from it takes strength: with all your strength say "yes" to God.

This is no time to be hesitant, or content with a few religious practices and formal gestures of piety. It's time we displayed the dignity that comes from being God's "children": a title gained for us by Christ with His Passion and Death; and time we acknowledged that God is our Father, an extremely caring, merciful and loving Father who never takes His gaze off us. To open yourself to prayer is to establish a vital and intimate relationship with God who will shape us to Christ's model. If only we were able to say the Lord's Prayer the way Jesus taught us, the bounty of Christ's grace would be poured out onto us and the whole world! Instead we are laden down by other concerns (Mt 6:25-34): these are cause of much worry and anxiety for us and induce us to neglect what really is important (Lk 10:41-42).

You concern yourselves over everything else, caring very little for your soul and spiritual life. So not only do we waste our energy and complicate our lives, but we throw away those favourable opportunities which belong to the time in which we live. Our Lady reminds us all the time that this a time of grace: you live in a time in which God grants many graces for you but you do not know how to make good use of them. So what can we do? One thing we

must not do is despair. What Mary says is true, and from a human point of view, the situation is disastrous.

However, we know it is possible to rise from the dead. If we didn't know this our faith would be in vain (1 Cor 15:13-14). We know that death cannot close us up forever in a tomb if we don't want it, and if we hold onto Christ, and in Him ask forgiveness of the Father. We have to use the graces which God showers on us, and believe in His love and His forgiveness. We have to believe that we are given the chance to start again, enabling us to rise already in this life.

If we try we will enjoy the delights of heaven already on this earth. If we sow forgiveness, peace will blossom; if we cultivate peace, feelings of brotherhood will blossom, and if we put the beatitudes into practice, God's Kingdom will blossom. It's not utopia; it can be realized. Today it is even easier because God grants us great graces, and because Mary is with us: I am with you, my Children, and I invite you to the perfection of soul and of all that you do. Mary is with us. Together with her we can reach that degree of perfection to which she calls us; for it is her duty to generate us, making us the Father's children.

Decide for conversion and holiness. If you think this call is practically impossible, think again. This human reasoning is often induced by Satan (read Mk 8:33). Holiness is not fruit of human conquests; it is a gift from God, and hence within everybody's reach. All it requires is our disposition. If we say "yes" to God with all our strength, if we surrender ourselves to Him, if we truly desire letting Him act in us, He will make us holy for He is holy (cf. Lev 19:2).

God's gift has a name: it is Jesus Christ, so to accept His gift is to accept Jesus. It is not accepting a commandment, but Christ Himself, His person and His holiness. This is what we have been called to, this is why we were baptized, this is why we receive holy Communion. Mary is ready to generate us as children in the Child: all we need do is say "yes."

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message of 25 April 2001:

Dear Children, Today also I invite you to prayer. My Children, prayer works miracles. When you are tired and sick and can't comprehend the meaning of your life, take the Rosary and pray; pray till prayer becomes a joyful meeting with your Saviour. I am with you and I intercede and pray for you, my Children. Thank you for responding to my call.

Prayer works miracles!

Mary's presence in Medjugorje is a constant invitation to prayer. Today, with our occupations and worries - in particular, for things which don't regard our soul and spiritual life (cf. last month's message) - we need to make a complete turnabout. Mary invites us to conversion; that we seek that vital relationship with God. How many times has she asked us to decide for God, to surrender ourselves to Him?!

Prayer works miracles. The first miracle is without doubt the miracle of communion with God, of the loving relationship between the creature and his Creator, where the grace of God descends upon him, flooding his soul and his body, to heal it and sanctify it. It is like the

water which gushes forth from the right side of the temple (Ez 47:1-12), the water and blood which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus (Jn 19:34).

Mary suggests that we pray; that we pray with the Rosary, and she underlines its healing power: when you are tired and sick and can't comprehend the meaning of your life, take the Rosary and pray.

A worldly person might think it strange that one should pray with the Rosary to recuperate strength when tired, or to be healed when sick; and even paradoxical to do so to find the meaning of one's life. It brings to mind the disdain and surprise of the powerful Naaman who wanted to be healed of his leprosy, when the prophet Elisha invited him to simply bathe himself seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:9-14; Lk 4:27). He went away with rage, but his servants persuaded him to try; and he was healed.

Do we want to accept Our Lady's invitation, at long last? Rather than endlessly discussing our children's problems, why don't we pray the Rosary with them - starting from when they are very small? The answer to the many afflictions of our world is often simpler than what we think.

It must be clear, though, that we should pray till our prayer becomes a joyful meeting with our Saviour. Without this joy, our prayer might not reach its scope. It might, instead, remain practical, cold and sterile, or could even become superstitious and idolatrous. Saying: Lord, Lord (Mt 7:21) is not enough; also the Hebrews prayed but their prayer did not allow them to recognize the time of their visitation (Lk 19:44) and it didn't impede them from refusing or condemning Jesus' death.

It doesn't take great words to pray; you only need to open your heart. Our God is a merciful Father and can't wait to pour on us His graces (Lk 11:9-13). He will give us His Holy Spirit, and we will not be burdened by our tiredness, or afflicted by our sickness. And we will not wonder about the meaning of our life because Jesus will be our life! Whether tired or rested, healthy or sick, our hearts and minds will be filled with His peace and His love. It will be true joy, the joy that no one can take from us (Jn 16:23).

All this will happen; it is already happening, because Mary is with us; she prays and intercedes for us.

N.Q.



The primacy of grace

In his pastoral letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*, John Paul II strongly stresses the primacy of Christ's grace. Further reflection on the subject will help us understand this fundamental aspect of the Christian message which cannot be eliminated from the Good News. We have entered the third millennium and are being urged to more fully know and transmit this important element.

The theme of grace has been considered several times in the history of the Church, and has given rise to numerous theological controversies.

In the Gospel accounts the many words and deeds of Jesus represent, for Christians, a primary reference point. With the help of theology we are made to understand their meaning and impact in today's world. The apostle Paul is one of the first and most authoritative interpreters (theologians) of Christ. He engaged in controversy with the early Christian

community over the theme of grace, due to the current of thought amongst the Jewish Christians which attributed man's salvation to his own efforts and works according to the Mosaic covenant, rather than to the grace of God through faith in Christ. Paul's argument is developed in the letters to the Galatians and the Romans.

In the centuries that followed, the subject received further consideration with St. Augustine's development on the theme as a reaction to the heresies of Pelagius (V cent.). In the XVI century, with Luther's protests, the Council of Trent gave the theme of grace central place in its theological reflection; and more recently St. Therese of Lisieux (XIX cent.), doctor of the Church, developed a profound reflection on the gratuitousness of salvation. Lastly, in our own days, the Common Statement between Catholics and Lutherans - signed in Augsburg (Germany) in October 1999 - confirmed the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." This theme is of prime importance in Protestant theology which places emphasis on Scripture (*sola Scriptura*), justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), and Christ's central role as saviour and mediator (*solo Christos*).

The primacy of grace compares the old economy of salvation founded on the Law with the new economy founded on grace (*gratia* in Latin, which is also the root word for *gratis*). This principle represents the most significant difference between the First Covenant (on Mount Sinai stipulated with Moses for the people of Israel) and the New and eternal Covenant stipulated by Christ for all mankind.

The expression Law indicates the religious, cultural and moral rules which God gave to the people of Israel through Moses (the Torah is contained in the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), but in a more general sense it indicates man's effort and commitment to live according to religious precepts. This is the meaning assumed by the term in St. Paul's letters.

In Israel of old a man who lived according to the Law was considered a just man and his salvation was had by virtue of his own justice because he earned his salvation. This, in synthesis, is salvific economy (i.e., the way to salvation). This principle, however, is superseded by Christ Who established a New salvific economy no longer founded exclusively on the law (i.e. man's merits), but on the grace of God, on divine benevolence, on the Father's mercy.

This is wonderfully liberating, since God's relationship with man (the Covenant) is no longer founded on man's fidelity in carrying out his duties, but on the eternal fidelity of God towards man; on His free love for which He gave Himself not only for the sake of the righteous, but also for sinners (cf. Rom 5:6-10).

The primacy of grace is made manifest, above all, in Christ's cross. Man's ascetic efforts aren't made needless by the cross; they take second place. The cross gives new dimension to (not cancels) man's moral effort, making it relevant. The same goes for his failures: not everything is obtained with virtue and not everything is lost with sin. For St. Paul salvation reaches mankind solely through Christ, more precisely through His Cross and Resurrection which is made available to us through faith (and the sacraments), and not through a meticulous fulfilling of the law. If it weren't so Christ's death would be in vain, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose (Gal 2:21). The law does not save.

In principle, the Church has always recognized the primacy of grace, but there has often been a certain tendency to accentuate man's effort, his ascetic effort, and his sacrifice with which he hopes to deserve divine favour. In Christian life, a certain amount of importance is

given to volunteer work, and to spiritual battle, rather than to God's initiative or the primacy of grace which precedes all human response. In this sense, the saints have often appeared as heroes to be invoked and not brothers to be imitated because of the distance which separates us.

To accept the primacy of God's grace means to lose one's life, or the pretence that we can save ourselves through our own goodness. It also means to acknowledge our need to be saved by Someone Else, to acknowledge our need of Christ, of His presence in our lives.

This leads us to a dimension of adoration and contemplation of life, to a prayer of praise born from gratitude for God's love, to an attitude of humble acceptance of God's gift.

Nonetheless, it is right and proper to dispel all possibility of misunderstanding, as it would be wrong to propose grace at a cheap price, a type of sale on God's mercy.

This is not Christianity. It doesn't offer forgiveness without repentance, absolution without confession, baptism without sequel, a Christian life without commitment, holiness not nourished by prayer and good works! God paid dearly for the graces which God grants us. He paid with the incarnation, passion and death of His Son! Hence, man on his part is called to collaborate with responsibility with the gift of grace; without settling for mediocrity and slackness, or despairing for his failures.

Mirco Trabuio

Reunited in the Only Son

"I am the way, and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). These words from the Gospel of John have shone brightly on this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. They shine forth as a kind of programme for the new millennium on which we have set out.

These words by the Pope were pronounced at his conclusive homily for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January 2001). This important annual appointment calls together the whole Church for prayer and numerous other initiatives to implore from God the gift of unity between the Churches which profess Jesus Christ as sole Saviour of the world.

He continues: "Many people, especially the young, ask what path they should take. In the storm of words that they endure every day, they ask: Where is the truth? Which road should we take? How can we overcome the power of death with life? Jesus answers these questions when He affirmed: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'

The task of Christians today is to propose anew this decisive proclamation with all the power of their witness. Only in this way can the men and women of today discover that Christ is the power and the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:24), that He is the fulfilment of every human longing (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 45).

The ecumenical movement of the 20th century had the great distinction of clearly reaffirming the need for this witness. After centuries of separation, misunderstanding, indifference and even conflict, there has been a rebirth among Christians of the realization that faith in Christ unites them, and that this faith is a force capable of overcoming all that separates them (cf. *Ut unum sint*, no. 20). By the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has committed herself irrevocably to travel the path of the ecumenical quest (cf. *ibid* no. 3)."

The Pope used important words to describe the important steps taken forward on the path to

full unity; a path not without problems. "The differences that still exist between us must not and cannot be down-played. True ecumenical commitment is not a search for compromise, nor does it make concessions where the Truth is concerned. It knows that divisions between Christians are contrary to the will of Christ; it knows that they are a scandal that weakens the voice of the Gospel."

At the same time we know that what unites us is greater than what divides us, for it is Jesus Himself. "From being far apart and, often, adversaries - as we once were - we have grown closer and become friends. We have rediscovered Christian brotherhood. We know that our Baptism incorporates us into the one Body of Christ, in a communion that, while not yet full, is nonetheless real.

The pain resulting from misunderstanding or mistakes must be overcome by prayer and penance, by signs of love, by theological investigation," urged the Pope.

"The dialogue of charity, however, would not be genuine without the dialogue of truth. Overcoming the differences involves serious theological study. All the same, it is not up to us to 'create unity.' Unity is the Lord's gift. And so we must pray, that we may be given the Spirit of unity. Prayer for unity is a part of every Eucharist. 'Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom.' This is the heart of the entire ecumenical movement."

Stefania Consoli



Never been so many!

Pope John Paul II held an Ordinary Public Consistory on the 21st February for the creation of forty-four new cardinals, bringing the number of the members of the College of Cardinals to 185: the most ever. They represent 63 different countries; Italy being the country with more representatives.

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mk 10:43). With these unequivocal words the Holy Father greeted the new Cardinals gathered in St. Peter's Square for the first Consistory of the new millennium. "The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). Not the first time the Pope has cited this verse to the Roman Curia, also on other occasions he stressed that the Curia must be a place where one breathes holiness; a place which does not know the meaning of competition and careerism: "The Church does not rely on human calculations and powers, but on the crucified Jesus and the consistent witness borne to Him by the apostles, martyrs and confessors of the faith. This witness can also demand the heroism of total self-giving to God and to others."

The Cardinals are called to serve, the Pope said: "Your service to the Church is also expressed in assisting and collaborating with the Successor of Peter," and they must be faithful to Christ: "You are committed to faithfully following Christ, the Martyr par excellence and the faithful Witness."

"Beginning today a very special bond links you with Peter's Successor. This link makes you eloquent signs of communion. If you promote communion, the entire Church will benefit." As representatives of "many parts" of the world, they are called to "gather these parts into 'a single whole' through love, which is the bond of perfection. Only in this way will Christ's

prayer be fulfilled: even as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (cf. Jn 17:21).

The Cardinal of Ecumenism

Walter Kasper, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, is one of the 44 new Cardinals. A German theologian, he was dean of the theological faculty in Münster and Tübingen. Ever since he started teaching he has dedicated himself to promoting Christian dialogue. He recently declared: "Of course, theological dialogue alone cannot promote unity. We need to bring the peoples, parishes and dioceses together. We need to multiply meetings so that feelings of prejudice are overcome and mutual trust is fostered. It is important that we seek to penetrate the spirituality of other Christian communities. And it must be clear to all that the unity we speak of does not mean uniformity. There will be unity in the essentials of the faith, in the sacraments, and in the ministries, and there will be pluralism of spirituality, traditions, and discipline. There will be the exchange of gifts and reciprocal enrichment."

I lived in prison

Cardinal François Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận is President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In 1975 he was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon; and just a few months later, with the arrival of the communist regime, he was arrested and imprisoned. Without ever being tried or sentenced, he spent thirteen years in prison, nine of them in solitary confinement, until his release in 1988. Many of his ancestors had given their lives for the Catholic faith as victims of persecution between 1698 and 1885.

During the years in prison he celebrated the Eucharist with a few drops of wine and water mixed in the palm of his hand, and a scrap of bread he kept hidden in a packet of cigarettes. "The Pope sent me to serve the faithful of the diocese of Saigon (Việt Nam), and I couldn't abandon them." In this donation of self, he was realizing in his own life that which the Pope defined: 'a witness which can also demand the heroism of total self-giving to God and to others.'

What better witness for the members of the Church which continues to suffer persecution in various parts of the world because she belongs to Christ! With similar witnesses the Pope's words take on deeper meaning: "To face the new tasks which our changing world presents it is necessary to foster an ever deeper communion with the Lord. It is precisely the red colour of the robes you wear that reminds you of this urgent need. Is that colour not the symbol of ardent love for Christ? Does that bright red not symbolize the burning fire of love for the Church which must nurture within you the readiness, if necessary, to bear the supreme witness of bloodshed?" Edit.

We must start out from Risen Christ!

We must start out from Christ, was the appeal the Holy Father launched at the beginning of the new millennium, and the synthesis of his message in the various homilies during the Easter Triduum.

"We must start out from Risen Christ." There is a common thread in the themes discussed by the Pope during the first months of the new millennium. He takes us on different itineraries, but they all lead to the same fount of faith, hope and love; they all lead us to

Jesus Christ.

At Easter - indeed, all through his pontificate - John Paul II's message is founded on Christ: on the mystery of love and on His death and resurrection. To each Christian he says: In the Risen Christ all creation rises to new life. Jesus is the Fount of life; and from Him we must all draw the strength needed to put out into the deep to try for that miraculous catch, which is possible only if we place our trust in His Word.

The Holy Father, worthy to relive the conclusive phases of Jesus' earthly life, presided at the most significant appointments of the Holy Week: from the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday to the Mass on Easter Sunday. And if that weren't enough he heard at least twelve confessions in five languages on Good Friday at St. Peter's.

He dealt with numerous themes in his catecheses:

Holy Thursday: In his Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday the Pope reflected on the theme of sacramental reconciliation, which is not to be confused with a support system or with psychotherapy. "Christ continuously calls us to deepen our relationship with Him, since we cannot give to others what we ourselves do not have! Holy Thursday, the special day of our priestly vocation, calls us to reflect on 'who we are' and on our journey to holiness. It is from this source that our apostolic zeal will flow."

"The sacrament of Reconciliation, essential for every Christian life, is especially a source of support, guidance and healing for the priestly life.

Good Friday. In his brief intervention during the Way of the Cross celebrated at the Colosseum, the Pope spoke on the theme of suffering, which he said can be comprehended solely through contemplation of the Face of Crucified Christ. "The answers to the many questions and doubts which agitate the human heart can be found in the Holy Face," he said. Christ opened the way to glorification for humanity: "We adore you Christ, and we bless you, for with your holy cross you redeemed the world. Let us carry this truth into the third millennium. Let us profess that through His Cross, the Son of God, in accepting this humiliation, a punishment intended for slaves, opened to humanity the way to glorification. Ave Crux, ave Crux of the Roman Colosseum! Ave on the threshold of the third millennium! Ave down through all the years and centuries of this new era that is opening before us!"

Easter Vigil, Saturday evening. "A Vigil, the mother of all vigils, during which the whole Church waits at the tomb of the Messiah, sacrificed on the Cross. On this night, it is not darkness that dominates but the blinding brightness of a sudden light that breaks through with the startling news of the Lord's Resurrection." On this night: "the perspective of history is completely turned around: death gives way to life, a life that dies no more. On this night everything is marvellously summed up in one name, the name of the Risen Christ."

Easter Day. On Easter Sunday morning the Holy Father read his Urbi et Orbi message (to the city and the world) at the end of the Mass. He proclaimed in a song of praise and thanksgiving: "On this day heaven and earth sing out the ineffable and sublime 'name' of the Crucified One who has risen. Everything appears as before, but in fact nothing is the same as before. He, the Life that does not die, has redeemed every human life and reopened it to hope.

Men and women of the third millennium, the Easter gift of light that scatters the darkness of

fear and sadness is meant for everyone. This world of ours can change: peace is possible even where for too long there has been fighting and death.

Men and women of every continent, draw from his tomb, empty now for ever, the strength needed to defeat the powers of evil and death, and to place all research and all technical and social progress at the service of a better future for all."

Agnese Rubino



750 years for Scapular of Carmel

This year the Carmelites celebrate the 750th anniversary of the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The anniversary recalls the miraculous bestowal of the Scapular by the Blessed Virgin on St. Simon Stock, an English Carmelite who was elected prior general in 1247.

In his message to the Carmelites, John Paul II recalled how "the various generations of Carmel, in their journey towards the 'mountain of God', have sought to model their lives on Mary's example." Hence, "in Carmel, and in every soul moved by tender affection for the Blessed Virgin and Mother, there has thrived a contemplation of her."

Open to God's Spirit from the beginning, she was able to hear God's Word and obey his will (Lk 2:19). "Mary - taught and formed by the Spirit (cf. Lk 2:44-50) - was docile to the divine promptings, advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross."

"As Mother of the Church, the Blessed Virgin is one with the disciples, in constant prayer (Acts 1:14). Thus, "Carmelites have chosen Mary as their Patroness and spiritual Mother who guides everyone to the perfect knowledge and imitation of Christ."

The Pope pointed out that this genuine form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, expressed in the humble sign of the Scapular, is consecration to her Immaculate Heart, with an intense Marian life expressed in trusting prayer, enthusiastic praise and diligent imitation.

"Over time this rich Marian heritage of Carmel has become a treasure for the whole Church." But what is the Scapular? It is essentially a "habit." Those who wear it experience the loving and motherly presence of Mary. Two truths are evoked by the sign of the Scapular: on the one hand, the constant protection of the Blessed Virgin; on the other, the awareness that devotion to her cannot be limited to prayers and tributes in her honour on certain occasions, but must become a 'habit' .. through frequent reception of the sacraments and the concrete practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In this way the Scapular becomes a sign of the 'covenant' and reciprocal communion between Mary and the faithful."

At the conclusion of his homily Pope John Paul II confided: "I too have worn the Scapular of Carmel over my heart for a long time!"

Man of the Spirit

Seraphim of Sarov is one of the most beloved and venerated saints in Russia. A seraphic saint: sweet and gentle of soul, he has also been called the St. Francis of the east. A lifelong intimacy with God and Christian love for his fellow man were two of his many attributes. Prokhor Moshnin was born in 1759. The son of a builder, he studied hard as a boy, and loved reading the Holy Scriptures, and was fascinated by the writings of the Fathers of the desert. A vision of the Virgin Mary while still a boy inspired him to place his life at the Lord's service. This was the first of many visions by the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles. He entered the monastery of Sarov at the age of 18, became a monk at 28 and took the name of Seraphim (Hebrew for angels of the highest order; it means "fiery"). Seraphim is, in fact, remembered as an "earthly angel and a heavenly man." He was ordained a priest in 1793 but chose not to preach until he had acquired a greater closeness to God; and for this he decided to live in the forest as a hermit.: "My soul was so full of joy that I did not think I could remain on the earth," he would later say.

He remained for about 16 years; living in austerity worthy of a desert monk of Egypt from the 4th century, sharing his portion of bread with the birds and beasts of the forest. In these years of isolation and purification he fought a terrible battle with the forces of evil: "When someone chooses the desert and silence he feels that he is being crucified over and over again." He lived on prayer "with the heart."

When he returned to the Monastery, Seraphim had grown to such spiritual stature that countless pilgrims sought him out to hear him preach and to ask for his prayers. During this time he became the spiritual father of the nuns of the nearby Diveyev Convent, an order which attested to his power of healing through Jesus Christ and offered him its prayers when he was recognised a prophet of the Lord and named a holy Staretz (Elder of the Faith). His advice to those seeking to choose between a contemplative life and an active one was: "Enslave your inner peace, and a multitude of men will find salvation along with you." On the first four days of the week Seraphim dedicated his time to reading the four Gospels. His spirituality, though, was not Christ centred, but reflected the tradition of the eastern Church which drew from the mystery of the Holy Trinity: "Each soul receives life from the Holy Spirit so it can be illuminated by the mystery of Trinitarian love." He emphasized in his sermons that it was only through the Holy Spirit that one could find the joy of inner peace.

In the "Our Father", at the part: "Thy kingdom come," he intended "Thy Holy Spirit come," and identified the coming of God's kingdom with the coming of God's Spirit; and called man to understand that seeking our "sole necessity" (God's Kingdom) means to seek the Holy Spirit.

He taught that it is through the offering of one's heart to God, that the Spirit is able to make Himself manifest, thereby introducing us to the eternal love of the Father and the Son. This is the Kingdom we invoke with the "Our Father."

The offering of one's heart to God is the highest expression of human freedom. When he offers his heart, man invokes and receives the Holy Spirit, because with this invocation the Father's response is immediate.

Seraphim's usual greeting was: "My joy, Christ is Risen!" The Easter joy permeated his soul all year long, and when he was near his death he told his fellow monks that he would soon be leaving them (in a vision the Virgin Mary had prepared him). Saddened by his imminent

loss, one lamented. Seraphim responded: "This is not a time for sorrow, my friend; it is a time for joy."

On the 1st January 1833, a Sunday, he received holy Communion and bade goodbye to his fellow monks. That evening he could be heard singing hymns typical of the liturgical time of Easter. The next morning (2 January; his feast day) he was found dead, kneeling in prayer in front of the icon of the Blessed Virgin known as "the joy of joys." S.C.

Waiting for Pentecost

"Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life" (Jn 12:24-25).

It is natural for man to balk at life's trials which can be of various types. In particular, the little trials that accompany his daily life form a type of web which blocks his vision, his hearing, his soul and his heart, making him unable to perceive the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. With time this web gets thicker, making him all the more unable to perceive the Spirit's impulses (to the point of thinking that the Holy Spirit doesn't exist!).

For a person to open himself to the Holy Spirit's presence again he must first of all shed his old self. Here, too, help from the Holy Spirit is fundamental, for without His help human action predominates, and this gives rise to rigid spirituality, fanaticism and pedantry. These are all symptoms of an ego which is either very strong or very weak. On this subject St. Paul says that even if we give away all our belongings, but do not have Love, we will have done nothing (cf. 1Co 13:3).

When the wheat grain dies two things happen at the same time: it sheds its external shell and in doing so it reveals its new self. The process is a natural and harmonious part of creation in which the Holy Spirit plays a fundamental part. When this shedding is done together with the Holy Spirit, the experience is sweet and beautiful, just as it was for Jesus: as He went towards His death, He was serene and able to console others because He was totally immersed in the Holy Spirit.

Total shedding of self is to do with our baptism, because baptism is dying to oneself, and to sin. St. Peter explained to the first faithful after Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The first Christians prepared for this self-dying through catechesis and with the firm decision to live for God. We, too, must shatter the old man which occupies our mind, heart and will and leave space for the Holy Spirit to act in us. In doing so we open up to the grace of God who offers Himself completely to us.

To defeat death, pain, sin and Satan's presence in us, and to allow the Holy Spirit's power to be manifest in us - in every cell of our beings - we must shed our minds of worldly things.

"Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do" (Rom 12:2).

When we accept to die to ourselves through the Holy Spirit, life is born where there was

once death. Without this passage we remain extremely fragile and touchy and easily hurt by the least of difficulties. With bitterness in our hearts we try to defend ourselves and wound others through gossip, criticism and slander. Instead, when we invoke the Holy Spirit, He defends us; and His ways are so sweet and vital that things are built up, not destroyed. Many people defend themselves and attack others simply out of fear. On the other hand, if we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit with a humble attitude, He has the power to purify and heal the heart. To fight against those who hurt us with feelings of hatred is hurtful for our own soul, because hatred is an open door through which Satan enters. Instead, if we respond with a smile, with goodness and with prayer, hell is paralysed and is unable to enter us; and this enables us to grow strong and the fruits of the Holy Spirit are transformed into virtues.

To die to oneself and be open to the Holy Spirit means to become a new creature. To this end we must offer everything to the Holy Spirit so that He can change our minds and hearts and purify our souls. It is only when we are completely open to Him that this transformation can take place; and we are able to discover the fundamental virtues of faith, hope and love. This is life which blossoms; it is the action of the Holy Spirit in us, and our faith becomes much more than human trust: as a gift from God, it unites us to Him. And in this union we discover the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, for when He is able to fully act in us we discover that within us is a hidden and precious treasure. In truth, the discovery is limitless, for God is infinite, so it is important to grasp the Holy Spirit's impulses and feel the need to journey onwards, without being pressured or obliged, but spurred on by the immense need to live.

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic



"Return to Primitive Fervour"

Constant reminder of Christ's Saving Love (continued from Echo 156)

The Queen of Peace calls those who belong to her: "my dear Children." These are true "offspring of the Woman" (Gn 3:15) chosen by God to be part of "his great plan of salvation for mankind" (message 25 Jan. 1987), to bring the flame of love of Mary's Immaculate Heart to every corner of the earth, to become as though a continuation of her special presence of grace amongst men. "I invite you to live with love the messages I give you and to transmit them to the whole world so that a river of love might flow where people are full of hatred and lack peace" (25 Feb.'95). "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" (25 Oct '96).

As at Lourdes and Fatima for a chosen few, at Medjugorje a multitude of chosen ones have been given to experience in a special way the inflamed mystery of Trinitarian love. Through a real and personal meeting with the "flaming bush" of the Immaculate Heart, these have received a precise spiritual mandate: be witnesses and bearers of the Father's merciful Love, that it may reach out to man's deepest abysses and wounds; so each "forsaken land might be called His delight" (cf. Is 62:4); that everything might be redeemed and shine with the Easter splendour of the new heavens and new earth. "I invite you to become apostles of

Love and goodness. In this world without peace bear witness to God and to God's Love" (25 Oct. 1993); "I invite you to become peace where there is no peace, and light where there is darkness, that each heart might accept the light and the way to salvation" (25 Feb. '95). So that this fundamental plan of grace is fulfilled, at this dawn of "a new time" (25 Jan. '93) marked by the triumph announced by Her Immaculate Heart, Mary calls us to be witnesses of Love amid our brothers and sisters in the world. But this love that we are to witness is quite different to the love intended by the world. It is not human love; it is the love of God: that love which was fully revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ through the scandal of the cross; the fruit of that "hidden and mysterious wisdom of God that He predestined to be for our glory before the ages began" (1 Cor 2:7).

The Queen of Peace calls us, in particular, to sacrificed Love: the love glorified in the sacrificial Lamb which gives light to the new creation (cf. Rev 21:22-23). "Dear Children, Today I invite you to love, which is pleasing and dear to God. My Children: love accepts everything, all that is hard and bitter, for the sake of Jesus Who is love. Therefore, my Children, pray to God that He might help you; however, not according to your desires, but according to His love!" (25 June 1988). "Reconcile with one another and offer your lives so that peace might reign all over the earth" (25 Dec. 1990).

This is the regal way of the Gospel Beatitudes, traced out by Christ for all generations of redeemed souls. In this time of special grace, Mary desires lighting up this way for her children: "I would like you to love everyone - good and bad - with my love. It is the only way for love to triumph in the world" (25 May 1988). "I desire bringing you ever closer to Jesus and to His wounded Heart, that a fount of love might gush from your hearts onto all men and onto those who despise you. This way, with Jesus' love, you are able to defeat all misery in that sorrowful world which offers no hope for those who don't know Jesus" (25 Nov. 1991).

This divine love, when accepted and donated for others, continuously generates the mystery of the Church, that supreme fruit of Christ's Easter Journey and true "sacrament of salvation for the world." In this divine love we see the visible presence of the image and the glory of the Trinitarian family.

With great tenderness, Our Lady invites us to enter the crucible of love in Her Immaculate Heart to live with greater intensity and fullness the mystery of communion. "I desire that my Heart, Jesus' Heart and your hearts be fused into a single heart of love and peace... I am with you and I lead you onto the way of love" (25 July 1999). Mary thus kindles new spaces for this communion, such as spiritual families and prayer groups, where the grace of her special presence shines with greater intensity to reflect the Trinitarian love and proclaim to the world that Christ's offering is fount of ineffable joy. "Form prayer groups, and you will experience joy in prayer and in communion. All those who pray and are members of prayer groups are open in their hearts to God's will and give joyful witness to God's love" (25 Sept. 2000).

Mary, Mother of the Church ("Mater Ecclesiae"), in perfect consonance with the Pope's intuition - amongst other significant deeds during the Jubilee year he wanted the Church to celebrate the "purification of memory" - desires that the Bride of Christ (the Church) be renewed so she can shine with new life before her Lord. She desires that every "spot and wrinkle" remaining in the old unredeemed humanity, which many Church structures still hold (the Pope called these: "mechanisms without a soul, 'masks' of communion"; cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43) be completely consumed by the burning love of the Lamb. It is to

Him that the Queen of Peace desires leading her children so that hearts are healed and renewed by the "river of life flowing crystal-clear", which continually "gushes forth from His throne" (Rev 22:1).

"Let us pray, my Children, for those who don't want to know God's love, even though they are in the Church. Let us pray that they may convert, that the Church may rise in love. It is only through love and prayer, my Children, that you can live this time which has been given to you for conversion" (25 March 1999).

An ever greater multitude of people turn their gaze unknowingly today to "the one whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37), because they thirst for the water of life which the Father wants them to have by freely responding out of love. Let's now entrust to the tender love of the Queen of Peace the burden of our weaknesses and our radical incapacity to love, found deep in the wounds of our heart, so everything may be completely transformed and we will finally become: "the outstretched hands of God which mankind seeks" (25 Feb. 1997).

Giuseppe Ferraro



Mary, Woman of the third day

I wish that Mary herself could enter your homes, throw open your windows, and wish you HAPPY EASTER!

This wish of mine for you is immense, like the arms of Jesus stretched out on the cross, or stretched up to the Father in heaven. Many people have asked me why in the Gospel account of the Resurrection Jesus did not appear to His mother. He appeared to so many people: Mary Magdalene, the pious women, the disciples; so why not to His own Mother?

Well, in my opinion there was no need for Jesus to appear to her because Mary was present at the Resurrection. To tell the truth, theologians say no one was present, that the mystery was without a witness. But I think that there was an exception; I think that Mary (and Mary alone) had to be present; just as she was the only one present at the Incarnation of the Word, and at the moment when He left her virginal womb. She was all alone and she was the first woman on whom God-made-man fixed His gaze. Likewise, Mary (and Mary alone) had to be present when He came out of that virginal womb of stone: the sepulchre "in which no one had yet been laid." And she was the first woman on whom man-made-God fixed His gaze. The others were witnesses of the Risen One; Mary of the Resurrection.

Besides, if the bond between Mary and Jesus was so strong that they shared the redemptive experience, it is unthinkable that at the Resurrection - the most important moment of salvation - Mary would have been separated from her Son. Were it the case, hers would have been the only absence, and an unjustified one at that.

There are at least two pages in the Gospel which confirm how the Mother's story fits in perfectly with the Son's Easter. On both of these pages the term "third day" (symbolic for resurrection) refers to Mary's presence. The first page comes from St. Luke, and tells of when Jesus, 12 years old, was missing, then found in the temple of Jerusalem on the "third day." Scholars agree by now that this episode was a veiled prophecy of what would happen to the disciples when Jesus was to pass from this world onto the Father's kingdom, again in Jerusalem at Easter, years later. So it is a parable alluding to the disappearance of Jesus behind the stone which covers the sepulchre, and His glorious reappearance three days later.

The second page comes from St. John, and regards the wedding feast of Cana. Through Mary's intervention - which anticipates "Jesus' hour" - the wine of the new Easter covenant is offered for man's banquet. Mary thus causes the "glory" of the resurrection to explode ahead of its time. Also this episode is introduced by the same trademark: "the third day" (Jn 2:1).

Mary, then, is the woman who has to do with the "third day." Not only is she the firstborn daughter of Easter, but in a certain sense she is also its mother.

"Holy Mary, woman of the third day, wake us from our sleep. Grant us the certainty that death will no longer have a hold over us; that the peoples will no longer suffer injustice; that there will be no more wars; that the poor will suffer no more; and that, at long last, those who suffer violence and pain will need to cry no more.

And grant us the hope that, at the final battle, you will be for us arbiter, just as you were for Jesus, and that on the third day you will ratify our victory."

Mons. Tonino Bello, Bishop

Blessed art thou among women

by Fr. A. Gasparino

It is important for us to know Mary better because our love for her is often too superficial; and this is probably because we don't know her well enough. To this end, we can find help in a document of the Church, namely: Redemptoris Mater. Our reflection will begin with point no. 7 of the Encyclical Letter:

"God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ."

Who, amongst men, is the most blessed of God's creatures? Only one is the answer. and, of course, the answer is Mary. Mary alone was chosen before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before God, predestined to give to the world Jesus, the Son of God. In reality, God blessed us all in Christ and Mary; before we were born He blessed us. He cast His gaze upon man's misery, and through Mary, He inaugurated a new world, the world of the sons of God. It is above all in Mary that every spiritual blessing belonging to Christ has been sealed. Did not Elizabeth greet Mary as the "blessed amongst women"?

The divine messenger appeared to Mary to announce that she would become the Mother of God, and said: "Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee." Why is she called "Full of Grace"? The Encyclical Redemptoris Mater responds: "in the soul of this 'daughter of Zion' there is manifested all the 'glory of grace' which the Father...has given us in his beloved Son." We should note that the angel does not call Mary by her proper name (which was Miriam = Mary); he calls her by her new name: "Full of Grace."

Mary, a holy creature, is united to Christ who is the supreme holiness. The Pope says: the election of Mary is wholly exceptional and unique. Mary stands out from all other human creatures because her mission is exceptional and unique. Mary is "full of grace" because it is precisely in her that the Incarnation of the Word is accomplished and fulfilled.

But Mary is a creature just like us. The Council says that she is "the first among men and the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from Him."

A Protestant friend once told me that he prays to God, but not to Mary. I asked him: "Have you already carefully considered the 'Hail Mary' prayer?" The first part is totally biblical, so it should not be difficult for a Protestant to accept. In the second part we say: 'pray for us sinners,' hence we turn to her to ask for prayers. Rather than 'pray to Mary' we ask for her to pray for us. In the Communion of Saints, it is normal for us to turn to fellow believers whom we love and esteem to ask them to pray for us. From this view point then devotion to Mary is fully justified. The Council says: "Full of grace means all holy."

Furthermore, the Council tells us that not only is Mary all holy; in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 53 we read: "Because of this gift of sublime grace Mary far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth." The Church thus affirms that Mary is the greatest of all earthly creatures. The grandeur of all the Saints put together is pale before the grandeur of Mary. And Mary is greater than all celestial creatures. The grandeur of all the angels put together turns pale when compared with Mary's grandeur. This is the reason why we place unlimited trust in the Blessed Virgin. When someone doesn't understand Mary's grandeur, it is because he doesn't understand the greatness of the Incarnation.

Mary, chosen and prepared by God to fulfil the prodigy of the Incarnation, is truly the first of all women, the greatest and the closest to God!

Our Protestant brothers and sisters worry a great deal about the devotion to Mary which has developed in the Catholic Church, more so than in the Orthodox Church. But the mystery of the Incarnation has never ceased to amaze theologians. Of course, there is need for vigilance so that the Marian cult is not distorted. At the same time, however, we have to understand that never will we be able to fully comprehend her grandeur and the need we have for her. Yes, Mary should be greatly loved; but our devotion for her must be authentic, it must be founded on Scripture and tradition. It should be put to greater use in the liturgy, and this should offer orientation for the popular manifestations of devotion to her. Infact, the Holy Father points out: "Devotion on its own is not enough. For devotion to be sincere it must become imitation of Mary."

Marian devotion must therefore draw from the fount of Mary's grandeur in an unceasing Magnificat of praise to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. If devotion to Mary does not lead to Jesus then it is a false devotion. Mary must lead us to Jesus, always: "Do as He tells you." This is precisely what Mary wants us to do!

"I am here with you this evening, dear Children. I will not speak when there is din; I speak when there is silence, to a heart which is tranquil, a heart filled with love, a heart full of warmth for his fellowmen. I desire inviting you to really live my presence.."

"Yes, I am your Mother and I desire being such for ever. I desire that through you, everyone may experience that I am the Mother of all men..."

With these words Our Lady spoke, through Jelena, to the prayer group in Medjugorje. With plain expressions loaded with tenderness and love, Mary brings her children ever closer to an encounter with her Son Jesus: the Word Incarnate. She knows how to touch hearts and make them open so that every seed of the Word might bear fruit in good time.

Fertility of Mary: Virgin, Mother and Woman

Contemplation of Mary is fruit of the encounter with Jesus' Mother, with the person of Mary. Meditation of her is much more than choosing an important subject for our spiritual growth; it is the heart itself which seeks to express what is born in the soul after accepting her as mother. As a person, Mary is a mystery of infinite depth, and it takes humbleness and faith on our part to become part of it.

Mary is revealed to us as mother and virgin; this truth is nourishment for our heart in the encounter with her. All forms of Marian spirituality must be based on her. The risk is that Marian devotion might lead to the multiplication of external actions without the contemplation of Mary's inner life. We are called to be her children through the imitation of her person, in our faith and in our fertility.

What is Mary's fertility and what is ours? Not only is Mary's fertility physical - through her participation at the Incarnation of God, and His passion and Resurrection; it is also and particularly spiritual. Neither is it an event which remains tied to that period in time when Mary lived in Nazareth. Mary's "fiat" pronounced at the Annunciation continues throughout time, for in the same way that a mother continues to nourish her baby once it is born, so does Mary continue to be a Mother who cares for her children.

This inner attitude of Mary's is the foundation for a woman's spirituality, however, it is true that all of us (men and women alike) are called to imitate the Mother of God (cf. Lk 8:21). Mary bore Jesus in her virginal womb, and in her heart she bore the Word. Through the exterior side of her fertility our Blessed Mother is an example for women who give birth physically, but she is also an example for all of us who are to give birth inwardly: we are all called to be pregnant with the Word of God, and to be full of grace (cf. Lk 2:51).

What is this pregnancy; and how is it accomplished? The Greek verb "diatereo" used by St. Luke helps us to understand. It means "to care for something as though it were a treasure." Thus, we must let the Word be a treasure for our heart. At our baptism God sowed His Word in our hearts. That seed needs nourishing; it needs our "yes" each day so that God can make it bear fruit in our soul. A "yes" to life in God; which is to accept not only a particular task, but everything which day-to-day life presents, is a "yes" to the Eucharist, to that same Jesus which Mary bore in her virginal womb, to the sacraments, and to the Word of God which we should read daily. Our "yes" must be made particularly through our faith. Faith is the inner adhesion which purifies the heart of our words and fantasies about God; it keeps us whole in our inner life, and virginal in our heart.

Distinction between inner and outer life mustn't give the idea that external gestures are important. We have to understand that they work together. If we were to give importance only to the spirit, we would miss the importance of the Incarnation. It is our Marian spirituality which serves as a balance between the two, and helps us express our inner spirituality in the imitation of Mary.

If faith is a gift which we bear in our inner life; we must look at Mary who bore it also externally. When we receive the Eucharist: it remains in us physically for about 10 minutes, but it is beneficial to us only if we bear it within our inner selves. This is how Elizabeth was able to say to Mary: "blessed are you who believed" (cf. Lk 1:45).

Jelena Vasilj

News from the blessed land

Sr. Elvira says: "Woman is good of world"

In the last issue of the "Echo" we brought you news of the opening of the "Field of Joy": the new female community at the "Comunità Cenacolo."

To the young women who were to open and run the house, Sr. Elvira (foundress of the Community) spoke on the worth of a woman and how it can be best used for the good of others. A summary follows:

"Our aim is to love. Your life is love; it can develop with a glance, a gesture, with pain. Women in particular have a burning love within them. Maternity is inside of her being, in her blood, her eyes, her brain; everything in her is maternity. She is like that because God wanted it. We were made to love. When a woman has real peace in her heart, she is unable to keep it for herself. Woman was made to give life, to be the fire which brings good and life to mankind.

Woman is an apostle able to bring to people joy, happiness, trust, and hope - but she can also bring despair. She is able to bring to a family: torment, violence, and ruin. But if a woman's inner maturation is not hurried, she is able to bring good upon everyone. The most precious goods of the earth aren't gold and diamonds, or the discovery of science and technology. The true good of the world is a wise woman, a true woman, a clean woman who sows life, hope and peace wherever she goes.

You, my young women, are called to transmit something which no culture or science can transmit. It is something which only a woman who is rich in inner peace can give, who is rich in the Holy Spirit can give, which only a woman who prays can give."

* Mirjana and the Blessed Virgin - On the 18th March last, Our Lady appeared to her as she had promised she would each year on her birthday (what better gift could one desire for a birthday?!). More than 1,000 people were present at the grounds of the Comunità Cenacolo and they recited the Rosary while they waited for the apparition which lasted 5 minutes. Our Lady blessed everyone and gave a message: "Dear Children, Today I invite you to love and to mercy. Give love to one another, just as your Father gives love to you. Be merciful ... (pause) ... at heart. Do good works, without letting them wait too long. All mercy which parts from your heart brings you closer to my Son."

* Couples in the School of the Holy Family - In Medjugorje, thanks to the initiative of fra Slavko Barbarić, the first international seminar "Couples in the School of the Holy Family" was recently held at the Shrine. Fifty couples from three continents attended the seminar. Through various moments of common prayer which were held in the conference hall, in the church and on the hills; and through conferences given by Franciscan friars, and testimonies given by couples who had experienced Mary's intercession, they received an important message:

First, and foremost, they were called to conversion. Conversion is a means by which people

give first place in their lives to God. It opens the heart, making it receptive to the rest of Mary's call which was: - consecrate their family to God and abandon themselves and their families into His hands; - renew family prayer, (especially the prayer of the rosary); - invoke the Holy Spirit; - pray for peace in their hearts, in their desires, in their families and in the world; - discover love in their hearts in order to forgive in the family, so they could then love and forgive others; - read the Bible, in order to learn how God loves His people; - fast; - encourage old people to pray, and teach the young. And: - be an example for others. Those who live these messages become the joy of Jesus, and the family will truly bring forth holiness that renews the world.

* 6th International Meeting for Priests in Medjugorje: 2 July (evening) to 7 July (afternoon) 2001. Fax to book: 00387-36-651-888 or E-mail: medjugorje-mir@medjugorje.hr

* 12th International Youth Prayer Meeting in Medjugorje: "Grow with Mary in Wisdom and Love." July 31-August 6, 2001 (Press Bulletin)

"Pilgrim Virgins" for the new evangelization

At the beginning of this third millennium, while the Holy Father has invited all Christians to work for the new evangelization of the world, the prayer aroused by the Pilgrim Virgins is a privileged means to reach out to all those who have not yet known Jesus and Mary. A Pilgrim Virgin at a prayer meeting which includes preaching, holy Mass, prayer, the Rosary, adoration and confession is, in fact, a very effective means of evangelization.

The movement, born in 1995 from an initiative by the Confraternity Our Lady of France (under the tutelage of Cardinal Medina, Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship, in Rome) originally began as a means of preparation for the Great Jubilee. The fruits of conversion, of joy and of peace, and the numerous priestly and religious vocations born of the initiative have roused ever growing interest and increased demands for new statues in many countries; particularly in East Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The prayer which accompanies the Pilgrim Virgins for the unity of Christians and the conversion of the world, has received much encouragement by many Bishops, Archbishops, Patriarchs and Cardinals from the five continents. Seven thousand images of Our Lady (icons and statues) have been sent out so far, thanks to all those who have collaborated, many of whom include readers of the Echo.

The more people are involved in this initiative - so that Mary's "visitations" may be multiplied - the sooner Card. Wyczynski's prophetic words might be realized. He said to John Paul II: "If victory comes, it will come through Mary." The Blessed Virgin is more than ever necessary to our world; and the world groans with expectation of her. Let us permit this incomparable Mother to visit all her children!

Donations to: Notre Dame de France, 11 rue des Ursulines, F-93200 Saint Denis, France. Bank acc. "Confrérie ND de France", Crédit Lyonnais Saint Denis Basilique, nr. 30002 / 00536 / 000000 8657 R / 78)

Requests for images: fax France 1 64 59 65 22, or e-mail: olbns@easynet.fr

20th Anniversary of Apparitions:

A Novena gift for Mary

All the great mysteries of salvation were prepared in silence. Silence gives us the chance to recognize the Word and leave space for the action of Grace.

The friars of Medjugorje have chosen the way of silence, of prayer and of adoration to prepare for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions which will fall on the 25th June next. In this same spirit they have also prepared a special Novena to Our Lady as a gift to her. The novena will allow all her children spread around the world, and her Shrine, to be united in prayer.

A special intention is devoted to each day. We are asked to pray the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary and meditate on the proposed texts (a Gospel passage, a message by the Queen of Peace, a passage from the Catechism of the Catholic Church for each day).

Prayer Intentions are as follows:

Day 1: for the visionaries

Day 2: for all Priests who minister at the Shrine

Day 3: for the parishioners

Day 4: for all leaders in the Church

Day 5: for all pilgrims who've come to the Shrine so far

Day 6: for all pilgrims who'll visit the Shrine from now onwards

Day 7: for all Medjugorje-inspired prayer groups and centres in the world

Day 8: for the realization of all fruits and messages of Medjugorje

Day 9: for the intentions of the Queen of Peace

The complete Novena text is available on Internet at www.medjugorje.hr ; or in book form in Croatian, English, French, German and Italian, available from the souvenir shops and the Information Centre in Medjugorje.

Requests via e-mail: informacije@medjugorje.hr or fax 387.36651988; or contact your nearest supplier of Medjugorje books and articles.

(by our correspondent in Medjugorje: Paula Jurcic)

We wish to thank all those who have sent donations. If we cannot always reply, we would like you to know that we always remember our benefactors at holy Mass and in our petitions to Fr. Angelo.

"The eyes of the Mother were filled with joy at the sight of her Risen Son, and on His divine face she fixed her gaze."

If our eyes look for the presence of the living Jesus we will recognize Him at the "breaking of the bread", and we will not wait in vain for His Spirit, if we wait together with Mary.

God bless you.

Villanova, 1 May 2001

Don Alberto

Echo on the NET: www.eclipse.it/medjugorje

(E-mail: beverley@filippin.it)

It has become necessary to renew our Mailing List! - If you did not write to us during the year 2000 or later to confirm your subscription and number of copies, then please do so now if you wish to continue receiving Echo.

Write to: Echo of Mary, Casella Postale 27, I-31030 Bessica, Treviso, Italy.