



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

160

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Our Blessed Mother, 25 Sept. 2001:

Dear Children, Also today I invite you to prayer, especially today when Satan wants war and hatred. I invite you anew my Children: pray and fast, that God may grant you peace! Witness peace to every heart and be bearers of peace in this world without peace. I am with you and I intercede before God for each of you. And don't be afraid, for he who prays does not fear evil and does not have hatred in his heart. Thank you for responding to my call.

Carry peace to the world!

Today, when Satan wants war and hatred, Mary once again calls us to pray and fast. The Queen of Peace continually points out to us that these are our weapons to save the world from self-destruction. Though humble in appearance, they are extremely effective because the power they exert comes directly from God. They are the weapons for the little, humble children whom God loves dearly for they have Jesus' same countenance. These children, of whom the Pope is the first, are able to obtain peace for the world: that peace which the world cannot gain, for it is a gift of Jesus. Peace I give to you, my own peace I give to you; a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid (Jn 14:27).

Pray and fast so God may grant you peace! In this imperative tone, Our Blessed Mother's petition becomes an impassioned appeal for her children to take shelter in the shadow of God's wings (Psalm 56) on this dark night, where wild beasts await, ready to devour us (Holy Father, General Audience 19 Sept. 2001).

There is need to fast, to renounce what is superfluous, to nourish of the essential.

Superfluous, though, is not only excessive amount of food: very often cause of disease and death in so-called rich countries. Superfluous is whatever isn't necessary for life; and for believers, "life" means life in God. Man is God's creature, and only God is essential for man. For 50 years Marthe Robin (will be beatified) remained without eating or drinking. For all those years, all she took was the Eucharist!

Fasting is not just abstinence from food, but is a sober lifestyle; it is using earth's resources in a way that conforms to God's will. Today, fasting is also being wary of the media; it is

knowing when to turn the TV off so we're not subjected to, and miseducated by, the models of consumerism and the worldly way of thinking which is so often contrary to God's will. Fasting is finding time to create silence both within us and around us so we can hear His Presence. God speaks to the person who enters into communion with Him through prayer. He speaks and offers words of wisdom to help us understand worldly events, courage so we are not overcome by them, and strength to surpass them. "Christ's word is the only one which can give a response to the questions which trouble our spirit. Even if the forces of darkness appear to prevail, those who believe in God know that evil and death do not have the final say. Christian hope is based on this truth; at this time our prayerful trust draws strength from it" (Holy Father, General Audience 12 Sept. 2001).

Take courage then! We are called to a hope which for us is certainty. Christ has already saved the world; the powers of evil will not prevail! In union with the Holy Father, strengthened by Mary's protection, onwards we go with renewed trust.

Prayer and fasting are our weapons. As weapons they do not divide, they unite; they do not wound, they heal; they do not sow hatred and death, but peace and life. Let us bear peace in our hearts, and bring it to our families and those we encounter. God will do the rest! Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Blessed Mother, 25 Oct. 2001:

Dear Children, also today I invite you to pray with all your heart and to love one another. My Children, you are chosen to witness peace and joy. If you lack peace, pray and you will receive it. Through you and your prayer, my Children, peace will begin to flow through the world. Therefore, my Children, pray, pray, pray, because prayer works miracles in men's hearts and in the world.

I am with you and I thank God for each of you; you who have taken prayer seriously and have put it into practice. Thank you for responding to my call.

Be serious witnesses

During the Last Supper, after Judas had left, Jesus said: Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you (Jn 14:27)

In fact, the world cannot give itself true peace. At the most, it can manage to live together pacifically, and that is already much. The peace of which Christ foretells at His ascension; which He offered as the Risen One (Jn 20:19-26) is not absence of war and is not based on any form of power, but is fruit of deep communion between the Son and the Father; fruit of Love Crucified and is both destruction and glory (Phil 2:6-11), death and Life. It is only from God that we can receive true peace, and it is only in Christ that we can obtain it, because He is our peace (Eph 2:14).

In the early days of the apparitions in Medjugorje, Mary taught us the way of peace. She, the Queen of Peace (message of 25 July 1988), invites us with infinite patience to find our role as children, through surrender to God, with prayer and fasts. Jesus Christ is our peace and Mary leads us to Him; her maternity continues as she generates us in Christ and Christ in us. Also today I invite you to pray with all your heart and to love one another. Praying with all one's heart is the door to communion with God. Prayer is real if it leads to communion with

God, which is being immersed in Love, for God is love (1Jn4:8). This allows human love to transcend all its limits and take on the power and redeeming force of Divine Love: love one another, as I have loved you (Jn 15:12).

My Children, you are chosen to witness peace and joy. We must have the courage to believe in these words; without considering how unworthy or weak we are, but by keeping our gaze on Him Who was pierced, by letting ourselves be loved by Him; not once and for all, but moment after moment, in the little and the big trials of every day, in the sad and the happy moments each day presents. And when we are on our Calvary, and we don't cry over ourselves, but are still able to witness peace and joy, then through us peace will begin to flow through the world.

To witness peace and joy is to show Christ who lives in us. If you lack peace - our world lacks peace today - pray and you will receive it. Prayer works miracles in men's hearts and in the world. This is an elementary, but fundamental truth of our faith. So let's take Her call seriously and bring positive change for ourselves and the world.

N.Q.

John Paul II in Central Asia

From 22nd to 27th September, John Paul II completed his 95th pastoral voyage when he visited the former soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Armenia, and of course, he was given a very warm welcome both by the population and by the civil and religious authorities.

In Kazakhstan Catholics are a small minority (less than 2%) in a prevalently Islamic country (50% Muslim; 30% Orthodox). During holy Mass celebrated in the capital, Astana - which saw the presence not only of Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, but also of a great number of Muslims - the Pope spoke of peace, of religious freedom and of human rights.

The Pope was thinking not only of the situation in Kazakhstan, but of the international crisis too. He condemned all forms of violence, particularly when it is practised in the name of God. Hatred, fanaticism and terrorism profane the name of God, and disfigure the true image of man. While he condemned terrorism, he also expressed the Church's respect for Islam, for authentic Islam, the Islam that prays, that shows concern for the needy; and he invited Christians and Muslims to work for the realization of a civilization of love.

Kazakhstan, like the other countries which have got out from under the harsh and oppressive Soviet regime which inculcated atheism and contempt for religious values, is today exposed to the danger of materialism: Western cultural models are enticing because of their remarkable scientific and technical cast, but there is growing evidence of their deepening human, spiritual and moral impoverishment. The culture which produces such models is marked by the fatal attempt to secure the good of humanity by eliminating God, the Supreme Good.

In fact, following a meeting with youth held at the Eurasia University in the capital, one young university student witnessed: "After the Communist regime we wrongly thought that happiness would come from owning material goods. Today, however, many young people of my age seek authentic values."

The Pope offered the youth words of encouragement, and urged them to work for a more

united world. Only in the encounter with Jesus, the Word made flesh, do we find the fullness of self-realization and happiness. (...) No earthly reality can truly satisfy you. Open yourselves to the One who created you out of love and wants to make you worthy, free and good people.

The Pope then went to Armenia, the first Christian nation: for in the year 301 Armenia was the first to adopt Christianity as its State religion, and this year it celebrates its 1700 years of Christianity. The Armenian Apostolic Church split from the Churches of Rome and Byzantium around the 5th century when the Armenian Church rejected the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (on Christ's dual nature - divine and human - in one person). Hence, for more than fifteen centuries the Church of Armenia has not been in full communion with the Catholic or the Orthodox Churches. It was for this reason that the Pope and the Catholicos Karekin II did not celebrate the Eucharist together. Nonetheless, today the Christological differences from Chalcedon have largely been resolved.

"In its long history, the Armenian people paid a terrible price for their fidelity to their own identity. Just think of the mass extermination," perpetrated by Turks in 1915. Over 1.5 million Armenians amid the indifference of European leaders who were occupied with the first world war. This massacre, which had been hushed for years, is one of the worst genocides in history (together with the extermination of the Jews and the North American Indians). While prelates were discussing theology, the people, surrounded by Muslims, preferred martyrdom to denying their Christian faith .

The Pope's ecumenical pilgrimage to Armenia was highly successful; and Catholicos Karekin II was "exquisitely courteous." The Pope thanked him "for wishing to give me hospitality in his residence and accompanying me at each moment of the pilgrimage," saying it was "a sign of friendship and charity for all Catholics."

After long years of totalitarian oppression, and the devastation of a disastrous earthquake, in a country where young people have left the land of their birth, and poverty persists, Armenian Christians are equally challenged to hold their gaze on Mount Ararat and maintain that stable and confident faith which has seen them through so much. Today in Armenia, as in any other part of the globe, Christians are called to witness fraternity and pastoral union, that the world might believe. Mirco Trabuio

India intolerant of Christians

Life is becoming increasingly difficult for Christians in India. Groups of fundamental Hindus are ever more hostile towards members of the Christian community. Just a couple of months ago two Catholic nuns were beaten up by aggressors using iron bars and sticks. Ever since the nationalistic government of Atal Vajpayee has been in power there have been numerous cases of aggression and violence. The situation for foreign missionaries has also worsened because the Government is not granting visas. Not only, but local people converted to Christianity are being denied the right to work.

Apostolic pilgrimage geographically strategic Kazakhstan linking Europe and Asia

by Fr. Daniel Ange

In his homily of 15 August 2001, John Paul II, thinking of his apostolic pilgrimage to Kazakhstan and Armenia, said: "To you, Mary, I entrust the success of this new stage in my service to the Church and to the world..." It was an historical pilgrimage, like that to Ukraine: two countries of the former USSR, two lands soaked in the blood of countless martyrs.

Kazakhstan (5 times that of France, and 70 times that of Belgium) is in a strategic position, since it links East Europe (freed of Communist ideology) to China (still under Marxist oppression).

Great expectation preceded JP II's visit; and Fr. Daniel Ange had the grace of preparing the youth for this visit which would be decisive for Asia, the continent of the Church's third millennium. "After the immense joy of participating at the youth festival in Medjugorje," says the French monk, "I received the gift of leaving for the 'little Medjugorje' in Kazakhstan to prepare young Catholics for the Pope's visit."

An island in an ocean

"It was an endless stretch of plains, scented with wormwood which frees its odour when trampled on, occasionally broken by a slight rise or by a row of trees. The little village of Oijorné - no more than a couple of hundred houses - lay in the middle of this vast steppe in north Kazakhstan, about 300 km from Omsk in Siberia and 400 km from Astana, the country's new capital.

This oasis sprouted up from nothing in the middle of the desert in 1936 during the first wave of massive deportation under Stalin. I had the grace of meeting some of the survivors who had been torn away from their hometown of Galicia (west Ukraine, then Poland). The faces of these old men and their wives were deeply marked not so much by the torrid summers (+40°) and freezing winters (-50°), but by the dramatic events of their youthful years. They were between 5 and 15 years old when they arrived here. In the first wave some deportees were able to bring one or two cows with them, but in the second wave (1939-1941), people were given only 2 hours' notice, so these managed to pack very little into nothing more than a suitcase or cardboard box or two.

Packed into livestock trains and left without food or water for the weeks' journey, they were then loaded onto a lorry, dumped in the middle of the steppe, and practically abandoned. Numbered posts indicated the area they had been left in. With the kazakhi nomads, upon whom Stalin had imposed forced settlement, they bartered their poor belongings: a kg of salt for a bag, a kg of grain for a ring.

If they arrived during the brief spring they had time to sow and build a hut for shelter before the arrival of winter, but if they arrived in October all they could do was dig a hole and cover it with branches; this then iced over. And there they remained huddled together for six months waiting for the thaw when the steppe would be adorned with thousands of flowers. Many lost their way and their lives during snow storms in this white desert. In 1941 the German population from the Volga was deported and dumped in the farthest corners of this endless plain. Thinking they were Nazis (but they were victims of Nazism), the deportees already present in the area did not give them a warm welcome.

Under the vigilant eye of Moscow these villages were, in fact, prisons; villagers were not even allowed to visit family in other villages. Occasionally, some would go as far as the boundary of the kolkhoz (collective farms) to catch a glimpse of cousins!

In 1941 a miracle answered their desperate prayers. Reduced to famine and dying by the day, the entire village was pleading with the Queen of Heaven to intercede, when on 25 March the big freeze was suddenly over. Never before had there been such an early and sudden thaw. And there before them lay a large lake (7 km long and 70 m deep) which had formed under the snow; full of big fish. The catch was so easy and abundant that aeroplanes from Karaganda (650 km) came to find food for the big city. Over the years the lake diminished in size as living conditions improved; now it is little more than a large pond. I met members of the delegation that in the '80's dared to go to Moscow to ask permission to build a church. It was denied; but in 1990 - at long last - a fisher of men arrived: a priest from Poland. This was a bigger miracle than the fish! Thomas Peta, the Capital's young bishop for the past two years, had the joy of receiving his beloved Holy Father. When you finally get here, after hours of journeying across the steppe, you are completely taken by it all. This humble reality is representative of the Catholic Church of Kazakhstan: totally young, poor and simple, and completely blessed. Local authorities eventually gave way to the pressing demands of the inhabitants, and a white church with twin spires was built and dedicated to the Queen of Peace: the first Marian shrine in Kazakhstan.

Seeds under ice blossom with sun

Fr. Thomas was very surprised when he went to Medjugorje and discovered that the title was one she had given herself, and that his little church was strangely similar to the Marian shrine in Herzegovina. When he went back home he had a copy of the great cross on Krizevac erected on a little volcanic hill and dedicated it to the martyrs of Kazakhstan. He also called Ojjiorné the little Medjugorje of Kazakhstan.

Four years ago Fr. Thomas asked the Beatitudes Community to organize a national youth festival for the Feast of the Assumption. This year I was invited to prepare the youth for the Pope's visit; and I had the immense grace of attending the international festival in Medjugorje (12,000 youth from 25 countries) first, then this one here with 300 young people from Kazakhstan. It was a closed number thing because of the heat and the complete lack of shade; hence it was essential that everyone could fit in the church. In any case, it is a huge number, considering the overall number of Catholics, and the distances which separate them.

"Do not fear my little flock!" Who knows how much this handful of young people from this tiny Catholic Church is in need of consolation, encouragement and, above all, of love! "The kingdom is for you!" Yes, the kingdom was reflected in their transfigured faces at the end of the meeting, after the long hours spent contemplating the King in all His Eucharistic humility - in this village the Most Blessed Sacrament is exposed day and night all year long! This, plus confession, was what it took to make them shine anew with the divine beauty which comes from being God's children.

An intense moment was the 14 km march to the great cross while praying, singing and confessing. The sight of their heads bobbing up and down over the top of the grain crop which was ready for harvest made me think: they are the crop of the martyrs! They would not have grown if the seeds (parents and grandparents) had not resisted beneath the thick icy layer in that endless winter of persecution. In fact, the majority of these young people were the grandchildren of deportees. On the night of the 15th another march took them to the

miracle of the fish stele, where they consecrated themselves to Our Lady in front of a big bonfire after passing through a green gateway which symbolized Mary Gate of Heaven. The "grannies" - all deportees - were not lacking. If the crop was ready for harvest the merit also belongs to those who survived and transmitted their faith to their children during the long, terrible years without priests, sacraments or a church.

As I contemplated the pure faces of the youth and the prematurely aged faces of the grandparents, I thought of the span of time which separates them: apparently from two different worlds, they are vitally connected. Not one of those young people could have been present without that incredible patience, and perseverance, and courage by those who didn't deny, didn't betray, didn't give in.

These people secretly resisted so they could transmit to the next generation the secret of their life. Yet all year long they had to listen to contradictory and aggressive language against the faith; but at home they bathed in the faith. Few let themselves be contaminated by the ideology which churned out slogans all day long.

With us was Fr. Marcin Babraj, a Polish Dominican who had been deported in '39 when he was only six. "I thought freedom lay just the other side of that distant volcanic hill. I dreamt of going there to see, but it was severely forbidden to leave the village." When he returned many years later he saw the big cross of martyrs on the hill. 'It is a visible sign of that freedom, and it tells us that freedom is here amongst us now.' "

Fr. D. Ange

Messenger of Grace

Slovak by birth, and the second of five children, Terezia Gaziova was brought up in a hard-working, God-fearing family. The children were brought up by the same strong faith which sustained the family during the harsh Communist regime.

Terezia studied to become a midwife, and though she loved her job immensely she soon left it because her love of life impeded her from collaborating for abortions. Hence she dedicated herself for years to dialysis patients. During these years she reflected a lot on the meaning and the fleetingness of life, till one day she started asking God what her place in life was. She kept on asking, and the answer came seven years later, and when it came she had no doubts. She had to go to Medjugorje to assist pilgrims from the East, those poor souls who had been denied the faith by the Communist ideology.

Thirty-two years old, sweet and gentle, she is always serene and attracts all with her reassuring smile. She has lived in Medjugorje for the last four years, assisting pilgrims from the former USSR to facilitate their encounter with the Queen of Peace (she is fluent in Russian and other Slavonic languages). "They have neither money nor means to come to Medjugorje," says Terezia, " but I pray, I ask everything of God, and through Providence I receive the money to pay for their voyage, and the necessary lodgings and food for their stay. It is such a joy to see the happiness in their eyes when they encounter God's Grace." But not all can come to Herzegovina - it is so far away - so Terezia takes the grace of Medjugorje to them when she goes back during the winters. She organizes simple meetings; she talks of her experience and the messages, and talks about God to the many who have never heard speak of Him. Her joy is overwhelming, infectious. "I feel Mary's presence," Terezia adds, "I know she accompanies me and guides me."

Last autumn she visited Kazakhstan and spent five weeks with Fr. Thomas (see previous

article by Daniel Ange), bishop of the diocese where the "little Medjugorje" is located. Terezia says: "I was profoundly struck by that little town: so far away from everything else, yet so close to God's heart.

I felt at home: the church is similar to the one in Medjugorje, with the hill of the cross, the evening prayer programme and perpetual adoration... Everything there speaks of Her; everything is dedicated to the Queen of Peace. The shrine is becoming famous, even in other former Soviet countries, and many go there on pilgrimage to draw from the fount of grace which God sends. Heaven is open above the "little Medjugorje," but hearts are open too. But they are so poor, and need our help." Terezia says: "They need books so they can grow in the faith, and translations of the messages.. Many people are looking for God; our presence is very important now, because the sects are very active and abuse of the spiritual void for their own interests." Terezia, a "messenger of Grace" offers her services for these people, but needs our help too, our contribution, so let's give her a hand. ***

Holiness as in goodness

The month of November is traditionally dedicated to the souls of our dear departed. Man's life is a journey, and at the end of this journey lies our final destination: our ultimate encounter with God. No one is excluded, but a saint differs to others because he or she is aware of this encounter and awaits and prepares for it.

Reading the lives of the saints is edifying, but it can make us feel a little discouraged when we read of the fervour they put into their fasts, prayers and mortifications, making us feel "little." In the past these particular aspects were emphasised perhaps more than today.

Instead, for our times the Holy Spirit has inspired the Church to transmit to the faithful the infinite mercy and goodness of God our Creator so that we can learn to look up to Him with immense trust, as a little child would to her father. For God has cared to reveal Himself to us as our most loving Father; and with the help of more recent saints - such as St. Therese of Lisieux (with her "Little Way"), St. Faustina Kowalska (of Merciful Jesus) - we know that each of us is called to become holy in our own way. Whatever way we choose - be it study, or prayer, with fasts or with feasts, in the silence of the desert or in the chaos of the city streets - that is where we are to seek and follow God.

One aspect common with "holy people" is their goodness; and when Jesus says we should be perfect, as His Father is perfect, it helps me to think that the Father is perfectly good. Our capacity to be good, or to love, is not measured by our ascetical practices, or to deprive ourselves of life's pleasures, or of not falling, but is measured by our capacity to communicate what is good and positive to those around us; it is knowing how to get back up after a fall, and helping others get back up.

More than depriving ourselves of something, we should know how to give something to others. Rather than being poor, chaste and obedient, holiness is being, is choosing, to be good.

M.T.

Pope by Mary's side: "Rosary is our weapon"

"October is the month in which we honour Our Blessed Mother, Queen of the Holy Rosary. In the present international situation, I appeal to all - individuals, families and communities - to pray the rosary for peace, even daily, so that the world will be preserved from the dreadful scourge of terrorism."

This is the impassioned appeal the Pope launched in response to the wave of violence which began with the attack on New York and Washington. The appeal was repeated on more than one occasion during the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary.

Are not his appeals in perfect consonance with those which Our Lady has been making over the last 20 years in Medjugorje? (The same period of 20 years is significant also in JP II's papacy, since it was precisely 20 years ago that the Pope's life took on a new direction after a bullet was fired at him: "One hand fired a shot, and another altered the course of the bullet," he said at Fatima, there to thank Our Lady for her protection.)

Once again we see how the Queen of Peace and her "beloved son" walk side by side as they guide God's people. We have on numerous occasions been able to see how the Pope's words and Mary's messages are very close, not only in content, but also chronologically.

Hence, also today, while the world is disrupted by war, fear, injustice, tyranny, misery... their words coincide, as if to give further strength to their voice so it can be heard by as many as possible, if not by all. This is what JP II said at the Angelus of 14 October: "Last Sunday we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The entire month of October is dedicated to this beautiful prayer, which the Christian people love. On account of the present international situation, I have invited individuals and communities to pray the rosary for peace. I also renew this appeal today, underlining at the same time that the rosary is the contemplation of Christ in his mysteries, in close union with the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Some, with more than a hint of irony, have said that he is dusting off an old devotion fit only for grannies, but JP II himself responds with full clarity to this provocation: "Contemporary spirituality feels the intense need, so to speak, to focus on the essential. Because of this, there is at present a promising rediscovery of the true nature of the rosary, as a prayer that helps us to stay in Christ's company, to know him better, assimilate his teaching, and live his Mysteries. And who, better than Mary, can accompany us in this journey of the mind and heart! This is why we repeat the Hail Mary, which 'constitutes the web on which the contemplation of the mysteries develops' (Apost. Exhort. *Marialis Cultus*, 46).

Following the inhuman terrorist attacks of 11th September, which the Pope said was "a dark day in the history of mankind," in all his public speeches Peter's successor has continued to ask that we pray for peace: "May a constant prayer for peace rise in the Church with the praying of the rosary, both by individuals or by communities, keeping our gaze fixed on Jesus Christ, our peace."

"We entrust to the Virgin all the missionaries of the Gospel and implore for them the strength to be builders of justice and peace. Such prayer for peace is taking place throughout the world, in this hour charged with great concern. Let us join in fervent prayer to the Lord through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace."

One month after the tragic events in the US, the Holy Father led the Synod of Bishops in the

prayer for peace: "May the Lord uproot from the human heart every trace of resentment, hostility and hatred, and make it receptive to the Spirit of reconciliation, solidarity and peace."

"The recitation of the rosary used to be very much practised in families, especially at the end of the day." This is a clear plea to families, that they return to this sound practice. Also our Blessed Mother asks that we recite the rosary daily.

S.C.

Defamatory campaign against Medjugorje

Despite evidence that Our Lady's messages are rich in theological truths, a part of the Italian Catholic Press has begun a defamatory campaign against the events and protagonists of Medjugorje.

Precisely in the year which marks the 20th anniversary of these extraordinary apparitions, and people worldwide are celebrating the Queen of Peace, this campaign rings out a loud, jarring note!

In apparently impartial tones and a sense of "duty towards readers," the articles are, instead, written by people who clearly ignore the facts which, thank God, continue even today (while firmly believing, we also recognise that the ultimate authority regarding the validity of these rests with the Church).

Though the authors are in possession of detailed information - extrapolated from "important documents" which should have been under the custody of Church authorities - they did not care to contact the persons directly involved to verify the events (and we wonder how bishops can allow others to "visit" archives instead of protecting the privacy of those whom the Lord has put under their pastoral care!).

Lies and sarcastic tones, to the point of insolence, follow one after the other in an analysis of "cases" and "characters" without respect for those concerned.

Explanation and consolation is found in the evangelical beatitudes: Happy are you when people abuse.. persecute.. and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, your reward will be great in heaven.. (Mt 5:11). God takes what is bad to gain profit, so that our "monsters splashed over the front page" (accused of manipulating and of being manipulated), are given the chance to grow spiritually and lighten the way which others darken through scepticism and the presumption of thinking they know better than God.

Our prayer is that all Catholics called to serve God in truth and humbleness might learn to hear the prophecies which God still sends to the earth: words and signs sent to direct a people which continues to grope in its desert of indifference and unbelief.

A new book on Medjugorje by two Italian journalists who "went to Medjugorje to make an honest inquiry, but came back with a burning desire to witness," gives responses to various accusations moved against Medjugorje.

We also recall Daniel Ange's "spiritual protest" for a similar campaign launched by a Catholic weekly in France in 1997, a full account of which can be read in Fr. Laurentin's "Medjugorje Testament, #17" by Ave Maria Press, Toronto.

S.Consoli

News from the blessed land

Mirjana: To see Our Lady is to see Paradise

"The afternoon of 24 June 1981 my friend Ivanka and I were the first to see Our Lady on the hill, but previous to that I had never heard of Marian apparitions on the earth. I thought that Our Lady was in heaven and that our only contact with her was through prayer."

This is the beginning of the profound story that Medjugorje visionary, Mirjana Dragicevic Soldo, has been experiencing for 20 years since the Blessed Virgin chose her to be a witness of her love and presence amid mankind.

In an interview to Glas Mira, of which the following is an extract, Mirjana recounts the story and tells of her feelings.

The beginning

"When Ivanka told me that Our Lady was on Podbrdo I didn't even look because I didn't believe it possible. I retorted: 'Sure, she hasn't got anything better to do than come to me and you!' Then I started on my way back down, but something told me to go back to Ivanka. She was in the same spot as before and said to me: 'Look, please!' When I turned I saw a woman dressed in silver, with a child in her arms. I can't explain how I felt; there was a mixture of happiness and fear. I didn't know if I was dead or alive, or just terrorized. All I could do was look. It was then that first Ivan, then Vicka reached us.

Back home I immediately told my grandmother that I saw Our Lady, but she was naturally sceptic: 'pray the rosary and leave Our Lady in her place in heaven!', she told me. I couldn't sleep that night, and only the rosary helped me remain calm.

The next day I 'felt' that I had to go back; the others were there too. It was the 25th. When we saw the Blessed Virgin we went up to Her for the first time; and that is how our daily apparitions began."

The joy of the first encounter

"We had no doubts; that lady was the Virgin Mary... because when you see Our Lady, you see paradise! Not only do you see Her, but you feel Her presence inside your heart. You feel that your mother is with you.

It was like living in another world; I didn't care if the others believed us or not. I lived in expectation of the next encounter. Why should I have lied? Besides, being a visionary then wasn't at all pleasant!

During all these years Our Lady has remained the same, but the beauty she radiates is beyond description. A few seconds before she arrives I experience a sensation of love and beauty so intense that my heart feels as though it will burst. But I have never felt that I am better than others for the fact that I see Our Lady. She does not have favourite children; we are all the same for her. This is what she has taught me. She chose me to transmit her messages.

I have never asked anything for myself, not even when there was something I desired. I knew that she would have responded to me just as she responds to everyone else: go down

on your knees, pray, fast, and you will obtain it."

The mission

"Each of us visionaries has a specific mission. When I received the tenth secret, the daily apparitions ceased. However, I do receive the "official" visit of Our Lady on the 18th March. That is my birthday, but it is not for this reason that Our Lady chose that day. The reason for this choice will be understood with time (I often joke that on that day Our Lady doesn't even wish me a happy birthday!).

Apart from that, Our Lady also appears to me on the 2nd of each month. On that day, together with her, I carry out my mission of praying for nonbelievers. The terrible things that happen in the world are the consequences of this unbelief. Praying for them means to pray for our own future.

The Blessed Virgin has often said that those who enter into communion with her can change nonbelievers (even though Our Lady doesn't use this term, but: 'those who haven't yet known God's love'). This can be done not only through prayer, but also with our example. Our Lady desires that we speak with our lives so that others can see God in us.

I have often seen Our Lady sad, sorrowful for these children who haven't yet known the Father's love. She truly is our Mother, and as such she would like all her children to find happiness in their lives.

It is up to us to pray for these intentions of hers; but first we need to feel love for our brothers and sisters who are far from the faith, without criticising. This way we will be praying for ourselves as well, and we will dry the tears which Mary weeps for her faraway children."

(from Glas Mira)

* Welcome to new parish priest! - Fra Branko Rados succeeds fra Ivan Sesar, who after one year of service in Medjugorje has accepted the role of provincial vicar and educator of young candidates to Franciscan life. Fra Branko is 34 years old. He was acting as a director at the youth festival

* White marble statue in place of cross - On the hill of apparitions a white marble statue of the Queen of Peace was blessed on 8th September, feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. The statue, which was placed on Apparition hill to mark the place where she first appeared, is a gift by Korean pilgrims out of gratitude for the many graces received.

* Ivan father for third time - Daniele was born at the beginning of September. Ivan's other children are Christina and Michela. Ivan's family lives in the USA, and the joy of the new birth is dampened by the sad events which struck his wife's nation. May the arrival of this new life bring hope to the people of America.

(from Press Bulletin)

"Return to primitive fervour"

Listen to Mother of Incarnate Word

Mary, "who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world," (Lumen Gentium, 53) is also "united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie," and "in the course of her Son's preaching she received the words whereby He declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God (cf. Mk 3:35), as she was faithfully doing (cf. Lk 2:19, 51) (LG, 58).

In this time, "which through her is united to Heaven in a special way" (message 25 May 1996), Mary does not tire of calling us to become ever more open to the living Word of the Father, Whom she herself brought in the world, and Whom still today she offers continually to her children as the only fount of true joy, peace and salvation.

Through her messages Our Lady very often invites us to read and meditate the Holy Scriptures. In the early years of the apparitions she said to the prayer groups: They should read and meditate the Bible (28 Feb. 1984); and only a few months later: I want to reveal to you a spiritual secret. If you want to be stronger than evil, plan your personal prayer. In the morning establish a time to read a passage from the Holy Scriptures, impress the Word of God into your heart and force yourselves to live it during the day, especially during the moments of trial. This way you will be stronger than evil (19 April 1984).

Impress the Word of God into your heart so it is impregnated with it all your life long; in both its more and less significant moments. The Word becomes an engine and a compass, a grid which allows us to interpret personal and external happenings, to understand the present and be a guide for the future. Under the guidance of Our Lady, a disciple of Christ becomes a member of the Bible's messianic kingdom.

To the parishioners of Medjugorje, Our Lady gave two pieces of advice: read the Bible daily and give a place of honour to the Bible in the family. I invite you to read the Bible every day in the family. Put it where it is easily seen so you are stimulated to read it and pray (18 Oct. 1984). It's not a book to be kept on a shelf or in a drawer; it's the most sacred object of all and should be on a pedestal in a central position where everyone can use it every day.

Four months later Mary again expresses her desire for families to grow spiritually, indicating two means: Each family must pray together and read the Bible (14 Feb. 1985).

There is an essential link between Mary's presence among the men of this time and the Holy Scriptures, and it clearly doesn't collide with Revelation, since "Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one" (CCC, 65); but it derives from the unique relationship which ties the Mother to the Son, to Jesus who is the "mediator and the fullness of all revelation" (Dogmatic Const. Dei Verbum, no.2). It is a tie of grace which, in the spirit of the "Magnificat," is fully expressed in the humble and admirable dimension of service to the Word of God whom she generated in the flesh when the times were right, and since she is obedient to the mandate of universal motherhood which she received at the foot of the Cross, she continues to generate her Son in the hearts of her children still today.

Our Lady, driven solely by the burning love of the Spirit who abides and works fully in her, continues to offer herself for the sake of the Father's plan of salvation, so that His and her children might "open their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24:45). This, rather than understanding on an intellectual level, refers to an opening of heart so the Spirit is able to

touch the depths of the soul, which is that space where the saving action of the Word of God works to create a new, authentic, profound and vital communion with the Word of the Father, and through Him, with the entire Trinitarian Family.

"Therefore, my Children, pray and read the Holy Scriptures, so that through my coming you may discover in the Scriptures the messages which are for you" (25 June 1991).

Our Lady desires leading us to profound involvement, with the mind and heart, so that life in God might blossom fully within our souls, and generate a current of grace and heavenly joy for all mankind. This way we can become true missionaries, efficacious bearers and credible witnesses of the Truth and Love of God amongst the multitude of people yet to find the light, but whom Mary wants to reach through our free response to her motherly call.

"Through your example, my Children, you will be God's open hands which mankind seeks. Only in this way can you understand that you are called to witness and become joyful bearers of the Word and the Love of God" (25 Feb. 1997).

"My Children, also today I invite you to rejoice and become joyous and responsible Christians, aware that God has called you in a special way to become hands joyfully outstretched towards those who do not believe and who, with the example of your lives, receive faith and love for God. Thus, I ask you to pray, pray, pray, that your heart might open and be sensitive to the Word of God" (25 Nov. 1997).

Our Lady reminds us, however, that for the Word of God to be alive and fertile in souls, it is necessary that we first open ourselves to prayer - persevering and profound prayer - so that we are involved ever more intimately in that eternal current of divine Love which generates that supernatural "hunger and thirst" for the Word, and makes of us real instruments of grace and prophetic truth in His hands.

"This time is mine. Therefore, my Children, I invite you anew to prayer. When you find unity with God you will experience hunger for the Word of God; and your heart, my Children, will overflow with joy - and wherever you are you will witness God's love" (25 Jan. 1997).

Giuseppe Ferraro (to be cont.)

"Setting up family" in Mary's Heart

We were used to seeing her there in Medjugorje, with a microphone in her hands, interpreting for the monks, and for Fr. Slavko in particular.

Milona von Hapsburg, German by birth, spent many years in Medjugorje, putting her knowledge of many languages at the service of the "Gospa" for the sake of the pilgrims. Humble and discreet, she is also frank and knows how to make others feel at ease.

We met her again in Medjugorje last August. As would be expected, she was helping pilgrims: translating the relations of the Festival for a group of French youth. But Milona is now wife and mother, and in the interview we'll see how she came to understand the call to be contemplative in the world through the gift of consecration in the family.

Milona, what has this land of grace been for you?

In Medjugorje I spent 11 fantastic years at the school of life next to Fr. Slavko (from 1985 to 1996, the year that I left Medjugorje). Besides replying to all the letters that arrived, I used

to help him with the translations, which meant from 4 to 5 hours each day for his talks to the pilgrims; and when there were too many pilgrims, we used to put two language groups together, so Fr. Slavko would speak in German and I would translate into English, or he would preach in Italian and I would translate into French. I also assisted him at personal meetings, and during voyages. Hence, I was busy from 9 in the morning till the evening when I would translate the prayers and reflections during the evening programme, but this was the easiest part. In fact, this wasn't even work, because it became prayer. I also lived here during the war, praying and fasting with the people of Herzegovina; and they were truly precious moments that I will never forget.

At this school I came to know the true meaning of life, but I especially learnt how wonderful it was to be in Our Lady's heart. It was she who took me in to her family, the Holy Family, and I discovered how she lived, what she thought of marriage, and that she invites us to experience the profound joy that comes from the love of a family when this is rooted in God.

Had you already considered marriage?

Within my heart I understood the beauty of the call to marriage, but the idea of consecration in a community had been buzzing around in my head for some time. However, I gradually came to understand that whether in a convent or out, it was still consecration, and that the difference between the two wasn't that great. Our Lady made me understand this; and it was her own call. This changes the world; it makes the world new, because it makes us live continuously in God's presence, and we come to see how He gives life to everything we do. This is the future of the world, and if this lacks, the next generation will not have land where it can grow up. There will be no humus. Our Lady prepares the humus for those to come. It was wonderful for me to discover that God lives everywhere; not just in "cloisters." It's up to us to accept and trust God our Creator, as our Blessed Mother did. The reality of the Trinitarian Family is within us. It's what Mary teaches; it's what she herself experienced. I'm convinced that her Immaculate Heart will triumph when Jesus is able to be King in the fullness of His saving action; when God is accepted by all as Father; and when we - living temples of the Holy Spirit - know how to adore and praise Him at every moment of the day, making us similar to Mary.

So what made you change your mind?

I understood that this was "the call," so I decided to go out into the world, and I left Medjugorje. It was one year before I met the man who would become my husband. Though I had perceived the signs that marriage was my call, I still didn't like the idea of getting married because it frightened me a little. I thought it was too limiting and even a little boring. Besides, in the past, I had met some married men who had tried to flirt with me; something a married man shouldn't do. I felt the humiliation of the wife back home, and perhaps I even felt a little proud because in that moment I was being preferred. This atmosphere of adultery made my heart, head and stomach ache; and it made me afraid, so I said a decisive no to marriage.

But it didn't end there...

No, it didn't, because something in me didn't seem right. So at a little church near my home

in Munich I said to St. Anthony: "Listen, if this man exists on the earth, then I entrust him to you. Protect him and make him become what he has to become; I don't know what it is, I don't know him..." After this I felt serene because I entrusted it all to him, then I forgot about it. Later, I returned to Medjugorje.

In July of 1993 I felt that something nice was going to happen to me, so I did a kind of inner retreat in company with St. Francis: a little statue and me in the silence of my home. One day, the person in charge of an humanitarian association came up to me and said: "Hi! See Charlie, this is Milona. Milona, this is Charlie." In that moment I saw the smile of this tall young Frenchman who had been presented to me in an unexpected way, and at the same time I saw his heart. I wasn't looking at him, but at his heart so "alert." Before that I didn't know that something so alive, so deep, lay within me. It was like a fresh breeze... I said goodbye and went on my way, and continued with my novena and waited for the surprise, unawares that it had already arrived!

Did it ever pass your mind that he was the groom God had prepared for you?

Nooo! He was younger than me, and like many who have just discovered God he was very enthusiastic and thinking of becoming a priest. He sought me out only for spiritual counselling.. That feeling that arose in me on the first meeting was still there, but I didn't want to be in love with a "baby" who wanted to become a priest! But my heart knew better than my head and I accepted to see him and pray with him.

It was wonderful to discover that it was much better to pray together. I was used to praying alone, but together it seemed more complete.

Did he stay on in Medjugorje?

No, we decided to go to France and try "walking" together. But I didn't know what to do with a boyfriend, how someone in love should behave; I had forgotten about those things. It was all new to me and I felt like a child, even though I didn't feel young anymore at 35. At the course for engaged couples I learnt what marriage really meant, and that Jesus protects the relationship, and that He is the core. For me (leaving the mature priests of Medjugorje to follow a "kid") this was hard to believe. The Lord showed me that I was wrong: I was not leaving the priests for Charles; I was entering more profoundly in the Lord, because He gives certainty to every walk. He is our rock.

In a dilemma because of my fears, one day a confessor told me: "Do you know why you wear white on your wedding day?" I thought: a symbol of virginity. "No, because you are the bride of Christ!" This changed everything. I would enter the church with the dress of the bride of Christ, representing the Church being united to her Jesus. He the Virgin, and I the bride in white because I would marry Him! This is the fullness of life; it is God writing about Himself. I was not afraid any more. I was about to enter into a divine and ecclesiastical reality through the most simplest of ways.

And then came the wedding day..

Yes, even though we had to go through a great deal of human suffering. However, the eternal realities were so beautiful, and so superior to the human ones, that I learnt to love this walk and see it as a gift from God. Charles and I see it this way, and are grateful, and we learn to accept our weaknesses and limits. Then Claire Marie arrived: a wonderful baby

girl who's now two and a half. Besides giving me great joy, she helps me in my daily conversion.

What else? When you stay with Our Lady, all your questions disappear, and God's life is revealed in all its beauty. Our Lady simplifies the complicated part in us.

Through accepting the Mother, we receive the Father, and learn to accept one another. This generates peace. All this passes through Mary's Heart.

First beatification of married couple

"Dear Families, today we have a singular confirmation that the journey of holiness undertaken together, as a couple, is both possible and wonderful!" The Pope was joyful on the 21st October when he beatified a married couple who had lived "an ordinary life in an extraordinary manner". In St. Peter's Square thousands of families listened to the Holy Father as he praised Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi (who lived in Rome in the first half of the 20th century). Amid the joys and worries of everyday family life they drew frequently on God's strength, through daily Eucharist, devotion to the Virgin Mary, whom they invoked every evening with the Rosary, and consultation with wise spiritual directors. Amongst those present for the beatification ceremony were three of their four children. The two sons, both priests, concelebrated with the Holy Father. A daughter participated with great emotion from her place near the altar, while the other, a nun who passed away some years ago, was no doubt rejoicing in the company of her parents and all of heaven for the honours placed on this wonderful couple.

The same day was the 20th anniversary of the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*: JP II's most important document on marriage and family life.

Cover page: painting of Queen of Peace by Adrian Mills. Picture card with text in ten different languages (including Russian and Italian) available from Adrian Mills, Bihan Ker, Nansmellyon Rd., Mullion, Cornwall, TR12 7EE, England. Ph. 01 326 240394.

Mary or Eve?

"A woman can be Eve all her life, or she can be Mary. It's up to her to choose."

With this appeal, made at the youth festival in Medjugorje last August, Sr. Elvira (foundress of the Cenacolo Community) wants women to be aware of the wonderful opportunity offered by God: be instruments of man's downfall, or be instrumental in his return to God. Choosing to imitate Mary allows a woman's spiritual nature to be fully realized.

Mary is the opposite of Eve

She was one of the women from Nazareth; she stood out for her grace and her charity: always ready to help others, watchful of others' needs. She was the servant of all. How beautiful!

Simplicity, transparency, nothing to hide, nothing to fear: everything in her was so crystal clear it reflected paradise! When we look at Mary we should be able to see and desire the eternity that awaits us.

And she was humble; humble because she perceived God's greatness, and trusted Him totally! "Do unto me according to thy word." Mary understood that God - Infinite and Eternal, Creator of heaven and earth - had become as small as an embryo for love of us! When you think about it, it's not that difficult to imitate her way; it is a simple, and little

way.

If we do not imitate Mary, we inevitably imitate Eve
Eve protests with worldly mentality. Deceitful and untruthful, the world is an assassin and a thief. It steals life and beauty, and the odour of Christianity. We have to live the way Mary did. I say this to the women, but I also say it to the men, for if you don't fall in love with "Mary," then all the women - and yes, that one sitting right beside you in this very moment - will deceive you, and disappoint you and humiliate you, because she is more cunning than you. I say it especially to the men, because if a woman is not Mary, she will be maliciously Eve.

Each women should ask herself...

The Lord gave us a womb to bear life. He gave us a uterus where life could grow. Our uterus bears the mercy of God. Woman cannot be substituted. We have to be Mary, otherwise the world - the other part of the world - is lost, is dead. This is why there is more death than life in our society. It is because woman continues desiring things, but what she really desires is the infinite. She seeks love; but her true desire is for infinite love; she seeks beauty; but her true desire is for infinite beauty.

We need to encounter the Father's face

If a woman encounters the Father's face, others will see Him reflected in her own life. So we have to start being truly alive; living a Christian life.

I have told you the things I tell the drug addicts; but I think that perhaps we are all a little dependent on something. If our heart is not totally God's, than there is a little bit of drug in them too. Drugs have many names. We have to learn to discern.

It might even be called prayer: "I pray all the time." But look within yourself, because if prayer doesn't transform your heart and your face, then you are not praying to the living God, but you are adoring yourself. True prayer transforms you and helps you grow with each passing day.

God's gift for me makes me better, more real, even younger and more beautiful! To women I say: prayer and Christian life don't need make-up to make you look beautiful and radiant and young-looking.

God sends many priests

Many priests and religious are born, but for their children mothers prefer a career, a degree, power, and worldly glory. To mothers I say: vocations depend on your prayers and on your heart. We already suffer for the lack of priests, and this deprives us of God's forgiveness and mercy.

Offer our children to Our Lady when they are in the womb

To the young people who are more generous I say: pray often to God and say: Lord, send the vocation to my baby, so Your mercy might continue on the earth, that Eucharistic Jesus might be present always and everywhere. Women, mothers: it all depends on you!

(Sr. Elvira - from a recording)

It was the 31st January 1989 when Our Lady - through Jelena - said to the prayer group: "My dear Children, I desire that your every new step towards God be one of love, prayer and peace. My Children, if you do not pray, you cannot find love or peace, or all that God

wants to grant you.."

The message itself is clear, and it might sound obvious, yet it expresses the fundamental rules for our journey to God.

Peace in the world depends on our response. Peace is fruit of love and prayer

by Jelena Vasilj

When someone asked St. Ignatius how he would react if his order broke up, he replied that it would take him no more than "an hour of prayer" to get over the shock and disappointment. Anyone who prays - not just this saint - is able to experience that the fruit of prayer is peace. When a spiritual man pours out his soul to God through prayer (encounter with God), his restless heart finds rest. Just as it is the nature of fire to burn upwards, so do man's desires tend to go upwards. And it is in following this order of things, to which man is destined by the bonds of charity, that he finds peace.

To the contrary, a restless man is ruled and misdirected by his own sentiments which instead of tending upwards, lead downwards. Basically, he is spiritually immature, and is often without peace. He is like a boat for ever on the verge of sinking, menaced as it is by winds and waves. We could say that on his boat Jesus is still asleep.

I wouldn't like anyone to think that earthly sentiments are to be condemned, that only one's affection for God is justified. This is wrong, for God Himself ordered us to love others; and this was a commandment, not an optional. However, God asks us to love with divine love. This makes us think that human happiness is imperfect, and unable to fully satisfy man's heart. With this in mind, we can conclude that a restless heart finds rest only in God.

There is another error related to our search for peace, which must be avoided: we mustn't allow peace to become an "absolute." In the past there was a mystical movement called Quietism, its followers spent all their energy seeking peace, and in a certain sense God became of secondary importance, where the Lord became an instrument in this search for peace. But Jesus tells us: "I came to bring war, not peace." The peace Jesus talks of is a false peace, gained without the cross, without the dying to oneself. It is egoistic and an indication of fear, and a form of escape.

Peace is always fruit of something, such as fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence, but also fruit of our good works. This peace - fruit of our good deeds - is known as the repose of the soul, since it abstained from evil works and is not laden with sin.

In doing good works we imitate the Creator, Who after having made creation (a good thing in His eyes) rests on the seventh day. So it can be said that peace without the realization of good works is apparent peace. It is also true that a Christian's search for peace is also paradoxical because he has to look up at his cross from which peace comes.

God's mercy is the fount of all peace. With man's fall he lost his sense of justice and his capacity to establish peace on the earth. It is only through the intervention of Grace (the new order of creation) that peace can be had on the earth. Ever trustful, we must seek our peace

in the Father's forgiveness; through confession, the greatest fount of peace.

We should ask for this grace from the Queen of Peace, who for twenty years has been teaching us that peace is a personal thing between God and man; it is so personal that it depends on man's response: God places His peace within man's heart; from where he can pour it out onto his family and from there it can shine out over the world.

Aid delivery

In was the beginning of October when we visited the Muslim district of Gracanica, and the Serb districts of Dobjoj and Teslic. People were wanting to start again, to build, both in a material and a spiritual sense. We noticed particular devotion for a local shrine, and a church where a relic of St. Leopold Mandic is venerated. The biggest surprise, however, was in Doboj. It was truly a miracle! The church is being rebuilt! This is the only Catholic parish in this Serb city, and during the war this church was razed to the ground! Not a single brick was left of it. The work on it began last 16 July, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and is nearing completion. Once again, we have a miracle by the hand of Mary!

Alberto Bonifacio, Centro Informazioni Medjugorje, Via S. Alessandro 26, I-23855 Pescate (LC), Italy. Fax Italy 0341-368587

Dear Readers,

Here we are at the end of another calendar year, and with joy we thank the Lord for all His gifts, and for providing for our needs in keeping the Echo alive.

The Holy Spirit, through apparently invisible channels, provides us with the contents for our reflections and articles, and moves the hearts of generous people so that they also reach far away lands. A big thanks to all those who help distribute, to "God's posties!" We also thank our various translators, who offer their services so that Echo might be read by all. In particular, we wish to remember Fr. Bruno Cerrato from Belgium who had recently offered to translate for the French edition. This humble priest, dear to God's heart, suddenly passed away last September. Together with Fr. Angelo he will certainly continue to assist us from his place in Heaven.

To all, we wish a fruitful journey between now and Christmas. May Mary help us become "little" and "poor" and be better able to accept Jesus Who comes into the world as a baby, Who chooses a stable for a crib.

Echo of Mary Staff Our prayers for you!

We invite you all to join in our prayers which we shall offer up to God on the first Saturday of each month. On this day we shall pray for the intentions of our readers (these may be expressed within the silence of your hearts and offered up in prayer; it is not necessary that they be written down and forwarded to us).

Once a month Fr. Alberto will also celebrate a Holy Mass for the same intention.

We are called to "don the weapons of light" and to shine with the Lord's Glory.
This means that we ourselves need to become prayer.
The world's peace depends also on us; and this journey is possible with Mary's help.
God bless you all!

Don Alberto

Villanova, 1 November 2001

* * Request for rosary beads: Bishop John Tong, Catholic Diocese Centre, 16 Caine Road, Hong Kong.

Due to increased postal tariffs, we have adopted a new dispatch system so that we can now provide only single copies, or multiple copies in one of the following amounts: 14, 63, 130. For larger quantities, there are no changes. All are welcome to make a request for a single copy.