

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 Sept. 2005:

“Dear Children, With love I call you: convert, even though you may be far from my heart. Do not forget: I am your mother and I feel pain for each of you who is far from my heart; but I will not abandon you. I believe you can leave the way of sin and decide for holiness. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Leave the way of sin

Two ways are before us: the way of good, and of death and evil (Dt 30:15). *“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose, therefore, life, that both you and your seed may live; that you may love the Lord your God, and obey his voice, and adhere to him, for he is your life”* (Dt 30:19-20).

We are free to choose, and in fact we make choices every minute of our life, often underestimating their importance, for every choice is another step on the way of blessing or on the way of cursing. God cannot be confined to a space or a moment cut out in our day. *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength”* (Dt 6:5). We either give everything to God or we risk not giving Him anything. God is not an idol, or a lucky charm. He's not an insurance policy for a moment of need. He's not an idea or a concept, or an ideology, and He's not even a religion. God is THE LIVING ONE; He is the Lord of life; He is our life, and only in Him are we truly alive!

We often think we live, that we manage our own life and that of the others, but perhaps we are just blind leading the blind (Mt 15:14). **“Dear Children, With love I call you: convert, even though you may be far from my heart,”** says Our Lady. She appeals to us to convert, to choose the way of blessing and life. Her appeal is full of motherly love and sorrow. **“Do not forget,”** she adds, **“I am your Mother and I experience pain for each of you who is far from my heart.”** There is no threat here, just love and suffering for the children who remain far from her Heart. There is no resentment for our ingratitude. Mary, the humble handmaid, does not seek human recognition nor the hosannas of an audience, nor mundane triumphs. Her only desire is to lead us to the Father, and she wants it to be clear to us that **she won't abandon us**. We must be certain of this!

Our Blessed Mother does not stop before our sin, and if we invoke her, even



ADVENT
time of silence
time of expectation

if only upon our death, she will intercede and obtain divine forgiveness for us. Only a conscious and obstinate refusal on our part can stop her determination to obtain for us forgiveness and salvation.

It doesn't take great prayers; we only need to earnestly desire her help; yet *the senseless man shall not know; nor will the fool understand these things* (Ps 91:7). **Mary, however, will not abandon us**, but she continues to trust us and encourage us: **“I believe you can leave the way of sin and decide for holiness.”** Why is it that we who give credit even to those who don't merit it are so reluctant to believe her? Though we may be far from her heart, could we not try believing, and give her suggestions a try? Should we do this without malice, but with the sincerity, honesty, and humility of little children, we would find ourselves on the way of holiness where we would know not only forgiveness, but also the sweetness of God's blessing and the amazing beauty of life in Jesus Christ.

I am certain of this, but my certainty is not founded on human strength or capacity, but on the power of divine mercy, on Mary's ardent and motherly love, and on the word of Jesus *who came to call not the just, but sinners* (Mt 9:13).

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 Oct. 2005:

“My Children, believe, pray and love, and God will be close to you. He will grant you all the graces you seek from Him. I am a gift for you given that God allows me to be with you from day to day and to love each of you with infinite love. Therefore, my Children, in prayer and humility open your hearts and be witnesses of my presence. Thank you for responding to my call.”

Believe, Pray, Love

The message makes me think of the prayer taught by the Angel to the three shepherd children of Fatima during the first apparition: *My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee; I beg pardon of Thee for all those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee*. A lot of things have changed in the world since that spring day of 1916, yet the important thing, that which is decisive for the lot of individuals and nations, remains unchanged. Created in the image of God, man cannot cancel this image, nor can he cut himself away from it without losing his identity.

We are created in God's image to become, in the fullness of time (i.e., when his plan of love is fulfilled), His children in Christ Jesus. Today we are living the last day, the day in which *everything*, all of creation, *is being recapitulated in Christ* (Eph. 1:10). This is the day of the Lord, and even though for the rod with which we measure time this day is 2000 years old, we know *that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Pt 3:8). This is the day that we must choose, make a decision, because the Lord will come for each of us and He will not delay. *Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord is coming* (Mt 24:42), and, *you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect* (Mt 24:44).

My Children, believe, pray and love, and God will be close to you, says our Mother as she indicates the way to us to keep watch. Then, for us His day will not come like a thief (cf. 2 Pt 3:10), but will crown the expectation of the spousal encounter between the soul and its Lord.

To **believe** is to accept the gift of faith; it is our positive response to God's call. To **believe** is to let oneself be ravished by the Holy Spirit to know and to accept that which *is hidden to the learned and the wise* (Lk 10:21). To **believe** is to live according to the way the Church teaches us. To **pray** is to remain in God's presence with an open heart; to breathe Christ; to allow the heart beats of Jesus and Mary to beat in us, so

they can live in us, and we can disappear in them. To **love** is to contemplate Love which became man, was crucified and rose again in Jesus, and in every creature where He abides. To **love** is to live at Mary's school. If we sincerely believe, pray and love (not just with words); if faith, prayer and love impregnate our life, we will feel God's presence and *nothing will separate us from Christ.*

God will grant you all the graces that you seek from Him, continues Mary. What could these be if not the graces that nourish our life of faith? If we truly believe, pray and love in a way that draws God to us, what else could we want except graces that confirm our communion with Jesus and Mary? *This is a time of grace*, Mary has often reminded us, and ought to be lived as such.

Today Mary specifies: **I am a gift for you, since God allows me to be with you from day to day and to love each of you with infinite love.** *We announce to you what we have seen and heard* that you too may make treasure of it. **In prayer and humility open your hearts and be witnesses of my presence.** Prayer, humility and an open heart are characteristic of Mary, our Mother. She offers these qualities to us; let us accept them and the conversion that it will bring about in us will make us reliable witnesses, a faithful echo of her presence in Medjugorje. Peace and joy in Jesus and Mary!
N.Q.

SYNOD of BISHOPS: Bread of Communion

Though the Year of the Eucharist has come to an end, rather than a conclusion one must speak of a departure, and of a continuation of the millenary journey of the Church. The Synod of bishops, with the theme: *"The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church"* was the final act of a long year of reflections and interventions on what is the central mystery of Christian life: the **Eucharist**. The Pope sealed the year with the celebration of Mass on **Sunday 23 October** (World Missionary Day) whilst canonizing five new saints.

But what is a Synod?

The Synod of Bishops is a gathering of representatives of the Episcopal conferences around the world. It was instituted by Paul VI in 1965 and is made up of circa 200 Bishops.

And that is precisely what we had during the first three weeks of October: 256 Synod Fathers, elected either by their own Episcopal Conferences or by the Pope, together with other external auditors, were united around Benedict XVI to reflect on problems that petition today's Church.

Generally, the Holy Father consults with the Bishops to decide on the theme, but JP II chose the theme personally this time. The next step is to send to the Episcopal Conferences the *"Lineamenta"* prepared by the General Secretary of the Synod, together with a lengthy questionnaire. Based on this the *"Instrumentum Laboris"* is prepared (instrument of work) and sent to each of the

participating Bishops so that they may contribute to throw light on the problems being discussed.

The Synod of Bishops is an advisory body where the Bishops assist the Pope to understand the needs of the Church throughout the world. The final decision and teaching remains with the Holy Father who will issue a document at the end of the Synod.

The Pope of the Synod

That's how JPII wanted to be recalled; he had expressed this wish numerous times, saying that his formation owed a great deal to this experience. John Paul II, in fact, was a member of all the synods between 1967 and 2001. His attentive participation was proverbial. Vatican sources say that only the General Audiences of Wednesday impeded him from staying with the other bishops to know them better, to share their concerns, to strengthen them in the urgent commitment of the new evangelization.

Necessary update

Benedict XVI never leaves unfulfilled the work began by his "beloved predecessor" - as he likes to call him, while at the same time adding his personal touch, which though more sober and reserved, is extremely incisive and attentive. Pope Ratzinger thus faced the Synod in the role of protagonist, making good use of the fruits of his long experience in the Synod. So it does not surprise to see Benedict XVI willing new energy into the Synod of Bishops through innovations, such as reducing the time at the disposal of each participant in order to cut out a space destined for liberal exchange of opinions and deeper examination to favour spontaneous expression and sharing.

A long train

In his opening reflection the Pope indicated the tracks for the long Synod train: varied and composite because it is made up of carriages from all over the world, each filled with its own ethnic and cultural baggage.

He spoke of imperatives, the first of which was "be glad": an invitation, he said, to feel the presence of the Lord close to us. Benedict XVI thus invited all not to be deaf to Him "because the ears of our heart are so full of the din of the world that we cannot hear this silent presence that is knocking at our door," directly petitioning the consciences of those present by saying: "Let us consider whether we really are prepared to open the doors of our heart; or perhaps this heart is crammed with so many other things that there is no room in it for the Lord. Thus, insensitive, dead to his presence, distracted by other things, we fail to hear the essential!"

Be perfect as your Father is perfect

The words of the second imperative, "be perfect," invite us to be what we are: images of God, 'mirrors' where the Lord's light is reflected, said the Pope. However, aware of man's imperfections, the Holy Father recalled that for man to reach the ideal of perfection one must continually make "repairs" like to a musical instrument "that unfortunately has several broken strings, so that God's music which should echo in the depths of our soul can no longer ring out. We must repair this instrument, be familiar with its broken parts,

the destruction, the negligence, the omissions, and seek to make it perfect and complete so that it will serve the purpose for which the Lord created it.

So it can be an invitation to the regular examination of conscience, to see how this instrument of mine is going, to what point it has been neglected or is no longer in working order... and an invitation to have recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where God himself repairs the instrument and restores us to integrity, perfection and functionality."

Correct and comfort one another

The third imperative is fraternal correction and sharing others' sufferings. In a paternal and assuring tone, with clarity and eloquence Benedict said: "None of us sees himself or his shortcomings clearly. It is therefore an act of love to complement one another, to help one another see each other better, and correct each other. I think that one of the very functions of collegiality is to help one another, also in the sense of the previous imperative, to know the shortcomings that we ourselves do not want to see." Then he added with firmness: "Only if it comes from a humble heart that does not rank itself above others, that does not consider itself better than others ... can we help one another in this regard with a great act of love."

Beauty in diversity

Though the theme was one, the variety of interventions evidenced the diversity present in Christ's Church: a wealth to be exploited in this world of globalization which tends to standardize everything and hide the work which gushes forth from God's extraordinary creativity. "We have sensed a profound joy in experiencing the unity of our Eucharistic faith in the midst of the widespread diversity of rites, cultures and pastoral situations," wrote the Synod Fathers in their final message. "The presence of so many Brother bishops has allowed us to experience, in a more direct way, the richness of our different liturgical traditions that makes the depths of the unique Eucharistic mystery shine forth."

We must have courage

Wherever we may be - in the family, at work, in religious communities - we need to ask for the courage to think with Christ's thoughts. We can do so by reading Sacred Scripture; and by practising *Lectio divina*, to grasp Christ's Way of thinking, to think His thoughts and feel His sentiments, to be able to convey Christ's thinking to others.

We are united by our faith in the one God, Father of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist unites us; and in it we are recapitulated in Him. We conclude with the words of the Pope who said that there could be no justice where man becomes sole master of the world and of himself. Such a world, he said, would be dominated by the arbitrariness of power and self-interests... "If we remain united to the Lord, we will also bear fruit; then also from us there will no longer be the vinegar of self-sufficiency, of discontent of God and of His creation, but the good wine of joy in God and of love towards one's neighbour."

Stefania Consoli

Bishops testify: people hunger for the Eucharist!

Many were the Bishops from around the world that testified how people hunger for Christ, and that many must do without Him in communities where there is no priest.

The **shortage of priestly vocations** is a situation which damages those priests who are forced to run from one community to another, and it also damages God's people who – in some parts of the world – are literally forced to practise Eucharistic fasting. One Bishop from South Africa noted: "Due to the lack of priests, many communities celebrate Mass only once or twice a month!"

The causes vary. The secularization of western nations certainly doesn't favour the increase of "workers in the Lord's vineyard." Bishops from some countries where the seminaries are full complained of decreasing numbers of faithful. In particular, the Bishop from Korea said: "the participation of children in the Eucharist is decreasing dramatically along with age." He said the children that don't come to Mass complain of Mass being uninteresting.



"There must be a fair distribution of priests throughout the world," commented the bishop of Mozambique, while the bishop from Lebanon pointed out: "Sending priests to countries where they are lacking, taking them from a country that has many, is not the ideal solution if one bears in mind the question of tradition, customs and mentality. The problem remains."

Some bishops asked themselves if it were not possible to ordain married men – as they do in the Eastern Church - to make up for the shortage of priests and ensure the Eucharistic bread for all, but it was decided that it was an "untenable hypothesis." With conviction the Church has once again affirmed that **celibacy is "an inestimable gift" for the priest and the faithful.** The Patriarch of the Church of Antioch pointed out: "The Maronite Church admits married priests. Yet, it must be recognized that if admitting married men resolves one problem, it creates others just as, if not even more serious."

And in his homily at the concluding Mass, Pope Benedict clarified: "The celibacy that priests have received as a precious gift and the sign of undivided love towards God and neighbour is founded upon the mystery of the Eucharist, celebrated and adored."

Amongst other problems put forward by the Synod Fathers one was **holy communion for the divorced and re-married.** At the conclusion of the Synod, the Bishops reaffirmed that "according to the tradition of the Catholic Church, they cannot be admitted to holy communion, being in a position of objective contrast with the Word of the Lord. ... Nevertheless, the Church welcomes them and follows them with special attention that they may cultivate a Christian lifestyle... If the nullity of the matrimonial bond is not recognized and objective conditions arise that render cohabitation irreversible, the Church encourages them to commit themselves to live their relationship in accordance with the

law of God, transforming it into a firm and faithful friendship, and thus be able to return to the Eucharistic table... But such relationships should not be blessed, so as not to create confusion among the faithful concerning the value of marriage.

At the same time, the Synod hopes that all possible efforts be made both to ensure the presence, pastoral character, and correct and swift activity of ecclesiastical tribunals for causes of the nullity of marriage, and to dedicate further study to the essential elements of the validity of marriage, also bearing in mind the problems emerging from the profound anthropological transformations of our times, by which the faithful themselves risk being conditioned, especially given the lack of solid Christian formation."

Thus the **Lights and shadows** in a Church that confronts herself with the Eucharist 40 years after the Council: "The Eucharist can also be considered as a 'lens' through which to verify continually the face and the road of the Church." The Synod, a realistic and objective examination of the Church is necessary so that the *beautiful Bride of Christ* may be a credible response to the challenges of a world which does everything it can to cancel God. For this reason to the Synod Fathers Benedict XVI recommended that during the Synod they say "not only beautiful things about the Eucharist, but above all, they live from its power." *S.C.*

China forbidden to participate

Four were the bishops that were not able to participate in the Synod. One of them, Mons. Wei, tells how after receiving the Pope's invitation to the Synod, he went every day to ask for his passport but that he was continually denied it.

The vice president of the Patriotic Association declared that the Vatican had offended the official channels which manage the affairs of the Church because they invited the bishops without contacting them. The Patriotic Association is a non-ecclesial organism, members of which include atheists belonging to the Communist party. Its scope is to control the Church (also economically), and the formation of a national church not dependent on the Holy See. China does not permit the Vatican to nominate bishops; they see it as an interference in its internal affairs, and Chinese Catholics are not allowed to acknowledge the authority of the Pope.

In his homily, the Pope sent a "fraternal greeting" to the Church in China: "With deep sorrow we felt the absence of their representatives. Nevertheless, I want to assure all of the Chinese Bishops that, in prayer, we are close to them and to their priests and faithful. The painful journey of the communities entrusted to their pastoral care is present in our heart: it does not remain fruitless."

Holy Mass, meeting place

"Burundi, a Christian country, and more than 60% Catholic, has just experienced a period of trial with tragic conflicts among the country's various ethnic communities.

These conflicts degenerated into civil war, and the situation reached the point that people from different ethnic groups no longer dared pass one other in the street. Eucharistic celebrations remained privileged places where people from different ethnic groups could meet to pray for reconciliation." (*Bishop of Burundi*)

Where there is no Sunday

"The celebration of the 'Sunday Eucharist' presumes that there is a 'Sunday' - the Day of the Lord - set apart, and that the Eucharist can be celebrated freely on Sundays. In some parts of the world, this is not possible: for example, in Saudi Arabia or in some other Muslim countries. Sunday is a working day and the Eucharist is not celebrated because there are no Churches and no priests, or there is simply no religious freedom. From Eritrea and Ethiopia, there are many Christians who are working and living in Muslim countries. ... Before they go to the Muslim countries, they are forced to change their Christian names into Muslim ones, and especially the women have to dress in Muslim attire. Once they reach their destinations, their passports are taken from them and they suffer all kinds of abuses and exploitation. Many are forced by the situation to become Muslims." (*Bishop of Ethiopia*)

Muslims associate with Paschal Mystery

"We are very much a minority of local churches, living in a world where Islam has strongly marked culture. ... Because of the needs of the mission, many live far away from any priestly presence. Due to this they cannot participate in the Eucharist, except on rare occasions. Our thanksgiving to God joins that of our Muslim friends who also praise God for His works of creation and mercy. We could spiritually incorporate their prayers in our Eucharistic celebrations. We are sometimes amazed to see our Muslim friends 'linked with the Paschal Mystery.' When we come to inscribe our life in the offering of Christ, we also, in some way, do so with the lives of our friends. ... In an imperceptible way, our Eucharistic celebrations bring together a people who are yet absent, a people searching for God in the righteousness of their hearts. For a particular Church, the way of living the Eucharist cannot be separated from her concrete history with the people to whom the Lord gave her." (*Bishop of Algeria*)

Material bread alone

"In Romania the communists tried to give man material bread alone, and sought to expel 'the bread of God' from society and from the human heart. ... Priests were imprisoned simply for being Catholic, so they could not celebrate or speak about God. In the famous period of 're-education' and 'brainwashing' in the Romanian prisons, to ridicule priests and the Eucharist and to destroy human dignity, the persecutors made them celebrate with excrement, but they never succeeded in destroying their faith. ... No one will ever know, ever, how many humiliations they were made to undergo. These modern martyrs of the 20th Century offered all their suffering to the Lord for dignity and human freedom." (*Bishop of Romania*)

The great unknown Hans Urs von Balthasar

In truth he is unknown especially in his own country which obstinately continues to remain silent about the **great Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar**. Yet, abroad, his works are requested, appreciated and readily found. They are translated into various languages; and the numerous dissertations on his life and works honour this Swiss son. The Cardinals and Bishops which came from three continents for his jubilee Mass, testify to the greatness of this theologian of the Church of today.

The following is an excerpt of a homily given by the Bishop of Basel, Kurt Koch, at a celebration of the **centennial of von Balthasar's birth** (12 August 1905) in the parish Church of **Lucerne** where the theologian is buried. It is where his funeral on 1st July 1988 was celebrated by Pope, then Cardinal, Ratzinger.

TESTIFY TO BEAUTY OF GOD

To live one's Baptism and through one's Baptism be called to follow Christ was the motor behind von Balthasar's Christian life, his ecclesial existence and his theological work, in the wake of Christ's radical call: "If you love your father or mother more than you love me you are not worthy of me."

He took this call so seriously that he also encouraged lay persons to embrace the evangelical gifts of poverty, chastity and obedience. Christian obedience comes as a result of listening to the Word of God with an open heart so as to discern His will - taught von Balthasar. For a theologian, the beauty of obedience lies in the fact that obedience can be given to those who are in turn obedient whether he be lay, deacon, priest or bishop, for all owe their obedience to God. Obedience within the Church is never related to formal authority.

This profound biblical sense applied to obedience allowed von Balthasar to remain immune to the anti-hierarchical attitude being felt in today's Church (an attitude that Card. Ratzinger called a "sickness"). In short, von Balthasar had great respect for the *Petrine* structure of the Catholic Church.

In Mary he contemplated the Church which was born from her "yes." In her he saw the model of biblical obedience which doesn't come as one's own initiative, but rather as something to receive; an obedience that knows that the true source of fecundity of all apostolic activity is contemplation.

This fundamentally Marian attitude was the backbone of von Balthasar's theology. Only if a theologian allows an encounter – in a spiritual sense – with the Word of God can he be a voice of the Gospel; and this is possible only if his theology knows how to go down on its knees.

Von Balthasar upheld that his theological and literary works intended to be a finger of John who points at Christ. He desired

helping people to heal the eyes of the heart so that they could see the living God and recognize Him as the cause, centre and scope for all human life. In his book, "Our Mission" he outlines the St. John Community which was so dear to him.

Von Balthasar was a "conservative" in the good sense of the word, because he worked to keep the most precious and irreplaceable good of the Christian Gospel, even amid the storms of the world and within the Church. At the same time he was also "progressive" because he fought for spiritual renewal of the lay people. He offered many new aspects to the Church, but above all, he showed clearly that God is not only true and good, but also beautiful. It is only in the beauty of God that the true face of every other divine attribute can be read. Image, action and word are joined to give praise to God who is Love. In this love alone – according to von Balthasar – is made visible the greatest mystery of the Christian faith.

Von Balthasar fought for a "true, Christian theology of liberation." His is a theology founded on the Eucharist where Jesus, the Spouse, gives Himself with everything that He has and is, and those who radically graft themselves into the Eucharistic mystery of the self-offering of Jesus will lead Eucharistic lives on a daily basis, offering themselves up in turn for the mission. He who encounters Christ in the unassuming species of Eucharistic bread and wine (where Christ is hidden and present for us) will be able to discover Him also in the poor and suffering.

All of us have reason to be grateful to Hans Urs von Balthasar because he showed the Church the way of decisive reform: return to the essence of the Christian faith in its Catholic form.

In the early years of the apparitions at Medjugorje, the then young priests Slavko Barbaric and Tomislav Vlasic visited von Balthasar at Basel, and brought back with them as a gift these words of his: "There could only be one error regarding Medjugorje, and that would be not to acknowledge the apparitions as real." In his book on Medjugorje, Fr. Rupcic wrote of a document in which von Balthasar seriously warned the bishop of Mostar about the responsibility that he would have to bear should he continue to fight against Medjugorje.

(Reduction by Rita Gervais)

"What happiness I am given each new day when I find You in the Eucharist! I am more fortunate than your disciples as I can receive You within my soul, remain alone with You, unite myself to You, and identify myself with You. I am nourished by You, I am embodied in You!

How many tears I shed for the brethren and my mission, so difficult and laborious! But You come to me in the morning and I am able to rest on Your Heart; and the burden of the day's work becomes barely noticeable."

*Mother M.Pia Mastena
Founder, Sisters of the Holy Face*

Mary, woman of silence

Amongst the many Marian names – and one doesn't quite know whether to admire the fantasy of the poets or the tenderness of popular piety – I found one which is extraordinarily suggestive: Mary, Cathedral of Silence.

Mary is that gothic cathedral which houses silence; jealously. It is not broken even when she speaks. But why?

Well, first because she is a woman of few words. In the Gospel she speaks a mere four times: at the annunciation of the angel; when she sings the Magnificat; when she finds Jesus in the temple; and at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. After having told the servants at the wedding to listen to the only word that counts, she remains forever silent.

Her silence, however, is not only the absence of voice, or the lack of noise. It is not even the result of an ascetical form of sobriety. It is, instead, the theological casing of a presence; the shell of a fullness; the womb that protects the Word.

One of the last verses of the Letter to the Romans speaks to us of Mary's silence when it speaks of Jesus Christ as the "revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages." Christ, silenced mystery; hidden, secret mystery; literally: encased in silence.

In other words, the Word of God was wrapped in silence within the womb of eternity. When He entered the womb of history he could not be wrapped in anything except Mary's own person. So she became the earthly prolongation of the mysterious silence of heaven.

For us all, devastated by the din of the world, she remained the silent casket of the Word: "She kept all these things in her heart."

Blessed Mary, woman of silence, lead us to the fountains of peace. Free us from the siege of words - our own first, but also those of the others. As children of noise we think we can put a mask over our tormenting insecurity with our idle talk. Mother, help us to understand that only when we are silent can God talk. As co-inhabitants of the hubbub, we have convinced ourselves that we can exorcise our fear by turning up the volume of our transistors. Mother, help us to understand that God communicates to mankind only in the sands of the desert, and that His voice has nothing in common with the decibels of our din.

Mother, explain to us the profound meaning of that verse of Wisdom (18:14-15) that once used to be read at Christmas, making our eyes open wide with amazement: "*While all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty Word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne, onto the earth...*" Lead us back, I beseech you, to the faraway wonder of the first crèche, and awaken in our hearts nostalgia for that "silent night."

Fr. Tonino Bello, Bishop
(excerpt: *Maria, Donna dei Nostri Giorni*)

Love becomes a Child

Love, sung, prayed, and proclaimed, has always been the object of man's attention. To tell the truth, love is the only thing we seek and really need. Lack of love is the root of every conflict whether personal, or a family or world affair. If every person were to fully enjoy a portion of the love for which he was created, no one would ever bother to attack another, but he would simply love!

We are all needy of love, and we passionately seek it, though we rarely find it in its most authentic and pure form. We are speaking of gratuitous love, the love that loves to love and be loved; the liberating love, the kind that doesn't ask you to be different from what you are to make you feel loved; the love that satisfies, because it comes to you first without making you beg for it; the love that, in short, nourishes the unsuppressible need that we all have; that dampens the attack of other, unhealthy types of appetite.

More or less aware of this deep yearning, we consume our existence waiting and hoping, chasing after it and even pretending it. Some even sell themselves for a few pennies for the sake of a caress despite the squalid egoism of it all. But what do we really seek? A feeling, a sensation, the pleasure of a moment? Have we ever thought that perhaps we ought to concern ourselves with WHO we should

seek and not what we find? For indeed, love isn't a perceivable energy, but a living and real person!

"God is love" wrote St. John (1Jn 4:8). This is both our starting and finishing line. It is where we will finally find what we are seeking: God the person, a conscious and free Being that enters into relationship with us, who communicates with us. Love is no longer fruit of a relationship, but Love is the subject and the object of the relationship.

Once we have understood this, everything changes since we know with certainty the time and place of the encounter: the Eternal One in our own time; the Infinite One in our own space. He comes to us in a thousand ways, known and unknown. He is always new, yet constantly faithful to Himself. He is the living love of the Scriptures; love at work in the Sacraments; the one and only love throughout history who adapts Himself to each person to be closer to each of us in our personal needs. He makes Himself known so that no one should remain indifferent to His touch which warms, vivifies, transforms.

He is a person; He is Love; He is free to come and to go, to hide Himself or to let Himself be found. Though He cannot be commanded, by a beseeching heart He is disarmed, irresistibly attracted, and

becomes the defenceless prisoner of our expectations.

This is the meaning of Advent which is about to begin: the expectation of an encounter with Him for whom we yearn. He is Love in the form of a little baby; little so He can enter each of us and transform us into His crib, His temple and tabernacle where He can become truly the Emmanuel.

In this **holy time** certainty springs from hope: at Christmas Love is born. There is no doubt, however, we can accept Him only if – like the shepherds – we heed the announcement. We can love Him only if – like Mary – we allow ourselves to become involved, and our plans even upset. We shall know how to keep Him if – like Joseph – we set aside the rule to listen to the Spirit. We shall know how to adore Him if – like the Magi – we accept to leave our kingdoms and bend down over His poverty.

He, then, will enter into our lives to establish His dwelling place. We shall find peace in the certainty that we are loved by Love Himself; that He will never abandon or betray or blackmail us, but will continue to repeat to us: *"The Lord your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival."* (Zeph 3:17) Stefania Consoli

Fertility of Consecrated Virginity

"The Lord chose Jacob, Israel as His possession"

At the base of a radical choice for consecrated virginity offered to the Lord, there is always God's initiative, His call. The Lord on His part makes a proposal of love, a call that attracts. He chooses those whom He wishes (cf. Lk 6:13) e then leaves one to choose in all freedom.

The role of consecrated virginity is always to be seen in connection with the spousal love between God the Spouse and the virgin-bride person. According to the logic of this world, there is no reason to be a virgin. The motivations for virginity are entirely celestial. It is the generous response of he or she who has been enchanted by the person of Jesus Christ and desires being part of His work of salvation.

Those who respond to the call are introduced into God's thought. God himself invests ever more heavily in this person, revealing His plan of love, and though it is a universal plan, its realization is begun in individuals who have placed themselves at His disposal. *"Those whom He chose he also predestined to become his adoptive children..."*

This is God's will: to make us all His children. But these children need to be generated in God and for God. The mission of the "chosen ones" is to be seen in this perspective. It is they, the "chosen ones" who transmit to all the amazing plan of the Father

to have every person return to His fatherly bosom. Just as a couple in reciprocal love conceive and generate earthly life, so does the virgin, in union with the heavenly Spouse, conceive and generate divine and eternal life. We see how this happens in Mary who after giving her consent is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and becomes the Mother of God.

To understand the profound meaning and the fecundity of consecrated virginity it is necessary to make reference to Mary and to the events of her life. God calls her and promises that she will become mother in a special way. She responds: "How is this possible?" Similarly, we also ask ourselves the same thing, as do those around us. The response, both for Mary and for all those called to work in the Lord's vineyard, comes from the Angel sent by the Lord: *"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee."* (Lk 1:35).

When God sets His hand at work it is He himself that assures it is fulfilled, and made productive. The Angel continues, and says to Mary that the Fruit born of this union will not be hers, but will be the Son of God (ibid.).

Mary is entirely at the service of God and His plans which are often inexplicable in our eyes. She generates the Son of God, she presents and offers Him to God in the knowledge that He doesn't belong to her. The same thing is valid for the virgin-person whose fertility is a mystery except to its Author.

Just as with every renouncement and



sacrifice, neither can virginity be an end to itself. It is the means by which one opens himself to the greater, more earnestly desired and loved good. Through it we belong to the Lord with our entire being and with all the integrity of our person, consecrating to Him all our faculties and potentials, knowing that in His hands they will not remain unused and sterile, but rather, they will develop to fullness.

God alone knows how many aborted, violated, exploited and undesired children have found a mother in the consecrated virgins. He alone knows how many have been embraced by their prayer and accompanied in their journey towards eternity. This is the project of our merciful and just God who uses infinite means to reach all persons of all times and situations, to offer them a nest prepared by Him, full of His warmth and love. It is there that His saving power is manifest, to bring all to fullness.

Fertile is he who makes God known as the fount and lover of life. Fertile is he who makes others fall in love with God, who "does not impose anything on a soul, not even His love. He seeks us continually but He doesn't constrict us. He loves us but He doesn't oppress us. He desires us, but He doesn't possess us. He leaves us free to choose and to understand, deep in our heart where there is life." (anon). Only from God's perspective can everything be seen better, including the fecundity of a virgin womb consecrated to Him. *Sr. Ana Simic*

Life with Mary Immaculate

by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic

Marian spirituality, particularly during the last century, has been greatly enriched by **consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart**. What does it mean to consecrate oneself to Mary? It means to enter into her Immaculate Heart since our own immaculacy depends on hers, which is a little like being in our mother's womb. In fact, as Christians we received the immaculate and incorruptible life through the sacrament of Baptism, and still today we possess this grace. It is both a reality within us and a promise: the bud of an immaculate state yet to be attained. Each baptised person, together with the Church, tends towards that which Mary attained so we can arrive at the same mystical union with God through total donation. **Mary received this grace at her conception**, but in a mysterious way she actively participated in its efficacy all her earthly days.

Through reading the Gospel and the lives of Saints we learn of Mary's virtues which perfectly coincide with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In these virtues we can read the expression of Mary's response which raised her up to union with God and a life in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This presence fecundates her womb and her soul continually (as it did at the Annunciation) to generate all the members of Christ's Mystical Body.

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart besides being a prayer (various formulas exist) is the entrance that leads to Mary's virtues. Our soul is thus transformed in a womb able to receive the Holy Spirit and in turn becomes fertile as hers is.

Mary is immaculate in view of the death and resurrection of Jesus. She was able to receive this grace and fully collaborate (in God's plan); with the grace bestowed upon her she was raised continuously and united to the Son till she reached the maximum union in His passion and resurrection. This same fundamental attitude ought to impregnate our approach to all the Sacraments.

The departure point to follow the immaculate life is our readiness to be united to Jesus through Mary, because her immaculacy is a gift of God for us all and not just for herself. God granted it to her so that Mary could be our Mother, a mother who carries her children in the womb and heart.

In his letter to the Ephesians St. Paul writes: *"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity"* (Eph 1:4). In short, the Apostle speaks of the immaculacy and incorruptibility in view of holiness, so that our holiness presupposes this state: it was sown in us at Baptism, and is still developing. But what nourishes it, and what impedes it? **It is nourished by that food which Jesus Christ left to the Church**, particularly through participation in the

Eucharist and the Word of God. Further, we must consider the meaning of *participating in the Word of God*. The divine Word has, in fact, all the power to change our life. The Eucharist has all the power to satisfy the most profound needs of man. It isn't enough, however, to accept it, as we must enter into the dynamics of it.

Many are the impediments. It would be better to say that they (impediments) make up the elements of a true and proper battle against the devil, and against all the evil present in the universe. It would be very easy to be raised up to God on one's own. In truth, we carry with us all past generations; the consequence of original sin. It is here that the battle begins, but also the awareness that we will reach what Mary has reached. No longer individually, but together, as the Church. Otherwise, the Trinitarian life would be a contradiction. In fact, we know that the divine life in the Persons of the Holy Trinity is expressed with a continual offering of self to each other. In the same manner we too can enter into the life of God by offering ourselves totally for everyone. This is why the battle is greatly broadened, and it is not given to us to close ourselves up in ourselves.

To examine our day, we only need to consider what we do when we wake; which is to wash and get ready to face another day's work. In the spiritual life things work the same way. One must wake in God, in the Holy Spirit. How would Mary wake today? Her day would be totally offered up to God.

Morning prayer should help us to wake up and contemplate the face of God: look at Him, hear Him, feel Him - naturally, with faith, hope and love. When our soul wakens this way, we are able to better fulfil our duties, our mission. In the evening we shall be ready to immerse ourselves once again in God to eliminate all that has burdened us, and thus prepare for the night where we encounter God in our sleep.

The Magnificat is an excellent conclusion to our day. If we commit ourselves to live the immaculate life in a continued process, in us will grow joy and praise. Those who are attentive to the grace given us with each new day, and live the relationship with God with brief prayers, will - in the evening - reap the fruits of praise and his or her soul will spontaneously be brought to proclaim: *"My soul magnifies the Lord!"* - not recited as though it were composed by others, but as a song that is born from a heart which becomes ever more pure and immaculate.

Priests for the Community

On the 30th October 2005, **Mons. Bruno Forte**, Archbishop of Chieti-Vasto, ordained the first two priests of the *Kraljice Mira Community* founded by **Fr. Tomislav Vlasic** in 1997. We wish the two new priests a holy ministry at the service of the Church and the people.

WORDS OF FAITH

Ten Commandments not a Burden

"The Ten Commandments are not a burden, but a **sign-post showing the path leading to a successful life**. This is particularly the case for the young people whom I am meeting in these days and who are so dear to me. My wish is that they may be able to recognize in the Decalogue a lamp for their steps, a light for their path (cf. Ps 119:105).

Adults have the responsibility of handing down to young people the torch of hope that God has given to Jews and to Christians, so that "never again" will the forces of evil come to power, and that future generations, with God's help, may be able to build a more just and peaceful world, in which all people have equal rights and are equally at home."

Benedict XVI (WYD, Cologne Synagogue)

Do not Fear Death

Pope Benedict XVI said that Christians can **cultivate a fearless acceptance of death**, recognizing that it is a necessary juncture leading from one's journey on earth to one's final destination in heaven.

"New life, received through baptism, is not subject to the corruption and power of death." For Christians, **"death is a gateway** from the earthly pilgrimage to the home of heaven, where the Father welcomes all his children of every nation, race, people and tongue," he said as he called on Christians to include some time during the two feast days to "think about the mystery of death without fear and cultivate that constant awareness that prepares us to face (death) with serenity."

Pope Benedict told thousands of visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square on the feast of All Saints that the day offers the opportunity "to experience the joy of being part of the large family of God's friends." The **"mysterious but real" bond which we call the communion of saints** is "a family united by deep bonds of spiritual solidarity, which unite the deceased faithful to the world's pilgrims," said the Pope. This bond is fostered "by prayer and participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist." The souls of all the faithful "overcome the barrier of death" and are united in the Eucharist.

(Benedict XVI, 31 October 2005)

You are Precious to Christ!

"Do not fear! Open the doors to Christ! God is at work in the concrete and personal situations of each of us. Do not let the time the Lord gives you go by as though everything happened by chance.

Don't ever think that you are unknown to Him, as if you were just a number in an anonymous crowd. Each one of you is precious to Christ; **He knows you personally; He loves you tenderly**, even when you are not aware of it!"

John Paul II at the 15th WYD Rome, 15 August 2000

Children on pilgrimage in Medjugorje

This is the third year that this family pilgrimage to Medjugorje has been organized. It first started when "Grandma Clotti" wanted to thank the Virgin Mary for healing her grandchild, but the Holy Spirit quickly involved other children and their families in the experience.

About one hundred, of whom 50 were children aged between 1 and 15, departed from Milan in two buses. Accompanied by two priests, it was especially a child-size pilgrimage to enable them to encounter the love of Jesus, through His and our mother, Mary, and through cultivating friendship. The long voyage was made lighter by games, prayer and songs and a break which has become a regular dip in the Croatian sea... in a kind of baptism!

Upon our arrival at Medjugorje, the youth of the Cenacolo Community greeted us with a recital of the apparitions, and on the 2nd of the month all the children were close to Mirjana for her extraordinary apparition, for which they prepared with two hours of prayer and singing. Of course we climbed the hills, and precisely on Podbrdo, around the statue where Our Lady first appeared, a profound silence united all with the Mother and with Heaven, with each other and all of creation.

With their disarming simplicity the

children accepted the great gift of Medjugorje, especially through their desire to return each year, and also to **WITNESS**:

Rosa, an autistic child, wrote on her computer in broken Italian: "I say the Virgin was (there). I was with Mary in her arms. I was with her, loved by her. I was her beloved child.... I am happy to have met you; with faith you make friends more quickly. Mary loves us if our hearts are open."

Pietro, 10 years: "We prayed the Way of the Cross on Krizevac with bare feet as a sacrifice for the souls in Purgatory."

Filippo, 9 yrs: "When Our Lady appeared I felt my heart open and something fresh and light passing through my lungs into my heart."

Giovanni, 10 yrs: "When I heard the prayers of the littlest children I thought that the little ones were the biggest!"

Luca, 11 yrs: "Each person from the "Cenacolo" Community gave me a bit of joy, happiness and love, which filled my heart. I think I have given this happiness and joy to those who are sad and discouraged, and I have given love to those who are excluded and refused by others. I have been coming for many years to Medjugorje, and the best moment is the apparition of Our Lady to Mirjana. I thank all the people who have helped me on this pilgrimage in my moments of sadness."

Paolo, 7 yrs: "This is the second time

that I come to Medjugorje, and in my heart I heard Jesus calling me, and I know that Mary loves me too."

Emanuel, 9 yrs: "Our Lady has a heart of gold, and Jesus too. They want peace and love to reign in the kingdom. Christ sacrificed Himself for us, and for His sake we have to put peace in the world."

Pietro, 12 yrs: "My mother told me that everyone comes back from Medjugorje with something in the heart. In my heart is the desire to return."

Andrea, 9 yrs: "For me the most beautiful moment was putting on the recital for the little orphans, because we made them happy."

Francesco, 11 yrs: "For me it was when we were all together in silence on Podbrdo. I could feel immense love and peace."

Giorgio, 12 yrs: "You begin the pilgrimage with a sad heart, and you come back home with a heart that has more harmony."

Samuele, 8 yrs: "Mary, I love you with all my heart. Amen."

Teresa, 7 yrs: "I have been going to Medjugorje for some years now, and each time my heart is filled with joy."

Giovanni, 12 yrs: "I recommend this experience to everyone and I hope I can go next year too."

Elena Ricci

The Power of a Blessing!

On 2 October the apparition to Mirjana gathered a very big crowd. Here is the message by Our Lady: "I come to you as a Mother. I bring you my Son, peace and love. Purify your hearts and take my Son with you. Give true peace and happiness to others." Mirjana added, "The Gospa blessed each one of us as well as the religious objects that we had brought. Then she insisted again on the importance of the priest's blessing."

I seize this opportunity to make clear that there are several kinds of blessings, which it is important not to confuse. When a priest blesses (or Bishop, Cardinal or Pope), **it is Jesus Himself who blesses through his ordained minister.** Jesus Himself then pours out His divine sanctity upon us. He takes some of His good and gives it to us. This blessing is a huge grace that does not depend on the inner state of the priest. If the soul that receives the blessing is open and recollected, then Jesus opens the treasures of His Heart and spreads them in plenty, according to the openness of the soul and the measure of a person's faith. **A humble soul receives the most.** Since the blessing reaches the soul directly, the intelligence may not be conscious of the effusion that is beyond its grasp; this is the reason why it is so easy to be distracted and miss the giving of the gift. This is a shame, because the soul comes out enriched, fortified, pacified, and protected; and the most precious aspect is that it can unite the soul with God in a more intimate way. The fruits of a blessing are such that they

immediately are recorded for eternity and give the soul a special beauty. As is true for all gifts from God, the more zeal in the giving or the receiving of a blessing, the greater its efficacy.

At Medjugorje Mary said, "If priests knew what they give when they bless, they would bless day and night!" And, "**A priest's blessing is greater than mine**" (a personal message to Marija, undated). The reason is that the priest received the sacrament of Holy Orders.

This is only a small preview of the priest's blessing! **Lay people may also bless**, and the Church recommends that parents, for example, bless their children every day. Our Lady asks that children be blessed every morning and night (undated message from the 80s). **Children may bless their parents too!** The power of this blessing depends a lot on the person giving it; that is why Mary's blessing is particularly powerful! If a mother on earth may bless her child, how much more can our Mother from Heaven do it!

In Medjugorje, the Gospa gives her blessing at each of her apparitions. After greeting us with: "Praised be Jesus, my dear Children!" she prays for us with her hands outstretched. One day I asked Marija why the Gospa sometimes gives us her "blessing of joy", sometimes her "maternal blessing", or her "solemn blessing", etc. What is the difference between these blessings? Marija answered: "The Gospa did not explain." Well, let us just receive the gift with confidence and gratitude, and our Heavenly Mother will do the rest according to our needs!

Sr. Emmanuel (Children of Medjugorje)

Priests in Medjugorje: important and decisive role

Mgr Issam J. Darwish, **eparch of the Melchite Catholic Church in Australia and New Zealand**, visited privately Medjugorje in September, prior to which he visited the Pope. "At the end of our conversation, I asked the Holy Father to give his blessing to the group of pilgrims going to Medjugorje. He smiled with great kindness and said: 'May God watch over you and bless you'."

The number of pilgrims coming to Medjugorje is a sign of God. The atmosphere of prayer spread by the priests from here is very deep. I believe that Medjugorje is a place of expectation, a place that is questioning our faith; how we should deepen our faith. The prayer in front of the cross, adoration, the Eucharist - all this gives to the pilgrims a deep spirituality. It is a place of prayer.

I think the role of a priest accompanying pilgrims is very important. His role is to help them go beyond seeking signs. I told my pilgrims that we already have the signs in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar and other sacraments. The Mother of God speaks to each one of us. It is not necessary to see her. We can see her with the eyes of the faith. The messages of Medjugorje are Gospel messages. I see nothing else. Eucharist, penance, prayer... it is the Gospel. I will encourage the faithful to come here, for a few days of prayer and interior conversion. I also will encourage the priests to come with them. I have a desire: that Medjugorje open up to the environment, to the Orthodox and to the Muslims, that it become a centre of dialogue with them." *(Medjugorje Bulletin)*

Queen of Peace at work in Australia



Our Lady has always shown special love and concern for her little children. In the far north of Australia there's a remote Aboriginal community called Wadeye, or Port Keats. Isolation contributes to the various hardships this community of 3,000 experiences which include poverty, and wanting in housing and health facilities. Members of St Martin de Porres Catholic Aboriginal Community in Darwin together with their Chaplain and a Brother from the Missionaries of God's Love (an Australian-born religious community), were due to hold a retreat in Wadeye, but the mission was halted several times for reasons beyond their control. **Fr. David Tremble, MGL**, recounts how the gift of **faith and prayer opened the way** and allowed peace and reconciliation to triumph over rivalry and unrest.

"After three false starts (due to road blocks for ceremonies, funerals and gang fighting) a team from St Martin's was finally given the go ahead to outreach to Port Keats (Wadeye) which is the largest remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. The news that we could go ahead came as a gift on Our Lady's Birthday, the 8th September!

Each delay to this outreach was incentive for the prayer groups in both communities to fast and pray in preparation - the prayers became all the more fervent when the old Church bus seized up after the first 100 of the 420 km drive, and all it took was a snip to the air-conditioner fan belt and we were on our way again."

We know that at Medjugorje our Blessed Mother has indicated on many occasions the importance of prayer and fasting, particularly prior to special days and events.

"On our arrival at Wadeye," continues Fr. David, "we were met with the news that over the weekend during the early morning hours, a gang of young men from the town were arming themselves with metal chains and bars to stir up a rival neighbouring gang. Many of the Catholic women in the Wadeye Community, aware of the unrest, were in prayer. Suddenly three of the young men saw a lady with arms extended in a pleading gesture, similar to Mary on the Miraculous Medal. They felt paralyzed by this wondrous vision in the night sky and **peacefully abandoned their weapons** influencing the rest of the gang to do the same.

During the following nights of our mission these three young men, with all the traditional shyness of their culture, surprised everyone by witnessing to this event. Even more amazing was that on our final night (dedicated to the Holy Spirit) a big mob from one of the rival gangs also came to seek prayers for healing and deliverance. I will never forget the privilege of looking into the faces of so many men, women and children and glimpsing an

inspiring openness to the healing love that flows from the heart of Jesus."

Australia, also known as the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit, has been chosen to hold the next World Youth Day (Sydney, 2008), which is an opportunity for the entire Church to grow in grace. We invite all readers to join us in prayer that Australia, with its peoples ancient and new, may respond with the same generosity of heart as Mary to a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the love and grace of God our Father, through His Son Jesus, our Lord! (BKDrabsch)

Film on apparitions of Virgin in Rwanda

The international Catholic charity, "Aid to the Church in Need" (ACN) will support a project for the realization of a film on Kibeho - a site of pilgrimage in Rwanda - relating to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in that African nation.

"Although Kibeho is not a very well known place in the world, it is Africa's only pilgrim-site where Church-approved Marian apparitions have taken place. It may be compared with Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima," said Christine du Coudray, head of ACN's Africa department, on Oct. 6 on return from a visit to Rwanda.

"Our Lady appeared here from 1981 to 1983 and the visionaries, now in their 40's, are still alive." According to du Coudray, ACN is supporting a film project about Kibeho and the apparitions: "The film will be a gift to the suffering Church in Rwanda where, still today, violence is a part of everyday life. Amid all the cruelties, Kibeho is a place of prayer and reconciliation. This is a message to Africa and to the world," she stated.

At the presence of Rwanda's Bishops, the Apostolic Nuncio, the civil authorities and numerous priests, religious and faithful, a little over 2 years ago the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Card. Crescenzo Sepe, consecrated the Marian Church at Kibeho which is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Pilgrims from Rwanda and other African nations go there to pray.

According to the visionaries, the Virgin called herself *Nyina wa Jambo* (Mother of the Word). Her call was to conversion, prayer and fasting. On one occasion she showed the visionaries very strong images of rivers of blood, killings, and dead bodies abandoned in the fields. The terrible vision was later connected to the Rwandan genocide of 1994-95; one of the bloodiest scenarios ever seen.

According to ACN for Africa, what the Church of Rwanda needs most is help for the formation of priests, religious and lay catechism teachers; new churches, and a cathedral for the many pilgrims of Kibeho."

Mail from Readers

Moses Ekene, Nigeria: Thank you for sending me the Echo of Mary. I consider myself like Matthew the tax collector in the Bible who is not worthy, yet I still receive the Echo of Mary. In fact, the Echo is like oxygen to the soul; it comes and reminds me of the need to be on the straight path each time I want to fall away.

Marian Centre WA, Australia: A big thank you from the people of Perth who receive the Echo. Keep up the good work; may Our Lady grant you many blessings from her Son Jesus.

* Request for Rosary beads, medals:

1) Emile Tognizin, s/c Zonou Lambert, Mission Catholique, BP 357 ou 11, Lokossa - Mono, Benin, Africa. 2) Modesta Gbedo, Paroisse St. Antoine de Padoua, Sinwe Lago, BP 02 Agbangnizoun, Benin, Africa. 3) Felix Manu, St. Joseph Catholic Church, PO Box RY 96, Railway, Kumasi, Ghana.

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May the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us!

5 November 2005

don Alberto