



ECHO OF MARY

Queen of peace

152

July-August 2000 - Yr.16 #4 - [Info](#)

Our Lady's message 25 May 2000:

Dear Children, I rejoice with you and in this time of grace I call you to spiritual renewal. Pray, my Children, that the Holy Spirit may come to dwell in you in fullness, so that you can witness in joy to all those who are far from the faith.

In particular, my Children, pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that in the spirit of love, each day and in each situation, you may be closer to your brothers; and that in wisdom and in love you may overcome every difficulty.

I am with you and I intercede for each of you before Jesus. Thank you for responding to my call.

May the Holy Spirit dwell in you in fullness

In the April message (see Echo 151) Mary reproached us for worrying too much about material things and not enough about spiritual things. With this month's message our hearts are made lighter as Mary says: I rejoice with you, and we are filled with consolation, joy and hope. With tender love Mary embraces us all, not due to any merit of our own, but out of the motherly love she has for us. This motherly love is immediately confirmed when she says: In this time of grace I invite you to spiritual renewal. Again Mary invites us to spiritual things; she truly is Mother and as such knows what we need, and she never tires of reminding us. For the feast of Pentecost she advised us to pray so that the Holy Spirit could dwell in us in fullness, because the life of Jesus in us is wrought by the Spirit, and it is possible only if we allow the Spirit to penetrate us fully.

Mary, the full of grace, is the only human creature able to be fully pervaded by God's Spirit. In her God took on the form of man; in her our Lord became flesh. It is unthinkable that we could invoke the Spirit without leaving space in us; it is not possible to have God in our souls in the same way that we would have a human proposal or sentiment, no matter how good or generous. God cannot be placed alongside idols, even if we call these ideals. Our God is a jealous God (Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9) who loves us with an exclusive love; His love is incompatible with other loves.

God's love for man has a name; it is called Jesus, and Jesus cannot be bartered with anything or anyone else! That is why we must be concerned with spiritual, not material, things. That is why we must invoke the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Either Jesus is in us in fullness, or He is not in us! If He is in us then we can give Him to others; we will be capable of witnessing in joy to all those who are far from the faith, and we will make it possible for others to experience the joy of meeting Him. If He is not in us then all we can give is something of our own, and as useful as it may be it can never meet man's real need.

Mary also invites us to ask, in prayer, for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that each day and in each situation, we are closer to our fellow brothers and sisters. This is not simply a call to understand and agree with, but something infinitely more important. Once again it is a question of being dispensers

of God's gifts, vehicles of His love; it is a question of taking to a brother that salvation which God has wanted and predisposed for him, which has been guaranteed by Christ and facilitated by Mary's intercession.

Furthermore, it is a question of witnessing with your life that it is possible to experience God in this world, in our earthly existence, in the wisdom and love which come from the Holy Spirit and with which we can overcome all difficulties, dispel all doubt, gather up and enjoy the peace which comes from His presence, and live through life's ups and downs in consolation which comes from the Spirit.

Let's take this call of Mary seriously, and work without tiring at her school.

In the Pope's homily at Fatima during the Mass of beatification of Francisco and Jacinta on the 13th May last he exhorted the many children present to do two things; one, to offer prayers and sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, and two, to enrol in Our Lady's school, adding that: "we make more progress in a brief period of submission to and dependence on Mary than in whole years of following our own will and of relying upon ourselves" (St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, 155).

For many years in Medjugorje Mary has been urging us, calling us and teaching us with infinite patience; we must take her messages seriously, accept her suggestions and remember that this is a time of grace which might end. Let's accept Mary's invitation to work at our spiritual renewal, and remember that she is with us and intercedes for each of us before Jesus. **

Our Lady's message of 25 June 2000:

Dear Children, Today I invite you to prayer. He who prays is not afraid of the future. My Children, do not forget: I am with you and I love you all. Thank you for responding to my call.

Prayer frees us from fear of future

The uncertainty of the future, both on an individual and social level, and even on a cosmic level; and the temptation by man to control it, often gravely conditions our life. The cause of so much greed, tyranny and injustice by individuals and entire nations is often found in the attempt to solve man's problems on a purely human level.

Man's pretence to solve life's problems by counting exclusively on his own strength has age old roots which sink back into man's first sin and lead inevitably to disastrous failure. No form of social security; no technique of foresight; no programme can erase the uncertainty of the future and the fear that accompanies it.

"He who prays is not afraid of the future," Mary tells us in this brief but essential message. We cannot give human solutions to problems that exceed human capacity; we must look to God the Creator for the key to the difficulty. To want to do without God equals self-destruction.

Prayer enables man to overcome the fear of the future not because it distracts us from our worries, but because it resolves in a radical manner the problem of our existence by immersing us in Life. For prayer is not repeating formulas but it living in the presence of God and learning to accept His plan. Then, we are able to feel His Life pulse in us; and breathe His eternity. We become part of a new dimension which is unknown to the world and to all those who want to remain in this world. It is, instead, experienced by the little ones with unpretentious hearts who know how to surrender themselves to God and His love.

"Today I invite you to prayer," Mary repeats once again, and assures us that whoever prays does not fear the future - and I think that all of us, at one time or another, have been afraid of the future.

Mary's invitation is much more than asking us to be consoled; hers is a call to live this state of grace day after day, because "today" said by Mary is every day for us. We are being called to live our every day, and every instant of our days, in the hope, light and joy which always accompany Jesus' presence in us.

My Children, do not forget: I am with you and I love you all. Mary's declaration makes all our fears disappear. It is only if we forget Mary's love for us that we get afraid. So that we do not forget we ought to pray, and in prayer we must learn to listen. We must always remember that prayer is not listening to us, but listening to God. In prayer we have to free God's Spirit who dwells in us and let Him pray for us, intercede for us and accept for us the Father's Will (Rm 8:26-27).

Mary is our Mother and at her school we are sure to mature!

Put her teachings into practice, take her invitations to the letter and perceive ever more distinctly Jesus' presence in us. She is called to be Mother for eternity and the Son she generates is Jesus.

Nuccio

Mary and ecumenical dialogue with Churches

The ecumenical dialogue with the other Christian Churches is one of the most important goals of the Catholic Church, after the Second Vatican Council.

In this journey towards full communion Christian churches are called to discuss many historical and doctrinal problems including the role of the Blessed Virgin in the economy of salvation.

It must be said that Mary has never been the cause of separation between the Churches; to the contrary she has become a victim which over the centuries has influenced the worst of the doctrinal divisions.

It is due precisely to the exclusion of Mary from the problem of division within the Church that the argument is relatively new in the ecumenical debate. The most significant document was published in 1992 at the end of a meeting between Catholics and Lutherans in the US.

In France in 1998 the ecumenical group from Dombes printed an interesting document on "Mary in the plan of God and in the Communion of Saints." From the above texts (a clear reference point for future confrontations) we have drawn the following reflection.

At the moment the Church keeps in her depositum fidei (deposit of the faith) four dogmas regarding Mary: divine maternity, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, and assumption into heaven.

The dogmas are founded on two pillars of the faith: Holy Scripture and Tradition. A dogma is not meant to be an end to itself, but has a cristological function; that is, to understand more profoundly the mystery of Christ. Marian dogmas are no exception.

The dogma on divine maternity is the oldest one and dates back to the Council of Ephesus (431 bc) which solemnly proclaimed Mary Theotokos (Mother of God) in a critical period for the Church (Nestorianism doubted Christ's divinity). When the Council of Ephesus acknowledged Mary as the Mother of God, it further underlined Jesus' divinity.

All Christian churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant) which were united up to the XI century agree on this doctrine of the faith.

The second dogma - on Mary's perpetual virginity - is a conviction of the faith brought to us from the early Church and is expressed in the liturgy and is widely accepted as Tradition of the Church.

The first Protestant Reformers (Luther, Calvin and Zwingli - XVI century) also accepted it. Some centuries later, however, within the Protestant theological thought, it became the object of revision, so that today not all Reforming Churches accept it. The Orthodox and Anglican Churches do, on the

other hand, accept this doctrine of the faith.

The last two dogmas, on the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption of Mary into heaven, are the ones which create the most difficulty on the ecumenical plane. They are both recent: the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, affirms that "the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of God omnipotent and because of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, free from all stain of original sin" (Ineffabilis Deus).

The Assumption of Mary into heaven was instead proclaimed doctrine of faith by Pius XII on the 1st November 1950: "Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven, after the completion of her earthly life, since by reason of her Immaculate Conception she should not suffer the consequences of original sin" (Munificentissimus Deus).

Though the Orthodox Church has preserved a strong sense of Marian devotion both in the liturgy and popular devotion, it is of the opinion that these last two dogmas were defined by the Pope in an illegitimate way because he exercised his papal infallibility without making recourse to the council, and because there were no external circumstances urging the question.

Apart from this, the Orthodox Church would not have problems in accepting the contents of the dogmas, for amongst the splendid Marian titles in use in the Eastern rite Churches, one of the most common is Panàghia ("All Pure") which underlines the total pureness and impeccability of the Mother of God.

Regarding the Assumption, the same word is at times used by eastern tradition, though it more frequently uses the word dormition to indicate Mary's final destiny on the earth. The doctrine of the Assumption is also in line with the teachings of St. John Damascene, the last great father of the Eastern Church.

Those Churches born from the Reform have instead put forth objections of a more fundamental type regarding the doctrines of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. The Protestants - extremely strict - put their faith only in the Holy Scriptures, or in the symbols of faith of the united Church, in which there are not enough elements for them to accept the two Marian dogmas.

On her part, the Catholic Church drew from lengthy theological reflections on data contained in the Scriptures and the oldest Tradition only in embryo form. This same principle of theological development of a dogma was used by the Church for other important doctrinal aspects which are not always clearly stated in the Bible, for example, the definition of the seven Sacraments and papal infallibility.

To sum up very briefly, the Protestant Church claims that the last two Marian dogmas, besides not having the necessary scriptural support, tend to separate Mary from common mortals and elevate her to the same level as Jesus Christ who also was born without sin and ascended into heaven. It also claims that the two dogmas - both recent - were proclaimed at the end of an age-old debate between two opposing sides, both of which were equally authoritative.

The Catholic Church responds with clarifications which allow for correct doctrinal interpretations, and which remove that sense of ambiguity which not only harms the journey towards unity, but deforms faith itself.

Just like every other creature, Mary was also saved by Christ; but rather than being made exempt from original sin, she was "preserved" from it. That is to say that she enjoyed redemption wrought by Christ ahead of time.

With a rather banal simile we could compare it to buying on credit (we get to use and take home an item immediately even though it will be paid for later). Likewise, Mary enjoyed the fullness of those fruits of redemption which the other faithful will enjoy later on. This is certainly a privilege, but the

fate of the rest of us is not removed from her, it is just anticipated.

Mirco

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NEWS OF THE JUBILEE

Blood of Martyrs is seed of new Christians

"After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language: they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands... These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb..." (Rev 7:9-14).

In Rome on 7 May a commemorative celebration was held in the Colosseum to honour the martyrs from the various Christian Churches. The Holy Father presided and representatives of various Churches also attended.

There couldn't have been a better way to advance on the journey of reconciliation and dialogue than to celebrate together the memory of those from the various Churches who have witnessed their fidelity to Christ with the shedding of their own blood.

A sign of Christ's love for His Church and of the continuing and invigorating action of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the fact that in every era of human history there have always been people ready to offer their own lives to God for the sake of their brothers and sisters, in the wake of their Pastor who gives His life for His sheep.

The twentieth century is no exception. The Holy Father said: "All along the twentieth century - perhaps more so than the early years of Christianity - there have been those who preferred death to denying their faith."

Christ's Cross, symbol of salvation for all peoples, and the sight of his arms stretched out over the wooden cross for the whole world, remind us that He gave His life to make of a multitude one people. In the same way, the martyrdom of many brothers and sisters of all languages, peoples and nations calls for reflection, for only the offering of one's life to God (in dying to ourselves and renouncing our own ways) can lead the Church back to unity.

The most convincing type of ecumenism is the one offered by martyrs and witnesses of the faith who offer their lives for the sake of others. It shows the way to unity for Christians of the 21st century. It is the legacy of the paschal cross; a legacy which endows and supports Christians on their way to the new millennium.

The Vatican Commission in charge of drawing up a list of these witnesses has prepared a list of twelve thousand. Seventeen, a representative number, were remembered during the commemorative celebration. These were martyrs of the Soviet totalitarianism, victims of Communism in other parts of Europe, martyrs of ethnic intolerance (Nazism and Fascism), and all those faithful missionaries and native people who lost their lives in missionary lands (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Papua New Guinea). A prayer was also said for Mons. Romero who was killed in San Salvador (and of whom we recently wrote in "Echo").

"If the grain of wheat which falls to the ground does not die, it remains alone; if it dies it bears much fruit." May these words by Jesus guide the steps of all Christians, that they may live more

profoundly their baptismal vocation and offer to God their lives in a sacrifice of praise for the world's salvation.

In Fatima Mary still calls for "conversion and penance"

On the 13th May last the Pope went to Fatima to beatify the two little shepherd children, Francisco and Jacinta Marto. In an atmosphere dense with emotions and rich with grace, he once again filled the entire world with wonder and admiration.

Against the expectations of those who think he is no longer capable of guiding the Church and should resign, it was clear to all that the Pope knows exactly what he wants; and his gestures and decisions were a patent sign of the divine wisdom which flows richly from his person.

The Holy Father said at the General Audience of 17 May that his pilgrimage to Fatima, the third of his pontificate, was: "an opportunity to thank Mary for what she wished to communicate to the Church through these children, and for the protection she has given me throughout my pontificate: a thanks which I wanted to renew to her symbolically with the gift of the precious episcopal ring that Cardinal Wyszyński gave me a few days after my election to the See of Peter."

He added that he thought the time was appropriate to make public the third part of the Fatima secret, for which he gave thanks: "for all that God's mercy has wrought in the 20th century through the motherly intercession of Mary."

He said at the General Audience: "With the two shepherd children of Fatima, the Church has beatified two very young people because, although not martyrs, they showed that they lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree despite their young age.

Their holiness does not depend on the apparitions but on their fidelity and commitment in responding to the extraordinary gift they received from the Lord and from Mary most holy."

But let us give the word to one of the pilgrims who witnessed the event:

"An immense crowd of at least 60,000 people from 24 different countries gathered in Fatima around the Holy Father on the 12th and 13th May, in the Jubilee Year.

'The crowd was exuberant with joy, but capable of spending moments in absolute silence and intense recollection,' said the Pope on 17 May. On the afternoon of 12 May when the Pope arrived and went to pray before the statue of the Blessed Virgin in the apparition chapel, the silence which pervaded the enormous square was unreal. Not a sound could be heard, there was nothing that might distract the others; and the immense crowd, in religious silence, became one with its pastor in profound communion, in an experience of the divine presence. The universal Church was lifted to God in prayer.

The 13th, day of the beatification of little Francisco and Jacinta, was a similar experience, only more intense. There was something different in the air which brought together peoples of every nation, race, tribe and language in sincere and palpable brotherhood. Something new was searching our hearts as though it were awaiting a response from each of us, but at the same time it was as though Someone Else had already responded. And with this sensation, all anxiety was dispersed, and the heart was filled with peace and hope, and praise and thanks.

All our worries disappeared, and our needs lost their importance, and life was simpler and so much freer!

"You are concerned too much with material things and too little with spiritual things," Our Mother warned us in the message of 25 April. Well, in Fatima, on the days 12 to 14 May of the year 2000, our worries for material things were inexistent, and the spiritual things - which God, in His infinite goodness and wisdom reveals to the little ones - filled our every void, and satisfied our every expectation.

In the multitude of people we saw a meek herd being led by Francisco and Jacinta, where people were happy with just a sip of water, were restored under the shade of a tree, and found joy in sharing makeshift stools with the person next to them. Men, women, children and old people slept outside with just a blanket for protection against the cold night air, but happy to sleep beneath the loving gaze of our Mother. And the thousands of torches which lit up the night were telling us: darkness does not exist when you light up the torch of faith in your hearts, and when we walk side by side as we follow behind the beautiful Lady's little children."

Editorial Team

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Fatima Leads Way to Third Millennium

"The time was right to reveal the third part of the secret" said the Pope on 13th May at Fatima on the day Jacinta and Francisco were beatified. .

The time was right! In this Jubilee year we stand as though in front of a window which looks out onto the third millennium. This is also an ideal position to look back on the century which is about to end. With this celebration in Fatima the Pope is asking us to look out through this window, as he deliberately takes us to the heart of the message of Fatima and points out to us the holiness of the two shepherd children and the third secret. Why? The reason is because Fatima is the sign of the times, the key to understanding the 20th century; it is the type of spirituality most suitable for these times of which Medjugorje is the continuation and fulfilment. It is because Fatima is the spiritual way which leads us into the third millennium.

We shall try to throw light on this spiritual way which Our Lady has mapped out for us, by looking out the window first onto man's history and its developments; then onto the present day with its living sign of Medjugorje; and last onto the open field of the year 2000 which we can cultivate if we learn to listen to and follow our Saviour's Mother.

A closer look at the shepherd children's experience will help us understand.

The cornerstones of the spirituality indicated by Mary in Fatima are basically three: the Rosary, offering of self for the world, and the Immaculate Heart. They are simple things, but in the beatification of the shepherd children it becomes clear how this new way is for the little ones. And it becomes certain that the third millennium will belong to Mary and to the little ones, in an evangelical sense of course.

The Rosary

"I would like you to recite the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war." Sr. Lucia wrote, "this call is not meant to fill people with fear; but it is an urgent appeal, because ever since the Blessed Virgin gave great efficacy to the Holy Rosary, there is no problem - whether spiritual or material, national or international - that cannot be solved with the Holy Rosary and our sacrifices. When the Rosary is recited with love and devotion it consoles Mary, and wipes away many tears from her Immaculate Heart."

Offer self for the world

"Would you like to offer yourselves to God, and accept all the suffering it pleases Him to give you, in reparation of the sins with which He is offended, and to obtain the conversion of sinners?" The children responded "yes".

Let's take a concrete example to help us understand the value of the Rosary and of self-offering for the world. The example is the Pope.

The third secret was published on June 26 with a comment by Cardinal Ratzinger, but Cardinal Sodano spoke on the fundamental parts of the secret on May 13 in Fatima. One of these is that the shepherd children saw a Bishop dressed in white fall beneath gunfire. All the popes refrained from revealing it.

It happened precisely on the 13th May 1981 in St. Peter's Square that John Paul II was hit by gunfire. He said that our society was in need of the sign of a suffering Pope, and now that the third part of the secret has been revealed everything is clearer. John Paul II is a sign for the world of the 20th century. He suffers as the shepherd children did, and as the years go on, his suffering and prayer become more intense.

Fr. Tadeusz Styczen, the Pope's confidant, tells: "Praying for the Pope is like breathing; he does it always, and so naturally.. He is always friendly with people, and is happy to be with them, but at a certain moment he will reach for his rosary and smile, as if to make the person he is with understand that he has to go and pray."

This is enough to show us the first two cornerstones of the Fatima spirituality. The third point is the true nucleus.

The Immaculate Heart

"Do not be disheartened," said Our Lady to Lucia, "my Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which leads to God." This is what Mary came to tell us! Not only, but she showed us her goal: "God wants to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart."

Have God's expectations been satisfied? What can we do today? The moment has come to look out from our window back onto history.

The Immaculate Heart as refuge and way to God: this spirituality is not a devotion for individuals to adopt, but an indication for the universal Church, because the Blessed Virgin herself asked the Pope to consecrate the whole world, then Russia, to her Immaculate Heart.

Pius XI did not do it. Pius XII at first hesitated and then, when he saw the horrors of WWII, he unexpectedly announced over the radio (it was 31 October 1942) in Portuguese: To your Immaculate Heart, in this tragic hour in man's history, we entrust and consecrate not only the holy Church, but the entire world which is torn apart by ruinous dissension.

After less than a month the Germans were defeated in the historical battle of El-Alamein in the north of Africa and this opened the doors of Europe for the Americans. A few months later, following the German defeat in Stalingrad, Churchill said: "The wheels of destiny have changed direction." He was right, because WWII came to an end shortly afterwards.

What wealth of grace is hidden in the mystery of consecration to the Immaculate Heart! Pius XII was so impressed that on the 1st November 1950 he made recourse to his infallibility to define the Assumption into heaven by Mary a dogma of faith, and he instituted numerous feast days and Marian years. Then, on his deathbed he said that every nation, every diocese, every parish and every family should consecrate itself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Pope Pius XII had seen first-hand the power that the Immaculate Heart had over her Son's Heart. This is a sign of the times, that is, a necessity for the difficult times we live in, which God Himself showed to us through Our Lady.

John Paul II has also understood this need, and on 8 October next before the world's bishops who will be in Rome for their Jubilee, the Pope will consecrate the world and the third millennium to the Immaculate Heart. It is the Pope's desire that this consecration be prepared for first in people's

hearts, then in families and parishes, then in dioceses, just as Pope Pius XII had desired. So how can we, in our present time, realize this wish? The answer comes from history, and to be precise, from Pope John XXIII who wanted Italy to prepare herself for the solemn consecration to the Immaculate Heart through an initiative which received his blessing: a pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima travelled the length and breadth of Italy in 1959. At the conclusion of the pilgrimage, on the 13th September, the Pope himself consecrated Italy to the Immaculate Heart. Hence, from our window we have seen something of the "helmsmen" who have been guiding the Church.

How is Medjugorje the fulfilment of Fatima?

I believe Medjugorje was announced in no uncertain terms by Our Lady in Fatima. These are the words of Sr. Lucia in a letter to Fr. Fuentes in 1958: "Our Lady told me repeatedly that the last remedies for the world would be the Holy Rosary and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Then she said to me that once the means so despised by men will have come to an end, she would offer us the last anchor of salvation; and that is, the Most Blessed Virgin in person, her numerous apparitions, her tears and her messages from visionaries scattered around the world." This appears to me to be the basic characteristic of Medjugorje, that is, that the Blessed Virgin has given herself, and is in this sense the last anchor of salvation. For 19 years Our Lady has descended onto the earth every day, and the novelty is not in her words, but in the efficacy of her presence. Every day her maternal heart is open for all to draw from, almost as if to "steal" the graces from this bottomless well. What more could we want?

If we have understood this then we have seized the essence of the third secret of Fatima, and the profound sense of the apparitions in Medjugorje. So let's not delay any further. Let's rush to this fount! Let us consecrate ourselves and lead those who thirst to this "Cor Immacolatum", this "Vessel and depository of all mysteries" (St. Gregory, Thaumaturgus).

The last word is Mary's: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

Nicola

* On the 26th June the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the third part of the secret of Fatima accompanied by a theological comment by Card. Ratzinger and an introduction by Mons. Bertone.

Following is the third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima on 13 July 1917. The original text, taken from the official Vatican document, has been respected, including imprecise punctuation. Reflections on the secret will be published next edition of Echo.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand. Pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: Penance, Penance, Penance!

And we saw in an immense light that is God: 'something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it' a Bishop dressed in White 'we had the impression that it was the Holy Father'.

Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with haltingstep, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God. (Tuy, 3-1-1944)

Jesus' Presence transfigures suffering

It was a day of special grace today: in my hospital room I was able to celebrate the Eucharist, and I once again received the anointing of the sick by the Bishop of Nazareth in the presence of others (friars and nuns). It was a happy break, and it brought joy in tangible form which lingered for some days, leaving me with a certain feeling of physical wellbeing. The brothers' prayer touched me deeply, as though it were a delicate, yet intense embrace. I could feel that the endless signs of affection were addressed to Jesus whom I let transpire in a small amount from my condition, and whom their faith was able to see and magnify. Everything in me was exploited and I let myself be gently loved and showered in brotherly shows of affection.

Jesus, brother and God, after such rich outpourings of grace I am brought to consider that my insertion into the communion of saints in heaven is near at hand! I see ever more clearly that intense contemplation of You greatly helps us see and treat each others as brothers. This also generates a desire of heaven...

My Lord, are these samples a sign of the banquet to come? Did not the banquet come immediately after the samples? Hurry then, that the long await might not deceive me and that disappointment might not scatter the feeble hope in my heart. In today's liturgy, so rich, I felt the echo of the liturgy of heaven..

Not much time had passed when two hospital workers, of a different religion, came to me and asked: "Why do so many people come to see you, and speak so lengthily with you? Are you famous? All types of people come: of different languages and races; what do they seek? We work here and don't know why."

I replied: "Their true interest is in Jesus. They are able to see Him beneath the miserable appearances of my suffering and my offering of love. It is their faith and far-sightedness which fascinates me, and my beloved and happy nothingness which fascinates them. But we are all equally fascinated by Jesus. Without Him it is impossible to live: for the Jews which come to speak to me of Jesus' Gospel; for the Drusians who recall our brotherly love, over and above religion or race; for the Muslims who appreciate our surrender to Merciful God; for the Christians who see Jesus and desire to see more, and more often. Jesus is the important person!"

During the liturgy of the sick, we prayed for many of these reasons. At the end of the prayer of the faithful, the Bishop asked me to formulate a prayer too, but unfortunately I didn't have the strength to speak, and there were so many people in the room that the lack of oxygen made it difficult for me to breathe. However, I was sorry that I couldn't put to words what I felt in my heart. I would have liked to have prayed for a fellow brother, older than me, who was in a different hospital, and I would

have liked to have made a personal prayer that sounds something like this: "I pray to Jesus that when my arms won't be stretched out on the cross any more I will be able to throw them around His neck forever in eternity."

With the anointing of the sick I felt Jesus' blessing and saving arms around me; and my soul prayed: "be glorified in me the way you think best."

By now I am eager to drown in You. Oh, Holy Spirit, come. How often my heart calls you!

Especially now that the sickness is worsening I feel called to you with new vigour. In the struggle between the parching thirst and the swelling, grace enables me to meditate on the living water which gushes forth from Christ's heart and from those who believe in Him, and I see the symbol of the Holy Spirit, whose blessed fount is already in us. Blessed is my sickness which enables me to see the many graces God has endowed upon me!

With each attack - the distressing suffocation, the fainting fits, the devastating impression of losing my head from the pain - I feel closer to Jesus, and I invoke Him with my arms stretched out towards Him and I bless the will of God who will take me with Him when He thinks the time is most fitting.

At times I think that the veil which separates us is so thin that all it would take is a slightly more intense attack, just a wee bit of extra pain, a pinch more of dizziness. Just a wee bit extra would tear the veil and I would see Him! You are there behind that fragile barrier, perhaps more anxious than me, suffering more than me, yearning beyond all limits, to embrace me! Together let us suffer a tiny bit more, my Lord; just a little more waiting!

(...) How I would like to contemplate You from the other side of this veil; to measure Your heart beats, and fathom your anxiety ... so I could tell my brothers who you really are and let them know that our earthly conditions are powerfully echoed in You. But to know You so well is already paradise, and I have to wait for the day till I won't know where I really am ... for perhaps my arms are already around You - my emaciated, white, skeletal and loving arms!

(Testimony by Carmelite priest, Fr. Maurizio Vigani, who died in Israel at the age of 62)

Eucharist, Heart of Jubilee

When the Second Vatican Council spoke on the Eucharist it could not find a better way to define it than: "fount and apex of the whole Christian life" (LG 11). The Father could not have given us anything greater than His Son. Jesus could not have given us anything greater than Himself. "He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was" (Jn 13:1).

Let's see how the Eucharist expresses the summit of Jesus' love for us, in its three basic aspects:

1. It is sacrifice: "This is my body given for you... This is my blood shed for you."

2. It is food for new life: "My flesh is true food... My blood is true drink."

3. It is permanently present: "I will remain with you till the end of time."

The Jubilee year accentuates the need of Eucharistic Communion as a condition to acquire the indulgences. It was also wanted that special consideration be given to the Eucharist by holding the International Eucharistic Congress in the middle of the year (18-25 June).

Allow me to make a brief consideration on the Eucharist, sacrifice-sacrament-presence, so that each of us may ask: What does the sacrifice of the Mass mean to me? What does the sacrament of Communion mean to me? What does the continuous presence of Jesus in all the tabernacles of the world mean to me?

Sacrifice

At Mass: Jesus offers Himself in sacrifice for me; that is how much He loves me! He knows there is no other sacrifice worthy of the Father; no other sacrifice able to atone for my sins. "Do this in memory of me" is not just a remembrance, but the realization of the Lord's sacrifice; it is the very sacrifice of the Cross being repeated. It is Jesus alive and risen who offers Himself continually to the Father for our salvation.

How intense, sincere, is my participation at Mass?

I visited Padre Pio for 26 years. There is no doubt that Padre Pio relived the Lord's Passion at each Mass. It could be seen by all those present. His own words confirmed it on many occasions. It was so obvious that I came to the conclusion that the sacrifice of the Mass brings before us the very Sacrifice of the Cross in a bloodless manner. But at Padre Pio's Mass the celebrant's participation was each time a bloody one, often with the visible shedding of blood from the stigmata. We are not Padre Pio, but there are ways and ways of participating at Mass.

At a meeting for experts on liturgy many years ago it was asked: what sentiments should we suggest for the faithful at Mass? And the reply was unanimous: the offering of self, through the acceptance of those situations which are part of our daily lives (health, work, circumstances and difficulties, etc.). Those people were assuming, of course, that Jesus' sentiments during the Passion were a continued acceptance of the Father's will.

There was a holy priest who used to pray like this: "Lord, in the morning I am the priest and You are the victim and I offer You to the Father. During the rest of the day, You are the priest, I am the victim and You offer me to the Father." This way, his day was a continual offering to God, almost as though it were in response to the Mass.

Sacrament

On the subject, I would like you to read chapter VI of St. John's Gospel from which I quote a few verses.

"I am the bread of life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. He who eats me will live because of me. He who eats this bread will live for ever."

So deep is the union between us and Jesus! Truly, we can say together with St. Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). But let us not forget the warnings which St. Paul gives on Communion: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let each man examine himself. Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks his own condemnation" (1 Cor 11:27).

We priests see too many Communion and too few Confessions. To take communion you have to be in God's grace. If you are not in God's grace then you must first confess. An act of penitence is not sufficient; it takes sacramental confession.

The Eucharist is food for the Christian. It is strength, comfort and grace, because it gives us the Author of grace. We should go to Communion often, even every day, or at least every Sunday. The Eucharist is consecrated during Mass, and Communion completes our participation in it.

Permanent Presence

Jesus is always present amongst us. He lives with all His divinity and humanity in all the tabernacles of the world. He waits for us to go and adore Him so He can console us and give us everything. How many material and spiritual healings have there been in front of Eucharistic Jesus! How many decisions have been made, and minds illuminated!

People so often go to others to look for advice and help; some even go to clairvoyants, others go to healers or to charismatics, but not to Jesus. Yet the Lord foresaw and accepted it all. He foresaw the abandonment and the solitude, the acts of sacrilege and the contempt - I am thinking of eucharistic profanation, sacrilegious communion, the theft of hosts to supply black masses or satanic rites...

There is so much to repair for! Entire congregations of nuns organize adoration of the Eucharist day and night. All cities have a church where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for adoration by the faithful. For every need, for every event, whether happy or sad, our first thought must be to turn to Jesus who is present in the tabernacle.

Have I understood? How much do I take advantage of this wonderful presence?

Fr. Amorth

Eucharistic Congress 2000 in Rome

So that the faithful can better understand the importance of the Eucharist, numerous Eucharistic Congresses have been held.

This Jubilee year the 47th International Eucharist Congress opened in Rome on 18 June in St. Peter's and concluded on 25 June (feast of Corpus Christi) with solemn Mass celebrated by the Pope. The theme was: "Body of Christ, Bread of Life."

Clear reference was made to the salvific sacrifice renewed at Mass, and the nourishment which sustains the life of a Christian. It was an invitation to all to intensify the need and the influence of the Eucharist on our lives. It was a week of adoration, of praise and song, and prayer and silence. The entire Church had her gaze on the Mother Church of Rome which was celebrating the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. With good reason, John Paul II called this International Eucharistic Congress the "heart of the Jubilee."

Eucharist: heart of Church, heart of Jubilee, heart of world!

Like it or not, the transforming and transfiguring truth of Christianity is that without the Eucharist there is no Church, and without the Church there is no Eucharist. Jesus bread, Jesus life, becomes food and drink of salvation. Those without faith see the Eucharist as a devotional event within the Catholic Church. It is up to us, instead, to witness with the facts that this is not so, that this sacrament can transform the world.

Four lessons were held by four different Cardinals on the themes: "Eucharist, Fount of Learning"; "Eucharist, Conversion and Reconciliation"; "Eucharist, Christ's Presence amongst Men". The same themes were used on various other occasions during the week-long mission which was also rich with spirituality and prayer. In fact, in nearly all the parishes of Rome perpetual Eucharistic adoration was organized night and day for God's people and everyone was invited to take part.

So that the sick could also participate, priests went from home to home to bring Jesus to them, and Masses were said at the various homes for the sick and old.

John Paul II intervened on four different occasions during the congress: the opening ceremony, the Wednesday catechism, Mass and procession for Corpus Christi, and the conclusive *Statio Orbis* on Sunday 25 June. This goes to show the importance which the Pontiff gives to the Congress which was held midway through this most intensive Eucharistic year of the Jubilee. Edit. Team

Strive for holiness!

Sunday 21 May: the Holy Father canonized 27 Mexicans, nearly all of whom were martyred between 1915 and 1937, the period of revolution during which anti-catholic persecution was particularly ferocious. Twenty five of the above were priests and lay people who were shot or hanged for their faith. A priest and a nun, instead, distinguished themselves for their charitable lives. According to Vatican Radio, John Paul II has proclaimed 297 saints, while in the period starting 1594 up to and including Paul VI's pontificate the number of canonizations was 296; and while John Paul II has beatified 909 people, in the period starting 1609 up to and including Paul VI's pontificate, there were 808 beatifications.

On 1st October next the Pope will canonize 120 martyrs from China (Chinese and foreigners). The 1st October is also the 51st anniversary of Communist power in China, and for this reason the announcement of the canonization (which was made 10 March last) is not well seen by Peking. Through Ansa the Communist Party has made known that it hopes the Vatican will not do anything else to upset the sentiments of the Chinese people.

Christ, only door to eternity

The Bishops of Emilia Romagna met in Bologna recently to find a remedy to the growing problem of spiritism. Due to the increasing number of violent deaths amongst young people and adolescents, many parents are choosing forms of spiritism in an attempt to communicate with their departed souls.

The Bishops reflected on the possibility of a ministry which could respond to the requests for help by those who suffer for the loss of a loved one, and would include visits to the families and prayer meetings.

What the Bishops are proposing is to start up a "ministry of consolation" to evangelize people on the Christian meaning of death, of resurrection and of communion of saints.

It is important not to leave families alone with their sorrow; and for this there would be need of groups of people who are particularly sensitive in a spiritual and human way (eg. those who have already been through the same type of sorrow) to help others in times of trouble, so that they can learn to see things in the light of faith.

One other equally important aspect is that of helping these people find the proper way to be in contact with their dear departed ones through prayer.

The Second Vatican Council tells us: "some of His disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are purified, and others are in glory beholding clearly God Himself triune and one, but all in various ways and degrees are in communion in the same charity for God and neighbour... For all who are in Christ (hence have His Spirit) form one Church and cleave together in Him.

Thus the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least weakened or interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the perpetual faith of the Church, is strengthened by communication of spiritual goods" (LG 49).

It is with love and prayer, more so than with other means, that we are able to help those who have been struck with sorrow so that they are not stricken further by desperation and solitude caused by lack of comprehension. Prayer, which does not let anyone down, leads us straight to our only source of hope; and that is, Jesus Christ.

Faith of the Righteous

In Rwanda the bishop of Gikongoro, Mons. Augustin Misago, was taken prisoner on 14 April 1999 to Kigali and the death penalty pending over him. He was accused of taking part in massacres in his

diocese, and of refusing to offer protection to refugees in 1994 when conflicts between the tutsi and hutu peoples were rampant.

Though a young man witnessed in his favour, saying how Mons. Misago had saved him and nine other young men from death during the conflicts of 1994, his acquittal came only on 15 June last. The truth is that he has never ceased to denounce the violence, or to ask for justice for the tutsi and hutu victims, and when in 1995 some hutus were massacred in his diocese he did not hesitate to demand that an official investigation be opened.

On 10th May last, after hearing that the bishop had been condemned to death, the Holy Father sent him a telegram to say that he was spiritually close to him and his entire Church, and that he hoped the bishop would soon be back at the head of his diocesan community.

On 17 May bishop Misago responded: "Holy Father, the person who has the privilege to write to you is a son of yours: bishop of Gikongoro, held prisoner in Kigali since 14 April 1999. I received your moving message, your fatherly message so full of consolation and support. It came at the right moment, that is, precisely when the Public Prosecutor had asked the death penalty for me. Of course, it is totally unjustified and without foundation.

Holy Father, I wish to thank you from the depth of my heart for your gesture of solidarity and comprehension.."

The whole event surrounding bishop Misago, tainted deeply with political questions, is emblematic of the extremely delicate situation in Africa.

On the subject, Cardinal Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, said that in many countries of Africa the Church is persecuted, and that Mons. Misago is not the only case. In central Africa and the Great Lakes region there have been repeated attempts to weaken the Church; and with various pretences Christians are falsely accused and killed.

It appears that the same strategy used in Latin America during the 1970's to weaken the Christian witness is now being used in Africa, where the victims are especially Bishops, and where favour is given to sects and false ideologies so that they may spread amongst the people.

* Mr. Marino Bacuicoa of: Rua Roberto Augusto Collin 38, Ermelindo Matarazzo, Sao Paulo 03814-110 S.P. Brazil, conveys his thanks for rosary donations (Echo 148/149) and asks that we continue sending them. He adds that the local priest is now personally involved; and children and teenagers now arrive by his invitation much before the start of Mass to pray the Rosary.

Don't forget to mark all packages: "Rosary donations - of no commercial value. Donative de tercios - sem valor comercial" (to avoid import taxes) with sender's full name and address.

* My prayers go out to you as you mourn the death of dear Fr. Angelo. Truly he was a man and priest after God's own heart and a devoted and loving child of our Blessed Mother. He will remember us all from heaven. (Sr. Maureen, England)

"Return to Primitive Fervour"

Call to Holiness is main reason for Mary's presence in Medjugorje

(continued from Echo 151)

The way to holiness which the Queen of Peace teaches us is positive under all aspects, being tainted neither by excess piety nor false attitudes of self-pity. It is, instead, totally permeated by the light of life in God. This helps us discard our old humanity which bears the wounds of sin, and introduces us

into the fullness of the joy which comes from the new creation and the freedom of being God's children.

Dear Children, I call you to the immense joy and peace which only God can give (25 March 1989). My desire is to continually introduce you to the joy of life. I would like each of you to discover the joy and love which can be found only in God and which only God can give" (25.05.89).

Her message of 25 March 1989 brings to mind Luke's severe judgement in chapter 13 (the door which opens onto life is narrow): I have been calling you to holiness for years, but you are still far. I bless you.

In her more recent messages Our Lady seems to address in particular those who have decided for the journey of conversion, as she urges them to make more decisive, more mature steps along the spiritual climb to holiness and become true 'instruments in her hands for the world's salvation' (25.03.94), able to pour out onto others the same gift of holiness.

My Children, I desire that all of you who have savoured the scent of holiness through the messages I give you, should spread it throughout the world which so hungers for God and His love (25.03.94).

To seriously decide for holiness is, in fact, the only way to show Mary that we love her, and to be truly close to her Immaculate Heart (25.04.94). It reminds us of the passage in John's Gospel: it is he who accepts my commandments and observes them that loves me (Jn 14:21).

Mary desires that the scope of our journey to holiness (wrought by the Holy Spirit - 25.07.94) be above all for the glory of God the Father and of His holy name. This also happens to be the scope of Christ's saving deeds.

My Children, I desire you to be a wonderful bouquet of flowers offered to God on All Saints Day. I invite you to open your hearts, and to make the saints your models (25.10.94). .. Dear Children, Today I invite you to glorify God. May the name of God be holy in your hearts and lives. My Children, when you are in God's holiness, He is with you and gives you peace and joy which only He can give (25.05.97).

Mary reminds us that the spiritual place where the privileged journey to holiness is found is at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, "fount and apex of the whole Christian life" (LG), the very place which "encloses Christ our Easter" (PO). And she invites us to be ever more unconditionally involved in the paschal mystery: That Holy Mass may not be habit for you, but life! By living the Holy Mass every day

you will feel the need for holiness and you will grow in holiness (25.01.98).

May our prayer be constant and our self-offering to God through Mary sincere, so that the desire which enflames Mary's heart may be fully realized. Her ardent desire is that all those who've drawn from the fount of grace (Medjugorje) may arrive in Paradise with the special gift that she was given, that is holiness (13.11.86).

Giuseppe Ferraro

News from the blessed land

Annual Apparition to Ivanka - The visionary, Ivanka Ivankovic Elez, had her annual apparition on 25 June 2000.

On the occasion of her last daily apparition (7 May 1985) Our Lady confided to Ivanka her 10th secret, and told her that for the rest of her life she would have an apparition once a year on the anniversary date. This year's apparition lasted 7 minutes. Ivanka was at home with her husband and

three children and other family members. Our Lady gave the following message: "I introduced myself as 'Queen of Peace.' Again I call you to peace, fasting, and prayer. Renew family prayer and receive my blessing."

Ivanka said Our Lady was happy, and that she spoke to her about the sixth secret.

Seminar for Priests - The fifth international seminar for priests was held in Medjugorje from 30 June - 6 July. Almost 300 priests from England, Germany, France, Italy, Slovakia, Poland, USA, Romania, Argentina, Russia, Czech Republic, Mexico, Madeira, Portugal, Brazil, Slovenia, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine, Spain, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia participated. The theme was: Priest - messenger of the holy trinity and attendant of holy communion/body of our Lord. On behalf of the shrine the seminar was organised and run by Fra Slavko Barbaric and speakers were: Daniel Ange, Fr. James Manjackal, Rufus Pereira, Fr. Martin Ramoser, Fra Cosimo Cavaluzzo, Sr. Elvira Petrozzi and Fra Jozo Zovko.

Youth Festival - The parish of Medjugorje invites young people from all over the world to its annual Youth Festival, from 31 July to 6 August 2000.

The theme is "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us." Organizers advise bringing a portable FM radio with ear phones (for simultaneous translations), a Bible, a wide-brimmed hat or umbrella.

Coincidence ... or prophecy?

We all know that the Pope, on the 13th May, revealed the third part of the Fatima secret during the beatification ceremony of little Francisco and Jacinta.

Precisely on the eve of this great event the Virgin Mary (through the visionary Ivan) invited those pilgrims present in Medjugorje to attend the evening apparition on Podbrdo. Ivan later referred that she was very happy, and that she prayed for peace in the world.

That was in fact what the Blessed Virgin was asking for when she offered to the shepherd children the means to accelerate the end of the First World War (daily prayer of the Rosary, and the offering of sacrifices to God through her Immaculate Heart). Before dying Jacinta said to Lucia that God had entrusted the world's peace to the Virgin Mary, and that we should seek peace through her Immaculate Heart.

We also know that the attempt on the Pope's life was on 13 May 1981. According to a well-known biographer, as he was being taken to hospital he repeatedly said: Come, Mary! Come, Mary! Our Lady began to appear in Medjugorje the following month!

On 25 March 1984 the Pope (of whom Our Lady in Medjugorje said: I chose him for these times) made the consecration which Our Lady in Fatima had requested. Some hours later in Medjugorje Mary said to the visionaries: Rejoice with me and with my angels, because a part of my plan has been fulfilled. Many have converted, but there are still many who do not want to convert! Pray. It was the 1,000th apparition in Medjugorje!

That day, after the consecration ceremony, the Holy Father spent four hours alone with Bishop Paul Hnilica who had just returned from Russia where he celebrated a Mass at the Kremlin in union with the Consecration act made by the Pope in Rome.

Surprised by the fact that his bishop friend did not stop over in Medjugorje on his way back, the Pope said: Medjugorje is the fulfilment and continuation of Fatima!

And Our Lady confirmed 7 years later: Dear Children, Also today I invite you to pray, now more than ever that my plan has begun to be realized... I invite you to make renouncements for nine days

so that with your help all that I wanted to realize through the secrets announced in Fatima may be fulfilled. I invite you, my Children, to grasp the importance of my coming and the gravity of the situation (25.08.91).

The following month, in Medjugorje, Mary said: Help my Immaculate Heart to triumph in this sinful world (25.09.91). What other fulfilment of the Fatima plan could there be if not the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart?! This also explains the reason for the apparitions of Medjugorje. Despite everything, in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"said Mary at Fatima.

In "Crossing the Threshold of Hope", John Paul II says that if victory should come, it will be through Mary; that Christ's victory will be had through her because He desires His victories, past and present, to be connected to her. It is also says that Mary appeared to the three children of Fatima and told them words which it seems have come to fulfilment now, at the end of this century.

Many people today lend an ear to all types of prophecies about the future, and the "makers of fear" get richer. But we children of Medjugorje are called to be Mary's apostles, and to spread her joy and the peace which is to come; that "time of peace which my heart impatiently awaits" (25.06.95).ÝÝÝÝ

Sr. Emmanuel

On Pilgrimage with Mary to meet Jesus

The office in Rome for the organization of the pilgrim statues of Our Lady, of which we wrote last issue, is run by Cardinal Medina Estévez, Prefect of the Congregation for the Sacraments and for Divine Worship. His is the preface of the book "Our Lady of France illustrated, Vol. II". The book presents the movement of the Pilgrim statues of Our Lady in the world and includes numerous testimonies by Patriarchs, Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops from the five continents.

In his usual competent manner the Cardinal analyses the doctrinal, ecclesial and spiritual foundations of the Visitations, clarifying the Church's position with regards to the initiative, thus helping us to grasp its importance and wealth. Following is an extract.

What does it mean to love Mary?

Grateful, fond love for the Blessed Virgin is not a marginal part of the Catholic faith, but an expression of blissful awe at God's plan to save us through the works of His merciful love.

The spiritual foundation behind the visitations - For those who open their hearts to a visitation by a blessed statue or picture of the Mother of God, this is a moment of grace and a call to be grateful for and to remember the profound meaning of one's Christian vocation and the call to holiness. It is an invitation to listen to the Word of God and to put it into practice. The Blessed Virgin, who carries her Son, the Lord Jesus, in her arms, points to Him as she says: Understand that He alone is your salvation! He alone is your happiness! He alone is your Teacher! He alone is your Truth!

Ecclesial foundation - The pilgrim images of the Virgin Mary are a legitimate expression of popular piety, and numerous Bishops have testified to the spiritual fruits they bring; these are woven with filial love, devotion, trust, fervent prayers and joy. Truly, the Lord works marvels for Mary.

Doctrinal foundation - For more than a thousand years in the Catholic Church, devotion to sacred images is a means of expressing love for the person represented by the image: the Lord, Our Lady, the angels, the saints, the Cross. The Catechism of the Catholic Church fully explains the true meaning of this devotion (see nos. 1159-1162). During our earthly pilgrimage sacred images remind us of the worldly reality and of the events through which God's mercy has saved us.

The Mother takes us to her Son. Love for the Mother of God will undoubtedly lead a Catholic to her Son who is the source of life; and to the Church, his Body. Christ took on the human form within

Mary's virginal womb, and Mary did not fail to accompany her Son to the foot of the Cross; hence love for Mary is inseparable from the sacramental life where the faithful receive, in eucharistic communion, the Body of Jesus who became flesh in the Virgin's womb to offer Himself in a sacrifice of praise and atonement on the altar of the Cross. Ý
Jorge A. Card. Medina Estévez

How to participate -So Mary can visit all her children, there should be one image every 10,000 people, or in other words 500,000 images to take the Gospel and the Pope's "Totus Tuus" to the whole world.

If in a parish an image of Our Lady is already venerated then it can be taken on pilgrimage from parish to parish, family to family, and in all those places where Mary may talk to her children. This is not always possible; so a good thing to do is offer an image for those who haven't got one. In this case, the association will send the image to one of the 500,000 designated places, and it will receive the Bishop's blessing.

To order a "pilgrim Virgin" for this purpose, write to: NDF, 48 avenue de Paris, F-91410 Dourdan, France. Price, including transport: US\$180

Let us share in this gift which Christ - who lives yesterday, today and always - wants to give to His Mother!

Edmond Fricoteaux

Contact: Ann Thunder, ph. 703 442 0668; 6805 Market Sq., McLean VA 22101, USA; e-mail: thundergroup@juno.com

Padre Gasparino on Prayer - It would be naive to expect the Word of God to provide an answer for every minor aspect of our lives. God's voice is not always clear. Indeed, it could be so soft and subdued that it would take so little to drown it out. But God does respond to humble prayer offered with faith. He may delay answering, because we ourselves need the delay and the very delay trains us to listen. Humility, faith and trust normally grow as we wait. As I wait in silence for God's answer, an awareness of what God expects of me develops. The delay is an incentive to roll up my sleeves and do my bit in order that God may do His. God normally replies, but if I am not sincere, I can be certain I will not hear His voice.

From Saint Faustina's Diary - The Blessed Mother smiled as she told me: 'I desire that you practise the three virtues which are dearest to me and the most pleasing to God. The first is humility. The second is purity. The third is love for God. As a child of mine you should shine especially for the presence of these virtues.'

"When we have Jesus in us His presence is consolation for all our troubles, and His light will shine in our eyes for others to see."

(Fr. Angelo)

* Fr. Alberto Bertozzi is the new president of the "Echo of Mary Association." At the moment he is vice to the parish priest of Castiglione in Mantova, where St. Louis Gonzaga was born. He discovered his priestly vocation thanks to Fr. Angelo. Fr. Alberto gave up his job at the age of 33, he lived in the parish with Fr. Angelo for 12 years, and for 6 of these he studied theology. He became a

priest 6 years ago. Besides legally representing the Association, Fr. Alberto will accompany each edition of Echo with his priestly blessing.

"It is with gratitude and trepidation that I enter to become part of the association which produces Echo. I am aware that I do not have Fr. Angelo's same charism and ability. If the Mother of God so desires, she will continue to call her children to form a single body in Christ. God bless all those who collaborate!"

Villanova, 29 June 2000

* Main language editions of Echo of Mary available in Medjugorje at MIR-Shalom shop opposite St. James church and the Ain Karim shop, in arcade under the International Hotel.