



# ECHO OF MARY

## Queen of peace

### 158

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**Our Lady's message 25 May 2001:**

**Dear Children, In this time of grace I call you to prayer. My Children, you work much, but without God's blessing. Bless and seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, that He may guide you in this time, and so are able to understand and live in the grace which belongs to this time!**

**Convert, my Children, and go down on your knees in the silence of your hearts! Place God at the centre of your very being so that you might witness with joy to the beautiful things God continuously gives you in your lives. Thank you for responding to my call.**

## **Seek the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit**

This message contains precious indications for a journey which begins on a disheartening note: "My Children, you work much, but without God's blessing," but leads to a note of consolation: "witness with joy to the beautiful things God continuously gives you in your lives." On this journey we are not alone, because Mary is with us, and the time is also a favourable one, for it is a time of grace. To paraphrase a verse of the Second Letter of St. Peter (2 Pt 3:9), we could say that Our Lord is patient with us, since He doesn't want anyone to perish, but He wants everyone to be given the opportunity to repent. For this reason Mary continuously and ever so patiently calls us to the way of salvation. Above all, the call to prayer (communion with God) is a constant in Our Blessed Mother's messages. Learning to pray hasn't got anything to do with techniques, theories or philosophy. Praying is communicating with God, in a new dimension which often isn't to do with the world, but is profoundly grafted in our nature as God's children.

Prayer is fruit of divine grace, but at the same time it is also a channel through which grace flows. Therefore, this time of grace must be a special time for prayer. In prayer we experience God's life and His blessing. Thus, Mary's call to bless - apart from being infinitely great - is also extremely clear in its meaning. It is not giving something which comes from us, but is letting God's blessing pass through us! So seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit means above all to make oneself ready and open to His action; and this means knowing how to renounce one's own way of thinking, reasoning and judging. Everything must be reconsidered and seen through the light of the Holy Spirit. This is conversion.

Mary's call is to: "convert, my Children, and go down on your knees in the silence of your hearts." This call allows us to see the greatness of Mary's personality and holiness; and like Mary, we too are called to experience the silence which talks to us of God and in which God talks to us - a silence of inner concentration and adoration, of profound and intimate conversation with God (Mt 6:6). Like Mary, we are also called to make of our hearts a silent reserve of facts and events which have brought us to God (Lk 2:51).

Then, we will have put to good use the grace of this time, and we will have given God centre place in our lives. Mary is not asking us to place God at the centre of our actions or of our thinking, but of our very beings. This means dedicating not some of our faculties to God, but opening up our heart, mind and soul to Him. God must be everything for us, and our lives ought to be an expression of this living and active Presence of His in us.

Illuminated by the Divine Wisdom we will know how to adore this Presence in us and, in the silence of our hearts, go down on our knees before Him. Then, as each day passes, no matter what happens, we will have peace - His gift - and joyfully witness the beautiful things that God gives us continuously in our lives. The joy which comes from God cannot be compared to the fleeting joy the world gives. His joy is the scent of heaven; the taste of Paradise to be found already on this earth and in our lives. So what is keeping us from taking Mary's calls seriously, and trying out the validity of them?

Nuccio Quattrocchi

### **Our Lady's message of 25 June 2001:**

**Dear Children, I am with you and I bless you all with my motherly blessing. Especially today that God gives you abundant graces, pray and seek God through me. God gives you great graces; therefore, my Children, use this time of grace and come close to my heart so I can lead you to my Son Jesus. Thank you for responding to my call.**

### **Jesus is found in Mary's Heart**

On the 20th anniversary of the apparitions, the message summarizes with extreme clarity the meaning of Mary's presence in Medjugorje; which is to lead us to Jesus. Mary's motherhood for us has age-old roots which come from land made fertile by the Blood of Crucified Jesus (Jn 19:26-27). It is by the express will of Jesus that Mary is our Mother. Her motherhood is not a metaphor; it is real, more real than man could ever comprehend. Indeed, her motherhood is vital to us. Mary, who gave God to the world, who bore God physically, is called to generate God's children in the Son, so that God will be everything to everyone (1 Cor 15:28). Mary leads us to Jesus, but we aren't being asked to imitate a certain model or assume a certain type of behaviour or do certain deeds. We are being asked to become similar to Jesus in our heart and soul, right to the depths of our entire being. We need to let the Holy Spirit abide in us and act in us so we can become ever more like the Son. Only the Holy Spirit can work this miracle in us. Nothing we do - no exercises to strengthen the will

or fortify the intelligence - can do this for us.

This is why Our Mother has been asking us for the last twenty years to pray and to surrender to God. We need to throw out from our soul and body everything that is superfluous, everything that obstructs the action of the Spirit in us. That is why Mary invites us to fast. Converting doesn't mean changing something in us, but radically changing life; and this takes time. It can take a lot of time. By the grace of God, we are being given all the time it takes. How many times has Our Lady reminded us that we are living in a time of grace, and that we should make good use of it! Mary's special presence in Medjugorje for so long is a very special grace. And on this day - the 20th anniversary since Her first apparition, and a day in this time of grace - God gives abundant graces. To receive them we need to pray - through prayer our hearts become receptive - but we should also remember that we can reach God if we let ourselves be generated by our Mother: seek God through Me.

Come close to my heart so I can lead you to my Son Jesus. Mary's heart, abode of the Holy Spirit, is where the miracle of our "new birth" (cf. Jn 3:3) can take place. What is impossible for man can be wrought by God in an instant; all we need do is desire it with sincerity of heart. Happy are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set upon the holy journey (Ps 84). Today, God's graces are superabundant. Mary's motherly blessing is upon us. What is keeping us from deciding for God?

NQ

### **Private Revelations within the Church**

In our time it isn't rare to hear talk of apparitions, locutions, lachrymations, healings, prophecies, messages, or extraordinary events in general to do with people who are (or are thought to be) charismatic. Without doubt, abundant charisms have always been present throughout Church history. For instance, biblical witness from both the Old and New Covenants speaks of numerous episodes in which God communicates through special visions such as theophany (manifestation of God), and manifestations of Angels. And some books in the Bible, such as Daniel and Revelation, dedicate a good part of their contents to the description of mystical visions experienced during ecstasy.

Also the lives of many saints are characterised by extraordinary mystical phenomena. Just think of the Fathers of the desert, of St. Gregory Nazianzen who is said to have experienced the first reported Marian apparition (IV century), of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Brigida, and many others. Even St. Paul owes his conversion to a manifestation of the Risen Christ. Nonetheless, some of the saints have also openly mistrusted extraordinary phenomena such as apparitions and locutions. One of these was John of the Cross, and it surprises us, for he was a saintly man who became a doctor of the Church, and he was a contemporary and friend of St. Teresa of Avila (another great mystic of the XVI century!). Not only did he mistrust these things; he was almost hostile about them. But in the Church there always have been different views; and both are legitimate and both are necessary. The phenomenon of mysticism isn't found only in the Catholic Church. It can be found also in the Orthodox Church (where Orthodox saints are often mystics by antonomasia), and in the Protestant Churches (in particular, the Pentecostal movements) where Luther and Calvin haven't

managed to intimidate the faithful.

But this mustn't confuse us. Miracles, prophecies and visions aren't guarantees that a religion is true (or orthodox: conforming to established doctrines). For even in non-Christian religions it is possible to come across extraordinary, even miraculous phenomena. However these are not enough to qualify a religion as an authentic one. By this we mean being truly desired by God to lead all men to salvation. It must also be stated that the term "mystic" does not necessarily imply extraordinary phenomena (apparitions, locutions, etc.). A Christian mystic is one who lives in communion with Christ his Lord through partaking in the Sacraments, meditating the Word of God, through prayer and the practise of the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. In this sense, each Christian who consciously lives his faith is a mystic!

After this rightful introduction, it must be added that amongst God's people there are some to whom God grants special graces (through extraordinary manifestations) for the benefit of all. In general, these people are called mystics. If in the past the mediaeval was marked by a proliferation of extraordinary mystical phenomena, the period following the Council of Trent (1563) was, instead, characterised by greater mistrust. One reason for this was the Counter-Reformation (i.e., those Catholic initiatives meant to hold back the spreading of the Protestant Reformation in Europe) where personal charisms were much more rigidly controlled by the Church. Another factor was the influence exerted by the Enlightenment which stressed the importance of human reason over faith, and all religious manifestations were treated with suspicion and sarcasm.

Later, it would be Pope Benedict XIV (+1758) to define that private revelations, even those with Church approval, cannot and should not be given such status that would bind the faithful to believe in them. If a dogma is binding and necessary for our salvation, private revelations are not. At the same time the Church both allows and encourages faith in private revelations which have received Church approval. At this point we must understand the difference between public and private revelations. When we speak of Public Revelation we mean the Holy Scriptures, and Church Tradition expressed in the dogmas of faith. All other revelations are private, including those which the Church says are authentic and worthy of faith. Such is the case with St. Brigida, St. Catherine Labourè, the apparitions of Guadalupe, of La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Fatima (1917), Banneaux (1933), and others.

In the wake of theological reflection, it is taught that the scope of private revelations is not to add something to the Revelation, or to propose something new; but to offer a practical message of Christian living. Hence, private revelations are better understood when considering their historical and cultural context, while not forgetting that the values they transmit (calling for a more authentic and deeper Christian life) are unchanging and ever timely. Though biblical Revelation is finished, it is not a closed chapter, for it is an announcement of salvation. It is the announcement of Jesus Christ, Son of God, our Saviour! His message is eternal, and each Christian is called to meet Him personally so that the Lord's message might shine outwards and onwards. As Christians, we are also called to learn to discern the good fruits from the bad.

In this light we are able to see private revelations (be they apparitions, messages, locutions, or other) with a sense of authentic Christian freedom, and comprehend that repression is wrong, as is being gullible. People who naively chase after extraordinary phenomena are likely to remain spiritually immature, placing too much emphasis on devotional practices

instead of accepting, in joy and maturity, their Christian freedom. These haven't understood that the very scope of this extraordinary gift is to aid and enhance the practical side of our daily lives.

On the other hand, it is likely that those who approach extraordinary phenomena with prejudice and a sense of intellectual contempt practise a self-contained faith which no longer seeks anything from God, and which no longer has anything to give to others. The Second Vatican Council, which brought an end to the severity of prior centuries, seeks to marry the two needs by calling for prudence and gratitude. We ought to be grateful and feel consoled by charisms, be they extraordinary or not so extraordinary: "These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation.. judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church" (Lumen Gentium, 12).

Things are more complicated, however, when there has not been a definite pronouncement by the Church, as in the case of Medjugorje. Here, the individual, empowered by his baptismal and chrismal unction which makes him king, priest and prophet (that is, called to read and interpret the signs of the times) is called to discern personally by comparing the messages of the Queen of Peace with the eternal Christian teachings; and recognize the tree by its fruits.

Mirco Trabuio

## **Consistory: to meet challenges of new millennium**

"At every moment, but especially at the most decisive moments, the Church has to listen to the Spirit."

During the Regina Caeli prayer of 20 May, the Pope commented on the sixth extraordinary Consistory of the College of Cardinals and asked the faithful to support it with their prayer. Held in the Vatican from 21-24 May, the Pope convoked the Consistory in order to revive in the Church the awareness of her mission to the world. Various issues were discussed: the need for the Church to be more contemplative, personal holiness in evangelization, unity of faith and love, the abuse of globalization and moral issues, the new evangelization, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. The theme of ecumenism was particularly stressed, thanks also to the Pope's recent pilgrimage to Greece (cradle of the Orthodox Church). Three issues, in particular, were the object of greater consideration. These were personal holiness, the missionary work of the Church, and the presence of the Church in the mass media.

Regarding personal holiness, the Pope stressed how the primary effort of every believer and ecclesial community can only be that of striving for holiness, the passionate seeking of God, and the loving contemplation of His face. The call to holiness is for all; no one excluded. If there are different types of ministries, the substance of being Christian is the same for all. Holiness requires daily spiritual nourishment through prayer and the Word of God so that personal holiness spreads to parishes which are called to be communities where relations are warm and brotherly, not cold and bureaucratic. On the subject of the Church's missionary work, Cardinal Tomko summed it up like this: We don't want a Church for maintenance

work, but for missionary work. That means leaving the offices and cathedrals, and going out to meet the people. The Church is for those who haven't yet received the gift of faith, so that all might hear of Jesus Christ, and get to know Him personally. Above all, this mission is to capture people's hearts with the Good News (the Gospel) of Jesus Christ.

The Cardinals spoke of the need of a more incisive Catholic presence in the mass media which would allow the Good News to reach out more effectively to the world's population. Many Cardinals spoke in favour of a globalization of solidarity to help the increasing numbers of the needy and the suffering, for which God's people will have to draw on all its courage to renew its duty to work for justice, solidarity and peace. The Consistory has opened a window for us, enabling us to see a Church who wants to start again from the essentials, with prayer, communion with the Pope, and dialogue. She is aware of the great challenges which await her for the new evangelization, but she relies on the grace of God to accompany her in her mission.

M.T.

## **Pope in Ukraine: "I have come to ask pardon"**

The Holy Father made a pastoral visit to Ukraine from 23 to 27 June 2001. During the visit the Holy Father recalled the anniversary of the Baptism of Ukraine at Kyiv in 988 with the baptism of Prince Vladimir, when Rome and Constantinople were still united. Joyfully greeted by the people of Ukraine, the Pope said upon his arrival: "I have long awaited this visit and have prayed fervently that it might take place. Finally, with deep joy, I have been able to kiss the beloved soil of Ukraine."

Ukraine today is a country which is experiencing great difficulties in democratic, economic and religious terms. With the fall of the USSR, the Church of Ukraine - once attached to Russia - split up into three major jurisdictions: the largest is still tied to Moscow, the second is the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the third is the Ukrainian Patriarchate of Kyiv. The latter two disagree with the former, and for the Church of Russia they are schismatic. There are also the Catholic, and the Greek Catholic communities (the so-called Uniates). The goals of his trip were to confirm the Catholics in their faith, to witness to Christ with all Christians but with the Orthodox above all, and to encourage the resurrection of the nation and the transition to modern democracy. As during his pilgrimage to Greece last May, and his visit to the Holy Land last year, the Pope again expressed his sorrow and asked pardon for the sins committed by the Catholic faithful against their Orthodox brothers and sisters. Here where the majority is Orthodox, the Holy Father courageously and sincerely repeated: "bowing before our one Lord, let us recognize our faults. As we ask forgiveness for the errors committed in both the distant and recent past, let us in turn offer forgiveness for the wrongs endured." He made his intentions clear from the very beginning; to seek recon-ciliation and dialogue with the Orthodox.

Prior to his apostolic journey to Ukraine there was much flowing of ink in expressions of opinions and attitudes. Some were optimistic, contemplating a possible reconciliation between the sister Churches, while others were suspicious and thought his visit would

hinder ecumenical dialogue, in particular between Moscow and Rome. In Orthodox circles faithful to the patriarchate of Moscow, it was being said that his voyage was premature and that he was "challenging" the Orthodox Church with a form of proselytism. But the Holy Father put it in black and white: "I have not come here with the intention of proselytizing," and his humble gesture of asking and granting pardon opened the way for unity, giving the Churches a chance to mature in faith where love offers and accepts forgiveness. On Wednesday, he said: "The only way to clear the path is to forget the past, ask forgiveness of one another and forgive one another for the wounds inflicted and received and unreservedly trust the renewing action of the Holy Spirit."

But why does John Paul II make such exacting and difficult visits? In Greece he stressed that the Lord, not him, desires that, "in a spirit of mutual charity all controversies, past and present, be overcome because the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to the path of unity with all the Churches." He expressed this ecumenical commitment in Ukraine too, where the majority is Orthodox. His prophetic voice urged all Christians to "seek communion with all Christ's disciples." Without doubt he has contributed immensely to the international commission with representatives from both Churches which has been working to create dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox for over 20 years.

John Paul II's visit to Ukraine at the beginning of the third millennium is a sign of hope for this country and for the faithful of the Greek Catholic Church and the Latin Catholic Church, but also for everyone who works for the good of mankind. The words from the apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* are particularly suited to describe the spirit and reason for this visit: "Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ." (58)  
Pietro di Mattia

## People of Russia bearers of God

"Russia and my conversion go hand in hand. My faith was reawakened (from "formal" to an authentic and sincere encounter with Christ) from reading Dostoyevski. I can't say that he brought about the conversion, but God certainly used also this Russian novelist to enter my life. Since then I have greatly admired the ascetics of holy Russia. Yet, I didn't choose them; for they chose me."

With these words, Fr. Divo Barsotti - monk and theologian, an expert on spirituality and a man of deep spirituality himself - begins the first chapter of his *Diario di Viaggio* (Travel Diary). It is an account of his impressions when, in 1996, he was finally able to visit the land he so admired. During his journey to meaningful places where he admired the art and the churches, he was deeply moved by the warmth and friendliness of the people.

"Poverty looms over the population, but both the young people and the elderly bear it with great dignity. As soon as they see me with my monk's habit they press around me, wanting to speak with me, but every attempt at conversation is vain. I am mortified and embarrassed. All I can do is dismiss them with a smile. I am drawn by the beautiful art in the Cathedrals, but even more so, I am deeply moved by my encounters with the people. No work of art, no matter how great, can outdo the greatness of living man; and no experience, no matter how

profound, can beat human solidarity, or I should say the brotherly love which unites us together in Christ. As I sit a woman quietly comes up behind me. She is elderly; I feel her hand caressing my head. She knows I can't understand her language; but her humble devotion can be read in her gaze and her gesture, done perhaps with a note of embarrassment. The people do not distinguish between Orthodox and Catholic priests. If the faithful are able to recognize the presence of Christ in a priest, that presence is enough to inspire feelings of veneration and love.

Yet, an encounter with nuns tears at my heart: they are not willing to talk to us because for them we are "heretic." I am sorrowed, and I think: how long before they are able to see us as brothers? When will love help us overcome the differences? Of course, we are already one in Christ, but this unity ought to be manifest in the sign of a universal Church. As I think of the nuns and of other representatives of the Orthodox Church who did not hide their mistrust in us I am sorrowed. Can it be that the very same faith we both profess, instead of creating unity, makes communion more difficult? It hurts all the more when we think that barriers don't exist for the common people. The first refusal we experienced was by nuns; nuns who should have witnessed to love... So I prayed for Russia, that she might become the holy Russia she was, and her people might become bearers of God once more."

## **"Return to the primitive fervour"**

### **The Magisterium and the messages: indivisible reality**

There exists a clear harmony between the most significant expressions of the public Magisterium of the present Pontiff and the calls by the Queen of Peace in Medjugorje. It is a surprising analogy of contents, a literal coincidence even; a coincidence that is not casual, but appears as the radiation of a superior order, impressed by the Spirit in the missionary action of the Church since her beginning, which He has constantly unfolded down the course of history with the two wings of ministry and charism.

It appears before us with undeniable evidence, even in the very first apostolic community where the hierarchic order and freedom of Spirit - which "blows where it wants" - appear in a mysterious marriage of a superior dynamism of grace, generated by the merciful Love of the Father so that the Bride of the Lamb is always fertile with children, since she is called to "bring forth to a new and immortal life the sons who are born to her in baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God" (Lumen Gentium, 64). In this fundamental work of salvation, as the more recent Council documents remind us, Mary's role is unique and very special: "By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and concerns, until they are led into the happiness of their true home" (LG 62). If this time of grace is "Mary's time" (see message 25 Jan. 1997) in which God has entrusted to Mary the task of leading the ranks of "children of the light" in the definite victory of Her Immaculate Heart over every power of darkness present in the world, then it shouldn't surprise us that the Spirit has called to be the leader of the Church an authentic consecrated child of Mary. Mary herself has called the Pope her "most beloved

child" whom she chose especially for these times: "Pray, my Children, for the health of my most beloved son who suffers, and whom I have chosen for these times" (25 Aug. 1994).

Though he is Mary's beloved son, she has not spared him great trials and suffering of every kind which he has generously supported and offered "for the sake of Christ's body, the Church" (Col 1:24). At the same time, though, she has offered him her constant protection, even through extraordinary interventions, to keep him safe from mortal traps and homicidal hands armed by Satan and his followers: "His enemies wanted to kill him, but I protected him" (13 May 1982). We are not surprised that the Queen of Peace uses such motherly tones when she speaks for him. In September, 1982, Our Lady urged him to put his Petrine ministry at the service of all people of every race and religion, in a scope which goes way beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. And what has John Paul II's pontificate been characterized by if not precisely this? On 26th September, 1982, Our Lady said: "(the Pope) should consider himself father of all men and not just of Christians; and work tirelessly and courageously to spread the message of peace and love to the peoples."

About one year later, through Jelena, Our Lady gave a personal message for him again, urging him to persevere with apostolic resoluteness in the work he carries out at the service of Christ's Love and Truth: "Pray, pray, pray! Do not be discouraged. Be at peace, because God has granted you the grace of defeating Satan." She also urged him to spread to the entire Church the message of peace which She, in Medjugorje, addresses to the world; and to work tirelessly at creating unity among Christians, and to transmit the prophetic light of the Gospel particularly to the youth: "In my messages I urge everyone, in particular the Holy Father, to spread the message which I have received from my Son here in Medjugorje. I wish to entrust to the Pope the word with which I came here. That word is "Mir". He is to spread peace everywhere. Now here is a special message for him: he is to reunite the Christian people with the help of his words and his preaching! Above all, he is to spread to the youth the messages received from the Father in his prayers when God inspires him" (Message 16 Sept. 1983).

Looking back, it doesn't seem at all casual that the Pope published the encyclical "Ut unum sint": the corner stone of the ecumenical journey of the Church; or that in 1986 he proclaimed the first World Youth Day, destined to become the fundamental appointment of grace with young people the world over. And it's not difficult, in our opinion, to see a profound bond between Mary's special presence of this time and the numerous magisterial acts of the present Pontiff; as though they were intimately tied together by a special thread of Marian grace. The same grace, it seems, is present in fundamental pastoral decisions, some of which surprised many because of their revolutionary character; and though certain "experts" had predicted the worst, they have proved to be loaded with spiritual fecundity for the good of the world and the universal Church.

Not only, but there is an obvious similarity in the themes and contents of the messages by the Queen of Peace and some fundamental documents which have so significantly marked John Paul II's pontificate (such as *Dives in Misericordia*, *Salvifici Doloris*, *Redemptoris Mater*, and many others). It is almost as if the Pope has translated Mary's simple yet profound appeals into theological terms. The last Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio ineunte*, published on 6 January 2001, destined to mark out and enlighten the journey of the Church for the third millennium, is particularly so. It seems to symbolically offer to the entire

ecclesial Community the fundamental elements contained in Mary's messages in Medjugorje. At chapter III the Pope says: "I wish to indicate certain pastoral priorities," for the Church for the third millennium." Then he lists in order: holiness ("stressing holiness remains an urgent pastoral task" - no. 30), prayer ("prayer cannot be taken for granted; we have to learn to pray" - 32), the Eucharist (".. a fundamental duty, to be fulfilled as something felt as essential to a truly informed and consistent Christian life" - 36), the Sacrament of Reconciliation ("to discover God who shows us his compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself" - 37), and lastly, "the primacy of grace" (which calls us to the "primacy of the interior life and of holiness", lest we forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" - 38). Could the core of Mary's messages in Medjugorje have been expressed with greater light, or be charged with greater grace?

In his homily at Fatima on 13th May 2000, during the Beatification ceremony of Francisco and Jacinta, the Pope said: "I tell you that one makes more progress in a short time of submission and dependence on Mary than during entire years of personal initiatives, relying on oneself alone. This was how the little shepherds became saints so quickly." And here today we wish to respond to the Blessed Mother, who has been knocking on the doors of our hardened hearts for twenty years, and who has been "waiting for our 'yes' to present to Jesus so He can fill us with His grace" (message 25 May 1992). With renewed awareness that we are your children, and with the desire to remain close to the heart of "your most beloved son," we respond: "Totus tuus, Maria": we are all yours, oh Mary, Mother of ours, and Queen of Peace!

Giuseppe Ferraro

\* Human logic cannot always comprehend the ways of God or of the Blessed Virgin. At Lourdes, for example, Our Lady did not respond to Bernadette's questions . In the same way, her invitations were never accompanied by explanations ("Touch the ground over there. A spring will gush forth."). Mystery veiled her requests; but if she had been more instructive, there would have been no space for faith, hope or love. Our Lady knows it is important that we are given the space to practise these virtues. At Medjugorje, too, the messages are brief and simple; almost essential. Mary does not quench our curiosity about the future, but leaves space for faith, hope and love. She asks: Pray!, and unless our hearts are open we cannot fully comprehend her messages. They would just be words. The Bible, too, contains lots of words, and their living action is impeded by a closed heart. The Queen of Peace expresses God's desire that His words be alive in us; and this can happen only through prayer. T.V.

### **The Grandeur of little Bernadette**

"I will not make you happy in this world, but in the next!" This is what Bernadette heard from the "Lady dressed in white" who appeared to her on the 11th February 1858 at the cave of Massabielle. She was only fourteen years old, little more than illiterate and she was poor, not only because her family lacked financial resources, but because she was lacking in

intellectual capacity, and because her health was extremely poor (she suffered frequent attacks of asthma). Her job was to tend the sheep and her only pastime was the rosary which she recited daily, finding in it consolation and company. Yet, to this child - whom the world would call "useless" - Mary chose to appear with the very name which the Church had declared a dogma only four years previously. I am the Immaculate Conception, Mary told Bernadette during one of her eighteen appearances. Once again, God "chose what is foolish for the world to confuse the wise." In doing so, He overturned all criteria men use for discerning human greatness. This style is typical of God. He chose ignorant fishermen to be His apostles, and entrusted the first Church to them. "Thank you, because if there had been someone more insignificant than me You wouldn't have chosen me.." Bernadette wrote in her Testament, well aware that God chooses His "privileged" children from amongst the least of men.

Bernadette Soubirous was the opposite of a mystic. She was clever at practical things, but her memory was poor. Nonetheless, she never contradicted herself all the times she told what she saw and heard. Why should she be believed? Bernadette was coherent, and she never sought personal gain of any kind. And besides, how could she have known about that mysterious and profound truth on the Immaculate Conception that the Church had only just affirmed? It was precisely this that convinced her parish priest. While a new page was being written for the world on God's mercy (official recognition came only four years later, in 1862), the visionary started on a journey of suffering and persecution which lasted till she died. I will not make you happy in this world... Our Lady was not kidding! Bernadette soon became the victim of suspicion and derision; she had to undergo gruelling interrogations; she was accused of all kinds of things and she was even arrested. Hardly anyone believed her - after all, how could Our Lady have chosen someone like her?

Bernadette never contradicted herself, but she was advised to close herself up in the convent of Nevers where she would be better protected. The day she took the habit, she said: "I have come here to remain hidden," and she was careful not to seek favours because of the way God had chosen her. However there was no fear of her receiving favours in the convent, for here too she was humiliated and treated unjustly. In her Testament she wrote: "Thank you for filling my heart with bitterness - it truly was too soft. Thank you for the sarcasm of Mother Superior, for her harsh voice, for her unjust, ironic and humiliating treatment. Thank you for making me a privileged object of so many reproaches that the sisters would say: 'How fortunate not to be Bernadette!'" This was her way of bearing the treatment that was dealt out to her, including the nasty remark (about being good for nothing) by her mother superior when the bishop was about to entrust her with a task. The man of God, not at all intimidated, replied: "My daughter, given that you are good for nothing, I entrust you with the task of prayer."

Without knowing it he entrusted her with the same mission she received from the Immaculate One at Massabielle when through Bernadette Our Lady asked for conversion, penance and prayer... The little visionary was obedient to the end, praying in the silence of her heart and putting up with everything in union with Christ's passion. She offered it all for the conversion of sinners, according to the Blessed Virgin's desire. Profound joy accompanied Bernadette during her last nine years when she was bedridden because of her illness (she died when she was 35). Whenever anyone tried to comfort her she would

respond with the same smile that illuminated her face during the apparitions: "Mary is so beautiful that whoever sees her desires death so as to see her again."

When the pain became unbearable she would sigh: "I do not seek relief; only strength and patience." Her brief existence spent humbly accepting suffering and pain was the ransom for many souls in need. Hers was a generous response to the requests of the Immaculate Virgin who appeared and spoke to her at Massabielle. Bernadette knew that her holiness did not depend on the fact that she was privileged with Our Lady's apparition. In her Testament, she concluded: "Thank you, my God, for this soul of mine that you gave me, for the days of desert, for the days of darkness and for the days of light, and for your silence. Thank you for everything. Thank you for when You were absent and when You were present; thank you Lord Jesus." Stefania Consoli

\* Body of Pope John XXIII incorrupt - His body has been moved to a new tomb within the Basilica of St. Peter's to make access easier for the thousands of faithful who come to pray over his tomb. A medical and canonical 'recognition' was made prior to preparations for the translation, and when on the 16th January last his body was found incorrupt, it caused intense emotion the world round. Thirty eight years have passed since his death, yet his face has not changed. It has a serene, relaxed look about it, almost as though he were smiling. There are hundreds of cases of incorrupt saints, including Bernadette Soubirous whose body is perfectly preserved in the convent at Nevers. We can be certain that the Good Pope's body has been preserved through miraculous intervention (and not through the action of chemical agents) by looking at the Church: who put his mortal remains on display for public veneration. It isn't easy to understand why we have to suffer, because it is in man's nature to elude and escape its grasp. Our Lady is aware of this human limit, and for this reason will often stress its value while inviting us to accept it with love so it can become an instrument of salvation for us and for others.

In September 1988, Our Lady gave to Jelena Vasilj the following message for the Prayer Group which She herself guided:

"I rejoice, my dear Children, that you desire going to Jesus by taking up your cross every day. Accept it with courage. My Children, this way is strewn with thorns and is difficult, but know that I am next to you and will not leave you alone in any of the situations of your lives. I desire that you journey joyously along the way of the cross. Remember that Jesus did not complain about carrying the cross for you. So you rejoice too when you carry it for the love of Jesus."

## **"Happy are those who mourn"** **by Jelena Vasilj**

When we meditate on human suffering we ought to remember that we are before a profound mystery; and that man himself is a mystery, known fully only by his creator. St. Paul says that his life is hidden, and will be revealed in glory with the coming of Christ (cf. Col 3:4).

Suffering is the most powerful witness that man is not alone; that his origins lie elsewhere; and that this elsewhere is in God. There has not been a time when man has not been fascinated by the idea of owning his own life. When man was still in the garden of Eden he wanted to possess the secrets of his own life, and that of the others. God made it clear to him from the beginning that certain decisions would endanger his own life (cf. Gen 2:17).

With sin man is subject to death, and with this, also suffering which is a type of death or absence of the good man enjoyed at the beginning of creation. It is not thought that man didn't know what it was to work, so it would be wrong to think that his only occupation was to eat the fruits of Eden. We do know that he did not suffer the fatigue of work since it became a malediction as a consequence of his sin; when God said: Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life (Gen 3:17).

The remedy for this absence of good is found in man's return to God; and it is precisely in suffering that man remembers to entrust his life to God, and that he is not self-sufficient, and that the further he gets from God and from others, the greater his inner void grows.

Through the sin of our forefather we have inherited an infirm nature subject to material and moral suffering. True maturity is not in knowing how to control one's own life (Adam's same old error) but in realizing that a bleeding wound is in need of the Physician. Jesus came to heal the sick, and He says to us too: "Why are you so afraid?" (Mt 8:26) ... and we could add: to suffer? Trusting in Jesus and following His example are fundamental for man when he is faced with suffering. Faith is necessary since Christ's Cross is the bond of the new covenant. It is thanks to faith that we are once again bound to the Divinity in Christ's blood. And in imitating Christ's behaviour His eucharistic will is revealed in us: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work" (Jn 4:34).

We too are nourished in the Eucharist by this same will, but often we forget that in the Eucharist we are given the whole person of Christ. Therefore, when we suffer it is necessary for us to unite our will of thanksgiving and offering to that of the Holy Trinity, and know that we are constantly enveloped in the embrace of the Divine Family. We can say that our suffering is greater when we are not in God. To understand this we can think of a small baby who finds comfort in his mother's arms even though he still suffers. So it is for us, and our comfort is found in our Father's embrace. We must never leave Christ. We are his body, and by virtue of His Ascension we repose in heaven with Him. For the same reason, Christ suffers with that part of the body which is still on the earth. We need to pray to the Holy Spirit, Consoler of those who mourn, life and strength of God. Consolation, however, is born from hope, which is generated by the virtue of patience, and this in turn is fruit of suffering (cf. 2 Cor 1:6). We entrust ourselves to His Spouse Mary, Comforter of the afflicted, that her pierced heart might always be a fount of consolation for us.

## "Why does Our Lady appear?"

Fr. Divo Barsotti, 80 year old theologian, and founder of the monastic Community called Figli di Dio, explains from a theological point of view the reasons for Marian apparitions and why they last so long.

What does it mean when we say Our Lady appears? It's a general question that doesn't take into consideration time or place or the historical, cultural and social situations which accompany the events. The apparition itself presents the problem, but we can find help in oriental theology with its interpretation of the evangelical episode of Jesus' transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8). According to this theology it wasn't Jesus who changed before the eyes of the Apostles; but the change was in the eyes of the Apostles who were able to see God's light. We cannot think that God would stay far away from us; for He is more intimate to us than ourselves. And if this is true for our Lord, it is also true for Our Lady. Could a mother stay away and not care for her children?

So the first reason for Mary's apparitions is that they respond to a real necessity of man: he needs to recognize his mother and form a bond with her. In the eyes of God and the Blessed Virgin we are all children, little children in need of care, little toddlers who still can't walk steadily. Our Lady cannot stay away from anyone; when we pray to her she listens. It is unthinkable that a human being could listen to millions of people and all their problems and difficulties all at the same time. Yet, we believe that Our Lady has been given this power, because she is already in God's world, and God allows the human creature to participate in the attributes which are His own. Of course, it is only a participation; there is no real identification of Our Lady with God, but the participation is real. Since Mary is already part of the divine life she is not conditioned by time or space. So, Mary is present all over; she is present for each of us, and her presence is a maternal presence.

Why should she remain in paradise? St. Therese of Lisieux wrote: "When I shall be dead I won't remain in paradise, but I shall descend; for I want to remain with the people." If this is true for a saint, then it is true all the more for Our Lady: we are her paradise! Is not the paradise of a mother the life of her children? God's grandeur is in His humility. It is because He is infinitely great that she is the most humble of creatures. We do not see her; she is pure divine transparency. Through her we see and know nothing but God, God who lives in her, God who made her great by uniting and associating her to Himself in the mystery of His Grace and Love. So what comes of this? It comes that the question at the beginning is turned around: it is not Our Lady who appears; it is our eyes which are able to see.

It is for this reason that Jesus' last miracle in the Gospel - before he went to Jerusalem to be crucified - was in response to the blind man who cried: "Master, I want to see!" (Mk 10:51). It is something we should ask of her too; it is the miracle which allows us to see her appear. An apparition by Our Lady is a gift from her; it is the gift of a new vision. With this new vision we are able to see things which don't normally appear; not because they're not there, but because our vision is unable to perceive this light. It is not death either that makes us see, but the opening of our eyes upon a reality which already exists. It exists and we have been immersed in it since we were baptised, and in it we will remain for ever. The answer can be thus summed up: it is not our eyes which see; it is that Mary needs to be in communion with us. And it can't be any other way. A psalm says that God loves us the way a groom loves his bride. If this is true of Christ, it is even more so of our Mother. We are the

woman's life, She cannot live without us. We are her joy, her wealth, her holiness, because everything she has as mother, she cannot keep for herself - that wouldn't even be Christian!

What I have said so far concerns man in whatever state or moment he happens to be, so we now have to consider that if apparitions take place at a certain moment and in a certain place, we need to delve further for the answer to our question. The first thing needed to understand God's signs, is the humbleness of not presuming we know the King's secrets. At times we can understand why Our Lady appears in certain places and times only when it is all over. Take Fatima: when Our Lady appeared to the three shepherd children it was 1917 and communism was about to overwhelm Europe. We did not and could not know what would come. It was only many years later, with the fall of Communism, that we were able to see that the apparitions in Fatima had to do with Russia and the triumph of the Immaculate Heart. This tells us that when we ask God something, we should be humble enough not to pretend full understanding of His divine plans.

One thing we do know is that God loves us and He loves us infinitely. There is no doubt about this; and there is no reason for us to be anguished because God is love and everything He does reflects this love. The filial love of a child for his or her father is precisely this: not daring to question the Father out of respect for His will. It is respecting the fact that He alone knows why He does the things He does. With regards to the reason for Mary's apparitions, we should care to maintain this humbleness: it is not up to us to know what will be wrought by the secret action of Grace for our tomorrows, but we do know that when the action of this Grace will have opened our eyes to contemplate the divine plan, we will know the reason for what has been happening.

That an apparition by Our Lady should continue 20 years on a daily basis to more than one person would have been unthinkable just fifty years ago. Not only; the way in which she appears is new too. Previously, apparitions were related to holiness, where seers were pure and innocent, they being either very young or old and wise. In the case of Medjugorje, however, the seers are our brothers and sisters and no different to us. At first I was worried: why does Our Lady not ask any of them to renounce matrimony in favour of virginity? Have we not always thought that a nuptial relationship with Christ demanded this total offering of self? I felt confused, but then I understood. (However, in judging God one must be very humble!) I understood that this was the beauty of these apparitions: Our Lady descending into the abyss of our poverty (which is human reality), and creatures who turn to God without suppositions but are certain to receive everything in a trusting surrender of selves to God.

How should this offering to the Blessed Virgin be lived? Totally: wherever we are and at all times. It is not a question of saying many prayers, because the recitation of formulas can be deceiving when they are repeated without meaning. Our relationship with her should be like that with our loved ones. A mother doesn't need to be taught how to relate to her children, and her children don't need to learn how to relate to their mother. The heart simply opens and the soul receives God's message. I don't know why God does what He does. All I am asked is to believe - really believe - in Love. God is Love and His loves reaches me through a mother's heart. May the life of us all become a joyful hymn, as that is what God wants from us. We must never forget that Our Lady is with us forever. We cannot be intimidated

by death, for she will accompany us beyond the veil where everything will be beautiful. Sweet is the wait for that last apparition when we will live for ever in the joy of heaven.

Fr. Divo Barsotti

## News from the blessed land

### **"I see Our Lady - that doesn't make me a saint!"**

"It often happens that people ask me if I'm "the Marija from Medjugorje," and it makes me think of the episode from the Scriptures when Paul reproaches the Corinthians (1 Co 1:12): "I belong to Paul.. I to Apollos.. I to Cephas." But let's now ask ourselves who we belong to. Are we perhaps "Medjugorjans"? No! The answer is: we belong to Jesus Christ!"

With these words, seer Marija Pavlovic began her talk at the sports centre in Florence (18 May) where 8,000 people gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Mary's apparitions in Medjugorje. With a tone of familiarity Marija shared her experiences and her sentiments, as a seer and more so as a Christian who, like us, is occupied with following the way of holiness.

"I didn't ask Our Lady to appear; she decided to appear to me. Once I asked her why she chose me and I still remember her smiling face when she replied: 'God permitted me and I chose you!' All too often, because of this, people put us on pedestals and want to make saints of us. It is true that I have chosen the way of holiness, but I am not yet a saint!"

It is quite common that people who experience supernatural events are quickly "sanctified" only by those who know little about the world of God. It is a form of idolatry. To become attached to someone chosen to be God's instrument is almost wanting to seize God who manifests Him-self in that person. "It's not easy when people think you're a saint and you know you're not," continues Marija. "Journeying on the path of holiness is difficult for me too, just as it is for everyone else. It's not always easy for me to love, fast or pray, and I don't feel that I've made it just because Our Lady has appeared to me. I'm called to sanctify myself in my role as woman, wife and mother! Some even treat me as a clairvoyant and ask to know their future!"

The invitation is clear: a seer isn't a star! Seers reflect the supernatural. The reflection permits the community to see something of God's light and be edified. "Our Lady has shown us various supernatural dimensions, including the one where we go after death. At the end she said: Now you have seen you must witness! I think our main task is, yes, to witness, but also to apply the Blessed Virgin's teachings to our own lives. But Mary isn't just our mother, for she's a teacher, sister and friend; and our witness should make others fall in love with her. We let doctors examine us so that nonbelievers might begin to believe, and believers might believe more. Now it is important to persevere, so that this tree which the Queen of Peace has planted is allowed to grow. In twenty years it has grown so much that its shade reaches the ends of the earth. Every day a new prayer group is born; even in China where

the Christian faith is severely persecuted."

In her talk Marija stressed the importance of taking up an authentic spiritual journey, firmly rooted in faith, hope and love. "Once Our Lady said: 'In this mosaic every person is important...' So, in prayer, we can discover that task and say: 'I am important in God's eyes!' Then it will be easy to put into practice Jesus' commandment to shout from the roof tops what we have heard."

Marija and the thousands of faithful then prayed, and after the Rosary which she led during Eucharistic Adoration, the apparition by the Blessed Virgin came as a seal for a day spent celebrating God for lavishing His love on us through a very special Mother. Other speakers included Jelena, Alberto Bonifacio, and Frs. Jozo, Amorth, Leonard, Divo Barsotti, Gianni Sgreva and Barnaba. Together with the participants they represented many pieces of a mosaic where each piece is different in colour and shape, but each is important for the amazing work of art Our Lady is offering to the world.

Stefania Consoli

## **NEWS OF THE ANNIVERSARY IN MEDJUGORJE**

### **Preparation and gratitude for "moment of grace"**

Thanks to prayer Our Lady's message has reached the most remote parts of the world. This was confirmed by the presence of thousands who came from all over the world for the anniversary celebrations. It is not possible here to list their nationalities, but it has been estimated that 100,000 pilgrims were present!

Thanks to prayer grace was abundant during the anniversary for parishioners and pilgrims who prepared for this anniversary with a special Novena. In Medjugorje the Novena consisted in daily recitation of the Rosary on Podbrdo (Apparition hill), a specially composed novena prayer which was recited every evening, and daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament every evening after the regular prayer programme. Other preparations included improvements to the road between Tromedje and the Shrine, and a lot of work involving new publications.

Celebrations were centred on gratitude for all the gifts God has given through Mary. On the mornings of 24 and 25 June, Masses were celebrated in 17 languages, while the evening Mass of the 24th was concelebrated by 210 priests, and on the 25th by 273 priests from about 20 different countries. The annual Peace March was also held on the eve of the anniversary and feast day of St. John Baptist. Both Vicka and Jakov marched with the 12,000 parishioners and pilgrims who sang and prayed as they followed behind their Lord in the Blessed Sacrament who led the procession

Holy Mass on the eve was celebrated by Fr. Sikiric, professor of theology in Sarajevo, who said: "The great number of people present, and the number of languages used to proclaim the Gospel here this evening, is a clear sign that you have responded to the supernatural sign

first offered by Our Lady twenty years ago. Here in Medjugorje heaven has given us an irrational sign to which we can respond in a rather mad way through faith and total surrender. It is odd that people seek out supernatural demonstrations, when our own faith is a supernatural mystery in itself!"

## **25 June: "The grandeur of the Invisible"**

People, from all parts of the world: walking, talking, kneeling, praying... Today Medjugorje is a beehive of activity. The church is not big enough to hold any of the 17 language groups present for Holy Mass. Numerous pilgrims (mostly local people) walked bare foot for kilometres under steaming heat to come here today.

The presence of Grace could be perceived very early in the morning; as if all Medjugorje and the entire world had become a "Podbrdo". Mary brought peace for all, and God's living presence could be felt. Divine Life vibrated through the air, calming the arguments, temptations and trials which were so strongly felt during the Novena. It was as if the soul had been immersed in the safety of God's existence: the Lord stretched out his arms and gave a command, and the storm ceased immediately!

If people's faces bore the signs of the burdens and worries of life, they also reflected an inner force: eyes shone with the living faith offered by Mary to all. The apparition on this anniversary day took place at 6.40 pm in the so-called "yellow room" where seers Marija and Ivan gathered with family members and some priests. Marija later referred that the Gospa was very happy. Many of the people who were present in the room referred having experienced a special presence. Some said they were able to see the figure of Our Lady; while others noticed that the room became particularly luminous during the apparition. The main celebrant of Holy Mass in the evening was Fr. Ante Vuckovic, professor of theology at Split, and he underlined how Our Lady recognized her own littleness in the light of God's greatness, which is why she teaches that we are closer to God through our littleness and weaknesses.

The Franciscan Provincial, Fr. Tomislav Pervan, concluded with these words: "I wish to say a big thank you to the Lord! I was here at the beginning when 20 years ago Our Lady came as the Queen of Peace. Years of struggle followed, but in the end the truth prevailed. The presence of the Holy Spirit can be seen by the spirit of things; and the spirit of Medjugorje leads to the Church. You are all witnesses to this; you are the Church that responds with faith and prayer. One of the special characteristics of Medjugorje is that it is present the world over with prayer groups, centres and publications, in a kind of worldwide network which enables Grace to reach out, touch and heal hearts."

Responding to recent news from the Vatican on doubts concerning the truthfulness of the apparitions, the Father Provincial expressed his profound conviction that Our Lady's apparitions and calls in Medjugorje were true; and he encouraged those present to continue on their journey of faith in the truth. He then especially thanked the parish community and the Franciscan Province for the work they do in the service of the Queen of Peace.

At ten o'clock in the evening, many pilgrims were present for an extraordinary apparition on Podbrdo; and the hill once again became alive with singing and prayers.

At the end of this intense day it becomes almost natural to draw conclusions. And what has become evident is that Medjugorje, once an obscure country parish, has become an international shrine, where not human effort, but supernatural grace is poured out for the edification of the universal Church.

The words expressed by St. Paul many centuries ago ring out again: "It was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen. The human race has nothing to boast about to God" (1 Cor 1:27-29). Clearly, a divine hand was guiding the events of the day, and that divine hand belonged to the Queen of Peace. Human reckoning is certainly shattered in Medjugorje, for its strength is this grace. Its greatness lies not in something visible, but in something invisible. God: mighty, ever-present and totally comprehensive is not visible for the world to see, but can be seen through the eyes of faith, hope and love. And Mary is calling us here!

(From our correspondent in Medjugorje, Paula Jurcic)

Annual apparition for Ivanka - One of the six seers, Ivanka Ivankovic-Elez, received her last daily apparition in 1985. Our Lady promised to appear to her every year on the anniversary date, and also this year, in the presence of Ivanka's family, Our Lady appeared. Ivanka said that she was joyful, and spoke to her about the future of the Church, and then gave the following message for us all:

"My dear Angels! I thank you for your prayers, because it is through them that my plan comes into realization. Therefore, my Angels, I ask you to: pray, pray, pray, so my plan might be fulfilled. Receive my motherly blessing."

## **Cardinal Winning strong advocate of respect for life**

The recent death of Cardinal Winning, Archbishop of Glasgow, Scotland was a great loss for the pro-life movement. He stood out as a strong voice for the defence of the human person, the unborn child, the elderly threatened with euthanasia and those, like the unemployed, pushed to the margins of society.

In 1999 he marked his Golden Jubilee of Ordination with this superb defence of the family: "There are very well organised and resourced forces at work in our society which are hell-bent on destroying the Christian family. To those people I say: you will not conquer. As a Christian I have to accept the reality of other family forms, but for me and my Church there is only one model and the sooner society returns to it, the healthier we will all be. The model: husband, wife, child - in a stable environment."

## Letters from readers

Uganda, Africa: "Thank you for your continued spiritual nourishment you have given me by keeping me in your mailing list. Every time I read Echo I feel the power of God moving among His people." Dr. Eyudu

Redditch, England: "Echo is always a joy to receive; an inspiration and a beautiful gift to pass on to others. God bless you all at the Echo, and may Jesus and Mary help us readers to lead holier lives!" (G. & D. Bree)

Macau, HK - "Your Echo is very helpful for my talks to our Chinese Queen of Peace Prayer Group. May She bless your wonderful work!" (Fr. D. Martin)

Tanzania, Africa: "We thank Jesus and Mary for their special love for us people of Tanzania because we have been receiving messages from Heaven through this little gift of your Echo. We have benefited a great deal spiritually. We hope you will continue to send it to us..." (Emilia F. and Anna Msoffe)

Nigeria: "We are all so grateful! All those who receive and share a copy testify how greatly they gain from the spiritual messages.. I am very sorry we cannot send any financial help ..most of the beneficiaries are either religious or poor people." (AnthonyM Mofunanya)

Slovenia: "Thank you for continuing to send me the Echo. It is my only source of news of Medjugorje. Please continue to keep me on your mailing list." (Br. Peter Mullaney)

Philippines: "I have been receiving Echo for several years. I always read it completely and give it to others. Last year I attended the retreat for priests in Medjugorje. Please keep me on your mailing list..." (Fr. De Meulenaere, Don Bosco Boys' Home)

Japan: "I'm very grateful to receive regularly the Echo. It is so informative and spiritually uplifting. I would appreciate very much to continue receiving it." (Fr. Sean Mary Ryle)

\*\* Dear Readers of the English edition, as you know, the Echo is a free publication which spreads the Christian message to the world, and is financed by donations from readers. While we thank those who have sent donations, we must also advise that for some time money received from our English-speaking readers has not been covering production and mailing costs for the English edition.

Despite this, we have continued to send it without charge to all those who make a request. True, many of our readers are from third-world countries; and many are religious and missionaries, but we are obliged to let you know that the diminishing donations are putting the future of this edition at risk.

Our hope is that hearts might be touched and the needs of this publication met. We place our hope in the hearts of Mary and Jesus.

## **How to Help the Echo of Mary**

Personal cheques accepted.

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*Let us remain together  
in the motherly blessing  
of the Queen of Peace  
to bring to the world  
abundant fruits of peace  
and reconciliation.*

Villanova, 25 June 2001

20 years of apparitions by Queen of Peace in Medjugorje!