



# **ECHO OF MARY**

## **Queen of peace**

### **166**

**November- December 2002**

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Message of 25 September 2002:

**Dear Children, also in this restless time, I invite you to pray. My Children, pray for peace so that in the world every person might love peace. Only when the soul finds peace in God can it be happy; and love will then flow out onto the world. And in a special way, my Children, you are called to live and to witness peace - peace in your hearts and in your families; then through you, peace will also begin to flow out into the world. Thank you for responding to my call.**

### **Living and Witnessing Peace**

Also in this restless time I invite you to pray. The reference to the difficult times on the international scene seems clear. Mary, Queen of Peace, watches over us, while calling for mobilization to defend peace. Prayer, above all, is our weapon, without letting ourselves be disturbed by these restless times, by anxiety. Real peace comes from God, and so we must ask for it from Him. Pray for peace so that in the world every person might love peace. What peace?

Christ is our peace (Eph 2: 14). When He came into the world the Angels announced peace to men of good will (Lk 2: 14): peace to those whose will is oriented to God's. When Jesus bade farewell to the Apostles, just after Judas had departed so as to betray Him, Jesus fulfilled the Angel's announcement: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (Jn 14:27).

With His blood spilt on the Cross Jesus enacted God's reconciliation with man, and thus, with peace. Peace between the Creator and His creature, peace amongst creatures, peace in the world, The prince of peace (Is 9:5) inaugurated His dominion in which peace will have no

end (Is 9:6).

Therefore, peace can be attained! All it takes is for us to open our hearts and accept it. Mary teaches us how to receive this gift. She appears in Medjugorje precisely for this reason. The highway that leads to it is called surrender. "Today I invite you to total surrender to God. Give all that you have, and all that you do to God so that He can reign in your life as King of all that you have. Only this way can God guide you, through me, into the depths of the spiritual life... I bring you peace; I am your Mother and I am the Queen of Peace... May God be everything for you in your lives" (25 July 1988).

Give all to God; everything that we do and all that we have. May God be everything in your life. This is the surrender to which Mary untiringly calls us. This is the condition so that Jesus might reign in us, so that our soul might find peace in God. Give everything to God: our time, our actions, our work, our rest, our thoughts, our desires, our worries .... that is: hand our life over to Him. This donation of self allows Christ to live in us, making it possible for us to live and witness peace. This isn't just an invitation; it is an explicit and a special call: In a special way, my Children, you are called to live and to witness peace. It is both an urgent call and one with great responsibility.

Peace cannot be built within the palaces where the world's powerful men gather. If anything, war is sanctioned there. Peace in the world is exclusively a gift from God, and it flows through the little and humble people who know how to open themselves to Him and bear within their hearts and their families the gift of peace. Through them peace will flow out onto the world, and with peace, also love.

This call to live Mary's message is a serious one! And the stakes are high, much higher than what we can imagine. Peace!

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Message of 25 October 2002:

**Dear Children, also today I invite you to pray. Believe, my Children, that with simple prayer miracles can be wrought! Through your prayer, you open your hearts to God, and He works miracles in your life.**

**By looking at the fruits your heart is filled with joy and gratitude for God for all that He does in your life and, through you, also for others.**

**PRAY and BELIEVE, my Children. God gives you graces, and you do not see them. Pray and you will see them. May your days be**

**filled with prayer and thanksgiving for everything that God gives you. Thank you for responding to my call.**

## **Simple Prayer works miracles**

Again we are invited to pray. How could it be any other way? Without prayer there is no life in God. Praying is remaining in God's presence, and receiving His Word. It is opening our heart to the Holy Spirit and letting Him speak for us (Rm 8:25-26). Praying is also letting ourself become like Christ and living by His Word.

Believe, my dear Children, that with simple prayer miracles can be wrought! Simple prayer is the humble prayer of the tax collector, who admits he is a sinner, and pleads for mercy (Lk 18:10-14). Simple prayer is not the babble of the pagans (cf. Mt 6:7). Simple prayer, not composed, not mixed up with other ideas, is essential, with no frills attached. Just like the Lord's Prayer taught to us by Jesus: the Our Father. Just like the Rosary which is so dear to the Catholic population and which is the Holy Father's favourite prayer (he recently dedicated his latest apostolic letter to the Rosary: *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*).

Mary has asked us to pray this simple yet great prayer of the Rosary so many times! The Pope has now dedicated an entire year to the Rosary, and he has given us the mysteries of light to complete those we have contemplated to date. The aim of this addition is to broaden the horizon of the Rosary, so that it might be possible for those who recite it with devotion - and not mechanically - to penetrate even more deeply the contents of the Good News, and conform one's life even more closely to that of Christ (John Paul II, general audience 16.10.02).

With simple prayer miracles can be wrought. Conform one's existence to that of Christ: is not this the greatest miracle? Mary invites us to believe in this fruit of simple prayer, and she explains how it can happen. "Through your prayer you open your hearts to God and He works miracles in your life." All God's actions are miracles, so His response to our prayer, His interventions in our lives, are miracles. We don't always recognize this, and that is why Mary invites us to look at the fruits of God's action in us. By looking at the fruits your heart is filled with joy and gratitude for God for all that He does in your life and, through you, also for others.

If only we knew what God is offering (Jn 4:10), how our life would change! The fruits are there for us to see, otherwise Mary wouldn't have asked us to look at them. They are fruits of grace for us and for those to whom the Lord wants to reach out through us. Pray and believe. God gives you graces and you can't see them. Pray and you will see.

Prayer and faith intertwine, and so do prayer and light. Pray with faith so our prayer is not vain. Pray and see, so our prayer is not blind. The awareness of what God does in us will deepen our faith, and consequently, our days will be filled with prayer and thanksgiving. Peace be with you! N.Q.

## **Pope proclaims "Year of the Rosary"**

Those who for years have been responding to the appeal by the Queen of Peace to "grasp hold of the Rosary and to pray, especially in the family, for peace," may take this news for granted; yet it is truly an exceptional event. John Paul II on 16 October last, at the beginning of his 25th year of Pontificate, proclaimed a Year of the Rosary (Oct. 2002 - Oct. 2003). He accompanied this news with an apostolic letter - Rosarium Virginis Mariae. "A simple yet profound prayer, at the dawn of this third millennium, it remains a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness."

The letter is dense with emotion, and reveals John Paul's love for that which many considered a "devotion for old women." Instead, the Pope asks for everyone's help in countering "a certain crisis of the rosary which in the present historical and theological context risks being wrongly devalued and for this reason not taught to the new generation."

### **"My favourite prayer"**

The old Pontiff draws from his own experience: "Since my youthful years this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life. The Rosary has accompanied me in both joyful and trying times. To it I have entrusted many worries, and in it I have always found comfort. I have received so many graces over these years from the Bl. Virgin through the Rosary!"

His own experience inspired him to write this letter on the Rosary. "After the Jubilee, I wrote a letter to invite everyone to 'start off again from Christ.' I felt the need to develop a reflection on the Rosary so that people could contemplate the face of Christ in company with and at the school of the Blessed Mother. After all, reciting the Rosary is nothing else but contemplating Christ's face in company with Mary."

### **Objections to the Rosary**

The Letter and the Year of the Rosary are wonderful opportunities to throw proper light on this powerful spiritual instrument. "There are some who think the centrality of the Liturgy necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary... yet not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, it sustains it, since it serves as an excellent introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives," stressed the Pope who knows that there are many in his Church who think differently. Still others fear that with the Rosary Jesus' image is over-shadowed by Mary's, but the Pope points out: "The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer... The life and prayer of believers is centered upon Christ," and like the Rosary, "everything begins from him, everything leads to him, everything, through him, in the Holy Spirit, attains to the Father." "In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium. .. Never as in the Rosary do the lives of Jesus and Mary appear so deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ!"

### **A path of contemplation**

But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which the Pope proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* as a genuine 'training in holiness.' He said: "What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the 'art of prayer.' It is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become 'genuine schools of prayer'."

### **Pray for peace!**

The Blessed Virgin of Medjugorje has been inviting us to pray for peace for the past 21 years. This time it is her "most beloved son" to repeat the same invitation: The Rosary is by nature a prayer for peace... Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of its Hail Mary's, the Rosary has a peaceful effect in those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them that true peace which is the special gift of the Risen Lord.

"A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary

timely. First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace... To rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ who 'is our peace' since he made 'the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility' (Eph 2:14)." Also the family is increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and practical planes. So "the revival of the Rosary in Christian families will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age." By focusing our eyes on Christ, the Rosary makes us peace-makers in the world.

## **The Rosary in the Family**

The family that prays together stays together. Here the Holy Father echoes Our Lady's call in Medjugorje to pray in the family. The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together.. Once very dear to Christian families, it is important not to lose this precious inheritance. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching tv. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, and of His most blessed Mother.

## **Rosary, a treasure to be rediscovered**

The Holy Father underlines the wealth of the Rosary: a prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Let us do so as a means to confirm the direction outlined in my Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

Next issue will give us further opportunity to look more closely at this reflection on the Rosary, but in the meantime we anticipate its conclusion so we can see how the Pope desires that his appeal is accepted with responsibility.

I turn particularly to you, Brother Bishops, priests and deacons: through your own personal experience of the beauty of the Rosary, may you come to promote it with conviction.. I also place my trust in you, theologians: may you help the faithful discover the biblical foundations, the spiritual riches and the pastoral value of this traditional prayer.

## **May this appeal of mine not go unheard!**

I count on you, consecrated men and women, called to contemplate the

face of Christ at the school of Mary. I look to you all, brothers and sisters of every state of life.. Christian families.. the sick and the elderly.. and young people: confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives."  
Stefania Consoli (Continued next issue)

## **Rosary has five new mysteries "Mysteries of Light"**

It was as if there were something missing from the Gospel scenes which make up the Joyful Mysteries (the Incarnation and the Infancy of Jesus) and the Sorrowful Mysteries which synthesize the Saviour's supreme earthly mission known as His Passion. In fact, there was no mention of the events which characterize Jesus' three years of public life. That is why the Pope desired five new "mysteries of light" He explains:  
"Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the 'light of the world' (Jn 8:12). Yet this truth emerges in a special way during the years of his public life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom."

1. The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became "sin" for our sake (cf. 2Cor 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:17), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with His mission.
2. Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1- 12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers.
3. Another mystery of light is the proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and His calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) while forgiving the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk 2:3-13; Lk 7:47- 48).
4. The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to "listen to him" (cf. Lk 9:35).
5. A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies "to the end" his love for humanity (Jn 13:1).  
"In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of Mary remains in the background," says JP II. "Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and

echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary's lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: 'Do whatever he tells you' (Jn 2:5). This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ's public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the "mysteries of light". This unexpected but clever integration of the new mysteries (which the Pope suggests be prayed on Thursdays - and the Joyful Mysteries on Saturdays) into the traditional prayer of the Rosary gives it new freshness and will definitely create renewed interest in this Christian spirituality which introduces one into the depths of Jesus' Heart: an abyss of joy and light, of sorrow and glory. S.C.

## **A Saint for daily life**

On 6 October 2002, in St. Peter's Square, before one of the largest and most orderly group of pilgrims, the Holy Father canonized St. Josemaria Escrivà de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei, and called his message of sanctifying daily life valid for all believers.

"All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom 8:14) said the Pope. "These words help us understand better the significant message of today's canonization of Escrivà. With docility he allowed himself to be led by the Spirit, convinced that only in this way can one fully accomplish God's will."

This fundamental Christian truth was a constant theme in his preaching. Indeed, he never stopped inviting his spiritual children to invoke the Holy Spirit to ensure that their interior life, namely, their relationship with God and with their family, and their professional and social life, totally made up of small earthly realities, would not be separated but would form one life that was 'holy and full of God'. He wrote: 'We find the invisible God in the most visible and material things'. "The ordinary life of a Christian who has faith," Escrivà used to say, "when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is always present." This supernatural vision of life unfolds an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives, because, even in the only apparently monotonous flow of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation," continued the Pope.

"Ever since 7 August 1931 when, during the celebration of Mass, Jesus' words echoed in his soul: 'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself' (Jn 12:32) Escrivà saw more clearly that the mission



of the baptized consists in raising Christ's Cross above all human reality and he felt burning within him the impassioned vocation to evangelize every human setting." "To elevate the world to God and transform it from within: this is the ideal the holy founder points out to you, dear brothers and sisters," said JP II who never tires of warning us to beware of a society which attacks Christian values. "Escrivà continues to remind you of the need not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialist culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ's disciples.

By following in his footsteps, society is made aware that whatever our race, class, society or age we are all called to holiness."

Editorial team

With the thousands of young people in Medjugorje, Daniel Ange traced out a kind of "astronomic" trail to define the Church. They are the twelve bright stars in Mary's crown, who is Mother and Queen of the Church.

## **The Church's Twelve Stars**

**by Daniel Ange**

To the young people in Toronto the Holy Father said something which was extremely simple: "If you love Jesus, then love the Church!" We shall ask Mary to let us see and love the Church the way she sees it and loves it. I want to speak to you of the Church made up of 12 stars.

The first star is the eternal Church, the Church in its entirety. The Church is eternal because its beginnings are found in the heart of the Holy Trinity, all the way down the centuries and throughout history.

The Church is made up of three great galaxies which are interconnected. There's the galaxy called Heaven, and it is the most numerous. The greater part of the Church is in Heaven, and each time the Mother of the Church comes to visit us on earth, She is showing us that Heaven exists, She shows us our future and our immortality.

Between the Church in Heaven and that on Earth there is another little galaxy called Purgatory. God's Love is so great that at the moment of our death if our heart still hasn't become like that of a child's, the Lord gives us the wonderful chance called Purgatory where we can become as pure as children.

Our time on the earth is a time of faith; in Purgatory it is a time of joyful hope, and Heaven is living with, by and on Love. These galaxies

communicate love and life to each unceasingly.

Second star: Jesus is never alone. He can't exist without His Church. With Adam the Church began to exist on the earth. Before Jesus' birth in the world the Church already existed; there was Mary: she is the Church who welcomed God into the world. The Church was also Joseph, John, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the shepherds, the Wise Kings ... Jesus is surrounded by His Church even when He begins His missionary life. In fact, the first thing He does is say to Nathanael, to Peter, to John: "Follow me!"

The Church is the crib of God's Word just as Mary is God's crib on the earth. It is the Church which transmits to us everything that belongs to Jesus, and which gives us His presence. Not only does the Church speak to us of Him, but it gives us Jesus in the Eucharist. There could not be Eucharist without the Church, and each time we evangelize we are not announcing a message or a theory, but we are giving to others the very Person of God because we are God's ambassadors.

Third star: Jesus identifies Himself with the Church. On the way to Damascus, when Saul asked: "Who are you, Lord?", Jesus didn't respond: "I am the Jesus of the Christians whom you persecute," but only: "I am Jesus, the one whom you persecute." All the forms of persecution against the Church which will continue for as long as the world exists are attacks against Jesus in His Church. The Church continues to do what Jesus did during His 33 years in Palestine - which is to continue freeing prisoners, healing the sick, and opening up Heaven for the dying.

Fourth star: the Church is not only the Body of Jesus, for it is also the Bride; and even if this Bride is unfaithful, the Groom will never abandon her. The union created between Jesus and His Church is a nuptial union, in both a mystical and physiological sense, because Jesus is joined to His Church through the donation of His Body in the Eucharist.

Fifth star: The Holy Church made up of sinners never separates holiness and sin. The Church donates all God's holiness, particularly through the sacraments, thanks to which sinners can become saints again. This holiness of God is transmitted to us through poor sinners.

Aware of this, the Holy Father during the Jubilee asked forgiveness for all the infidelity expressed by the Church over the past two thousand years. This gesture expresses all the holiness of the Church.

**Sixth star:** The Church shows off her best profile. Everywhere, down the centuries, the first hospitals, and leper hospitals, and orphanages, and homes for the elderly, and for Aids patients, were founded by disciples of Jesus. Wherever there are people who suffer, the Church is present. With her saints the Church has marked history; she has saved humanity because she has always defended man from himself.

**Seventh star:** The Church is renewed continuously, so that it is eternally springtime. The World Youth Days are a manifestation of the Church's eternal youthfulness. Which political or religious leader would be otherwise capable of gathering together hundreds of thousands of young people from all round the earth? Who else but John Paul II could do this? Yet the Holy Father doesn't gather up these young people around himself. He gathers ambassadors of the world's youth around God in the Eucharist.

**Eighth star:** The relationship between the bone structure of the Church and the rest of the Church is harmonious. The skeleton is the part Christ Himself built: so we have bishops, priests, the sacraments, etc. The blood which runs through His veins is everything that the Holy Spirit inspires within the life of the Church, such as holiness, works of charity, religious communities, especially all the new communities. One cannot separate that which Jesus gave from that which the Holy Spirit gives. They are the two hands of the Father with which God builds the Body of the Church.

**Ninth star:** Church Unity. God's dream is that all His children might be one. The first millennium was marked by an undivided Church. The second millennium by great fractures within the Church. In this newly born third millennium God will give to the Church - to His Body - its original unity. It will be much more beautiful than at its beginning, because during this last phase local Churches have studied particular aspects which when put together will transmit extraordinary completeness. Unity is created around the heart of the Church, which is the Eucharist.

**Tenth star:** the Missionary Church. How can we keep for ourselves this enormous treasure of novelties, of beauty, of light? The Church heals us of our sin, and eliminates much suffering. If everyone lived according to the Gospel, there would be no more war, or Aids, or divorce, or abandoned children...

When I know that Jesus is the only answer for all man's expectations,

how can I love Him without also doing everything in my power so that others can also know Him and love Him? This was the reason why I abandoned my life as a hermit in the desert. I couldn't stand the idea any longer that so many young people were committing suicide, while I had God's own life within me. I see that Medjugorje over these twenty or so years has been a real school of evangelization for the world. Our Lady often calls us in no uncertain terms to "witness God's joy with your life," or: "I desire that through you the entire world might come to know the God of joy. I want you all to be the reflection of God, to be the light that shines in the dark!"

Eleventh star: The Church is the only place on the earth where life and love are protected. We have left behind us a century of endless war: man against man. And as if that weren't enough, a billion and a half babies were killed before they were even born. Satan can't stand anything that is weak or little or poor because every child reminds him of that little Jesus in Mary's womb; and every person who suffers reminds him of that Man on the Cross.

All that propanda for euthanasia comes straight out of Hitler's scripts written in 1932. Satan rebels because he refused to kneel before a newborn and say: "You are my Creator." The Church is involved in this great battle between life and death. And just as a mother defends her little ones, also in the Church we find thousands of young people who are able to consecrate themselves, who remain pure till marriage, who entrust their love to Mary. And these aren't just Catholics, but also Protestants, and Orthodox and Hebrew.

Twelvth star: The Church is victorious. In this great battle to save life and love the Church is already victorious. I no longer need to believe in Jesus' Resurrection because I have seen Jesus rise in His Church. I have seen that no persecution, no matter how bad it might be, can ever bury the Church in the catacombs for long, because there is not a stone that can keep Jesus closed up in the tomb for more than a couple of hours. Amen.

(From a recording)

## **Why do we pray to the Saints?**

Each of us from the moment of conception, in eternity, is part of God's plan. St. Paul's story is known to all. For many years he lived as "Saul"

who persecuted Christians. Then God called him, and a rapid change came about in him.

When God calls it is to awaken in us the new man, according to God's original plan. Every grace tends to awaken our original self. It can't be stressed enough that the need to manifest this originality is fundamental to our spiritual lives. I'm not talking about originality according to human reckoning, but according to the image God impressed within us from all eternity and which we need to seek and fulfil within ourselves. This is why we need to know how to listen to God and be united to Him as the Saints were.

Jesus came into the world to break down all divisions between man and God and amongst men. Many are the divisions which we bear within ourselves. When we think reconciliation is impossible, or when we don't want to heed certain advice, or we think certain situations are impossible, this means there is "division" in our hearts. God calls us to be reconciled in Jesus Christ; to offer everything to Him because He is our reconciliation.

Every day, as we try to put this journey of reconciliation into practice, we come up against our own limits and sense of uselessness, and we seek help by lifting our gaze upwards. Why pray to Our Lady? Why consecrate ourselves to Her? Why pray to St. Michael, the Angels, the Saints? St. Paul comes to our aid: "You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2: 19-20). The more we are united to the universal Church, the heavenly Church, the more help we receive. This is why we pray to the Angels and the Saints; it is why we seek help in Mary's Immaculate Heart. No one can help us as much as She can.

We ought to be ever more aware that our communion with the heavenly Church strengthens our union with God, and helps us become instruments of reconciliation for the distant, for souls in Purgatory, for those who suffer under satanic influence, for all our brethren who seek help.

Jesus wants to work in us always, so that we and the world are reconciled; but He can do this only if our hearts remain open. Often, our souls close during trying times. But: happy are we if we continue to trust the Lord even during trials; if we accept them as the Lord's gifts, as a mission, and if we become signs and instruments of reconciliation for the world.

Tommaso di Francesco

## **The Blessed Virgin's Parents** **by Fr. Nicolino Mori**

JOAQUIM and ANNE are patrons for everyone - the family, the Church, the redeemed - because the first blossom of their branch was that marvellous creature called the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom came Jesus and from whom came all of us. Were these their real names? The proto-gospel of James says so; and even if this gospel is considered apocryphal, it is very much consulted by exegetes because of its profound aspects regarding revelation. Most likely, then, they were indeed Joaquim and Anne.

It is important to refer to our patron saints - also Our Lady reminded us to do this - for it means to keep our gaze on Heaven; to place our hope in eternal life during our earthly life.

The merit of Joaquim and Anne was to have generated Mary. "Theirs was the privilege of having given birth to the Virgin Mary. The even greater privilege of the Virgin Mary was to have given birth to Jesus, and not only to give birth, but to nourish him and to bring him up." In our spiritual life this is fundamental, because on the wave of enthusiasm it's easy to begin; but if the seed is not nourished it will soon die.

I like to underline how Joaquim and Anne give birth to Mary, how they nourish her and they bring her up; and how Mary gives birth to Jesus, how she nourishes him and brings him up. Our Patron Saints have the task of giving birth to Jesus' Presence within us, and to make this presence grow. It's like having to till the soil within us so the seed of Jesus can find fertile earth and grow; but how does this happen? John the Baptist says it for us: "I must diminish and He must grow."

These two Saints who tilled and sowed, and nourished the ground in Mary are also our Patron Saints. They help us grow towards God; they help our faith grow, they help us work on ourselves so that we diminish and Jesus in us grows. This way, our human thoughts and judgements grow weaker, and God's way of thinking grows stronger in us. The love we have for ourself grows weaker, and God's love grows stronger in us. Our worries and concerns for ourselves and for our future grows weaker, and our concern that Christ be a part of us grows stronger.

May this be the grace that we ask of the Lord: make us grow smaller, so that Jesus might be born, might be nourished and might grow in us, just as Joaquim and Anne did for Mary, just as Mary did for Jesus, and just as Jesus wants to do with us today. \*

## **Spiritual Infancy: privileged way to God's heart by Giuseppe Ferraro**

It is significant that all the messages of the Queen of Peace are addressed to a particular category of persons; to those whom She calls her "dear children." In the original Croatian language, it is rather: "my dear little children." One would say that Mary particularly wants us to know that her motherly calls can bear fruits of grace in hearts when we accept them with the simplicity and humility of real children whose hearts are open to the fact that God is our Father and Mary our Mother. The Queen of Peace desires helping us so we can fully experience the gift of divine sonship offered to us continually by the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth take their name" (Eph 3: 14-15). "My Children, I invite you once again to decide for prayer, because it is through prayer that you are able to live your conversion. Each of you will become, in all simplicity, as a child who is open to the Father's love" (25.7.96).

It is not by chance that the Queen of Peace chose children as witnesses of her presence in Medjugorje. At the beginning of the apparitions their ages ranged between 10 and 16 years. Also for other Marian apparitions at the end of the millen-nium - Lourdes and Fatima in particular - Our Lady chose very young children. Though very young they were still able to correspond, often heroically, to her motherly calls. It is God's eternal style to "choose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise .. what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Co 1:27).

It all seems to express a spiritual message which is much deeper than what it might first appear, and which heaven insistently addresses to this poor humanity which refuses, with devilish pride (even spiritual pride!), and wastes, with a terrible lack of responsibility, the precious gift of the Risen One, which is divine fatherhood, which alone is a fount of peace, joy and new life for the hearts of all men and the entire universe.

In fact, the world and even some church institutes seem to forget too easily that the Bible teaches: "Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3-5). It is with great significance that the Holy Father echoes Mary's words. "In children there is something that must never be missing in people who want to enter the kingdom of heaven. People who are destined to go to heaven are simple the way children are, full of trust,

rich in goodness and pure. Only people of this sort can find in God a Father and, thanks to Jesus, can become children of God" (Letter of Pope to Children in the Year of the Family, 1994).

There is a perfect harmony between the messages of the Queen of Peace and the Pope's magisterial activity which suggests it is not casual. The Pope offers to today's world a privileged way which goes straight to the perfect love of the Gospel, the "little way" of spiritual infancy so admirably incarnated by St. Therese of the Child Jesus. When he solemnly proclaimed her a Doctor of the universal Church on 19 October 1997 it wasn't without a certain degree of dissent. On that occasion, he said: "...At the summit, as the source and goal, is the merciful love of the three Divine Persons.. At the root, on the subject's part, is the experience of being the Father's adoptive children in Jesus; this is the most authentic meaning of spiritual childhood, namely, the experience of divine filiation, under the movement of the Holy Spirit. At the root again, and standing before us, is our neighbour, others, for whose salvation we must collaborate with and in Jesus, with the same merciful love as his" (Apostolic Letter *Divini Amoris Scientia*, 19 Oct. 1997).

This is precisely what Mary's call at Medjugorje is all about. It is the golden key which lets us into the treasures of heavenly grace and joy enclosed in the Father's heart, ready for the children of this time: "I invite you to a life with God, and to complete surrender to Him... I desire that each of you might discover the joy and love which can be found only in God, and which only God can give. All God wants from you is that you surrender to Him" (25 May 1989).

Mary continues to wait with motherly trepidation for our "yes" so "she can offer it to Jesus, and so He can fill us with His grace" (25.05.92); since this alone can open the deepest levels of our souls enabling them to accept and then to donate God's love "which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (Rom 5:5). This is how we can become "instruments in His hands for the world's salvation" (25.03.94).

The call is to offer one's life to God, to which the Queen of Peace constantly invites us. We are being asked to journey on this spiritual path with the simplicity and freedom of authentic "little children" whose surrender to the Father and whose trust in His great mercy is such that they accept all life's situations of joy and of sorrow in the knowledge that they all lead to fullness in communion with Jesus' Heart which burns with love, and where Mary awaits us; so that "My heart, and my Son's Heart, and your heart can be fused into a single heart of love and peace" (25.07.99). \*



# **News from the blessed land**

## **At the service of life: "The Mother's Village"**

There once was a man who had decided to commit his life to serving the Queen of Peace and to putting Her requests into practice... That is how fables begin, but "The Mother's Village" - where children receive an education and medical care - is much more than a fable, for its beginning continues and becomes a programme where each of us is asked to respond with responsibility.

FR. SLAVKO laboured intensely for this project, and amid war and destruction, he created this institution "for the sake of life." Inspired by Mary, who came as Mother of all men, he desired giving a hand to her hand, dedicating himself to this love of hers, accepting her presence, working to console as she does, and being obedient to that word of hers.

We all saw - and can still see - the victims of death and destruction. It was for this reason that this "fight for life" needed to take on more tangible aspects. At the time, those whose lives were most at jeopardy were those of the children left homeless and orphaned, who had neither security nor the chance to receive an education. Fr. Slavko felt the need to give these children a family structure, an education and job training

### **The beginning**

The Mother's Village opened in 1993, and during the civil war (1991-1995) Fr. Slavko was accepting refugee children from central Bosnia who were orphaned or displaced. The children were being looked after by the Franciscan nuns from Hercegovina and by a few lay people. A private house was rented for this purpose. It was after this that the idea of creating a village for children came into being.

**"What cannot be seen with the eye can be seen with the heart."  
The love of Mary.**

From a physical aspect the Mother's Village isn't particularly different to an ordinary house or pre-school in any other part of the world. The

difference is seen only upon looking more deeply. "What cannot be seen with the eye can be seen with the heart." (From the Little Prince).

## **The Mother's Village is a call for the world to do good**

"Prepare for yourselves a treasure in heaven" says the Lord. These treasures are our good deeds; it is the love we put into our lives and the love we give to others. Mother Teresa of Calcutta put it this way: "Giving yourself is better than just giving something." Each good deed, each decision of ours is united to the Lord's perfect and universal sacrifice which nourishes the world and souls.

This way, the good in the world is increased, and we become more joyful, for a "joyous heart is surely born from the Lord's Heart which burns for love of us," Mother Teresa used to say.

The Mother's Village says to the world: "fight for life!"

Majcino Selo (as it is called in Croatian) is both an image and a model for all "that is in the world but is not of the world," and which fights against the culture of death typical of today's society.

The secret to this new way of living is Mary's presence which is an expression of her love for us. "Her love is a mother's love which creates the conditions for living and for working, for growing and for developing. When man knows he is loved, and particularly when this love is unconditioned, he must find the strength to love with the same love, and to fight against all that brings destruction and death. This is the type of love the world needs." (Fr. Slavko)

In this light, the message which the Mother's Village leaves for us all is that we are being called to open ourselves to this motherly love of Mary's and let it guide us in all our daily actions (whether they be big or little, visible or invisible) in our desires, decisions and deeds in favour of life. Each time we decide for what is good and positive; each time we decide for love, we also become as "mothers" since we generate God's life and His kingdom within us and around us.

This way, and together with all men of good will who try their best to put Mary's messages into practice, we become inhabitants of the Mother's Village in the world.

(Further information can be found at [www.majcinoselo.info](http://www.majcinoselo.info)) Paula Jurcic

## **My Children, prepare yourselves for Mass!**

## **by Fr. Slavko Barbaric**

**PRAY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT** - At the beginning of the Novena to Mary Immaculate in 1983, Jelena Vasilj came to the parish office to say that Our Lady desired that we pray to the Holy Spirit before Mass. We believed Jelena and we did it, but we thought she meant only for the period of the Novena.

On 2 January 1984 Jelena came with a new message from Our Lady: "Why did you stop praying to the Holy Spirit? I intended for you to pray always, all during the year, so that the Holy Spirit might descend upon you all. Begin again to pray!" Since then, every evening, before Mass, we sing a hymn to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit which God promised and sent to the Apostles, to the Church, and through Whom the earth will be renewed. It is the same Spirit who at the beginning hovered over the water and brought peace and order. It is the Spirit of God Who brought the dead back to life, healed the sick, and warmed those who were cold, and Who now hands out His gifts most generously to all those who ask. In particular, He is the Spirit Who can lead us into the mystery of the Eucharist where Christ is present. It is the Spirit without which man can do nothing. It is a good thing to invoke Him at every occasion, for every necessity, and especially when we prepare ourselves for the encounter with Christ at Mass.

**JOIN CHRIST'S OFFER OF SELF ON THE ALTAR** - Our Lady is the Mother of God's Word, and she was the first to believe Him. Then He became flesh and he became man in her pure heart which the grace of God not only had preserved from sin, but had also filled with mercy. In the meantime, Mary had also become the first "victim" and His first "tabernacle", the sanctuary for Jesus' divine presence amongst men. Her only task and desire is still today that of teaching us to say "yes" so we can become "living victims who will give thanks to God." With motherly love Mary teaches us how to celebrate Holy Mass. She doesn't speak of the Mass in a theological manner; nor does she use biblical images or hint at liturgical prescriptions. Her only desire is that we "live" and "experience" the Eucharist: "Dear Children, I invite you to a more active prayer, and attendance at Holy Mass. May your every Mass be an experience of God" (16 May 1985). And on 3 April 1986: "Dear Children, I invite you to live Holy Mass. Many of you have experienced its beauty, but there are still those who don't come willingly. I have chosen you, my Children, and at Mass Jesus gives you His graces. So live Holy Mass consciously and be joyful. Come out of love; let your

lives be touched by it."

**BECOME EUCHARIST FOR OTHERS** - After having participated at Mass we are ready to live in the Spirit and to fight against the works of the flesh. In this battle for life, at times we are winners and at times we are losers. We sin and we bear the wounds caused by them; but also love and the healing process are alive and efficacious, so that when we go to Mass which Jesus celebrates for us, we come out all new and ready. We can say that the first move by the Church - when Jesus celebrates Mass for us - is also when we begin celebrating our own Mass, our own sacrifice for the sake of others.

This grows thanks to Christ's sacrifice which is both our point of departure and arrival. So our life, too, can be a MASS, a eucharist for others; it fulfils us and unites us, making us a concrete reality in the world. It binds us to Christ, it unites us to Him, and we become a living sacrifice for the Father's greater glory. We become His presence in the world: we are the fruits of His redemption, and we enable His redeeming work to continue.

Thus, Christian life is essentially eucharistic; it is a life of love donated willingly and joyfully for the sake of others. The Eucharist thus becomes a source of peace. Every path to peace is a eucharistic path. The more disinterested our love is the sooner we will attain peace with God and peace amongst men.

An extract from: "Celebrate Mass with the Heart"

## **In Mary's Immaculate Heart**

In 1983 world renown theologian, Von Balthasar, said: "We are entering into a time when Our Lady will find Her place in the entire Church. Our Lady is not one of the Saints, she is the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church. She is the new creature who must manifest all her splendour within the Church. We should see her and love her the way God has foreseen she be seen and loved."

So that we can enter into a living relationship with Mary, and penetrate her Immaculate Heart (which is destined to triumph, for Mary said so at Fatima) it is of utmost importance that we become active, and dynamic. St. Augustine said: "God created us without us, but He won't save us without us." The thing about man which really makes him outstanding is his freedom and his free participation in the dynamics of God within the universe. God gave man the task of governing creation and its

creatures; man is asked to respond.

There is a passive, or static attitude which cannot help the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart. In various ways man remains interiorly passive. One element which generally creates passivity is a fear hidden deep in a soul which makes him fear even God. There can be no triumph like this! Also indifference is characteristic of interior passivity, such as when you don't care about your neighbour, or about working for peace. How do you offer forgiveness to someone who is cold? The proper attitude which allows Mary's Immaculate Heart to triumph is a dynamic one, which favours an interior opening. It is the same interior opening which we see in the Blessed Virgin at the moment of Jesus' conception. The risk for all communities, sanctuaries and spiritual movements is that they become static. When the dynamic is stopped, everything stops.

What doesn't fit into the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart? Fantasies don't fit; neither does prophetism, nor fanaticism. Sole human strength which tries to condition God's action doesn't fit either. So what does help this triumph? Reality. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, says that we are immaculate, or rather: holy and immaculate. This is reality. Through baptism we received, in virtue of grace, the gift to be immaculate. Mary's triumph will be realized when we are able to fully respond to the grace which makes us immaculate.

When in Fatima John Paul II con-secrated the world to Our Lady he defined it: "entrustment to Mary." This isn't enough, for it lacks this other expression: "surrender to Mary," which means literally to surrender, to give up, to her so that she might give everything to God. When we are entrusted to Mary, we do not belong to ourselves anymore. Our lives belong to God, through the hands of the Bl. Virgin. God gave us Mary for a Mother. Her heart is the "new garden" where we can find ourselves as we were originally meant to be, and according to the degree of our response, the power of the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart begins. It may seem strange, but without us it's not possible. That is why at Medjugorje Our Lady said: "without you, without your prayer, I cannot help you." How beautiful this is! We are called to build a new world together with Mary Immaculate! We are called to participate in the wonderful plan of salvation for mankind! The steps that lead to the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart pass through our own heart. We ought to be aware that we possess the pureness of Mary Immaculate. We often feel as though we are being chastised, we feel frustrated and abandoned by God, and we are tempted to feel that our faith is an illusion. The truth is that we do possess the pureness of Mary Immaculate through our baptism, but that the devil tries to keep us distant from this awareness so as to kill

the hope in our hearts. How can we fight him? By believing that at every moment we receive from God everything freely. Few believe this... In fact, many are convinced that one has to pay a type of toll or fee to God, so they pray a thousand Rosaries, they heroically practice penance, and they multiply their "religious practices" ... but this is doing business with God.

But God is good, He loves the good and the bad! So why don't we let Him love us when we make mistakes, when we're fragile and weak? Why don't we let His goodness, which is free, be communicated also to others via our own hearts? All our prayers, fasts and sacrifices serve to make our own hearts open up, so we can overcome the barriers within ourselves, and so we can be united to the infinite goodness of God. When this doesn't happen we are pharisees, "white sepulchres," and nothing but death triumphs within us. When we ask why we haven't changed after so many years of penance; the reason is that we think we can change by our own means

If we want to enter into the Immaculate Heart we must ask Her to help us to accept God's goodness which is free, from which all other virtues come. May the Immaculate live in our hearts; then she will generate God in us! And we will become instruments for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart.

Editorial Team

### **Medjugorje seer, Ivan, says: "Mother, why me?"**

"I was 16 when the apparitions began; and I was surprised, just like the others. I wasn't particularly devoted to Our Lady, and I didn't know anything about Fatima or Lourdes, yet Our Lady appeared to me too! Still today I say to myself: Mother, wasn't there anyone better than me? Will I manage to fulfil your expectations of me? Once I asked her really, and she replied: "My son, you know I don't seek the best persons.!"

So for 21 years I have been an instrument in her hands and those of God. I am happy to be at this school, which is a school of peace, of love and of prayer. It's also a great responsibility. It's not easy because I know that God has given me much and that He expects just as much in return. Mary comes as a real mum who is concerned for her children in danger: "My darling Children, today's world is spiritually sick." She brings us the medicine, because she wants to cure us. And she does it with such tender loving and motherly care! She desires raising mankind and leading everyone to salvation. She said: "I am with you. Don't fear,

I desire showing you the way to attain peace, but I need you, my Children. Only with your help can I realize peace. Thus, my Children, decide for the good, and fight evil."

All Mary does is speak. She repeats things often - without getting tired the way earthly mothers do - lest we forget. Mary teaches and shows the way to good. She doesn't criticise us, or make us frightened, or punish us. Mary doesn't come to speak to us about the end of the world, or of the Lord's second coming; she comes simply as Mother of Hope, to bring hope to today's world, to today's families, to the tired youth, to the troubled Church. Our Lady wants to say: if you are strong, also the Church will be strong, but if you are weak, also the Church will be weak. You are the living Church, the lungs of the Church. You must build up a new relationship with God, where your dialogue and friendship is new. Remember that in this world you are pilgrims.

Our Lady especially asks for prayer in the family, and she invites us to transform the family into small prayer groups to implore peace, love and harmony upon families. She also asks us to give importance to the Holy Mass, by making it central in our lives. She once said during an apparition: "My Children, should you need to decide between coming to me and going to Holy Mass, don't choose me, but go to Mass!"

Each time she addresses us she calls us "dear children." She says this to everyone, without distinction. I can never say it enough, that Our Lady is our Mother, and each of us are important to her; she loves each of us; each of us truly are dear to her.

(from a recording)

Perhaps not everyone knows that when Our Lady started the prayer group in Medjugorje, she asked (through Jelena) that its members remain at her disposal for four years and that during that time they should not make decisions regarding their calling in life. During this time Our Lady enlightened them in prayer and spiritual life. She asked that they be faithful, as the time was necessary for her to give the group proper preparation.

## **Waiting...**

**by Jelena Vasilj**

A life time is usually spent waiting for it to be fulfilled, and if we are generous we also attend to others so theirs is fulfilled too. For parents this means collaborating directly with God in the creation of life, and for

consecrated people it means giving birth spiritually to creatures into eternal life. We can see this in St. Pius who suffered tremendously for the salvation of souls; and in Mother Teresa who adopted Crucified Jesus' expression: I thirst - for souls, of course.

All creation awaits life. St. John says that life is God (cf. Jn 1:4). We don't fully possess this life now, for it will be fully realized in the next life. Of this life the Apostle Paul says: "Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face" (1Co 13:12).

Why do we need to wait? Why does the Lord keep us waiting, or rather, why does He deprive us of this vision by hiding? The answer is obvious: God wants us prepared for this great encounter. St. Ignatius of Antioch said when he knew he would be martyred: "I want to be ground and crushed like grain." He wanted to die so he could become Body of Christ. So the answer is: we can't enter eternal life without preparation. How does the Lord prepare us? .. by removing himself from our vision. Given that we aren't ready to fully enjoy His greatness and goodness, He steps aside so that desire to possess Him might grow in us. This desire prepares us for a future in God's presence. St. Augustine says that this desire is the fruit of our faith. "The Lord goes to prepare our place, He goes to remove Himself from our gaze; He hides so we might believe. A place is prepared if we live on faith. From faith comes desire, from desire comes possession. Desire helps to prepare our heavenly place, for desire is fruit of love."

Augustine explains: "...all our actions depend on this fruit of contemplation... It is the aim of all our aspirations, and it is eternal... It is precisely of this joy (which will fulfil our every desire) that the Lord meant when He said that no one will be able to take away this joy from us." (Io.eu.tr. 101.5)

It is important that we know how to await this fruit. The saints distinguish themselves for their capacity to wait, to believe. Our society indeed ails with its inability to wait, and this is often behind the sin of man who isn't able to postpone his desire to possess.

The wait to possess the fruit of our desire often provokes tears. In Psalm 42 we read: "My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually 'Where is your God?'" Waiting provokes spiritual groans and pains. "The Church gives birth to this fruit of her birth pains by desire, but when she enters eternity the birth is by vision. Now she groans, then she will exult; now she prays, then she will praise God" (St. Augustine, idem). Our sufferings prepare us to accept Christ; they make our soul more capacious and able to accept life.

It is through embracing the cross that we attain to total possession of



eternal life. "It's like someone who can see his homeland from afar, on the other side of the sea. He can see where to go, but he doesn't have the means to get there. So that we might have the means to get home, the one to whom we wanted to reach came to us. And what did he do? He gave us the wood to help us cross the sea. In fact, no one can cross the sea of this century unless he is taken by the cross of Christ. Even if one should have sick eyes, he can still hold on to the Cross. And those who are distant and can't see their destination need only hold on to the cross, and the cross will take them there." (Io.eu.tr. 2.2) \*

## **Letters from our readers...**

Pablo Martinez from Rosario, Argentina - I wish to thank you for the fraternal gesture of charity of sending me the Echo every second month. Congratulations for edition no. 165. God bless you and keep you!

Fr. Gianni Viganò, Guatemala - My thanks for the Echo of Mary. I've been many times to confess in Medjugorje. May the Queen of Peace obtain peace for this sad world. United in prayer, I bless you.

Sr. Alda, Mozambique - Heartfelt thanks for Echo in Italian and Portuguese. Through Mary's Heart may the Lord bless all the work and good that Echo does.

Fr. Francesco Peyron, Cuneo Italy - Thanks for the lovely publication which I regularly receive and share. I pray for you, that Echo might continue to spread far and wide the messages, the Spirit and the perfume of Mary, which your secret sacrifices make more fertile.

Fabio Maccari, Terni Italy - Congratulations for your work involved in spreading and explaining the message of Medjugorje. Not only do you lend your voice to the Blessed Virgin so that those far away might hear her, but you also supply the key so that the seed of hope and love is planted in hearts.

Pierluigi Zanin, Padova Italy - Dear friends, I want to thank all of you who worked with Fr. Angelo and who still work with love and dedication, in silence, for the Echo of Mary. All the editions of Echo published so far

are proof that it is Our Lady herself who wants this publication and that all those who have worked, or who work, for Echo are called by her. Thanks for the good you do, for the love and joy and peace which reaches us through Echo. I'll pray for you and for all of us who read it, that Mary, who keeps us united, might continue to teach us with the patience and love of a MOM.

Rosa Hauser, Buch Austria - Thank you so much for the Echo which I receive and distribute amongst friends. Thanks to God for this wonderful publication which leads us to the faith.

Frank McGentry, Australia: I can only say like so many how much we look forward to receiving and reading our lovely "Echo." It helps so much in increasing our faith and keeping us on "the Path." God bless you all!  
May the Lord bless us as we wait for his return.

Villanova, 8 November 2002

Blessed  
is he who comes in  
the name of the Lord...

"Praying doesn't mean to waste time, but to fill your time with grace, with light, with peace, with love and with blessing." Fra Jozo

### **Our Prayers for you!**

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

**Echo is a free publication.** Donations are gratefully accepted; without them we cannot continue to spread the Message to Mary's little children around the world.

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Echo of Mary Association,  
Casella Postale 27,  
I-31030 Bessica Treviso, Italy.  
(Ph/fax: 0423-470331)  
[echomarybk@tiscalinet.it](mailto:echomarybk@tiscalinet.it)

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