

Our Lady's message of 25 May 1994:

**Dear children, I invite you all to trust me more and to live my messages more profoundly. I am with you and I intercede for you before God, but I am also waiting for your hearts to open to my messages.**

**Rejoice because God loves you and He gives you the possibility every day to convert and to believe more in Him, as God your Creator.**

**Thank you for having responded to my call.**

### Trust me more and live my messages

Our Lady is calling us so patiently and delicately to strengthen our faith, in preparation for the 13th anniversary.

Why would She invite us to **trust Her more** if not because we have too little trust in Her? Perhaps we had lost hope, or had been expecting something that hasn't come yet, or that was not what She wanted to give us. If only we had opened our hearts to Her intentions (*Pray for my intentions.*). We are like the Apostles, when Jesus said: *You will be baptized in the Holy Spirit*, and they asked: *Has the time come for you to restore the Kingdom?* (Acts 1). But Jesus told them: *It is not for you to know dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses...*

This is what Our Lady expects: that by work of the Holy Spirit we become Jesus' witnesses like the first disciples, and then become *instruments of salvation* (25.3.94). If we are not expecting this, then we have not understood Her **messages**, starting from the ones on **Holiness** - for this is real testimony, it is the fragrance of Jesus in the world.

Mary is begging us to listen to Her; She is waiting for our hearts to open to Her.

We must **live Her messages profoundly**, which means no superficiality or weakness. It is not just reading them over and telling others about them, but putting them into practise in our daily lives of faith, prayer, fasts and sacraments. This is possible only if we **open to Her** and let our **hearts become receptive** to Her calls, and *decide for them*.

Any doubts about the "power" of grace that comes from Her through living the messages are dispersed when we listen to Her say: **I am with you and I intercede for you before God**. Indeed, what type of intercession could be more powerful than Hers? This must be accompanied, though, by our full trust in Her as Mother. Unfailing faith can move mountains, Jesus teaches us.

We have no reason to fear, Our Blessed Mother assures us: **God loves you**. He will not abandon us. God loves us the way we are and every day He gives us **the possibility for us to convert**.

If we are *humble*, as Mary told us in Her last message, we would recognize our errors and ask God's forgiveness. A proud »

### The Heart that loved men so much!

*During His life, Jesus knew and loved all of us and each one of us. That is why "the Sacred Heart is considered the most important symbol ... of the infinite love with which the divine Redeemer unceasingly loves the eternal Father and all men."* (Catechism - no. 478)

*Only the Heart of Christ, who knows the depth of His Father's love, could reveal to us the abyss of His mercy in such a simple and beautiful way.* (no. 1439).

The great forerunners and apostles of the Sacred Heart teach us to use the singular expression: **The Heart of Jesus and Mary**, two Hearts in one Heart. "Hail, Heart of Jesus and Mary." (St John Eudes)

For the month of June we suggest the daily recitation of the **Chaplet of the Sacred Heart** - an excellent means of meditation, and through the intercession of Mary Immaculate we will desire and ask for His same virtues: mercy, humility, patience, meekness and generosity. Conclude the Chaplet with the litanies of the Sacred Heart.

» person doesn't want to accept the fact that he sinned and this blocks the grace of conversion: *even if your conscience accuses you, God is greater than your conscience* (1Jn 3:20). *We have known (many times) and put our faith in God's love for us* (1Jn 4:16).

That is why Our Lady invites us to **rejoice**. It is a great joy for us to know that we can always trust God, He gives us all we need. We are in His hands, for He created us from nothing and He can always create us again, as long as we want it.

I thank You my God and Creator, my Father so great. You gave us a Mother, She was Your most humble and faithful servant, and now She offers Herself to us so that we will let ourselves be formed by Her and be brothers of Her Jesus.

Thus, despite the grey clouds that hang heavily over the world, this message is one of **great joy** to us.

Fr. A.

### From the hospital: IMPASSIONED APPEAL by Pope on unity

Dear Bishops, we are called to serve the world in humility, like Mary

*On the 19th May while the Italian Bishops were gathered together in the church of St Maria Maggiore, the Pope was in the Gemelli Hospital of Rome. The following is the summary of the Pope's discourse sent to the bishops from the hospital:*

"I enter with you in spirit into the Basilica of St Maria Maggiore where you are gathered for the recitation of the Holy Rosary. This basilica has always been a significant place for the pilgrimage Church, where she gathers to greet the Mother of the Lord. Today, like the Apostles, we are gathered in the Upper Room. After Christ returned to the Father they remained to pray together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to prepare themselves for Pentecost: the day Christ, through the Holy Spirit, would have made them witnesses.

It was appropriate that the Church began on the day of **Pentecost**, when the power of the Holy Spirit was made manifest by the Apostles who bore witness to the Crucified and Risen Christ. It was then that they began announcing - with the strength of the Spirit - the remission of sins in the Name of Christ. Thus, the Church began to develop. We do the same today; we too were given the power *to bind and to loose ...* we who are profoundly aware of our own weakness but also of the power given us by Christ through His Spirit.

The **Mother of Christ**, who is also the Mother of the Church, **is here with us** in a special way. Who is Mary for us? Mary is our companion, She accompanies us on our pilgrimage of faith to help us remain faithfully united to Her Son all the way up Calvary to Christ's Crucifixion. Mary suffered greatly together with Her Only Son, She was associated to the Cross of Her Son in Her motherly spirit, and was lovingly consenting to the sacrifice of the victim She generated.

Then, Mary was given to John by Christ who said: *Woman, here is your son*. St Ambrose and other fathers teach us that thanks to the gift of divine motherhood, the Blessed Virgin became a figure of the Church, for Her faith, love and perfect union with Christ.

That is why the **Church is called Mother and Virgin**. The Church is a Mother when she contemplates Mary's holiness, imitates Her love and carries out the Father's Will. When the Church preaches the Gospel and administers Baptism, she is a Mother who generates children to new life.

The Church as a virgin guards her fidelity promised to the Groom; and in the imitation of Mary, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, she preserves whole the faith, solid the hope and fervent the love.

## A motherly hand saved me from that bullet

Allow me, dear brothers, to think back at what happened **13 years ago** in **St Peter's Square**. We all remember that afternoon when the Pope was shot at with the intent of killing him. The bullet which went through his abdomen is now in the Sanctuary of Fatima, and the band with a bullet hole in it is in the Sanctuary of Jasna Gora.

**It was the hand of a mother that guided that bullet, and the agonizing Pope, on the way to the Gemelli Hospital, stopped at death's threshold.**

Last September during my pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of the Dawn Gate in Vilnius where I was able to contemplate the Face of the Mother of God, I repeated to Her the words of the great Polish prophet Adam Mickiewicz: "Oh Most Holy Virgin, your glory in Ostra Brama shines out, in Czestochowa you are present with your power to defend the glittering Sanctuary, and you saved me from death!" And my voice broke up. I knew that this Sanctuary was waiting for the Pope's testimony. And with the Dawn Gate other Sanctuaries were waiting, first the Colosseum in Rome, then the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania, and other 'present-day colosseums.'

At the end of the Way of the Cross last Good Friday I said: 'Dear brothers, we must **meet in those places consecrated by martyrdom**, starting from the first centuries up to our days. **We cannot not be united!** We cannot *not* say the same truth about the Cross! The history of mankind is waiting on our complete unity.' That is what I said and I know I was heard and understood.

### ... which is why I am alive to serve

It was like the echo of that shot in St Peter's Square which should have taken the life of the Pope 13 years ago. But **the killer bullet stopped and the Pope is alive ... alive to serve!** This is the confession he renews today before you dear brothers in the episcopate - for we serve together.

I shall never forget the words of the primate Wyszynski. It was during the millenium celebrations of the baptism of Poland, a period of great uneasiness with the Communist leaders. He said: 'I am here to serve! I do not command, I serve!' We, dear Italian bishops, are called to serve! It is our desire to serve our brothers in the priesthood, and the religious. It is our desire to serve everyone.

If the Lord gives me the chance to meet the **world's youth in the Philippines** then it will be precisely with this spirit that I shall go. **The world waits for our service!** In particular the **youth** wait for it. **The youth are ready to follow us - or better, follow Jesus Christ - if what we do, preach and suffer is authentic service.**

Dear brothers, you are reflecting on how to serve the **Church in Italy** the best way possible in this particular moment. How can we 'bind and loose' the complex questions concerning contemporary man? How can we convince this man of the power and splendour of the Truth, which alone can free him? How can we initiate him into that love that is stronger than death, that is the foundation of the human family? How can we evaluate the grace of this year, in which the family has paradoxically become an object not only of

a particular interest, but also of fearful threat? With the 3rd millenium in mind, how can we strengthen the foundation that the Church and the people of God are built on?

These are some of the questions that you have put to yourselves dear brothers. The questions are many. But together with these we also bring the fervour of the faith of God's people, the hope and the expectations of the people who have placed their trust in us. The Church, in Italy and the world over, is the Church of the great journey.

Let us journey together then with Mary, as pilgrims to the many Marian Sanctuaries that can be found on Italian soil, and let us make this journey in particular with the youth. The pilgrim Church who journeys with Mary has become above all the Church of the youth, especially in our times. Our hope is placed in them.

It is our desire to be witnesses and spokespersons of this hope for Italy and the world. It is our desire to serve the expectations of mankind in the best way possible, as the Mother of God has always done."

The Holy Father expressed his commotion and gratitude for the many tokens of affection he received while in hospital, and concluded: "All that remains to do is ask the Blessed Mother to include this trial of mine in the Church's great prayer for Italy, as my modest contribution for the cause we are serving together. With all my heart I bless you."

*Editorial team*

## Pope's sufferings .. Our Lady's tears

The Pope said: "I speak to you from the hospital room, and I must say that **this painful interval was necessary**. It was necessary in anticipation of my visit to Syracuse where Mary wept. Already last century She wept at La Salette in France. She had to weep also in our century. (...) Our Lady's tears were necessary during the period that we chose for our great prayer for Italy, and for Europe, for our preparation for the Third Christian Millenium.

These tears bring us providential fruits. From this hospital room it is easier for me, in a certain way, to entrust all to the Lord, every problem, every pastoral initiative, every joy, anxiety and hope of the great African continent, into His hands. It is easier for me to do this with the tears of Our Lady. They were necessary, providential and they bring us hope."

**\* The Pope to the doctor who operated on him:** "You and I have only one choice. You must make me better and I must get better, because there is no room in the Vatican for a Pope emeritus."

**\* 8 cloistered nuns to keep watch with their prayer in Vatican** - The Holy Father's desire of having a cloistered convent established within the walls of the Vatican City came true on 13 May with the opening of the *Maria Mater Ecclesiae* Convent. The date was chosen on purpose since it has much significance for the Holy Father. The community consists of eight Poor Clares from Assisi, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Rwanda. The abbess is Mother Chiara Cristiana who held the same post at St Clare's in Assisi. Every five years a new order will be chosen to take turn.

*"I pray.. that, free from any satanic influence, you may decide only for God."*  
25.11.89

## 13th Anniversary

## Being healed from false liberty so we may choose God

Mary's and Pope's Teachings coincide

Each year, on the anniversary, we search our consciences: to what point have we accepted this great gift that comes from the real and physical presence of the Mother of God on earth? It can be seen that the **Holy Spirit speaks to the Church through two great channels: the Pope and the Blessed Virgin**. For us this means light and joy of faith through the messages and the Medj. experience, and the teachings of the Pope.

Mary and the Pope: there is deep communion between the two of them which can be seen magnificently in the Pope's recent encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. It comments on the episode of the rich young man (Mt 19). He was a good man who observed the commandments, but when he came face to face with Jesus he realized something was missing, that he hadn't done all there was to do. It is the same thing for anyone who goes to Medj. When we find ourselves in front of Mary, though we may be good Christians and worthy of the Father, we realize that something is missing, and it is precisely the *best part* that is missing.

To regain this part Our Lady asked us the same thing Jesus asked of the rich young man: *If you wish to be perfect ...* From this we see how God respects our freedom in making a decision; and this is fundamental: it is here that we decide either for joy and holiness or for sadness and damnation: ... *he went away sad for he was a man of great wealth!* The Pope has said that this **inner "blockage"** is the great evil that torments the present-day man. **Man's conscience is no longer free to choose God.**

We must admit it: we are no longer able to make our own choices - whether big or small - from following the Gospel. Our choices are based on other things: convenience, fashion, what others do... That is why Our Lady had to start healing our freedom, to make us capable of making our own decisions through listening to what Christ thinks and what the Holy Spirit suggests to us. *I desire that your decision be free before God, because He has given you freedom. Thus, pray so that, free from any satanic influence, you may decide only for God. I pray for you before God and I seek your surrender to God.* (25 Nov.'89)

## Disappointing model of life produced by man

Mary hasn't left us in the dark about the drama regarding freedom that either opens or closes our way to God: it is indeed a battle.

The first step to engage this battle with Satan and thus win our spiritual freedom, is found in the will to content our good desires and suppress the bad ones. This distinction - called discernment - is easy to make: we have to refer to the Gospel and to how it is applied in the Catechism. This gift by God is a treasure of truth which the Pope calls "objective truth": it is a model of life not produced by us, but received by Christ

for the Church. We are wrong to think that the new life in the Spirit simply flows from our hearts without needing to be strengthened through purification and obedience.

Our conscience, in fact, is not an unflinching judge. It can make mistakes, even serious ones. That is why we need to be shown how to live, by Jesus who is Holy and by Mary Immaculate. "The maturity and responsibility of our judgements.. **are not measured by the liberation of the conscience from objective truth**, in favour of an alleged autonomy in personal decisions, **but**, on the contrary, **by an insistent search for truth** and by allowing oneself to be guided by that truth in one's actions." (VS 61).

This helps us understand better St Paul's warning: *man's conscience must be confirmed by the Holy Spirit* (Rm 9), *it must be clear* (1Tm 1), *it must not practise cunning and tamper with God's Word but state the truth openly* (2Co 4). The Apostle warns: *Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind.. to discern God's will; that which is good and pleasing to Him* (Rm 12). Paul's admonition urges us to be watchful, for in the judgements of our conscience the possibility of error is always present (VS 62).

### **Journey of conversion leads to true freedom**

In the journey that leads us to spiritual freedom there are many **crossroads**. The man who does not wish to work for his salvation will refuse to humble himself and in the end he justifies himself. But the man who accepts to stay before Christ the Lord and admit his own unworthiness will certainly feel shame for the bad he has done, but his shame will be a happy one, it will be a fruitful poverty, for this is the beginning of faith.

Our decision for either good or bad depends on how committed we are in fighting against Satan - he suggests we go towards bad but which he presents as good. Our weapons in this battle are **prayer and fasts**, for they are expressions of our will to *decide for God and against Satan instead of placing ourselves in Satan's hands without reflecting*.

Unfortunately this happens frequently: "Man comes to realize that his freedom is in some mysterious way inclined to betray this openness to the True and the Good, and that all too often he actually prefers to choose finite, limited and ephemeral goods. With his errors and negative decisions, man glimpses the source of a deep rebellion, which leads him to reject the Truth and the Good in order to set himself up as an absolute principle unto himself: *You will be like God* (Gn 3:5). Consequently, freedom itself needs to be set free. It is Christ who sets it free: *He has set us free for freedom* (Gal 5:1)" (VS 86).

It is precisely to win this freedom that in Medj. Our Lady offers us a method which shows us the constant road to conversion: *Today I invite you to begin working on your hearts... Work more, and with love clean out every corner of your hearts* (17.10.85).

If we began doing this we would discover something very grand and fundamental for our life which would remove all those silly fears we have about the "truth." In fact, we would discover how *the substance of the law is already written in our own hearts* (Rm 2:15). The level of spiritual life brought to us by Mary reveals this truth.

On his part the Pope tells us the same

thing: -"the moral law of the Church is a *law planted deep within them* (Jr 31), *written not with ink, not on stone tablets, but on the tablets of your living hearts* (2Co); *a law of perfection and freedom* (2Co), *it is the law of the Spirit who has given you life in Christ Jesus*" (Rm 8).

Let us thank the Lord for the light He gives us through these two beacons of the Church, and who permits us to discover this fascinating programme of life.

For us, this happened in Medj., our spiritual homeland. It was from there that we received this great and precious gift from Our Lady.

It is a gift, but it is also a task to take seriously. It is a task that we must carry out without ever forgetting how important and valuable our freedom of choice is. *Give God first place in your families. If God is with you, you have everything, but when you do not want Him you are miserable and lost and unable to know whose side you belong to. Therefore, dear children, decide for God and you will receive everything* (25.12.91).

*Edit. team*

---

*"I desire bringing you closer to Jesus and His wounded Heart so that you will be able to understand His boundless Love." 25.11.91*

### **"Fountains of living water will flow from his breast"**

(devotion to the Heart of Jesus)

The last century and the first half of this century were definitely placed under the sign of the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, almost in an appeal by that God who loves us so deeply that to make us understand how much, He showed us His Heart, bleeding, pierced and crowned with thorns.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart dates back centuries. It was first revealed to St Gertrude in 1281, but it became popular in France with the spreading of Jansenism (late 1500's). Jansenism portrayed a severe, inaccessible God and people's faith was weakened. **St John Eudes** (1601-1680), untiring missionary priest, was the first to inaugurate the liturgy of the Sacred Heart.

In 1672 the Heart of Jesus revealed Itself to the humble and misunderstood Visitation nun from France, **Margaret Mary Alacoque**. She and Fr. de la Colombiere, her confessor, were the chief instruments in the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Jesus told her: *This is the Heart that so loved men but found nothing but indifference and ingratitude. And then: My Heart will dilate to shed with abundance the fruits of Its love upon those who honour me. The precious treasures being disclosed to you contain those graces that are needed to draw men out of the abyss of perdition.*

The famous promises were then revealed to her, including the ones regarding confession and communion on the **"first 9 Fridays."**

The devotion spread also thanks to another Frenchman and priest, **Michael of Garicoits** (1797-1863). He worked at the Our Lady of Betharram Shrine near Lourdes. He imposed upon himself to carry out God's will, without reserve, without delay and without conditions. He had established a real "programme" of the Sacred Heart (extract of which follows), and he founded the priests of the Sacred Heart.

**"I am here to carry out your will: is**

what Christ yearned for unceasingly from the moment of His incarnation. Mary too desired nothing but to carry out God's will. "Jesus said: *Here I am*; the Mother said: *Here I am, the handmaid of the Lord*. In Jesus and Mary we see the same humility, love, obedience, joy and desire of self-donation. Pious XII said in his Encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Maurietis aquas*, that the profundity of Christ's love cannot be understood without looking at the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for it was there that Jesus was formed and where He received his human traits.

*The man who lives by the truth comes out into the light* (Jn 3:21). God wants to be known as the God of our heart and not of our spirit - *my heart's Rock* (Ps 73) - perhaps to make us see that the most beautiful spiritual qualities are nothing if one's heart is not humble and docile. Devotion is rooted into hearts that are animated by the acknowledgement of one's own poverty and His divine love. There is no other virtue outside this humility and love, and it is not so much in being men of prayer that these virtues can be ours, but in being continuous prayer.

*Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29).

Authentic love is sweet and strong at the same time; it knows how to unite love of people to hate of sin. It is full of comprehension but does not know any type of vile complicity. It takes discernment to discover virtue. Without discernment, virtue is made unnatural and the most precious graces become instruments of disorder and scandal.

Jesus' response to the adulteress and the Samaritan woman is exemplary. He attacked and destroyed the vice in their hearts, but all the time He treated them with such goodness and respect.

**Spirit of humility** and recourse to God. God will not allow us to be victims of illusion. Humility not only prevents illusions and falls, but it can make us faultless... If one is humble like Mary the Blessed Virgin, one will be without sin, like Her. Therefore, we must work at being humble, at self-denial, learning to love being hidden from the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself, for though He was God, He was also a man. He renounced His humanity, considering it nothing in front of His divinity. He offered Himself in sacrifice and said: *Here I am, obedient to the point of death and death on a cross* (Ph 2:8).

Humble oneself in one's nothingness. The more one loses oneself the more one will find oneself in God in a much better condition: sanctified, transformed and made divine. If a person does not deny himself, but prefers to search for one's individualism, he will find many little idols in himself and he will be forced to sacrifice everything.

**Obedience.** We must believe that when a superior or a director speaks, it is God speaking to us through that person's voice. The Saviour said: *Anyone who listens to you listens to me* (Lk 10:16). Unfortunately there is nothing more common than seeing the word and will of God being treated as though they were the word and will of humans. This way, the divine word which is so powerful it has the force to convert souls because *the decree of the Lord is wisdom for the simple* (Ps 19:8), produces nothing or next to nothing, and the will of God is considered a soiled cloth in need of washing. This is profanation and sacrilege!

What is an act of faith? It is firmly accepting the most profound mysteries of the Christian religion. When the Church proclaims a dogma we say: I believe. This is true obedience; but reasoning before obeying is the obedience of a protestant. The story of Eden went the way it did because Eve started asking herself why God should do this or do that. Eve became one who reasons, then she became independent, then sensual... An army that reasons about orders received would quickly break up; and we are similar to an army.

**Donation of self.** A man must toil for God's work, with joy and strength, day after day, without desiring success or worrying about tomorrow. *Each day has enough trouble of its own* (Mt 6:34).

If I have been given a job to do I will ask myself: will I manage to do it? I must not, though, become agitated, but I must carry it out with the same trust and faith that Abraham possessed. I must do what God asks of me through His representatives, and do it the way he says. All the rest is nothing but useless worry, bother and temptation which I must not listen to.

Often, well-meaning and well-educated people make big mistakes and damage the Church. They mean well and they care about good, but since they care more about the good they want than what God wants, they lose their way, fall back on worldly things and think they can build with human effort. By following along after their own spirit, they change the bread of life into fruit of death and become a burden for God and men.

*It is not the man who commends himself that can be accepted, but the man who is commended by the Lord* (2 Co 10)." \* \*

## Come to Medjugorje

*Do not allow gift of Mary's presence become void*

Our Lady says: *I rejoice at your presence here* (25.6.93); *I am happy to see so many of you this evening* (25.3.94).

### Invitation to return to Medjugorje

This appeal is from a young man who has recently returned from a retreat in Medj.

"Medj. remains an oasis of peace. Our Lady is inviting us to allow God to change us: *I will place in you a new heart...* It was in Medj. that I felt the irresistible desire to invite all those people who have been there - and non - to return, **to go to Her.**

It is from the Father that Our Lady has the power to grant such wonderful graces of healing and reconciliation, the fruits of which are peace and joy that the world cannot give. I lived for more than one year in Medj. in '92 and '93 and though only a few km away people were living through hell, here in Medj. it never ceased being an oasis of peace.

I met bus drivers, truck drivers and aid deliverers - many were atheists, but all of them said they could feel the profound peace. Some even witnessed visible signs, such as the pulsating sun, the cross surrounded by light, etc., and many of them changed life. Just as Mary was present in the Upper Room for Pentecost, today She is **physically present in Medjugorje** (truly exceptional!).

I was saddened to see fewer pilgrims, except for the French. Where are those great crowds of time ago? The answer is simple. The devil knows that Medj. is a source of grace, and through provoking fear of the war, he wishes to impede this flow of grace. On the other hand, if we look at the disasters caused by division in the families, at the moral disorder, the lack of ideals in the youth and the emptiness in people's hearts, we wonder whether it is more dangerous to remain home or go to Medj. where we know the graces of conversion and peace are abundant..." (Fra Agostino)

**Way to Medjugorje Safe** - A volunteer from Verona confirms that the way from Italy to Medj. is **safe**. "In Italy people think that just placing foot into former Yugoslavia means entering war zones. That's why there are so few pilgrims going there to pray, and why Medj. seems like a desert, though the church comes to life during the evening Mass. We ask ourselves: where is the faith that enlivened the thousands of persons just a few years ago?" (Alessandro)

Another friend from **Belluno**, just back from a pilgrimage with a busload of people, also confirms the safe drive along the coast and pleads people to start returning. He stressed the "importance of these pilgrimages as a unique chance to review one's life as a Christian, not to mention the other extraordinary graces that Our Lady grants." (Daniela)

**The desert will bloom** (Is 35) - Fr. A.R., back from Medj. after assisting in an aid-delivery operation, tells of his feelings about Medj.: "Looking down from the tops of Krizevac and Podbrdo I couldn't help thinking about the many hotels that were put up so quickly, but are now empty. It brought to mind the rich man who wanted to build new silos to contain all his riches (Lk 12). What a waste of effort and money - and to think it is preferred to the real wealth that Mary came to bring us, that neither war, nor thieves, nor rust can take from us. This too is a sign of God's mercy who calls us to repent."

*If Mary is in Medj., it is expected for Satan to be there too (cf. message of 28 Jan. 1987). Satan came to seduce with temptations of worldly riches, and he managed to deviate many. He has and is sowing scandal, and he uses people to do this.*

*But God cannot be defeated by man's resistance and limits. The Medj. spirit has moved to cover the entire world. The sparks of the Medj. blaze started up fires of prayer, renewal and vocations all over. Through this instrument, we have tried to keep these fires alive. We are certain that when the time is right, this flame will once again light up the hills where it first began. The communities and groups that Mary formed in silence over this long Good Friday will bring peoples from all the world to this privileged place known as Medjugorje.*

## News from the Blessed Land

\* **More healings** - Medj. continues to be a special place where the body and heart are healed. Towards the end of April two young men with AIDS (homosexuals) came to Medj. It was a total upheaval for them. One says he saw Our Lady, that She spoke to him to explain the first messages to him since he

knew nothing about them. We do not yet know with certainty if he has also been physically healed. Only a blood test will tell. Truly, though, Heaven bent down over these two young hearts to fill them with grace.

\* **A woman with multiple sclerosis** was taken up Podbrdo in a stretcher ... and came back down on her own two feet! There have also been cases of young smokers and alcoholics giving up their vices. **Two couples** with children, married with a civil rite because of previous divorces, have decided to live in complete chastity - like brothers and sisters. These are just a few examples of the graces springing forth from Medj.

\* **Vicka's 10-day visit to Canada** was a true blessing. Our friend and distributor, Giuseppe Bozzo, writes: "The churches were too small to contain the crowds that turned up to listen to this unpretentious girl."

In Canada where scepticism is widespread, the people truly hunger for tangible truth. A significant fact is that Our Lady appeared to Vicka in the church of San Rocco in Quebec before 2,000 people. The Archbishop of Montreal did not allow her to talk about the apparitions, but it was here that the evening liturgy of Medj. was repeated. At 6 p.m. the Rosary was recited. This was followed by a conference by Fr. Svet, and then Vicka spoke to the people. About 20 priests then concelebrated Holy Mass which finished late into the evening."

Vicka remained in the US for Pentecost and participated in the Marian Conference at Notre Dame in Indiana together with Msgr. Paul Hnilica.

\* On the 21st April, **Mirjana** gave birth to her second daughter: Veronika. Mirjana hopes to have many more children for it is thanks to the gift of maternity that she is so interested in what Our Lady reveals to her about her relationship with Child Jesus.

## Convictions of a Psychotherapist

**Fr. Slavko** told of a very interesting testimony by a psychotherapist who was Protestant but became Catholic. When in Medj., our psychotherapist affirmed: "I am sure the Blessed Virgin appears here!"

Fr. Slavko asked why, and he replied: "For three reasons. She is punctual, Her language is simple, and because She appears every day." Fr. Slavko: "But these are the same three points that worry the theologians. Why do they convince you?"

"As a psychotherapist I come across people all the time whose **anxieties and disturbances** are provoked by the **absence of the mother** in the family. Our present-day society is sick because of this absence. We have divorces and mothers who prefer to work or maintain outside interests rather than stay home and look after their children. Now, punctuality, simple language and daily presence of a mother are what is most necessary for a child's healthy development and stability. In Medj. it really is the Mother who is appearing; She is with us and is giving us those same three things that we lack. It is Her type of presence that strikes me. **She is healing us of this maternal absence.**"

*from the diary of Sr. Emmanuel*

\* **Fr. Jozo** went to Spain for the first time. He was there from 29 April to 8 May and met many groups in Barcelona, Madrid, Palma de Majorca and other cities. He roused

much enthusiasm for prayer and charity towards the war orphans and refugees.

\* **Ivan** will marry an American girl on the 23rd October next in America.

*We refer our readers to a past article in Echo 103 regarding the visionaries and their choice of vocation. Note that Ivan had tried to follow Our Lady's call to a religious vocation twice and entered a convent in Dubrovnik. To his disappointment, he was considered unsuitable.*

*It is indeed a great responsibility that of guiding young vocations; discernment and much care is needed. The risk in treating people's vocations too lightly is that of interfering with the Will of God. It also shows us the importance of a guide, particularly for people that receive such great gifts, for they are tempted much more.*

*Let us all pray to God, that Ivan, with the help of his future wife, may be faithful to the mission he has been entrusted with.*

**LATEST NEWS** (25 May) - The number of pilgrims is growing, particularly the French-speaking and English-speaking pilgrims. There is also an increased presence of pilgrims from Italy, Poland and Austria, etc.

Also this year the **peace march** from Humac to Medjugorje has been organized for the **Anniversary** date - 24 June.

As usual, the **Youth Festival** will be held from 31 July to 6 August.

### **Bosnia less fighting but peace not near**

The fighting is now confined to the north of Bosnia, but peace is still a long way off for former Yugoslavia. The Croats and Muslims had attempted forming a union between them but this has been undermined by the Serbs. The Serbs have been isolated by the international community, but they do not want to accept peace at the cost of losing a part of the land they occupied. They were offered 50% of Bosnia instead of the present 70% and more in their hands.

In the meantime they are trying to open a corridor to the north of Bosnia to connect Serbia to the zones they occupied, including Krajne which is Croatian. The obstacles in their way at the moment are the strongholds Brcko and Tuzla where Muslims and Croats, and not just these peoples, are holding them back. In Sarajevo, people still have to look out for their lives, where sharpshooters recently killed 70 people in just 1 month.

This isn't all. The Serbs seem to be getting a hold of Kosovo, Macedonia and Krajne.

We hope that now that there is less tension, there aren't also less prayers. We must keep on praying for peace to be established as soon as possible, particularly in this land where only an intervention by God can bring that about.

### **Tragedy in Rwanda was foreseen by Mary**

The press didn't spare us those tragic sights of abandoned and mutilated corpses, many of which are floating down the river into lake Victoria. They report that about 2,000 reach the lake each day, and that 500,000 is the death toll to date. The Rogationist missionaries, though, say 1.5 million is a more credible number. This is the worst massacre in history.

As in former Yugoslavia, though, where Our Lady began pleading for peace 10 years before the onset of the war, She also started inviting people to pray, fast and convert in **Kibeho** during the apparitions of 1981 through to 1983. Abbé Laurentin reports that on the 9th August 1982, Our Lady cried and the visionaries cried with Her when they were shown tragic visions of the future with terrible fighting, rivers of blood and abandoned corpses. So shouldn't we decide to take Mary's invitations seriously?

**SOLIDARITY** - Let us not forget these suffering peoples. It is a chance for us, who lack nothing, to build up *treasures in heaven*.

Check with your local Caritas or Medj. centre for ways of helping. If you prefer to send donations to us for these causes, enclose a note with your cheque so we know who to send the money to.

### **Faith and Hope stronger than hate**

Croats and Muslims are on their way to a reconciliation, and in many zones - such as Bare and Pozetva - where the Muslims are a majority, the Muslims are keeping guard, particularly at night, over the homes of the Croats.

The Bishop of Djakovo in **Slavonia**, Marin Srakic, visited all the parishes of his Diocese that are now in Serbian hands and he has noticed that the faith of those who have gone through so much tribulation has been greatly strengthened. (From Glas Koncilia no. 16/94).

**The Poor Clares of Brestovsko** - These cloistered nuns refused to leave during the war despite the many attempts to move them out (see Echo 104 and 110 for news about them). They kept up 24 hour adoration during the most heated moments. Alberto Bonifacio recently paid them a visit. They are now repairing the roof of their convent which had been badly damaged by fire last year during bombing. Water and electricity are being supplied once again and their community life is returning to normal.

**Not revenge, but pardon** - Fra Jerko Penava from Ogulin in Croatia writes: "About 15 days ago I attended the funeral of 17 year-old Matthew from Zagreb. He had been killed by a young boy of the same age. It is thought by accident, but the circumstances surrounding the accident leave room for doubt.

After the funeral, back at the boy's home, some of the family were plotting revenge. The mother protested heatedly: 'Who gave birth to Matthew?' she asked. Everyone was silent, and she continued: 'I am his mother, and if anyone is to take revenge it will be me, but not with violence. The boy needs help. His mother died when he was one and his father died a few years after that. So I've decided to bring him home and rear him as if he were my own son.'

One by one, they have all managed to forgive."

**An Information Office in Medjugorje has been opened by Mir Editions, on the church side of the bridge, to the left. Copies of Echo in the principal languages will be available here each month.**

### **Jelena talks about her experience: I believe in the power of prayer**

**Jelena Vasilj** has been studying theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in the USA. Last year she also attended the University of Gaming in Austria for one semester. She has now returned to the US.

In this recent interview by *Medjugorje un invito alla preghiera* from Pescara, Jelena says of her years at Uni: "I am very satisfied and now everything that regards Medj. seems much clearer to me. I am happy that what I have experienced does not belong just to me, but is shared by the whole Church. When I read about the lives of the saints I am able to see myself in them. I mean, the grace I have received is not something unique, but many others in the past and present have also received it. This helps my faith to grow."

On **inner locutions**, Jelena said that she does not have these on a daily basis anymore. They occur when she prays, particularly at Mass and when she meditates in silence. Jelena adds: "The Mother of God urges us to adore God and have faith in Him. I am aware of Her presence with the eyes of the heart and I receive the message in a type of flash - that seems to last about 15 seconds. When I write it down though, it appears to me that it should have taken longer."

*What do you feel after the locutions?*

Often I react like Peter when he said to Jesus: 'Why don't we remain here and put up a tent? When I feel the presence of God I feel like putting up a tent and staying there. Our world, however, expects something from us, and so God makes me see how we can't always enjoy His presence.'

*In what way would you like to be a testimony to the apparitions?*

Certainly not with force. God will let me know how I can serve Him. At times we don't realize how even little things makes us witnesses, like gestures for instance that spur on others. This has happened to me. I believe that if we open up to God we will become instruments in His hands.

Asked about the events in the **former Yugoslavia**, Jelena replied that she did not feel prepared enough in political events to be able to reply. She added though that they could be part of God's plan since nothing happens by chance. "In the history of man the Mother of God has often intervened in decisive moments, and I think that this moment is one of a great change."

*Do you think we could stop evil, the wars, if we took Mary's messages more seriously?*

**I believe in the absolute power of prayer.** For a person who has experienced the power of prayer, it is not possible *not* to believe in

prayer. I am not a credulous person, but I can see, through prayer, how God acts, how He changes me and how He even changes situations around me. I strongly believe that prayer is very powerful and that with prayer, in union with the Mother of God, we can greatly obstruct evil.

*Our Lady said in the message of 25 Oct. 1993: "If we had realized Her messages, the war would not have lasted so long."*

Like all evil, war is an evil that we can fight only with God by our side. We are so weak that we could never resist without God's grace. That is why I believe things aren't going the way they should, because we have not understood that it is **only with God's grace that we can defeat evil.**

*You are now far from Medj. Can you tell us how important guides are in your life?*

In the beginning there was Fr. Tomislav. He was a great help. We were made to comprehend the grace being revealed to us by God; and of course, Our Lady guided us as a prayer community. Also in America I have a **spiritual guide**. He is a Benedictine father and he is also my confessor. A spiritual guide helps me understand what God wants from me and this is important.

*What does confession mean to you?*

When I confess my sins and ask for pardon I feel that the bond with God is restored. Confession is a fount. Drawing from this fount helps one grow spiritually. **I confess every two weeks.**

*What do you think the Mother of God wants from you?*

I believe Our Lady is asking us of Medj. to be particularly devoted to God. The more I study the more I realize She would like a special devotion from me. I do not know yet what this will be, but I feel God is **calling me in a special way**. At times it frightens me. I do not know if the time has come to talk of a vocation, or if I am mature enough yet for such a big step... I think the important thing is to **decide for holiness**. I am trying hard now not to let my desires or instincts guide me, even if they are positive.

*What do you think of the messages?*

Spiritual growth plays an important part. At times I ask God why He doesn't give me something new, but if I look more carefully I see how much more work there is to do on myself. The messages seem simple at a first glance, but they are very profound. They are important for my own spiritual growth. All the days of our life will be spent in fighting our weaknesses and that is why I believe so much in prayer. Mary never stops asking us to pray, and we can never pray enough.

The **Rosary** is very important to me, and the **Our Father** is the greatest prayer of all. It is in this prayer that we find Christ's vocation and ours: doing the will of God. The **Scriptures**, the Gospel are important. It is here that we can find all the answers to our problems. I go to **Mass** every day. Without the grace of Jesus' sacrifice it is very difficult to grow in faith."

*You were 10 when you began having inner locutions in Medj. Do you think of these as a grace, or would you have preferred it never happened?*

Well on an egoistic level, I think of how my class mates lived and what I missed out on. If I compare these small privations to God's grace it makes me smile.

We were created for God. No type of sufferance can be compared to God's grace, even if we react in a typically human way, like I often do.

*Anything that is not grace is fleeting."*

## LIVE INSTRUMENTS DEAD INSTRUMENTS (2)

### An instrument of God must be joyful

An unhappy church-going person is a person who is not open to God. It is not possible to live with God and be unhappy. A person who prays all the time but continues cursing and criticising others is not open to God. That person is without life. In him there is sickness and death. God wants to remove this; He wants to heal.

Why, though, would this person not have joy? Why aren't Christians joyful? It is so contrary to real Christian living!

**Why have so many people joined sects?** The reason is that they did not find joy among the Christians. They did not find in them the way that leads to happiness. Behind every form of sadness there is an inner closure that Satan uses. St Francis used to say that the greatest danger for a person was sadness. "If you have sinned, go to confess, and be happy." In fact, there is no other reason for being sad.

### The causes of sadness

The problem is that we hang on to so many reasons for being sad and we don't want to let go of them. For as long as we keep these reasons and fears, we cannot be joyful and our closure impedes us from receiving God's joy.

When a person who suffers from satanic disturbances (but is not possessed) is exorcised, they pretend an immediate solution, but in reality, nothing can be done to help them. The reason is that with their minds these people wish to be freed, but their hearts belong to Satan. They want justice, revenge and rights, all according to their own ideas. They keep reasons in their hearts that they do not want to let go of. What they are doing is keeping Satan's kingdom in them. Their hearts are filled with ill-humour. What can a priest do if people, to be freed and thus joyful, do not open their hearts, do not renounce everything and do not really decide for God?

We are very very superficial in our work at keeping Satan at bay. He must be thrown out of our hearts, our minds, our wishes and our bad feelings - thrown out altogether. It's a waste of time saying we want joy if our hearts continue calling upon evil!

The Lord wants to use you as His instrument, and if your heart is open only to love and peace and God's justice and pardon, you will see how your faces soon change and how you will be able to change others! So the problem is that we have reserved our hearts for another kingdom instead of His.

There is another cause for this sadness in Christians: they believe, yet they don't believe. They believe, but they are **not convinced - truly convinced - that God gives everything**. God, though, *does* give us everything to make us happy. Perhaps He doesn't give us money, because at least those of us here already have more than enough.

The problem is that our journey to God is always on a material level. This impedes us from reaching real inner wealth. It wasn't by chance that St Francis and St Clare renounced all earthly goods so as to discover the treasure that lied within them. They sang and this made the rich marvel at why they were happy. If we are unable to free our hearts of all these things, we will never find

inner joy. We *must* free our hearts; then we will feel the presence of God when we call Him. If our hearts, though, continue being divided, we call God with our lips and Satan with our hearts.

Concerning this inner joy it is very important that we understand the passage of Luke's Gospel that speaks to us about the healing of the ten lepers. Only one, a stranger, returned to glorify God. The other nine had also been healed and this made them happy, but they had not understood the relationship between their healing and God. They did not return to adore God as "the Gift" - a much greater gift than our health.

To have stable joy our souls must **recognize God as our highest Good**, the good that is greater than all good on the earth. This way, our souls are open, and we are able to say: if I have God, I have everything! One of the Medj. visionaries once told me how Our Lady lamented: "They all come to see the visionaries, but only a few of them come to see Me; **they all come in search of gifts, only a few want the 'greatest of gifts.'**" So you see, as long as we look for little gifts without "the Gift" who also gives joy to human gifts, we cannot be happy.

### Needing each other

There is something important that Christians should remember which has to do with what we said in the beginning about being instruments of God. An instrument of God that prays needs to be united to God; he needs communion with God. Rather than ask for things, we should desire being dependent on God, elevating our souls to God and being united to God.

At the same time a Christian must be humble towards others and know how to **ask for help from others**. If we observe Our Lady's messages we see that She always prays. She has never used expression like: *I have powers*. She just prays. At the same time She says things like: *I need your prayers ... your help ... your fasts*. This is a sign of Her humility and Her dependence. I cannot help you either unless you respond with your prayers. I need your prayers, I need your openness. You see, that is how communion with God is formed and how communion among us is formed in God. Then God can be manifested in us. When we say: "I believe in God, I believe in the apparitions," it is a responsibility we take upon ourselves.

**Our body: instrument of God - a true fast** - It's the same for fasting: also our fasts must be in communion with God. There is a wrong type of fasting; like fasting out of habit - this is not a good enough reason for God. Some fast to lose weight: this has no spiritual value, though it can be done for health reasons. I would suggest to you all to eat less, to regulate your body's needs and take care of it for the **sole purpose that it is God's instrument not man's**.

Furthermore, a severe fast done for the purpose of obtaining extraordinary phenomena or some other personal desire has no value for God. Our fasts are worth something in God's eyes when done out of love for God and for our brothers. The wise men over the centuries teach us to be prudent and wise in regulating one's fast, but in any case it must be done for love of God. I think that Our Lady pointed this out to us in Her messages of 1984 (eg. 20 Sept. 1984).

## The value of our communion with God

See then how everything that we use must be in communion with God, for that is the only way we can be His instruments. When our hearts are open to God, when we actively participate in prayer and fasts, in our way of acting, speaking, thinking and listening, then we will be united to God and God will use us. The more we are open interiorly, the more things become easier for us, as they were for St Francis.

Do you remember the time when a civil war was about to break out in Arezzo? St Francis started praying. At a certain point he ordered one of the brothers to go to the city wall and order the devils to leave the city. The monk obeyed and told the devils: "Little Francis orders you to leave the city," and so the war was ended. It's all so simple. It was simple for Francis because he was in profound communion with God.

What I desire is that we all begin entering this profound communion with God to permit Him to act in us and through us. It is not important if some among you have extraordinary powers. I guarantee that any of you **who are sick will have the extraordinary power of sufferance** which, when put at God's service, nourishes the power of miracles. I guarantee that any of you who suffer from satanic attacks and offer it with joy and love, will free many other people. It doesn't matter whether you are little or big, fat or thin, all that matters is that you are united to God and you let God be central in your life and you let Him do everything in your life. **Just be instruments!**

If you put this into practice you will see how God will act in you. God will be the one acting and you won't be worried or nervous or be exposed to arguments. You need not worry about anything for God will do everything in you.

Fr. Tomislav Vlasic - 5 Jan. 1994

## Move Feast of Immaculate Heart to May 13

We unite ourselves to the many requests that have been forwarded to the Holy See to have the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary moved to the 13th May.

This **date is a very significant one**. It was on this same date in 1917 in Fatima that Our Lady showed Her Immaculate Heart. It was on this same date in 1981 in St Peter's Square that the Pope was saved from a sure death. Moved to this date, the Immaculate Heart would be celebrated in the middle of May and would acquire greater significance.

At the moment, this feast is celebrated the Saturday following the Sacred Heart celebrations and is easily unnoticed because it does not have a fixed date and could lose significance if celebrated during a pre-festive Sunday liturgy.

In prayer, we present this desire to Jesus' Sacred Heart and to His Church. We think that the following invocation, thought to be by St Ambrose, is a very suitable one for this cause: *Heart of Jesus, glorify Thy Mother, that Thy Mother may glorify Thee.*

We think the first person to be happy about this change would be John Paul II.

*"I ask you to show me your love by coming to Mass and the Lord will reward you abundantly."* 21 Nov. 1985

Today too, God grants to Church

## THOSE SAME CHARISMS

### as in early centuries

in particular to lay people  
"in the amount that pleases Him"

"(...) The Holy Spirit, the giver of every gift and the main principle of the Church's vitality, does not only work through the sacraments. According to St Paul, He who distributes to each his own gifts as he wills (cf. 1Co 12:11), pours out into the People of God a great wealth of graces both for prayer and contemplation and for action.

They are **charisms**: lay people receive them too, especially in relation to their mission in the Church and society. The Second Vatican Council stated this in connection with St Paul: "The Holy Spirit also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written (in St Paul): 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1Co 12:7)."

St Paul highlighted the multiplicity and variety of charisms in the early Church: some are extraordinary, such as healings, the gift of prophecy or that of tongues; others are simpler, given for the ordinary fulfilment of the tasks assigned in the community.

As a result of Paul's text, charisms are often thought of as **extraordinary gifts**, which primarily marked the beginning of the life of the Church. The II Vatican Council called attention to charisms in their quality as gifts belonging to the ordinary life of the Church and not necessarily having an extraordinary or miraculous nature. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the primary or principle aim of many charisms is not the **personalsanctification** of those who receive them, but the **service of others** and the welfare of the Church... in that it concerns the growth of Christ's Mystical Body.

As St Paul told us and the Council repeated, these charisms result from the free choice and gift of the Holy Spirit. In a special way the Triune God shows his sovereign power in the gifts. This power is not subject to any antecedent rule, to any particular discipline or to a plan of interventions established once and for all. According to St Paul, **he distributes his gifts to each "as he wills"** (1Co 12:11). It is an eternal will of love, whose freedom and gratuitousness is revealed in the action carried out by the Holy Spirit-Gift in the economy of salvation. Through this sovereign freedom and gratuitousness, charisms are also given to the laity, as the Church's history shows (cf. CL no.24).

We cannot but admire the great wealth of gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on lay people as members of the Church in our age as well. Each of them has the necessary ability to carry out the tasks to which he is called for the welfare of the Christian people, and the world's salvation, if he is open, docile and faithful to the Holy Spirit's action."

### Diversity and unity of charisms - Need to recognize and discern them

"However, we must also turn our attention to another aspect of St Paul's teaching and that of the Church, an aspect that applies to every type of ministry and to charisms: **their diversity and variety cannot harm unity.**

"There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord" (1Co 12:4-5).

Paul asked that these differences be respected because not **everyone can expect to carry out the same role** contrary to God's plan and the Spirit's gift, and contrary to the most elementary laws of any social structure. However, the Apostle equally stressed the need for unity, which itself answers a sociological demand, but which in the Christian community should even more be a reflection of the divine unity. One Spirit, one Lord. Thus, one Church!

At the beginning of the Christian era **extraordinary things** were accomplished under the influence of charisms, both the extraordinary ones and those which could be called little, humble, everyday charisms. This has always been the case in the Church and is so in our era as well, generally in a hidden way, but sometimes in a striking way, when God desires it for the good of his Church.

In our day, as in the past, a great number of lay people have contributed to the Church's spiritual and pastoral growth. We can say that today too there are many lay people who, because of their charisms, work as good, genuine witnesses of faith and love... out of fidelity to a holy vocation, who are involved in serving the common good, in establishing justice, in improving the living conditions of the poor and needy, in taking care of the disabled, in welcoming refugees and in achieving peace throughout the world.

In the community life and pastoral practice of the Church, **charisms must be recognized** but also discerned, as the Synod Fathers recalled in 1987 (CL 24).

Certainly, **the Spirit blows where he wills**; one can never expect to **impose rules and conditions on him**. The Christian community, though, has the **right to be informed by its Pastors** about the **authenticity of charisms and the reliability of those who claim to have received them**. The Council recalled the need for prudence in this area, especially when it regards extraordinary charisms (cf. LG 12).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* also stressed that "no charism dispenses a person from reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church" (CL24). These norms of prudence are easily understandable and apply to all, both clerics and lay people.

That having been said, we would like to repeat with the Council and the Exhortation cited above that "**charisms should be received in gratitude** both on the part of the one who receives them, and also on the part of the entire Church" (CL24). From these charisms there arises "for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them for the good of men and for building up the Church" (AA3).

The history of the Church shows that whenever charisms are real, sooner or later they are recognized and can carry out their constructive, unifying role; a role, let us recall once again, that the majority of the Church's members - clerical and lay - effectively fulfil each day for the good of us all.

The Pope, General Audience 9 March '94

### Donations received - March to May:

*Medj. in the East*: Lit.6,756,000; *Bosnia-Herzegovina*: Lit.4,462,810, plus Lit.16,500,000 from Fr. Tiberius Munari in Mexico; *Radio Maria Poland*: Lit.417,000; *Latin America, Sahel, Armenia, etc.*: Lit.2,205,000

## 13 June: St Anthony the power of the Word of God

Jesus said: *Whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works* (Jn 14:12). This was realized in the man who is known simply as the "Saint."

St Anthony, or Ferdinando, was born in Lisbon in 1195. His parents instilled in him a profound love of God and a noble spirit. When he was 15 he entered the Agostinian convent in his town because he was determined to die to the world and live only for God. Disturbed by companions with political projects, he moved to Coimbra 2 years later.

His life took a turn 7 years later when he met some Franciscan monks on their way to Morocco. He was attracted by their humble and simple manners. In 1220 the bodies of the 5 martyrs - killed in Morocco - were brought back to the convent and he kept watch over them that night. He later asked permission to enter the order of the poor monks, for he desired going to Morocco, and if necessary, die for the faith. God, however, had other plans. Anthony got sick in Morocco and had to be sent back home, but a storm carried the ship to the port of Sicily. It was here that he disembarked, and together with the monks of Messina he made his way to Assisi for the Chapter of Porziuncola and was greatly impressed by Francis.

Without a mandate, and amid 5,000 monks, he was anonymous. The Superior of the convent of Montepaolo took him back to Forlì and Anthony hid his cultured ways in the most humble of tasks. At the ordination of a priest he was forced to speak. He started out very modestly, but ending up enchanting them all with words of grace that showed up his rare knowledge of the Scriptures. Sent to preach to the heretics in Northern Italy, he moved about from town to town. The biblical writings had entered his soul so profoundly during the hours of prayer in Coimbra that when Pope Gregory IX heard him he called him *Arc of the Holy Scriptures*.

Whenever Anthony spoke, his listeners did not hear human words, but the words of eternal life which explains why he had so much success with the heretics. When he was in Rimini, where the people had been led away by heretics, they refused to listen to him, so Anthony went to the beach and started preaching to the fish. Fish by the hundreds could be seen gathering on the surface of the water. The people of Rimini converted.

Anthony is famous for the many miracles that accompanied him during his life.

After many travels he retired for some time into a contemplative life until his love for his fellow men led him back into the world. He founded the first house of study for the Franciscans in Bologna and Francis sent his fellow brothers to him for instruction. Francis would tell him: "I want you to teach Holy Theology to the brothers, but the spirit of prayer must not be quenched neither in you nor in them."

After some time he went to France to fight the heretics of that nation. His weapons were the Word of God and love for those who had abandoned the true Doctrine. With these weapons alone he entered the city of Toulouse which was a real stronghold of heresy.

In 1227 he returned to Italy. His final abode was the convent of Arcella in Padua. His preachings for Lent in 1231 were extraordinarily successful. People had started arriving the night before and there were so many that Anthony had to preach outside in the squares. Afterwards, the people started lining up for

confession. The city of Padua and the surrounding villages were completely transformed.

This great effort had damaged his already failing health. He was affected by dropsy which caused him great suffering. One day in Camposampiero (in the province of Padua) he fell terribly ill and he was taken back to his cell in Arcella on a wagon. His eyes were fixed on something up high and his brothers asked at what. "I can see my Lord," he replied.

He died on the 13th June at the age of 36. It seemed impossible that in so few years he was able to study so much, pray so much, preach and do so much good.

There were so many incredible conversions, people being healed and miracles happening over his tomb that Pope Gregory IX sanctified him only 10 months after his death. In 1946 Pope Pious XII proclaimed him Doctor of the Church.

St Anthony is generally represented as looking tenderly upon Child Jesus as He sits on an open Bible in the hands of the saint - this was how the Count of Camposampiero had seen him one day in ecstasy. *d.a.*

### Mary's gift for Albania

**Echo in Albanese!** Fr. Valdemar from Rapallo announced the good news and sent us a copy of the first number. It contains the translation of nearly all the articles in Echo 109 and 110. In the presentation our Albanese friends wrote: "With the help of Mr. Angelo Vecchione, in the city of Lac, we have started printing the bulletin *Echo of Medjugorje*."

We are certain that the Albanese believers will joyfully accept this sign of the presence of Our Lady in Albania." The translation of Echo 111 is now underway.

Some groundwork had already been done by the distribution of 7,000 copies of a free colour booklet published by Echo and translated by Roberto Prendushi. It is entitled: *Our Lady visits the earth and appears in Medjugorje; Her message reaches Albania*.

Apart from covering the messages and story of Medjugorje, the booklet also covers the Pope's visit to Albania, devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Shkodër, the reconstruction of this Sanctuary which had been destroyed during the last regime, and a basic catechism with daily prayers.

We hope this may indicate a call by Mary for the Albanese population, including the people of Kosovo and the other ethnic groups which have all suffered so greatly, that at Her throne of grace they may find real peace.

### ECHO IN OTHER LANGUAGES

**Italian:** Eco di Medj., C.P. 149, 46100 Mantova, Italy. **English:** Echo of Medj., Cas. Post. 27, I-31030 Bessica (TV), Italy. **French:** Echo de Medjugorje, 18 Allée Thévenot, F-39100 Dole, France. **German:** Echo aus Medj., Via C. Balbo 3, I-36015 Schio (VI), Italy - fax 0445-575856. **Spanish:** Roger Watson, Fermo Post centrale, I-22100 Como, Italy. **Catalan:** Amics de Medj., c. Carme 11 baixos, E-08700 Igualada-Catalugna, Spain. **Portuguese:** a) Gilberto Correia, rua de Brito 24, 4915 Vila Praia de Ancona, (ph. 911181), Portugal; b) Servos da Rainha, Caixa p. 02576, 70279-970 Brasília DF, Brazil. **Russian:** Int. Medj. Comité afd. Nederland-Belgie, Misericordeplein 12C, NL-6211 XK Maastricht, Holland. **Polish:** Czesława Mirkiewicz, ul. Ign. Kraskiego 21a/3, PL 30-515 Krakow-Podgorze, Poland. **Russian:** Dom Marii, Plotnikov 3, 121003 Moscow, Russian Federation - fax 007095-2415057. **Magyar:** Fraternitas, 1399 Budapest, p.f. 701/85 Hungary - fax 36-2176183. **Romanian:** Ecoudin Medj., P.O.B. 41-132, Bucharest, Romania.

**Reduced editions:** **Greek:** Soeur Despina de la St Croix, 69 Rue Epirou, Agia Paraskave, 15341 Athens, Greece. **Czech:** Medzugorské ozveny, Ilbenstädter, Str. 6, D-60385 Frankfurt, Germany.

**Distributors:** **USA:** Peter Miller, POB 2720-230, Huntington Beach CA 92647 - ph. 714-9637240, fax 9631432. Giovanna Ellis, 9809 Stoneybrook Dr., Kensington MD 20895 - ph. 301-5883198. **Canada:** Giuseppe Bozzo, 8324 Nicolas Leblanc, Montreal Que H1E 3W5 - ph. 648-3420. **Spain:** Josè L. Lopez de S. Roman, Ap. 246, Palencia, Spain. **Australia** (all editions): Medjugorje Sentinel, P.O.B. 746, Pennant Hills NSW 2120 - fax 02-9807806.

### ECHO IS FREE - IT LIVES ON YOUR DONATIONS.

#### Turning back to old-hat spirituality?

**Cardinal Ratzinger** was asked: "Are you suggesting we turn back to the old spirituality of 'opposing the world'?"

He replied: "It is not the Christians who oppose the world; it is the world that opposes Christians when the truth about God, Christ and man is proclaimed. The world rebels when sin and grace are called by their names. After the phase of the indiscriminated 'aperture,' it is time Christians became aware that they belong to a minority group and are often in contrast with what is logic, obvious and natural for the 'worldly spirit.' It is time Christians found the courage to be anti-conformists and the capacity to oppose and denounce many of the tendencies in the culture that surrounds us."

### LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

\* **M.D.** from **Frankfurt** has sent us the latest message of Our Lady in Litmanova, given on the 8th May. It talks about holiness.

"I wish to tell you that you do not know the Lord, your God, well yet. You have still not allowed your actions, hearts and words to mature in love. This world is sick because it is full of squalor and impureness. Do not think the way this world thinks. Do not desire what this world desires. I love you and I care very much about the pureness of your hearts."

The other girl, Katka, said: "God does not want anything that is complicated. He wants our love. For people who love, this is not difficult to give God love." There were 25,000 present amid the bitter cold, but the sun came out after the rain."

\* **From France:** "It was by chance (if there is such a thing), that my eye fell onto a copy of the *Echo of Medjugorje*. I read it and I was very moved, like never before."

\* **From Brescia:** "Echo is a paper that one can never finish reading. It is so nourishing that I read it over and over again."

\* **Pat from Surrey** writes to suggest that since this is the Year of the Family, parishes could donate Rosary beads to a couple when they marry so that they could become a *family that prays together*, and start lowering the divorce rate.

We thank Thee oh Blessed Virgin. The letters we receive and their expressions of gratitude are a blessing from you and encouragement to continue with the work.

To all our readers we say thank you: for helping us and for supporting us. I bless you all and entrust you to the Heart of Jesus and Mary.