



Message of the 25th of January 2010:

“Dear children! May this time be a time of personal prayer for you, so that the seed of faith may grow in your hearts; and may it grow into a joyful witness to others. I am with you and I desire to inspire you all: grow and rejoice in the Lord who has created you. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Prayer is humus for faith

The Apostles said to the Lord: “Increase our faith!”. The Lord answered them saying: “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you. (Lk 17,5-6). **Dear children, may this be a time of personal prayer for you, so that the seed of faith may grow in your hearts,** Mary exhorts us. This is the time in which grain and discord grow together, it is the time of waiting for the return of Christ, the time in which we are called to protect and cause the good seed of faith to grow. Faith is an immeasurably great gift from God and, like all gifts that come from Him, it is offered, not imposed; it is up to us to welcome and protect the gift or refuse it. God respects our freedom, to the utmost, but he does not abandon us and he is always ready to come to our aid when we turn to Him with a sincere heart. Even if we do not know how to pray, it will be the Spirit himself who will intercede for us (Rm 8, 26). Let us strongly ask God to not allow the seed of faith to die in us; let us ask him this more than anything else in the world; let us ask him for it for us, for our children, for our friends, for those who are our enemies, for the whole of humanity. Let us ask for Mary’s powerful intercession, **She is with us,** always ready to support us; let us ask for the intercession of the Angels, of our saints. Let our prayer be simple, alive, faithful; let it be an *elevation of the soul to God*, like the catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us. “For me prayer is a burst from the heart, it is a simple gaze towards the Heavens, a cry of gratitude and love in times of trial and in joy, it is something great, supernatural, that dilates my soul and unites me with Jesus” (St Therese of the Child Jesus MA 317). What Saint Therese affirms is an experience that I, you, we all can truly have if we really want to!

True prayer, from the heart, is a communion between the creature and the Creator, it is a meeting in Christ between the Father and the Son that I am, you are; for this reason, the Eucharistic liturgy, the Mass is the highest form of prayer. *Oh Father, accept our*



“We believed, according to our human criteria, that he was hiding his greatness and his glory from us, while he was revealing to us, through that same unveiling, the authentic greatness, true divine glory.

This greatness and this glory have nothing to do with our human greatnesses and glories. They essentially consist of the rule of a love that ignores all distances and triumphs in communion”.

Éloi Leclerc

offering on this night of light, and through this mysterious exchange of gifts, transform us into Christ your Son, who raised man up alongside you in glory. This is how we pray over the offerings at the Mass on the night of Christmas, and the fruit of this prayer is *to become one body and one spirit in Christ.* Our faith must lead to this assimilation. Now man is no longer kept away from the Tree of Life so that that he might *not eat from it and live forever* (Gen 3, 22-24). Now the Tree of Life is Jesus Christ and man can eat from him and live forever, if he does so with the right heart. In this way our faith will become a **joyous testimony to others** and it is a testimony that is truly efficient because it transmits something that is not part of us but of He who lives in us, Christ Jesus; and it brings joy because He is the true, only, unique, eternal Joy! And so **let us grow and rejoice in the Lord who created us** and who wanted us as his children in His Son Jesus!

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Message of the 25th of February 2010:

“Dear children! In this time of grace, when nature also prepares to give the most beautiful colors of the year, I call you, little children, to open your hearts to God the Creator for Him to transform and mould you in His image, so that all the good which has fallen asleep in your hearts may awaken to a new life and a longing towards eternity. Thank you for having responded to my call”.

Open your hearts to God the Creator

There is a time when nature wakes up from its winter sleep and it is a **time of grace**, because it is the grace of God that governs it and reawakens it. This is how it is for the whole of creation and even more for the human creature made in His image and likeness. “*Dear children! I invite you to open the door of your heart to Jesus as the flower opens itself to the sun,*” Mary said to us in the message of the 25th of January 1995 and once again today she repeats **open your hearts to God the Creator.** God is the Creator. He was the creator not only at the beginning of the history of the world and of man; he was the creator then and he still is the creator, because God is Life and life is in Him and it does not exist without Him. Man cannot do without God. It is the trick of the ancient serpent that still tempts and seduces man, that deludes him into thinking that he can do without God, that he can live without Him, and even against Him. It is the root of the first sin that is still budding and will finish budding only when *God is everything in everyone.* Like every mother does with her children, Mary wakes us up from our sleep, she calls us towards Life. **Open your hearts to God the Creator for Him to transform and mould you in his own image and likeness.** This is Life: living in God, allowing Him to continue His Work of creation in us, abandoning ourselves to His Love that transfigures us and makes us like Jesus. Mary insists; she has been at work since, from the time she was very young, she said Her *Yes* to the angel Gabriel, since she welcomed Jesus within Herself and thus welcomed all of us in Him to make each of us a unique Son of the Father. This is God’s creation, it is always underway because this is His Work. How can we not be willing to accept so much Love?

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the

hardening of their hearts. (Eph 4,17-18).

To be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4,23-24). This is the reawakening that Mary calls us towards, and proceeding in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we will find advice that is just as useful today, as it was yesterday, and perhaps even more than it was yesterday, so that a **new Life** may be born in each of us, that Christ conquered for us with His Death and Resurrection. Today, like two thousand years ago, the essence of life is always and only Jesus Christ and in Him, and only in Him, can we discover it, taste it, experience it. It is not a question of drawing up a treatise on existence but of experiencing something. It is not a question of inventing something new but of living the **new Life** that is already present in Christ and offered to each of us. It is merely a question of welcoming it with a sincere heart, without pretence, without hypocrisy.

Wake up from the sleep of unbelief and sin because this is a time of grace which God gives you (25.02.2000). Awaken from the tired sleep of your soul (25.03.2001); this is what Mary exhorts us to do and now it is up to each of us, and above all those who have particular responsibilities in the Church, to accept or refuse. It is still possible, but for how long?

N.Q.

Swim against the tide!

"We are continuously called to convert, but we are not always sure of what this truly means. Conversion means changing the direction of the pathway of our lives: not a little adjustment however, a veritable turnaround in direction. Conversion means swimming against the tide, where the "tide" is a superficial, incoherent and illusionary lifestyle that often drags us, dominates us and makes us slaves of evil or in any case prisoners of mediocrity. With conversion on the other hand, we should aim towards the high measure of Christian life, we should place our trust in the living and personal Gospel, which is Jesus Christ. His person is the final destination and the profound meaning of conversion, he is the pathway towards which we are all called to walk in life, allowing ourselves to be illuminated by his light and supported by his strength, which moves our steps.

Every day is a favourable moment and a moment of grace, because each day urges us to give ourselves to Jesus, to trust in Him, to remain in Him (...) even when there is no lack of difficulties and strain, tiredness and falls, even when we are tempted to abandon the pathway that leads to Christ and close ourselves off, within our selfishness, without realising the need that we have to open ourselves up to God's love in Christ, to live the same logic of justice and love.

Let us renew our commitment to follow Jesus, to allow ourselves to be transformed by his Easter mystery, to conquer evil and do good, to let the *old man* die who was associated with sin and let the *new man* be born, transformed by God's grace.

Benedict XVI

(General Audience 17th February 2010)

News from Africa

There is always the risk of "pretending nothing" and indifferently relegating a land, that continuously fights its struggle not only to live but also just to survive, to the oblivion of our conscience. A land that carries the burden of the fate of being perennially the "third world", not a subject with which to relate "on equal ground", but a third party that is set aside and that needs to be taken care of.

For some time on the pages of Echo we have set aside a little space to give a voice to this continent so that it might be the protagonist of its own existence; and it is the voice of the witnesses, of those who visit it, inhabit it and love it for many reasons...



In this short letter sent to the editorial staff, **Father ANDREA MESCHI, the general father of the Stimmatini Order**, tells us something about that land, so that we might all take it to heart, at least through the gift of our prayer.

"Dear friends,

I returned to Italy a short time ago...I rediscovered the **Ivory Coast** (I hadn't been there in six years) and I found it to be in very worrying condition. It's a country that is regressing at an alarming rate rather than making progress. The number of those who are unable to survive is rising fast, those who in the morning when they wake up ask themselves the fundamental question: will I find something to eat today? Poverty is spreading. The country does have some reserves, but crumbling and corrupt politics (the possibility of some revolutionary movement always seems to be latent), as well as the presence of exploiting multi-national forces are causing this country to collapse.

As Stimmatini we have been present here for forty years and we guide fervent parish communities, works of charity and education as regards young people. We also have a powerful radio as a means of catechism to be spread throughout the various villages of the forest. Laymen and women as well as nuns work with us. In Ayamè, in the hospital that was built with us, I encountered a team of doctors from the San Matteo in Pavia who come to Africa periodically to offer their work. At that time they were performing a series of eye operations.

There are very few European missionaries, a large group of local Stimmatini (almost twenty) has formed over the years and they are a source of great hope for the future, but there are very significant financial needs.

Let's hope that Africa can keep its head high and walk on.

I brought their songs home with me, which are mysteriously cadenced by the tam tam, and on my clothes there is a little of that "red earth" that I will never forget".

Father Andrea Meschi

From Uganda...

Dear friends,

heartfelt thanks for sending me the Echo of Mary. I have often thought about writing to you but the guerrilla warfare occupies all my thoughts. I've decided to do it now...

I've been in Africa for many years; I initially worked in a school and now I'm working on the youth pastoral project for human, social and Christian promotion among young people, with a special focus on young people and former child soldiers.

The Mission is in the North of Uganda. For twenty-two years I've experienced guerrilla warfare with the people and I've seen terrible atrocities carried out by the rebels of the "Lord's Resistance Army", including the painful Via Crucis of children who were kidnapped to become soldiers and slaves, being subjected to all sorts of mistreatment.

We are now in a period of peace, thanks be to God. This enables us to live more peacefully and therefore work more.

I distribute the Echo of Mary in English among the young people of the various schools that are part of the Mission. The young people read it enthusiastically and with great interest and I assure you that it's always a cause for celebration when they receive it and pass it on to each other. I'm currently working in ten schools, so the magazine really does get around! In all of these schools the Rosary is recited and in prayer the young people feel Mary's presence quite strongly.

I also love to read the Echo, because in it I find material for the youth pastoral project and for my own personal reflection. The only regret that I have is that I cannot contribute financially, and so I pray to the Mother of God that She might see to "someone" who might offer you the subscription for us missionaries. And that this "someone" might be thanked in a special way, that is, with my thanks and those of the young people, along with a prayer of thanksgiving from me for your generosity. For all of you and all of your readers and supporters I invoke the abundant blessing of God.

An affectionate embrace,

Sister Aurelia Poma (Lira - Uganda)

Christianity is not moralism!

"Christianity is not and cannot be moralism, it is not up to us to do what God expects from the world, but we must first of all enter into this mystery: God gives Himself. His being, his love, precedes our action and, in the context of remaining in Him, identified with Him, ennobled with His Blood, we can also act with Christ".

"From God let us not ask for some small or great thing, from God let us invoke the divine gift, God himself. (...) We must learn more and more about the things we can pray for and the things that we cannot pray for, because they are expressions of my selfishness. I cannot pray for things that are harmful for others, I cannot pray for things that bolster my own selfishness, my pride. In this way, praying, in God's eyes, becomes a process of purification of our thoughts, of our desires. (...) Only in this process of slow purification, of freedom from ourselves and from the will to have only ourselves, lies life's true journey, the journey of joy opens up".

Benedetto XVI

(from a Lectio Divina on John 15, 9-17)

In the year dedicated to the Priesthood

What might a saint from yesterday have to say to us today?

On Sunday the 25th of April the Carmelite Father Angelo Paoli (1642-1720) will be proclaimed Blessed. Today, many years later,

what is the meaning of the glorification of this man who lived such a long time ago? Does his story, which is made known to everyone with his beatification, carry an even more valid message for the Church and



the Carmelite order, as they enter the third millennium? Certainly what hasn't waned about the life and the example of Father Angelo Paoli is his charitable service, founded on the contemplation of the Mystery of God, loved and adored above all in the Holy Eucharist.

Pope Benedict XVI writes: *"The saints have drawn their ability to love their neighbour, in an ever newer manner, from their meeting with the Lord Eucharist and, reciprocally this meeting has acquired its realism and its depth in the service of others"* (Deus Caritas est, no. 18). With a tangible truth, Father Angelo experienced his relationship with God, remaining united with Him in his lengthy hours of prayer and becoming the manifestation of the presence of the love of God in history. Intense love for the person of Christ and for his Cross, moulded the course of his life and for him it became an experience of union of thought, feeling and will with the divine mystery, so much so that it led father Angelo to see men and the world with the eyes of God and to love others in God and with God.

The beatification of Father Angelo came after many years of waiting and the Lord in his Providence wishes to offer it at a special time. Is it a mere coincidence that it will be given as a gift to the Carmelite order and the Church during the year that the Pope wanted to dedicate to the priesthood? During this Year dedicated to the priesthood, the beatification of father Angelo is certainly an appropriate occasion during which to reawaken in all priests the love for the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as the creative service in charity.

Hilarity and humour accompanied many moments of his life. With funny jokes he played down difficult moments and he accepted words that resounded as attacks if not actually insults. Many aspects and anecdotes of the life of Father Angelo reveal to us the gentle nature of this man's soul, who, contemplating God's Beauty, worked to give beauty back to the men who approached it, by choosing (following his example) to collaborate with him as volunteers in the same service of our brother or allowing themselves to be evangelised in the experience of their illness and their poverty.

The Church continuously asks itself how to grow in internal communion and how to create links between presbyters and

lay people that are characterised by co-responsibility in the work of evangelisation. Father Angelo, who had high-ranking people as well as simple artisans around him, who he rendered responsible, knowing how to suggest to each of them their own specific way of making the culture of love grow, also invites us, his brothers and sisters of today, to invent pathways together and new ways of taking care of the poor and the convalescent of today, especially those affected, as Pope Benedict XIV says, with dryness of the soul.

Through this glorification, that comes about today and not in times gone by, through this priest who experienced his human and spiritual maturity in Rome, God probably also wanted to say something to the Church in Rome today, and to its presbyters in particular.

Father Giuseppe Midili, Carmelite

Fr. Ángel Peña

SIMPLE THOUGHTS by Pietro Squassabia

Chosen ones

We needn't be surprised if Love, which gives joy to our hearts, is like a fire lit by a "special wood", made of thorns, because this is how it was pleasing to the Father. It is not necessary to seek it out because it is offered to us every day: it is only a question of recognising it and holding it close, without throwing it away. Perhaps it is not difficult to recognise it because it looks like that wood that the Son carried to Mount Calvary after having readily welcomed it from the Father. The Father was immensely happy because of this and felt the need to manifest His joy to men when He said: *this is my chosen (beloved) Son in whom I am well pleased*. Then the Father thought about giving that wood as a gift to men, through His Son, so that all those who carried it might experience Love and Joy.

For this reason, the trials of life, that always recall that "wood" a little, express the Father's benevolence and not a form of punishment. With the annunciation of the angel, Mary recognised that "wood", she joyfully went to her cousin Elizabeth to say to her: *from now on all generations will call me blessed*. Therefore the cross was thought of by the Father to give blessing and not punishment. Otherwise Mary would not have gone to her cousin to express her blessing. Yes, like the Cross was a sign of having been chosen by the Father, as regards the Son and the Mother, our daily torments lead us to think of such predilection. And like Mary welcomed the cross with such love and abandonment, even without fully understanding it, we too are called to welcome the sufferings of each day lovingly and with abandonment, even if we do not always understand them. If we do this, then perhaps we too will experience the beatitude of the Virgin; perhaps we too will feel loved by the Father, chosen, like Jesus and Mary.

Too little

In the terrestrial paradise man possessed everything that he needed for life because he was "rich" with God's wealth, but when he left that place, he became impoverished and he ended up losing everything. Despite his efforts, he couldn't succeed in having anything

Joseph, the holiest of saints

We can say, without fear and without a doubt, that Joseph is the holiest of Saints and that, even if it is not a teaching of the faith, he is most likely already with Jesus and Mary in body and in soul in Heaven. The three hearts that were united on Earth, will be forever united in heaven. It is for this reason that the intercession of Saint Joseph as Jesus' father and Mary's spouse is so powerful. Nobody loved them like him, nobody took care of them with such concern. Joseph is the faithful man, always willing to do God's will. For this reason, his life is at the centre of the history of the world and the salvation of humanity. Being devoted to him is something more than optional.

that he needed to live. And so the Father was moved to pity given the misfortunate situation that man was in and He thought about giving him back what he had lost, actually, much more, because He gave him the greatest Treasure that He had: His own Son. In this way, the Father *deprived Himself* of His Son to *enrich* man.

Now the Father "cannot" give us to His Son again because – so to speak – He is no longer His but ours, seen as He gave Him to us, and so He needs us, simple humans, to give His Son to those who have lost him. But we need to be careful because we risk losing the Treasure that we are carrying in *clay vases*: if we break them, we will lose their contents...

We have an important duty in God's plan: to bring Jesus to our brother. Mary is the splendid creature who always brings us to Jesus but she also asks for our collaboration, as though she needed us to do her duty. If we welcome Jesus, all of us can carry Him to others because He, who *is meek and humble of heart*, always allows Himself to be led without putting up a fight. Perhaps Jesus expects none other than this from us: that we give Him as an exchange, that we give Him as a gift to others, without distinctions, without preferences, especially to those who do not know that they have lost Him, to those who are not even looking for Him. At the end of our life, the Father will only ask us this: if we brought Jesus to others. And so, if we do not give Jesus, then we give too little...

Mother Teresa of Calcutta recalled this often: we give too little if we don't give God. In fact man, even when he asks for "bread alone", in reality always seeks God because, in the bottom of his heart, he is always "hungry" for God. Jesus reminded us of this many times. Also when He said: *man cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of God's mouth*, what he meant was that, without God, "bread" is insufficient to take away our hunger. And even when He was giving loaves and fish to the crowds, with this He was also offering God's word, to truly take man's hunger away... We are therefore always asked to give Jesus to those who are in need, so as not to give too little. And let us not worry if we do not feel up to the task. Mary is our model and our aid. Let us turn to Her then, and certainly we will not fail in bringing Jesus to others. □

Reflections of light from Mary's land

by Stefania Consoli

For the record

When we're far away it's normal to want to know what's going on back home. In this way, even though we're far away, we feel like participants in family events, in things that friends are doing... This is what happens to those who return to their countries of origin after having visited Medjugorje: they expect to find news here and there that makes them feel closer.

For a long time we provided information about events, accounts of important visits, simple news of those places with little news flashes... But we ask ourselves: does this still have any meaning? Given that it is possible to find news on the Internet in real time – so if we were to write it, it would already be old news – we also asked ourselves if the approach towards that reality that so profoundly influenced our lives should change somewhat.

Every day the media “bombard” us with information of all kinds and many times facts are reported in a mediocre manner, often in the form of gossip; in this way only banal curiosity is satisfied and nourished on the “sensational” and we become accustomed to superficially reading our time. In the light of this, we can then come to a better understanding of the fact that it is not necessary to know all the “little facts” about Medjugorje to remain updated, but it is important to know what is happening within souls that allow themselves to be transformed by the grace received in that place and that continues to be operational wherever they are. I will therefore have *news from Medjugorje* if I know how to look into myself, if I know how to discover the fruits of a journey that is nourished with Mary's words, her presence in my day, her example in these lengthy years of the apparitions... In this way I will be the news in Medjugorje... And if I allow the Lord and his Mother to work freely in me, there will be news every single day!

A project that goes beyond all expectations

We're slowly approaching another anniversary of the apparitions; in June we will enter the thirtieth year of Mary's presence among us. A long story... Every now and again someone asks themselves: how long more will it last? What more will happen?

In the past, many striking episodes have left their mark on the life of Medjugorje and its protagonists: signs, events, sensational testimonies, and then there are the ten secrets that still remain closed in the discretion of the visionaries...

“Little children, do not forget that you are all important in this great plan, which God leads through Medjugorje. God desires to convert the entire world and to call it to salvation and to the way towards Himself, who is the beginning and the end of every being. In a special way, little children, from the depth of my heart, I call you all to open yourselves to

this great grace that God gives you through my presence here. I desire to thank each of you for the sacrifices and prayers. I am with you and I bless you all. Thank you for having responded to my call.” said Mary on the 25th of June 2007. It is therefore a great plan that cannot be enclosed in our forecasts or expectations. We cannot continue to scan the horizon to anticipate what will happen, nor can we look back in regret, thinking about what was and what could have been... according to us!

God's plan is not only big, it is enormous, because it is for the salvation of the whole world: not only men, but also the whole of creation and every living being, so that good might be re-established for all, as it was at the beginning of all species. Let us not waste time running around our small projects, and above all let us not shirk the responsibility of the success of God's plan: we are *all important*. Let us try then to seriously discover what we must do and let's do it, until the *end*.



FASTING offers us such good food

During the long winter months, it seems that plants don't need anything. They remain still, their vital functions almost asleep, and to those who don't know them well enough they may even appear to be dead. Yet their life is intense, palpating, it's just that it's concentrated towards the inside to protect itself from the rigour of the winter, but also to allow the plants to prepare themselves to express new life, new colours and scents. It is therefore an important time to regenerate themselves and to give the best of themselves. Every once in a while they ask for some water, perhaps a grain of fertilizer, but for the remainder of the time the plants...fast!

It is not at all inappropriate to speak about fasting in such terms. The idea of fasting is often only associated with the concept of penance, sacrifice, expiation: “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. “Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate...he relents from sending calamity. (Joel 2,12-13) we hear read in the churches on the first day of Lent. But we must personally experience this practice in order to understand that the fasting of Christians has a whole other value.

Let's get back to our plants to discover that the time of their fasting – even avoiding

essential foods – not only does not cause their death but strengthens them so that their blooming in spring is even more thriving. The period of their fasting therefore represents an *emptiness* but only in view of something *full*, an absence that gives a foretaste of only a *presence*...

My food is doing the will of the Father

The most striking example of fasting experienced as a form of preparation for a more intense action is given to us by Jesus himself. When preparing for his public ministry, he withdrew into the desert for forty days without taking any food. In silence, in prayer, he thus created within himself the space to meet the Father and to listen fully to his will, to then be announced to the people. This is the true sense of the fasting that we are invited to: to make space for God within ourselves, to meet him with greater freedom and to understand his thought to be translated into life.

The Acts of the Apostles narrates that believers fasted before making important decisions (Acts 13,4; 14,23), which leads us to understand how the intention of fasting should be to turn our gaze away from the things of this world, to concentrate instead on God.

Mary, a mother who leaves her children to fast?

We know well that in Medjugorje Our Lady invited us to fast as one of the five fundamental parts of *her call*, a pillar on which to place the building of our spiritual life. But we must be careful, this is only a form of support, it is not the life with God towards which we must tend! It would be too little to stop at the means that helps us to meet the Lord and then not enter into communion with Him! It is in fact a form of deceit to make do with religious practises without penetrating the mystery of God who offers himself continuously to us. After all, it is only a manner in which to silence our conscience that deludes us into believing that we're okay only because we have fulfilled the “ritualistic duties” foreseen by our religious belief. If this is how it is for us, then it means that we are still nourishing ourselves on the yeast of the Pharisees....

At the table with the saints

The fasting experienced by the saints over the centuries and the fasting that Mary came to give us today are two different things. What Mary gives us is a very powerful spiritual weapon that might help us to detach ourselves from our dependency on material things, however necessary they may be. If we try to fill our inner emptiness by stuffing our stomach with food and drink that continuously whet our appetite; if we fill our head with images, sounds, television programmes and distractions of all kinds to avoid the weariness of the inner desert, those nights that are necessary for the spirit to purify it and strengthen it; if we delegate the

duty to keep us company, so as not to feel the weight of solitude, to superficial relationships and useless chatter...if all of this occurs, then this means that we must seriously start to fast! Only in this way will we be capable of regaining control of ourselves and the passions that do not make us happy, but on the contrary, bind us to them like invisible drugs. We realise this when we begin to deprive ourselves of them, when we resist their persuasive calling, when we feel the pangs of hunger, thirst, need... By fasting we are therefore able to put a barrier up against the evil that nestles in our hearts through sin, which is often a form of gluttony.

A window opened wide on the soul

Another image helps us to come to a better awareness of fasting. Let's imagine a window open on our soul: it allows the light to penetrate from the outside and we notice the dust that has deposited there that we couldn't see before, as sometimes occurs with the objects in a room into which we suddenly let light in. A more sober lifestyle, less subject to various external calls that capture our attention, opens us up on the inside and we can see the Mystery that lives in us, in the depths, which is the true Light that shows us things in the full truth of their being and existence. Too many layers are accumulated within us and they become hardened over time, preventing us from clearly perceiving God, his impulses, his desires for our life. In this way the divine image impressed on our soul can never emerge and show that identity that makes us unique in God, original without having to depend on external stereotypes that only gratify our need for security.

AS THEY GIVE LIFE TO THE HUMAN RACE,

Without their maternity
It would be inhuman.
They give life to humanity
With their love, their beauty
and their tenderness,
and they nourish it with generosity
and goodness.
Without the woman-mother
The world would be more deserted
than the desert
And colder than ice.

God chose the mother
as his direct collaborator
and with her he continued the creation
of man and the world.
When man, with his sin,
broke the bond with God
he chose her as his collaborator
for his salvation (Gen 3,15).

Without the mother, the world
Would be imperfect
And man would have remained poor
or he would have ignobly returned to her.

The woman who sent us out of Eden,
the Mother who led us back to it.
In her womb
She led us to God
And, as though to a Father,
gave us to Him with a kiss.

Prisoners of the invisible

Have we ever asked ourselves why so many people are overweight nowadays, and unfortunately many children among them?

Perhaps because the world no longer offers God as an essential, complete food, capable of sustaining their journey through life and of giving joy to taste and the heart. It is wise then to welcome fasting as something precious that once again puts us into contact with the inner temple of our soul, to then give it as a gift to God, in the certainty that He will use that space in the best possible manner: filling us with Himself, telling us of his good through purer, freer and more available channels willing to allow themselves to be invaded by Him.

In this way we will be able to understand that it is God who gives us life and we do not need to see to it ourselves with greed, flooding our body to "have a stock" of it.

In this way we will re-establish the right ratio of dependency on the Father and we will be able to appreciate every gift more, that habit generally causes us to take for granted.

Stronger than an army

Mary has repeated this many times: with prayer and fasting we can even stop wars. It is true. Perhaps we should begin to believe this...

Nevertheless, it will only be possible if our soul becomes that point in the universe in which conflicts are stopped between the opposite tendencies of the spirit and the flesh and everything is at peace, while the harmony foreseen by the beginning of things is re-established. □

The mother is our destiny.
In us and with us
There is nothing that is not hers.
She died when she had given
us everything,
when she had nothing more to give.
Already before death
She was dead to herself
So as to live in us,
with us and through us,

(From: *The mother* – L. Rupcic)

I am afraid to say yes

"I am afraid to say yes, oh Lord. Where do you want to lead me? I am afraid to venture out, I am afraid to sign in blank, I am afraid of the yes that demands other yeses...But you, o Lord, say to me: "I need your yes, like I needed Mary's yes to come to Earth, because I need to be in your work, I need to be in your family, I need to be in your neighbourhood. I need your yes to be with you and descend onto Earth. I need your yes to continue to save the world!". Oh Lord, I am afraid of your need, but who can resist you? So that your Kingdom might come and not mine, so that your will might be done and not mine, give me the strength to answer your call with a joyful yes, to your life plan for me..."

(Michel Quoist)

Medjugorje is home for me !

For me, Medjugorje is first of all the place of my spiritual reawakening through an extraordinary meeting with Jesus through faith. I refer to it as an extraordinary meeting because I experienced not only the presence of Christ deeply in my heart like a seraphic penetration of that most pure Love, which is spiritually incandescent and humanly disturbing and that makes you discover that you are a creature loved by God, while also giving you the certainty of a new and surprising call **for me**, married and a mother of three children, for me, involved in volunteer work in hospitals; for me, a person who was always in a hurry, for me, someone who was very active, for me who was very sure...of myself!

I suddenly found myself alone, with my spirit immersed in the shadows, frightened to my very depths and stripped of all sense of security; the victim of distressing fears, torn to pieces by doubt, shredded by the most terrible thoughts...In all of this interior desert I understood only one thing: that God was giving me His love and His blessing, that in my spiritual desert, Jesus was free and He was giving me His word of mercy and telling me to be at peace in this test because God was touching me on the inside, in my spirit, to heal me and to teach me to pray with faith. Yes, that is the great gift that I received: the grace of deep prayer that helps me to remain silent while I pray in *the secrecy* of my soul. Humanly I feel incapable of expressing anything good, but remaining immersed in my inner silence, I feel that love for everyone is coming out of my heart and becoming adoration...

In Medjugorje I truly met God and from that moment my life changed. I learnt to be more docile, dying to myself every day, forgiving those who hurt me, offering my life to God, praying for those who are suffering in the world, and for the poor, humiliated, scorned...thanking the Lord every day for His infinite love. My life changed profoundly, but only after I allowed God to heal me!

In Medjugorje I experienced – and every time that I return there I re-experience it – that spiritual landscape that is simply called Easter: detachment from the shadows through divine Light, a secret *doorway* to be discovered through faith. And this doorway was opened up to my inner gaze after I secretly prayed to God to accept my desire to offer my life to Him without reservation, in my human weakness, to become capable of giving a loving sacrifice through Jesus.

I met divine Love in Medjugorje in its purest state, in no other place did I breathe in such peace in a spiritual sense! I have visited many other shrines but only in Medjugorje did I clearly perceive the living presence of Jesus as a faithful friend, close to men and their sufferings. This is a truly unique force of love...

I experience many trials during my everyday life, disappointments, worries, but I am comforted by prayer and by the certainty that the Lord welcomes my "little" offering as though it were a great gift of love for Him! Only by loving God can we become a Church; only by gratuitously

Without delay

loving can we enter into true communion with the Lord and with our brothers, but we need to listen closely in order to be able to serve our brothers *according to God* and not according to me! In Medjugorje I understood that true good is the fruit of divine will and not the will of man; for this reason we must strip ourselves of everything, depriving ourselves of what makes us slaves and be obedient to God, forgetting ourselves and our reasons. All we need is a little sincerity before Him and He will cover us with graces and blessings...

I often return to Medjugorje because I feel at home there and I feel that I am a living member of the mystical Body, of the universal Church, completely united with Christ through the Holy Spirit. What is happening in Medjugorje is a great mystery: there is nothing nice to visit, actually, sometimes even the simplest conveniences that we are so used to are lacking there, it is a place that is deprived of any attractions, in the summer people suffer the heat a lot as well as the cold in winter... The mystery of grace that is experienced in Medjugorje comes from Above and it can only be understood in the measure that we open our hearts to God! Then Medjugorje becomes "the most beautiful place on earth", it becomes a place "full of everything", it becomes an unforgettable place. If you allow yourself to be conquered by the divine mystery that is present in Medjugorje, that place will become *home* for you, it will become *rest* for you, it will become a *Mother* for you. But this is a mystery that only faith can help you to understand!

Grazia from Milan

When we feel called by the Lord, when we experience His presence, we cannot but follow Him and do what He asks of us, without delay.

Delaying means being divided between two callings: that which is anchored to daily life, to our own attachments, our affections, our plans and that greater calling that asks us to go beyond all of this.

And so we are there, calculating whether or not we should postpone our answer to the Lord for fear of the unknown or whether we should follow him straight away, without delay.

When they heard the angel's annunciation, the shepherds were so taken by it in their hearts and souls that they didn't hesitate for a moment to assess whether it was worth it or not to leave the cave where they were resting and run the risk of leaving their flock unattended, but "without delay they went to find Mary and Joseph and the infant".

Without delay...the shepherds therefore left, they went to see the infant and then they reported what they had seen, causing wonder in those who listened to them; in them all of this was a cause for great joy that they "returned glorifying and praising God". Besides, Joseph too readily answered the angel's exhortation, who, having appeared to him in a dream, had invited him saying: "do not fear and take Mary as your bride, because..." Yet humanly speaking, it must have been very difficult for him to believe such an extraordinary and unheard of event as that which Mary found herself in, a

conception through the work of the Holy Spirit...but Joseph trusted what he had heard and left for the unknown without delay. If we stop to think and to ponder when faced with an invitation from heaven, our heart will always be divided and we will never be able to find joy and fullness of life.

We too have received a calling to Medjugorje: some have answered, others, after an initial moment of enthusiasm, have let themselves be sucked in by daily life with all its problems, by the mentality of the world that surrounds us, by doubts and uncertainties and they've taken the road of sadness, darkness (I know many who have embarked on this road), while others have unreservedly welcomed Mary's invitation, abandoning themselves to Her, trusting Her. They chose the road that is more tiresome in the beginning, dealing with those misunderstandings and sufferings that are always felt when you don't follow the mentality of the world, but they received and continue to receive graces upon graces, especially those of peace, unconditional love towards everyone, joy that doesn't leave us, not even in pain.

Without delay...we cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon. When we live in communion with God, our heart automatically dilates, participating in the pain of the world, suffering due to the mistakes of those who love us and those who don't love us and **we feel the birth of the desire to offer our lives for those who are on the wrong path**, so that they might abandon the wrong path without delay and embark on the pathway of love. Without stopping to do calculations, but...without delay.

Cecilia Appugliese

Big little miracles

Many times things just come to an end, we don't know how or why, but they finish. We're immediately led to take it out on everything and everyone; we think that it's always someone else's fault or the fault of unexpected events: "If that had not happened...and if that person hadn't interfered...it would all have gone well", we think. But unfortunately that is not the case.

One thing is certain however: the devil acts by slipping into our lives and into our families' lives to ruin them and destroy them. If he is the one who's dominating, light cannot come in. Nevertheless we must look around well and see that, although small, there is always a chink that lets in clean air and even a little light.

I have a little story to tell that contains a great miracle. The family of a friend of mine literally *crumbled* about two years ago. There wasn't any specific reason, or better, there were many reasons, like in all situations of this kind, but there wasn't any way out; only a chink of pure air: prayer. Only by praying in fact, did my friend manage to overcome the despair that had taken her over; her only trust was in the hope of finding light and of rebuilding something that seemed to have inexorably crumbled.

Out of love for her little son, and to *survive*, she tried to have at least a civil relationship with the man who had now become her ex-husband; therefore for the first time after their separation, they accompanied their child to a

carnival party where I too was present with my family.

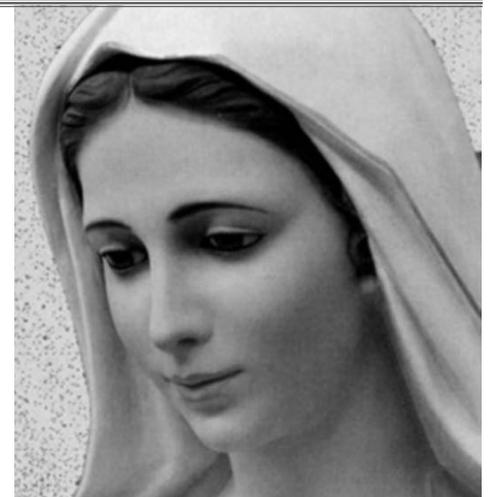
I normally wear a little chain around my neck with the Miraculous Medal (which depicts the Virgin Mary). Upon noticing it my friend said to me that she had lost hers a short time ago. "But I have another one!" I exclaimed. "I'm particularly fond of it because it was given to me by an unknown man as I was leaving the hospital having given birth to Luca, my second born son...". I immediately understood that she needed it more than I did at that time. After all, that medal had been sent to me through the hands of *an angel*, with the aim of protecting my family. And so, with the same intention, I gave it to my friend!

Miracles don't delay in coming. That very evening I asked them to stay for dinner at our house. Amidst incredulity and embarrassment, they accepted. We had dinner and chatted in a friendly manner while our children played together. Her eyes were shining and he had a smile on his face....Little Lorenzo was visibly happy and I truly hope that both of them noticed that look in the eyes of a child who feels safe because he has his mother and father near him. Three days later there was another dinner, but this time they were on their own...

In a month's time we'll be going to Medjugorje together. I don't think it will end here. I'm sure that Mary will make the little miracle that her Medal generated even greater, so that the joy of that little child and his parents might always be truer and more durable.

Help me to pray for them; I'm already doing so.

Cinzia Vinchi



*To remain united with You
in poverty,
to remain united with You
in obedience
to remain united with You
in humility.
This will bring many fruits.*

*To remain united with You
in misunderstandings,
To remain united with You
in persecution,
to remain united with You
In failure,
When we see no fruit
this will bring many fruits.*

ANONYMOUS

He is not here....

Men thought that he was unreachable, but they were wrong. God was near to his creatures, and to convince them of this, he became a man among men, a son, a brother and a friend...He lived in Galilee, a region that lies on the edge of the ancient Palestine, a crossroads of nations, between paganism and licentiousness. From the *height* of the *pious* Jerusalem it was spoken about with haughty disdain, but it is in none other than in that land that Jesus wanted to grow up, to preach and to show the true face of the Father... People were accustomed at that time, to a God who was far away and who exercised his rule through a power that instilled fear and He on the other hand chose to be *with us*; He overturned the old conception, showing a sovereignty made only of love.

By virtue of this love that overcame all other love – because it was capable of true sacrifice – He left Galilee and went up towards the city of the Temple, which awaited Him to condemn Him and hang Him on a cross. Outside of the walls, so as not to risk dirtying itself...

His own accompanied Him and obeyed, although they were a little perplexed. They tried to be faithful to Him despite the fact that the tension was at the highest point between disputes and judgements; while He, serenely, continued to be sovereign.

Then a series of goodbyes within the space of a few days found them unprepared... That strange talk on the Thursday, for Easter; they didn't understand it: «“What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’?» John 16,17). He was confusing them, like that gesture of washing their feet. The Master was no longer there: he seemed to be only a servant...

A few hours later in the silence of the night he had wandered away: “You stay here, keep watch...”, while Jesus sweated blood amidst the sleeping olive trees and drank from a chalice of bitterness. It was the dawn and a kiss that took him away from their expectations. Then, in fear, only escape offered them a way out.

It's all over...he's dead! ...No, wait: “He is not here. He has risen....Hurry, go and say to his disciples: He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him” (Mt 28, 6-7). So many events, so many surprises. Everything in such a hurry, everything so unexpectedly. And then lastly another goodbye...

An appointment in Galilee...But why on that lake that was the backdrop for their first meeting? Why did He want to see them there?

Éloi Leclerc writes (from *Easter in Galilee*): “Galilee was their little Home. Everything had started down there. The shock of the resurrection risked, in the spirit of the disciples, taking Jesus from our humanity, from our history, to project him into a mythical universe, of greatness that is both fascinating and frightening at the same time.

It was a matter of urgency to link the event of the resurrection to everything that had come before it in Galilee, to the humble pathways of the Master in the company of

his disciples. They had to discover that there was no fracture between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of glory. And that the conqueror of death was that man who was so near, so marvellously human whom they had known and frequented. (...)

In no way did Jesus deny his humanity. He is still that humble man who is near to his own disciples. He returns to his *brothers* with the same simplicity and the same sweetness. They found him more alive than ever and truer than ever in their family context, on the shores of the lake (John 21). And the wounds on his hands, in his feet and in his side are the signs of our destiny of weakness and suffering, of humiliation and death. The Lord did not refuse this destiny. He took it on in his own heart to fill it with his light (...).

Down there in Jerusalem, in the house where they were hidden, trembling in fear, the resurrection of the Lord could only appear

to them as an oppressive event, upsetting, a breakage with everything that they had experienced with Jesus of Nazareth and as such, without meaning. The event went far beyond their ability to understand.

But in their Galilee, on the shores of the Lake, under that free and pure sky, they were given the opportunity to find the Master in his humanity. The event no longer had its frightening appearance. Without losing anything of its greatness, it was in harmony with their simplicity. God suddenly illuminated their hearts, making them discover, in the glory of the Risen One, the meaning of what they had lived by following Jesus of Nazareth. That man whom the disciples had known and followed is the same one who reveals himself today as the Lord of glory. And although He is Lord, He remains their brother in humanity”.

S.C.

Noise as an escape route

“It seems almost as though people need noise! We've become slaves of noise...The continuous increase in deafening noise is a sign of the culture that, seeking to escape itself, often takes refuge in the torpor of a situation that makes it seek to forget everyday problems!”.

These considerations are more appropriate than ever for we who live in a society that is mechanised from all points of view, in all environments, but above all in the big cities, overcrowded metropolises that have become uninhabitable in a certain sense. And it is none other than the Archbishop of the great Rio de Janeiro, Monsignor Tempesta, who writes about them in a letter released by the National Bishop's Conference of Brazil: “Nowadays we are living in a world that is surrounded by sounds and noises, and for this reason it is very difficult to experience silence. There's the custom of always listening to one or more electronic devices at the same time so as not to think of life very much and to be distracted by the bitterness of daily life. We are urged by the incessant search for money; we are running constantly to accumulate material things, and in this search we are shrouded by the noise of cars, faxes, bells, horns, radios, TVs, mobile phones, deafening music, agitation and shouting. Silence is necessary for personal balance and above all to meet God and ourselves”.

Man has an innate need for silence, it is part of his most intimate nature, where man meets himself and God, the “Trinity that inhabits silence”, regarding this, the Archbishop reminds us that “Jesus too was very clear when speaking about inner prayer, when he underlines the importance of silence so that the figure of the Father might shine in us, and for this reason Christ advises us: to close the door of the room, say few words, remain in silence in His presence. This being with the Father is nothing other than the prayer of quiet, in which there is full joy only due to the fact that we are before our God.

Our life needs this balance of silence, that cries out peace...Christian silence is full of the Word of God and it lights up our lives. We should realise the importance of silence for prayer and life, a form of behaviour that promotes the contemplation of the eternal truths and encourages the search for God's face” □.

Our readers write...

Martine from Barcelonnette (France) – Dear friends in Christ, what a joy it is to receive the Echo once again! Continue to believe that the Echo is a gift from God for all of us! Be courageous, you are not alone, even if many obstacles have been put in your way...May our prayer support all of you.

Sister Marie Benoît and all the sisters of the Community (Monastery of the Benedictines of the perpetual adoration of Craon (France) – Dear friends of the Echo of Mary, thank you for having once again sent us your magazine. It was a little like a visit from an old friend who never left our heart...

Anne from France – Thank you for the marvellous work that you are doing! Continue to publish the Echo of Mary, which does much good...

Marie Céline from France – Thank you for your faithfulness. I have been receiving your magazine for some time and I distribute it to the members of my prayer group. Your faith sustained me very much during moments of difficulty. Thank you once again to the whole team of the Echo, may the Virgin Mary cover you with her grace.

Carla Benedetto from Mathi (TURIN) – As usual, I continue to distribute the Echo of Mary in the town where I live, Mathi, which is approximately 30 km from Turin. With an offer we would like to express our joy and gratitude for the possibility that we have of receiving and reading the Echo...

Anna Gambino from Saronno (Italy) – Heartfelt thanks for your precious Echo of Mary. I am sending you my constant little help. May Mary continue to bless you and reward you for all the good that you are doing...

Marta Vega from Adroguè (Argentina) – We are very grateful to you for sending us the Echo every two months, its contents allow us to be enriched spiritually and to remain in communication with our Mother of the Heavens through her messages. May God bless all of those who work to spread the word of what Mary is telling us with her infinite love.

Only for love

Only for love can we give everything without expecting anything in return. Only for love does the seed die without knowing whether or not it will bear fruit. Only for love can we conceive sacrifice as an act that is possible, reasonable and rich with meaning, even when the promise cannot be seen, not even from afar.

An emptiness to be filled, an investment without any certain perspective, a blank signature... This should be the constant attitude of the Christian who feels God's invitation to give himself to Him unreservedly, to become a "yes" to divine will that calls us and often remains veiled in mystery, only to then reveal itself step by step, as it walks.

Only for love can we sustain the burden of sacrifice that calls for a renunciation of goods and not Good; mortification and not death; willingness to live *in a loss* and not as *losers*; so that in this docility we will be an open space for God who will fight the battle against Evil in us, and as always, be victorious.

Only through love, because Love attracts us and causes us to fall in love, it invites us to lose sight of what is going on without hoping to recover anything, to give us treasures that will never grow rusty.

Only for love, because we are not heroes: it is a road that costs us our blood, which accumulates tears and *forces us* to plead...

Only for love; because there are no logics that can support comparison, because people lose their head when they silence reason to give only Him a voice, Love.

S.C.

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**Echo fully relies on readers'
donations.**

To all who have been instruments of Providence for Echo, enabling us to continue to help Mary reach her children, goes our heartfelt thanks, whom we remember especially in prayer and at Holy Mass.

If you desire a written response for your donation, please kindly request it. May God reward you and your loved ones onehundredfold!

Villanova M., 8 march 2010

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Don Angelo, ten years of beatitude in Heaven

It seems like yesterday but ten years have already passed since **DON ANGELO** left his body on earth and embarked on the pathways that lead to the heart of the Trinity, in Heaven. Illness had penalised him for some time, debilitating his muscles and lessening his ability to move, to the extent that it took his breath away. But he was there until the very end, careful to carry out what the Lord had foreseen for his last earthly season: to abandon himself more and more to God's will, to his guidance, to his initiative, in everything.

Here was a man tempered by a sober lifestyle, disciplined, in faith as in his daily life; a man accustomed to renunciation and sacrifice, capable of self-control and of guiding others with a sense of authority. Yet in the final months of his journey he was able to translate this somewhat rigorous attitude into total docility, to allow himself to be moulded without resistance, because he trusted, he recognised that God, who was calling him to Himself, and who wanted to perfect him prior to his definitive passage.

Those who knew him well had experienced his goodness, his generosity, his total dedication to others and the mission that the Lord had entrusted to him: the parish of Villanova Maiardina (Mantova) and the Echo of Mary. In the essentiality of a country rectory, surrounded by simple folk, without any claims, often needy, Don Angelo conveyed life to *his children*, without exhibitionism, with humility, although it was clear to everyone that he was the guide and that it was necessary to play by the rules...

He was sometimes a little gruff and nevertheless, as tender as only a good father knows how to be. Our own **Pietro Squassabia**, who was part of Don Angelo's "school" from the time of his youth and who remained alongside him until his last breath, recalls: "Among is favourite amusements as a child there was the pleasure he took in finding the nests of birds who had laid their eggs along the rows of trees of his countryside. As an adult also he had this passion: *there we are, this is the nest of a nightingale, he would say, that's a blackbird's nest, I'm not sure what this one is, perhaps it belongs to a finch.* Few things interrupted his prayer as an adult, perhaps none: at times he would take a short break, during his prayers, to listen to the nightingale singing on the branches near the rectory.

This search for all things real and true led him to understand the importance of prayer and in a special way, prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament, as an extension or anticipation of the Eucharistic celebration. He spent long hours before Jesus exposed: he used to say to us young people to set our hearts alongside Jesus' heart and wait alongside Him. From this prayer he drew a strength that transformed his being and diffused light to those around him".

He had a great love for Mary, especially since he went to **Medjugorje for the first time in 1984**, the Messages of the Virgin became true beams of light for his steps and for those who followed him on his journey. It was from a request to write a commentary to those messages for "his own" that the little Echo of Medjugorje came about – and over time it became a clearer body: it started out as a simple cyclostyled sheet and then it gradually became the magazine that we know today... To say that Mary's maternal

hand guided all of this is too little.

Don Angelo put his intelligence into this, his unconditional availability, his ability, his time; but Mary did all the rest... I imagine that it was She who, on the **3rd of March 2000**, went to take him from the bed of his sickness to bring him to Jesus, after more than fifty years of his priesthood spent imitating Christ.

Pietro continues, recalling those moments: "The last three years of his life were the most fertile of his earthly existence, because, given that the strength that such a dynamic and active person as Don Angelo had relied on, was now lacking, his soul was becoming more and more purified and he was more and more attentive to the realities of the Heavens. **Sickness carried out the greatest work within him.** Rather than making him gloomy, it transformed him into a more serene person: his last days, when the illness had taken away all of his strength, even his ability to speak, were those richest in teachings for those of us who were with him... He was near the celestial realities. He felt the blessed calling him and he told us this: "*I don't think I'll return to Villanova because I can hear the blessed calling me up there, they're calling me towards them*". He didn't consider his illness to be a disgrace but rather the fruit of a providential plan and he said this repeatedly to those who went to visit him: "*You ask me how I am, but how I am is not important. I'm doing what the doctors tell me but I'm not hoping to be healed because God wants this illness, God calls certain people to be nearer to Him and to participate in the suffering of the cross for the salvation of the world*".

Best wishes Don Angelo! It's great, ten years after your departure from here, being able to wish you all the fullness of an ever truer life, bright and joyous in He who created you and who made Himself known to many people throughout the world through you, today, as they read the Echo of Mary, they will undoubtedly recall you with gratitude and bless you.

**Stefania Consoli on behalf of the editorial staff
together with the Team of the Echo of Mary**

*Therefore my heart is glad,
and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One
to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures
forevermore.
(Psalm 15)*